

# Coppelia's Coffin

*by Lady Windermere*

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## Prelude

*Chapter 1 of 1*

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### **Annals of Cilicia – Coppelia's Coffin**

#### **Prelude**

He was quite extraordinary, the man who held the title of Vice Foreign Minister of the Cilician Democratic Union. Like everyone who had held the title before him, he was a skilled and gifted diplomat, an uncannily talented negotiator, and a celebrated humanitarian. Par for the course, he had an unblemished background, with extensive field work, and unparalleled recommendations from virtually anyone who had met him. He was eloquent and articulate, intelligent, well-educated, well-informed, patient, good-natured, even-tempered, mild, humble, and admired. But that was expected.

What wasn't expected was his order of priorities. After three years under the thirty-two year old man, most of his contemporaries still weren't quite certain what to make of it – or him, for that matter (he was also honest, which made the majority of them decidedly nervous, though they'd never admit it). What were they to think, after all, of a man who felt that ensuring his younger sister knew a loving and stable family life with her only living relative was the most important duty he could perform?

It simply defied logic, as did his massive and unequalled popularity and success. Commissions that were formerly known for arguments ending in all out brawls actually began to accomplish things, once he began attending. Negotiations between various recalcitrant states finally began after a fifteen-year halt, when he personally met with both leaders and their families on multiple occasions, and invited both to his estate for a weekend with his sister.

Godric Pfalzgraf really was quite extraordinary. He certainly was a mystery to his colleagues; despite the years he'd worked with them, during which they'd failed to even begin to ascertain his reasoning. Whatever his motivations, however, it was a source of endless frustration that the third Tuesday of every third month he devoted entirely to his sister. At seventeen, she was more of a young woman than a girl, especially as she seemed to have bypassed entirely the awkward stage in which, by all rights, she should have been stuck. Handsome though she undeniably was, those who met her immediately struck by her poise, as seemed to possess more grace than any one person had a right to. Her brother simply laughed at those who commented on it, with a comment that she meant to follow in his footsteps. Remembering the stately young woman, his listeners laughed, and thought to themselves that it wasn't that unlikely a future, if she could learn to become a little bit more personable...like her brother.

And so, despite all protests, those Tuesdays remained sacred to brother and sister. Over the years, they had spent the time in Italy, Germany, France, Greece, Israel, Korea, and a host of other nations, depending on where Godric was called at the time. Usually their day passed as they walked through parks; it seemed to be Alexandra's favourite way to spend time. Thus, Tuesday, the fifth of March, found them in Tokyo, Japan, wandering through a small park situated around a smaller pond. It was tiny, and quaint, and nearly-empty, which meant it was perfect, and the serene beauty of the area was precisely what Alexandra had described to Godric when they'd set out in the morning.

They'd been sitting on a blanket near the pond for a small while, working their way through a letter and a bag of sweets at an alarmingly unequal rate; despite being only half-way through the second page of correspondence, their bag of sweets was over three-quarters empty. It was, in all, an achingly domestic picture that they presented, had they been aware of it. They weren't, however, and the letter was eventually finished, though quite some time after their supply of sugar had been exhausted.

'Do you think, Godric,' Alexandra began, somewhat hesitantly, a few moments after the letter was refolded and placed back in its envelope, 'do you think perhaps we might invite her for a visit some time? I only thought that since we're to be staying here so long—'

'I don't know why Ms. Noventa insists on following you around the globe like this, 'Lessa.' A glance at his sister confirmed that she'd taken offence despite the use of his pet name for her. 'Don't lose your temper, but it's true, and you know it. Of course, you're free to invite her if you feel like it, but explain to me, if you will, why it is that you send for her every time we spend a month or two abroad? Better yet, explain to me why she comes the moment you do.'

Lessa sighed, exasperated with her older brother. 'I hope you're a little better than this at work, Godric, because if you aren't, I'd like to know how you manage to accomplish anything!'

'There really is no need to bring my work into this, Alexandra,' he snapped, grinning at her from across the blanket where he lay. It wasn't often that he ruffled her enough to break her composure, which, as her big brother, he felt was his divine duty. And Godric Pfalzgraf, after all, was never one to shirk his duty.