

BY *Areen Agrawal*

## The prince of Milton Keynes.

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*[Some time after the Norman Conquest of England. A small province, 50 miles northwest of London, used to be known as Milton Keynes - has only its queen Ketsiyah, left on the throne to look after it. William's army has almost taken over most of England ; just this region, being in the most difficult landscape, has not yet been invaded. The only person left, in the name of 'family' to Ketsiyah is her younger son Elysus - who is eager to die in the attempt of killing the Norman commander to save his province, from invasion, & to be declared a martyr thereafter. Ketsiyah, of course, doesn't want to lose him.]*

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## Scene - I

(It's the early hours in the morning, Elysus is getting ready while Ketsiyah walks into his room. Most of the portions of the room are dimly lit, to provide ample privacy.)

**Elysus:** What's keeping you up, Mother? You should be asleep by now. We have a long day tomorrow.

**Ketsiyah:** How a mother can sleep peacefully whilst his only child is about to sacrifice himself for others.

**Elysus:** Not "others", mother. They're our people, Milton Keynes is our home. And, I urge you to have faith in me.

**Ketsiyah:** I'm aware of your valour, Elysus. You're a man of noble character. But you don't stand a chance in front of the Army that has conquered almost the entire England!

**Elysus:** If I could just manage to distract the sepoys on the main entrance to the fort, and somehow could get in, I might manage to kill him.

**Ketsiyah:** 'If', 'somehow' & 'might' - your words inspire such confidence, love. You're not leaving!

**Elysus:** I wonder since when our courageous queen became so weak. What's bothering you, [raising his voice] what on god's earth is scaring you so much?

**Ketsiyah:** I can't lose you too, dear. You're all I got.

**Elysus:** (sighs) You won't. You have my word.

**Ketsiyah:** (Rises up from the bed) Don't - be - stubborn, Elysus! As long as I'm standing alive in front of you, you're not going anywhere.

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**Elysus:** Don't do this mother... just don't. I can't just sit here & watch our home being taken over! I will kill the commander, and even if I couldn't, I'll die a martyr.

**Ketsiyah:** These are my final words. I'm not discussing anything on this further. Sometimes, it's wise to surrender Elysus, when you don't have a choice. I hope you won't disobey your mother.

**Elysus:** I beg you, mother. I don't have a purpose other than this.

**Ketsiyah:** You will find one. We always find one.

**Elysus:** What if I won't? I can't live a meaningless life... Let me...

*(Ketsiyah, with a firm look on her face, leaves & Elysus stops, without completing his words. He has a look of despair on his face.)*

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*[Elysus leaves for the palace in the nearby town of Wolverton, where the Norman Army's battalion & their commander are residing, waiting for the orders from William, to invade the entire northwest. Wolverton is a small, but beautiful town. The river Great Shilas, forms its northern boundary; a tributary, the River Ouseh, meanders through its linear parks & balancing lakes. There's this palace, built in European Medieval Architecture, but of no use to the locals, which is being used as a temporary stay by the commander. It offers him some safety too, along with his Army.*

*First time in his entire mortal life, Elysus is going against his own moral standards - disobeying his own beloved mother.]*

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## **Scene - II**

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(The sun has dawned upon the town. Ketsiyah is watering plants in her palace's courtyard. She sends her regent - Morraine - to go look for Elysus in his room. Morraine doesn't find him, of course.)

**Ketsiyah (to Morraine):** (hardly being able to control her tears) Tell me he didn't leave, Morraine.

**Morraine (to Ketsiyah):** (after a short pause) ...My Apologies Madam Ketsiyah, but His Royal Highness is not there in his room.

**Ketsiyah:** (about to cry) Oh, Jesus - what have you done, my child? (sighs) May the lord be with you. You've betrayed your own values, I can't believe it.

**Morraine:** I believe we should send some troops to look for him towards the palace in Wolverton.

**Ketsiyah:** (collecting her senses) Send the Knights, but strictly advise them to not go close to the fort. He must not have gone so far by now.

**Morraine:** As you command, madam. But you're the queen, you have to be strong. The entire town is looking up to you.

**Ketsiyah:** I'll be alright, Morr. He made his choice. I hope he prepared himself for the consequences.

(Morraine leaves, Ketsiyah sits down on a swing near the orchard. She goes into deep contemplation.)

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*[Elysus has reached the palace, he's well aware of Wolverton's geography. He makes it through the main entrance, but gets caught in the hallway towards the main bedroom, where he was assuming he might find the commander. But, to his surprise, the love of his life - known by the name of Amara Vicclair, & the Mischievous Orphan*

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*as the English call her, comes into picture out of nowhere, at that very moment - to save him, & for her own selfish reasons, of course.]*

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### **Scene - III**

{One of the Norman guards is holding Elysus with his right arm around his neck, the other two are trying their best to hold him still with each of them strongly trying to grab a hold of his arms. Amara jumps from the balcony next the hallway, then sliding down the curtain she touches the ground & snaps the neck of the guard who's grabbed Elysus. The other two are frightened (as they should be, Amara is an assassin, a fighter & a survivor, of course. Entire Europe has heard of her). One of the guards tries to attack her, she manages to get hold of his wrist, and pierces the knife back to his own neck - first a slight touch through the neck, then the jugular vein... and an aesthetic & slow but deep cut towards the internal throat, feeling the fresh blood pouring on her hands bursting from the veins while the guard struggles to maintain his last breath. Still, the guard manages to retaliate, by kicking her in the abdomen. She suffers, for a moment, but then her right hand goes straight to his chest - inside - & she rips his heart out. He falls on his back with a thud (she enjoys it, always). The other guard, though stopped for a while by Elysus, manages to run away. Now finally, both of them hold their breath, and confront each other.}

**Elysus:** Amara Viclair, the... (frustrated & angry) ... You nasty bitch! You...

**Amara:** (delicately) Good to see you, too, Your Royal Highness.

**Elysus:** (sighs) Seriously. I lost hope, I thought you'd never return.

**Amara:** Well, here I am. (getting closer to Elysus) What are you... thinking - now?

**Elysus:** (letting his hands through her hair) ... that you're a piece of art, hanging on a wall, & I am kissing you wildly...

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**Amara:** (chuckles) Go ahead, then. You look like an admirer of an artist's craft work.

**Elysus:** Ohh, yes. I am.

(Both look into each other's eyes, the time, kind of, freezes for them. Their lips come closer & they start kissing each other passionately, changing 'sides' & 'positions'. It continues for a while. Then, a sudden revelation dawns upon Elysus & he quits, pushes her away.)

**Amara:** You've no idea how much I've missed you.

**Elysus:** Trust me... I do. But for now I have some unfinished business to do.

**Amara:** Are you out of your senses? I've survived so long, and the first rule of survival: never look back!

**Elysus:** Amara...

**Amara:** I know what you're up to, okay? You won't be able to take the commander down. We have to run.

**Elysus:** I won't leave until...

**Amara:** (grabs Elysus's hand) ... you're coming with me dear charming prince of Milton Keynes.

(They both get out of the palace, this time from a secret way out through an underground cellar - that Amara knew. She's way more aware of the palace's architecture, than Elysus. She's headed to the river Great Shilas, taking Elysus with him.)

**Elysus:** Where are we going?

**Amara:** I... also have some unfinished business to do. But, rest assured, we're definitely not going home - Ah, your home, I mean.

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**Elysus:** Could you just stop being so vague for a moment? [holds her hand, grabs her back to stop] ... (Looking into her eyes) Where - are - we - going?

**Amara:** Ohh, don't look at me with those judgy little eyes, Ely. (frees her hand, continues walking up the terrain) Keep walking, that escaped guard must've informed the commander about our recent act. The troops must be out looking for us. (stops for a while, looks back to Elysus) I shall explain to you the things, just keep going.

**Elysus:** Well, you better get started...

**Amara:** Otherwise...?

**Elysus:** I urge you to kindly enlighten me on our way ahead to... wherever, we're going.

**Amara:** (laughs) ... and that's what I was missing. So, the purpose of my visit to Wolverton's palace was to steal the Bronze Age gold jewellery, that's been kept there in the palace after it was found in Milton Keynes.

**Elysus:** That hoard was found in the town of Bletchley, in 1066. But it was declared lost. No one ever could discover where it was.

**Amara:** Well, my sources directed me to Wolverton's palace, where, unfortunately, I didn't find the hoard. But I found something written in regards to this, which suggested that I continue my quest or 'treasure hunt' - if I've to put it better, considering the worth of the jewellery - towards the bank of river Great Shilas.

**Elysus:** Since when you've become 'a thief' or more respectfully, I should say - a treasure hunter?

**Amara:** Contrary to *the Royal*, people like us need resources to survive, Your Highness. They aren't born with privilege.

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**Elysus:** Speaking of *the Royal*, has it ever occurred to you that your possession of that jewellery, which holds historical importance to the British, especially to Milton Keynes, is really a bad idea?

**Amara:** Ohh, there's no such thing as a 'bad idea' Elysus, there are just... poorly executed great ones. And, yes I'm well aware that your beloved mother, Her Excellency, will eventually find out that I have that hoard in my possession, but I have people who are interested in exchanging the honour, and I'd be glad to accept what they have to offer - which is obviously something I'm in intense need of.

**Elysus:** And what exactly is that?

**Amara:** Resources, love. Resources to survive.

**Elysus:** You're... forget it. How far do we've to go?

(The troops that Ketsiyah sent to find Elysus, are here, standing in the way of the couple. They have been advised to bring the prince back home, even by means of force & against his will, if the need arises.)

**Amara:** (disappointed & angry) Burn - in - hell, the queen of Milton Keynes.

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[Elysus gives her a glance, and they both are held captive. They're taken back to the Milton Keynes, and are presented in front of Ketsiyah]

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#### **Scene - IV**

(The Knights leave Elysus & Amara at Ketsiyah's royal court, where she herself is present along with Morraine.)

**Ketsiyah (to Elysus):** Are you alright, son? That was foolish. I feel betrayed.



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(Elysus turns his head down. He doesn't say a word.)

**Ketsiyah (to Amara):** And look who turned up on holy Earth, after an eternity of chase & run from the hunters - Amara Vicclair, the Mischievous Orphan... What an entirely unwelcome surprise.

**Amara:** and what an entirely unsurprising welcome, Kets.

**Elysus:** Amara, behave!

**Amara:** (with a look of disgust on her face) My Apologies, Kets -...- yah-... whatever!

**Ketsiyah:** Kets is better, love - with a bit of respect, of course.

**Amara:** (whispers) Clever.

**Amara (to Morraine):** (waving her hand to her) Good Morning, Ms. Morraine.

**Morraine:** (with a look of frown) It was.

**Amara:** Ah, that hurt. Are you still angry at me?

**Morraine:** (sarcastically) No, I fancy you.

**Amara:** Well, I'm honoured. (chuckles) Ohh, Come on, you were a leverage, Morr. I traded you for my life, with the Normans. And see, His Royal Excellency, the late king of Milton Keynes, saved you & you ended up here. If we hadn't met, you wouldn't have had such a lavish life. Be happy, move on.

(Morraine gives a look of disgust to Amara and says nothing.)

**Ketsiyah:** I want to have a word with Amara, Elysus could you please excuse us?

**Elysus:** As you command, mother.

(Elysus leaves the court.)

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**Ketsiyah:** What made you so courageous in the recent past sweetheart that you dared to turn up to Milton Keynes after assassinating my family. Now give me one reason why I should not announce your execution.

**Amara:** First of all, I consider it a misfortune of mine, that I'm standing on this land, inside this palace of yours. And, speaking of reasons, your Royal Excellency - your beloved son needs me. He's eager to die a martyr. If it wouldn't have been my appearance to Wolverton's palace, your prince charming would be dead by now.

**Ketsiyah:** And how does that make us even, huh? You're in love with him, of course, you'd save his life, no matter what.

**Amara:** There was nothing personal with your family, Kets. I had no choice. But trust me, Elysus needs me, and honestly, I'm done running away for my survival. And... it's not just me, he's in love with me too.

**Ketsiyah:** Have you met you? Because last time I checked you were an assassin. Do you happen to know how many innocent people's blood you have on your hands?

**Amara:** Well, it's been difficult to keep a count.

(Ketsiyah & Morraine give Amara a frowned look.)

**Amara:** (continues) Apologies. Everyone deserves a second chance. I look forward to a *life* with Elysus now, I'm ready to give up on everything but not him.

(Ketsiyah walks around for a while through the court, then she walks towards her throne & sits down there. She's again in deep contemplation.)

**Ketsiyah:** I forgive you. And I want you to leave England with Elysus, and make sure both of you never come back to Milton Keynes.

**Amara:** I... never thought I'd say this but, I'm grateful to you for this mercy.

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**Ketsiyah (to Morraine):** Show her her room for tonight's stay Morr, they will leave tomorrow before the Sun rises.

(Morraine & Amara walk out of the court, upstairs towards the hallway & guest house.)

**Amara:** You can forgive me too, Morr. We can end this rivalry here. What do you say?

**Morraine:** If you are in the illusion that I will be swayed away by your charm, then you're lying to yourself. I have no intention of forgiving you, & you're not even useful to me.

**Amara:** How very telling! Isn't it?

**Morraine:** And how meretricious, this attitude of yours. Ghastly. I'd better assume you're a stranger to me.

**Amara:** (hopping in front of Morraine to stop her climbing stairs, in low pitch) Oh dear, Morraine, you know what they say: "Be not inhospitable to strangers, lest they might be angels in disguise."

**Morraine:** Step out of my way Amara.

(Amara walks up the stairs. They both reach the guest house. Morraine opens the door of the room to her left, and Amara walks into the room. Then, Morraine walks back to the court.)

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**Scene - V**

[Morraine is here, back in the court. Ketsiyah notices the look on her face. She knows Morraine is surprised & has got questions.]

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**Ketsiyah:** I can see there are things bothering you, Morraine. I am in position to answer whatever questions you have on your mind.

**Morraine:** (lost in her thoughts) Yes, Yes - I... got questions, indeed. A lot of questions.

**Ketsiyah:** Proceed.

**Morraine:** I still can't believe you forgave her, I mean that's the same Amara Vicclair who we know & loathe. She literally killed your family - your two sons & the honourable king of Milton Keynes, His Majesty...(her voice rising & pitch getting faster) (sighs)... How can you?

**Ketsiyah:** Forgiveness isn't a chore Morraine, it's a gift. I have my own reasons to let her go. You know very well Elysus has reached to that point, where he no longer listens to me - his own mother who gave him birth. I hope - and to some extent, I firmly believe - that Amara's love might make him reconsider his decisions.

**Morraine:** You really have a big heart, madam Ketsiyah. I understand it isn't easy.

**Ketsiyah:** (stands up from her seat) I can't let my only son die too, I'd rather choose to let him walk away breathing - even if it means I might never see him again. (walks further towards Morraine)

**Morraine:** (she gives a look of bewilderment) I... really don't understand it.

**Ketsiyah:** Sometimes we should just be satisfied with the fact that the people we love are alive, somewhere on this Earth they're living a life. This reality, this mere existence of them, even away from us, becomes a force for us to continue *our* own being. Elysus will live his life with Amara, though I won't be able to see him again.

**Morraine:** And, what if His Royal Highness gets to know the truth about the family, what Amara did.

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**Ketsiyah:** He won't. We have kept this secret from him so far, we'll continue to do that. And, I am firm that Amara knows very well - telling him the truth will mean losing him, forever. She really loves him, I have seen it in her eyes.

**Morraine:** Speaking of love, madam: I wonder how... These two completely opposite personalities fell in love with each other, & that also so deeply that they both are ready to give up their 'most sought after purposes'.

**Ketsiyah:** It looks strange. It inspires awe, but deep down it isn't that difficult to understand Morr. The reality is we all long for the person who is in no way built like us. The one who's completely opposite to us. Someone who's lived his life on nobility & ethics, & has always kept himself in boundaries of morality - longs for someone who's lived freely & carelessly. The one who 'stays into his own world' looks for someone who's courageous & bold. All in all, we crave what we lack, Morraine. When we find that person who's a reflection of what we don't have, we feel whole. You can say: It somehow completes the cosmic equation for us.

**Morraine:** Mmm-hmm. I feel that's what love is, madam.

**Ketsiyah:** (smiles) That's what love is.

(Ketsiyah leaves for Elysus's room.)

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[Arrangements are being made for the couple to leave the country. Ketsiyah walks into his son's room to say final goodbye.]

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### Scene - VI

(Ketsiyah & Elysus hug each other. Elysus has tears in his eyes.)

**Elysus:** I failed you, mother.

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**Ketsiyah:** You didn't fail anyone. I have decided Amara & you are leaving the country. I want to set you free. Go have a wonderful life with your love, my son.

**Elysus:** But mother...

**Ketsiyah:** I don't expect any more disobeying, Elysus. This is what you're doing. Amara will take care of you, I know.

**Elysus:** I will feel as if I'm running away from my duties, from what I'm ought to do for this province.

**Ketsiyah:** I don't believe dying for your people, your home, is your moral duty or something, Elysus. It is supposed to be a choice. Choosing the other way doesn't mean that you're disappointing us. No, you're not. You deserve to live.

**Elysus:** How am I...

**Ketsiyah:** Do not say a word more on this. If you'd have chosen to die a martyr, it would've been merely a choice - more noble one, of course - but if you're choosing to live *your* own life... then - you - must - not feel regret or any guilt on this.

**Elysus:** I want you to give me your word that you'll take great care of yourself, mother. This isn't an easy choice, that I am about to make.

**Ketsiyah:** Don't worry about me, son. I have Morraine. I trust her - I always have & I always will.

**Elysus:** I love you, mother.

**Ketsiyah:** I love you too, dear. (kisses Elysus's forehead gently) It's a goodbye, son.

(Ketsiyah leaves. Elysus & Amara leave the palace, & the country, the next early hours before the morning - never to be seen again.)

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