

Love and Blood
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Chapter 1

A Journey for Honor

It was a cold and windy night in the town of Epson where the Happy Horseman Bar was just setting the party up. The music was loud, people were dancing on tables, and the beer looked like it would never run out.

Then the double door opened slowly, making a creepy sound. A guy in a black hood walked through into the bar. The entire bar shouted up for a moment, just to keep partying right away.

The man went to the back of the bar, and sat down at an old wooden table. The owner came close to ask if he wanted something.

-Just a beer- he answered.

The owner, a tall fat guy with a brown mustache nodded with his head and went looking for the beer.

The mysterious man took off his hood, revealing his face. Brown long hair appeared, with a well-cared beard. Across his left eye, a big scar showed that he was a dangerous man.

The owner came back with a big jug of beer, but he released it at the time he moaned.

-Are... Are you Rolando Karson?- he groaned.

The accused man sighed, and got up from his chair. His deep blue eyes showed he didn't care about anything. Not anymore at least.

-And what if the answer is yes? - Rolando said to the owner, who looked a little bit scared.

-You should leave. Now-the owner replied.

-I just want a jug of beer.-Rolando moved his clock aside, and touched the handle of his sword.

The owner and the entire bar took this as a threat, and unsheathed their own swords, daggers or whatever they had.

-Leave him alone.

The voice came from the other side of the room. The silence was overwhelming. The owner of the bar moved his eyes quickly, looking for the voice. And he found it.

The voice was from a tall black-haired girl in her twenties. She had a dagger in each hand, and looked experienced with them, but the owner knew that already. He gulped.

-Loren...-he whispered, sweating.

-Oh, you remember me-she said, laughing. - Look, there's no need to fight. Not right now at least. Please, gentlemen, go back to your seats.

The crowd obeyed slowly. Loren got closer to Rolando. She put the daggers away.

-Are you here to kill me?-Rolando asked- You wouldn't be the first, you know?

Loren laughed.

-Hmm...not really-she replied- May I talk to you?

Rolando wasn't convinced, but, he didn't have anything to lose either.

-Sure.

They both sat down while the music in the bar started over again.

-Look, Rolando, I know why people don't like you.

-Oh, dear, everybody knows the fake story.

They both looked at each other for a while, until Loren broke the silence up.

-Tell me the real one then.

Rolando didn't know how he got into that situation. He had told that story, the real one, of what had happened 10 years ago, and no one ever believed him. He wasn't comfortable there, and Loren knew that.

-Fine-he started- It happened a decade ago, in this very kingdom. Believe it or not, I am the second son of the now dead King Ferni and Queen Valeka. I'm a prince.

-Hmm...-Replied Loren- So what happened next?

-Well, one winter night, some kind of guild attacked the castle. They killed my parents, my older brother, and the rest of the castle; guards, cooks, servants, masters, all of them. For some reason, they left me alive. When the help came, the other kingdoms Masters concluded that I killed them all, and then exiled me out of the reign.

Rolando waited for the reaction of Loren. Actually, the usual one was to laugh and insult him. But Loren didn't do that. She stared at him, smiling.

Loren put her head closer to Rolando, and then whispered:

-What are you going to do about it?

He thought about it for a moment. What was he going to do? He knew the answer, of course. It was as clear as the water.

-I'm going to find that guild, and take revenge. I'm going to take my honor back.

Loren laughed quietly.

-I can get you to the guild, Rolando....

It was late. The servants were picking up the rest of the dinner. The royal family was getting ready to go to bed.

-I'm freezing, mom-said Rolando.

He walked to the window and closed it. The breeze was icy cold. Her mom hugged him and took him to bed.

-Good night, R-said Rolando's mom, The Queen Valeka, smiling.

Rolando smiled as well, and closed his eyes.

He couldn't sleep. He heard strange noises outside. Breaking branches, scary wind sounds. He felt like someone was watching him. He was scared.

Suddenly someone opened the main doors quickly and loudly. Rolando heard it. Everyone heard it. The boy could hear the soldiers running downstairs, with their armors, swords and spears. He sat on the bed and slowly walked to the door. There was no doubt that the castle was having a battle in the hall.

Rolando opened the door just a little bit, just to take a look outside. It was horrible. The royal soldiers were losing. The walls were painted with their blood. The enemy was getting closer. He banged the door and went to a little chest he had under his bed. From there, he took out a dagger his father made for him. Then he opened the window and went outside. Now he was on the Castle Bridge, on the way to the barracks and the stables. He heard the scream of his mom. The battle was still inside. It was raining, it was cold, and he was only a kid.

He remembered seeing a woman, not much older than him, holding a spear with blood on it, trying to enter in his parent's room by the window... but she didn't. She turned her head and looked at him. And then she came to Rolando.

-Who are you?- he asked her, with a trembling voice.

The girl smiled.

-I'm an Assassin. I'm about to accomplish my mission here, and then I will be honored by the Guild.

Then the smile became a laugh.

-Let me kill you, Rolando.

He was shocked, paralyzed. The last thing he remembers is the girl coming at him, a little fight between them, and then, probably because of a blow to his head, he fainted.

Then he discovered all his family was dead. The joyful Castle of Evinrude became a ghost castle, forgotten. And he was accused of it...

-We can go there.-Loren continued- Right now if you want.

Rolando stared at her. She could be lying. It could be a trap, she could be a mercenary looking for his head. He couldn't really trust her, but it was the only way to reach his goal.

-Let's do this.-He finally answered.

The next day they both started the journey, it wasn't going to be easy or at least that's what Loren said. It was the fourth day of traveling day and night when they reached Bleacher Mountain.

-Is this the only way Loren? - said Rolando

-Yes, my friend, it's the only way, I know you have heard a lot of dark things about that place but only a few are true - Loren replied.

The couple started to climb and by the end of the day they reached a dark cave. Loren took out her coat and fired it up to make a torch and at the same time Rolando was astonished by Loren who had the body of an angel. As

they got deeper into the cave and the sun started to fall they decided to take a break, and hide behind a rock of the cave to sleep.

-It's too cold in here for me- said Loren

Rolando looked at her and gave her his cloak, while looking her in the eyes. It was awkward; he knew he had already seen this woman somewhere in the past... but he couldn't say when.

Loren noticed the presence of the strangers and jumped toward them. With two kicks she knocked them up and took out her knife. The first man was a tall one with long golden hair, wearing a helmet. He was holding a torch with one hand and a long curved sword with another. No doubt he was an elf. The other one was a less tall guy with a long rod with a light on the end. The couple determined that he was probably a wizard.

-Who are you both? -Rolando asked

-I am Kawhi Windmill son of Idalon Windmill and this is Edelman- said the man with a torch-. Please, we aren't here to hurt you.

-Rolando. - Rolando answered, putting his sword away.

-Loren Bottom-said the lady introducing herself-. What is an elf doing in a cave with a wizard?

-That is none of your business, young lady- said the wizard-. Just let us go through.

-I think I can't let you do that. -said Loren, expressionless.

-I am the only one who is going to kill somebody in here- said a dark voice that came from the bottom of the cave.

-What was that? -Rolando asked, looking for the voice.

-Listen up, young man-started the elf. -We're here on a mission. We're here because of Blair, an ancient witch that lives of eating people who get lost in this cave.

-I don't believe you-replied Loren.

The tension was real. Any of them would explode soon, unsheathing the sword and killing someone.

But suddenly a white woman appeared.

The girl screamed and a bunch of crows came out of her body.

-I got this- yelled Edelman pointing his rod to the woman-. Run you fools!

A crow attacked him right in the eye and took it out. The wizard fell down on a pool of blood. The crows were over him already.

The rest of the group ran as if the devil were behind them. Kawhi was outside already, waiting for them. The couple was almost there, but then the crows reached them. They both fell down, with a bunch of crows over their heads. They felt their skin being torn. The last thing they saw was a shine coming from the cave exit, getting stronger and stronger.

And then they both fainted.

Loren woke up and saw Kawhi sitting in front of her. He was dressed with some green cotton shirt, with tall boots and a belt with a green shield as buckle. The helmet wasn't on his head anymore, and his hair was tied up, he was looking at her with his big blue eyes. He was very good-looking. She was in a very comfortable bed in a white hall with big windows. It was late.

-What happened? -Loren asked- What am I doing here?

-Don't worry, all your question will be answered when you meet our king- said Kawhi. - Now just go and take a bath. Please, make yourself at home.

Loren took his advice. She took a bath and got dressed with silk elf clothes. She walked for a while. The sky was full of stars. She got into some kind of church. After entering, she realized it was like a lake with an island in the middle of it. She could sense people there.

The water wasn't deep, so she walked through it. She could feel the fish swimming around her feet.

-...that's it. Our friend is dead now, and we can't do anything about it. And the enemy of the Forest is getting stronger...- was saying an Elf to the rest. He appeared to be the leader there.

Loren spotted Rolando on the crowd and went towards him.

-What's this? - whispered Loren to him.

-Some kind of reunion. I don't know where we are, but we can't waste our time with Elf stuff.

-I agree.

-And our guests! -yelled the Elf- Please, come see me after this meeting, we have a lot to talk about.

They both nodded with their heads and waited for the meeting to be over. All they discussed about was the Witch, some Forest and a strange disease that was causing the death of the Elf people.

The Elf Leader called them.

-Welcome to the Forest Sanctuary. I heard the Witch attacked you and my son Kawhi on a cave. I'm glad you survived her attack. -He sighted- So, I'm Idalon Windmill, Shield of the Forest and Defender of the Elf.

-Rolando.-He stopped for a moment. He didn't usually say his last name. People would recognize him. And he wouldn't like that. -Bastard from the north.

Loren smiled. She knew what he was doing. But she respected it.

-Glad to meet you, Rolando-replied Idalon-. And the young lady here?

-Loren Bottom-she answered.

-Great. So I'm aware my son saved you back there. Is it true?

Actually, they didn't remember. They just saw a light coming from the exit hole and they fainted. Was it possible that Kawhi would have used an elf power to save them from the witch?

-Yes he did-answered Rolando. He wasn't sure of course-. Thank him for us. And thank you all for your hospitality, but we need to get back on track.

-Of course. These roads are dangerous. Be careful.-Idalon looked worried.- I'll tell Kawhi to guide you out of here. Follow me.

Rolando and Loren followed Idalon through the Sanctuary. They passed the hall where Loren woke up and walked on a dirt path with guards on the sides of it. They owned long curved swords, just like Kawhi did. The leader guided them to the front door and opened it. There, a girl with a lantern hanging on her belt was offering them two cloth bags. By her side, Kawhi was holding the wooden doors.

-Kawhi!-yelled his father- Could you guide them back to the road, please?

-Yes, Father. Follow me.

Rolando and Loren grabbed the cloth bags and discovered they were full with bread. Rolando looked back. The main wall was full of archers on the top. The Elf were known for being great warriors, but better bowmen. The doors closed slowly, and the light disappeared, leaving them just with the moon.

They were now passing the edge of the Green Forest, that was domain of the Elf, and where the Sanctuary was located. Suddenly the trees started to disappear and instead appeared a valley with tall grass and some hills. The night sky was stunning and beautiful, and the wind cold but comforting. Some drizzle started to fall.

After a couple of hours walking by the hills and grasses, they reached the coast of the Rohkan Lake, which they needed to cross to get to the city of Rohkan. Kawhi guided them to the port, where a wooden raft was waiting on the quiet waters.

Rolando threw his cloak, sword and bread bag inside. Loren jumped in, unleashing the raft.

-It was a pleasure to have you in our home, travelers-said Kawhi.

-The pleasure was mine, Sir Elf-replied Rolando with a little reverence.

The elf smiled, while the couple started rowing. Loren didn't say anything during the journey.

The next day, they were in the Rohkan port. There a lot of merchants received them with a big smile on their faces, while offering fish, bread, fruits and weapons.

Loren ignored all them and started walking. Rolando followed her. Definitely she was a strange woman. She was determined and cold. Rolando was curious about her past, and more curious about where he knew her from.

After walking under the sun for hours on the path, they saw three soldiers kicking a guy on a side of the road, behind some bushes. They knew they were from the Crown because of the red armor. The guy looked defenseless, he didn't own a sword, not even a branch. At his side there was a cart tipped over, leaving some wheat and logs over the grass.

Rolando looked at Loren. She nodded with her head, and moved to the crime scene with Rolando at his heels.

The soldiers realized that they were not alone, and stopped laughing and kicking.

-Keep going citizens-said one of them, walking toward them.

Rolando placed a hand on the handle of his sword.

-What are you doing to that poor merchant over there?-he asked.

-Well... getting our money back. Crown Order -the soldier answered, shrugging. He removed his red gladiator helmet and scratched his head. - Keep going my friends, we got this.

He turned around and started walking while pulling out a canteen and drinking from it. The other two soldiers tried to warn their friend, but it was too late. He was now on the floor, with a clean cut on his throat.

-I missed this...-said Loren, cleaning her blade.

The soldiers unsheathed their swords and ran toward Loren. They raised their swords to attack but Rolando was faster, charging his sword against the stomach of one of them, and parrying the other one with a thrust of his dagger. One less. Two against one now. Watching the scene, the last soldier tried to escape, running into the woods, but Rolando caught him and ended his life.

The couple got back with the merchant. He was a tall guy with black hair. They helped him getting up.

-You idiots...-whispered, with a cough due to the beating.

-We just murdered three Crown Soldiers in front of your eyes and that's what you say to us?-Loren asked.

-I mean...-the merchant started- Now the Crown will put a price on your heads. Lots of bounty hunters and mercenaries will be behind you.-The guy looked busted- But don't misunderstand me, I'm really thankful. May I know your names?

-Loren Bottom.

-Rolando, bastard.

-Nice to meet you lady Bottom and lord... sorry I didn't hear your last name.

-That's because I don't have one. Not for a long time...

At that moment the merchant moaned and fell on his knees. Rolando realized he was wounded.

-Please, take me home...-whispered the merchant- Wooden house, about half hour from here, that way...- he said, pointing at a hill on their right.

Loren looked at Rolando.

-We need to get back on the road-she said.

-Yes but we can't leave him here. He would die.-Rolando turned the cart over and then picked up the man and placed him in. -Hop in, Loren. We can continue after this, it won't be long.

She agreed reluctantly, and hopped into the cart. The horses started moving.

It was the only house in the middle of those hills. The smokestack was on. Rolando knocked the door with the merchant in his arms.

A young and beautiful woman opened the door and screamed. The woman let them in and Rolando explained the man's wife what had happened.

-I'm Miriam Piggy, and my husband is Louis Piggy. He is a merchant and in his job he gets a lot of debts. I didn't think this could ever happen-said the woman before bursting into tears.

-But he is home now, he is safe-replied Rolando standing up.

-Please, any favor you need, my lord, anything.

Rolando didn't like to be called "Lord", it reminded him his past, that night, and being useless to his family, leaving them to the claws of that Assassin Guild.

-Would you get us a couple of horses? It would be easier to us to get to our destination-said Loren from back of the house.

Rolando looked at her. It wasn't a bad idea. But maybe it was too much to ask for, because the woman stayed quiet for a while.

-Take my horses-answered the merchant from the bed he was laying on.

-But Louis those horses are the only way you got to travel and sell the goods-yelled his wife to him.

-They saved my life, Miriam.

-We will take them, thank you-replied Loren, coldly.

Then Rolando thought of what Louis said to them back in the road of the woods. The Crown would already be looking for them. They will not be safe anywhere in the kingdom. It wasn't possible for them to be riding on the road without being at least followed by the Crown, and he explained it to Loren.

-He is right, lady Bottom-Louis replied-. Let me take you to your destination, then.

-But honey you're not capable of doing that!-Miriam yelled.

-Let me, please! I want to return the favor to them. Look I can hide you inside the cart, under the wheat, and take you wherever you want. The Crown don't check my goods.

-It's perfect. Thank you very much-Rolando said.

-Stay here for tonight-Louis said-. We'll travel early tomorrow. Where are you going?

Loren stood up.

-The Ice Peaks.

Rolando and Loren got into the cart. They used their cloaks to cover themselves from the wheat, and the cart started moving.

Rolando didn't notice how much time passed by with them inside of that cart. He assumed Loren was asleep, just as him.

Sometimes he woke up and heard voices, the merchant talking to people. The guy was a good actor.

It was hot. Very hot. He took out some bread and ate it. It was old and musty. He could hear Loren tossing and turning by his side.

After hours of traveling, the cart stopped. Rolando was awake. Louis got closer to whisper to them.

-We're now on the East Gates. They're probably checking all the carts.

The horses continued and soon they stopped.

-Hey, good man! -yelled a voice.

Rolando felt how Louis got down to talk to the man. Their voices heard low but he still could understand what they were saying.

-Can I help you, Captain?-Louis asked.

-Louis, my friend-the man said-. You have always brought food to our fortress.

-It's a pleasure to serve the Crown Guard, Captain.

-Look, there has been a murder on the Rohkan Road. Three soldiers, very awful. Have you heard anything about this?

Louis stayed quiet for a moment.

-No sir-he finally replied.

The soldier started walking around and sighed.

-Listen, I hate to do this-he said-. But it's my job. The Crown told me to check everything that tried to pass through this gates.

-It's nothing but wheat what I'm carrying, Captain.

-Then we can get through this fast.

Rolando heard how the Captain was walking around the cart, stirring the wheat. He was nervous, until finally the soldier spoke.

-Well I think it's fine.

-I told you-said Louis, happy.

The Captain didn't sound sure to let the poor merchant pass. And indeed, he wasn't.

-Just to be sure, I'll stab your wheat a little bit.

After saying this he unsheathed his sword slowly and raised it to start the stabbing. Rolando was ready to jump and try to dodge the blade, but then the Captain screamed and fell on the floor. Louis hopped on the cart again and whipped the horses to start running. All Rolando could hear was shouting, arrows hitting on the cart wood and the sound of wooden wheels moving as fast as they could.

Rolando didn't know what was happening. It was crazy. He stood up to take a look and saw Louis lashing to the wooden doors of the fortress.

-What are you doing?!-Rolando screamed.

-We have to get out of here, my friends!-Louis screamed.

-Did you kill that guard?

-I certainly did my friend!

Hundreds of arrows were flying by the cart's side. Guards running behind it as well and the gates being closed wasn't a good view for Rolando.

-We're not gonna make it!-he yelled.

-Yes we are sir!

Louis ordered the horses to go faster. The gates were almost all the way closed, but maybe they could make it.

A lost arrow hit a horse leg, the cart stumbled and turned over, leaving the three passengers uncovered.

-Run!-screamed Loren standing up.

Louis and Rolando followed her lead, dodging arrows and killing a brave soldier standing on their way.

Finally at the gate, they slid under it and passed. They made it. They ran through the valley head to the Cold Peaks.

They arrived to the base of the mountains.

They were exhausted, so they leaned on the rocks to take a breath.

-This is my stop, my friends-said Louis.

-Thank you very much, Louis-said Rolando.

-I need to get back with my wife. These are dark times, be careful.

-I hope to see you again in the future.

-Only the Gods will decide that, my friend.

Louis smiled at them and started his way back.

-Are you ready to start climbing?-asked Loren.

-I was born ready-laughed Rolando.

The couple started climbing. It was hard and exhausting but they made it to a small cave into the peaks where they could spend the night. Loren said the smartest thing to do was to wait until sunrise to continue climbing.

Rolando got some logs and started a little fire inside the cave. They sat around it.

-So, why are you so cold with people? So distant?-asked Rolando.

Loren waited a moment to answer.

-I'm not good with people. I'm not what you think I am.

-You're helping me, that's enough for me.

-You don't know me, Rolando. I've done horrible things.

Somehow, Rolando knew she was telling the truth.

-Horrible things like what?

-I've... killed people. A lot.

-Well, so have I.

-A lot.-She got serious telling this last thing.

-Are you like an assassin or something?-joked him.

Loren didn't laugh. She didn't answer either.

-Look, I trust in you, Loren-continued Rolando-. You have been a great help to me. I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for you.

-That's great to hear...

Rolando spotted a little tear escaping from Loren's eye, but he didn't say anything. She didn't look like the type or girl that cries often.

-We should rest now-said Loren.

-Maybe we should, yes.

And pouring some water on the fire, they fell asleep.

After hours of walking on snowy hills, they reached a Castle on the top of the mountain. It was enormous.

Rolando started walking on the icy floor to get to the castle. He was already unsheating his sword. He was angry, with revenge desires. That day, blood would be shed. He turned his head back and saw Loren looking at him, sadly.

-What's wrong? We made it! Let's go inside-yelled Rolando.

Loren started walking with heavy steps towards him, and with a head move she declared that she was ready as well.

Now that he thought about it, Rolando didn't know why Loren was helping him, or why she needed to go there. It was weird, but it was too late to ask now. All he wanted, was to go in there, and find the people who murdered his family and took his honor.

The door was getting closer. The wind was strong.

He was in front of those big wooden doors. Inside, who knew what was waiting for him. With his sword on one hand, and his dagger on the other one, he knocked on the door.

And it started opening.

-I'm sorry...-whispered Loren, behind him.

Rolando looked back, just as he received a hit on the head. And fell down unconscious.

Chapter 2

The Truth

Rolando woke up. He couldn't see anything. His head was covered with a hood. He was being dragged on the snow. He felt tired, he couldn't move or say anything. What was going on? What happened? All he remembered was seeing Loren...

He could hear his captor's voices.

-The Master told us to take him to the Ceremony Hall.

-Don't you think the Master is an idiot?

-Of course he is, but he will kill us if we don't obey.

-You're right. Let's finish this quickly.

-By the way, have you seen the Master's daughter? I heard she's back. And that she is a well formed and beautiful woman now.

-Oh man, I would love to take her to my...

-Hey! You pair of useless servants, move!

-Yes sir!

-Yes sir!

He felt dizzy. The men who was dragging him took him to a room, because there was no snow on the floor anymore. He was cold.

The servants sat him down on a chair and removed the hood. Slowly, he started to recover his vision again. He saw a lot of people in a circle around him, all of them with black robes. He couldn't see their faces. In front of him, there was an iron throne. And on it there was a man. A scary man, probably in his fifties, smiling at him. The most shocking thing about him was that instead having a left hand, he had a butcher's knife.

-Welcome, Rolando Karston, son of Ferni Karston, King of Everless -said the man on the throne-. I'm Shaq Bottom, but you can tell me "The Butcher". I'm the leader of this Guild.

-What have you done to me?-asked Rolando with difficulty.

-Oh, we gave you our special drink. It makes you very dizzy, and incapable of moving any extremity. It's pretty funny actually. But don't worry it will pass soon. This would be so boring with you in that condition.

He was right. Rolando started recovering his strength. At his feet, there was his sword. Did that man pretended to fight to the death right there? And did he say that his last name was Bottom, just like Loren's? Something here was very wrong.

-I've heard of you, Butcher. Let me ask you something,-started Rolando, standing up- did you murder my family in their own house, ten years ago?

Shaq started laughing, louder every time.

-Yes, my daughter and I did.

-Who is your daughter?

Rolando already knew what The Butcher was about to say, but he refused to believe it.

-The woman who brought you here. Loren Bottom, Captain of the Guild.

Rolando was shocked. He couldn't speak or move. Everything had been a lie.

-Now-continued Shaq standing up and grabbing a long sword-, it's your turn to die. You escaped that night, I don't know how, but I need to finish what I started. The Guild does not leave loose ends.

Rolando was angrier than ever. He grabbed his sword with all his strength and prepared to parry his enemy's first attack. He did, but the Butcher was really strong and was already preparing to strike again.

With a clever move, Rolando moved aside, dodging the sword, and cutting off Shaq's ankle. The Butcher fell on his knees, screaming in pain, but quickly recovered and started striking, faster and strongly. The only thing Rolando could do was block him as best as he could. Some of the attacks cut him off on his arms and chest.

The Butcher looked unflagging, and Rolando was getting tired. He would have lost if this would have continued, he would have died. But he didn't.

A dagger flew over the room and stabbed The Butcher on the shoulder. All the people in the room turned around to see who was to blame. Rolando remembered that dagger. He saw it in the Happy Horseman Bar. It was Loren's.

-What are you doing Loren? -asked Shaq, screaming.

-I can't do this anymore, father. I couldn't ten years ago, and I won't do it ten years later.

-Are you betraying me? The blood of your blood? Your father and Master?

-I think I am. You have been the leader for a long time. Maybe is time for a change, don't you think?

Loren started running towards her father, and with a fast strike stabbed him on the leg, throwing him on the floor. Rolando was on the floor, confused. Loren was a skilled fighter. She was fast. But was she really going to kill her father?

But The Butcher grabbed her from the throat and pulled her up.

-You traitor! You deserve to die in the most miserable way possible. You..!

But a clean stab in the back from Rolando's sword was enough to close his mouth forever.

Rolando came to Loren, who was on the floor.

-Who are you?-asked him.

-I don't know anymore. Maybe a bastard, just like you-said Loren, smiling.

Rolando looked her in the eyes. And then kissed her.

All the people in the black robes were not there anymore. They were alone. And they decided to go away from that place.

They rode back home. Back to Epson, Rolando's native city. There, they went to the castle that was Rolando's home once.

Rolando entered the castle and walked on the large red carpet to talk to the Master that reigned there, in replacement of the royal family.

-Lord Caesar-said Rolando bowing.

The Lord knew him.

-I don't want you here, you traitor-he replied.

-I'm just here to bring you a gift. An apology gift.

The greedy Lord became interested.

-Well, in that case, leave it there, but you're not forgiven from your sins.

Rolando took out a bag and threw it at the Lord's feet. Rolando bowed again and turned around to leave the castle. The Lord called his squire.

-Charlie! Come here!

-Yes, my Lord?

-Bring me that gift.

-Right away, my Lord.

The squire lifted the bag and took it to the Lord. Caesar opened it with a big smile on his face and looked inside; and the smile disappeared. He returned the bag to Charlie and started looking for Rolando. But he was already gone.

-What is it, my Lord?

The Lord didn't answer, instead, he stood up and went outside, in search of Rolando. The squire, curious, looked inside, and what he saw left him shocked. It was a decapitated head. To be more specific, Shaq "The Butcher" Bottom's head.