

Episode 4, *Stanton 2017*: “The Vessel and the Seed”— by Joey Madia

Scene 1. Cape May, New Jersey

[Sound of a ladder being set up, someone climbing. The sound of a hammer pounding in nails. A car pulls up. Engine shuts off. Door opens and closes.]

HIRED WORKER: Mornin’ Samuel! How was your drive?

SAMUEL: It was pleasantly devoid of traffic on the Parkway. It’s my reward for getting up with the sun. Although I would have suffered a rush-hour log-jam to see this house today. The paint scheme looks great!

HIRED WORKER: You chose the colors well. The burgundy and blue really make the architecture shine. When was she built?

SAMUEL: 1872. My ancestor wanted to outdo anything Cape May had ever seen, so he made the tower 66 feet high. Nothing like going out of your way to piss off the locals.

HIRED WORKER: You Ravenskalds do like to be the best.

SAMUEL: This house is important to the family’s history. It must be...my father’s funding the restoration. Of course, I have free reign to do things the way I want, which is to put it all back the way it was.

HIRED WORKER: Sounds like a very sweet deal.

SAMUEL: I couldn’t do it the way it needs to be done on an assistant professor’s pay.

HIRED WORKER: I’m gonna miss working on the old girl. There’s something about this place that grabs you and won’t let go.

SAMUEL: My father’s bought a bunch of them near here. All different styles—Queen Anne, Romanesque, Gothic like this one, and Italianate. The Ravenskalds had Italianate houses anywhere they had their steel and iron works.

HIRED WORKER: Fascinating. Really.

SAMUEL: You sound like my students! My point is, I’m sure I can get my father to hire you for those projects when this one is done.

HIRED WORKER: I’d like that. So I’d better get back to work. Unlike your students, who pay for the privilege of hearing you lecture on Victorian architecture, I have to keep giving you—and your father—reason to keep payin’ *me*.

SAMUEL: No worries there. I'm going to need someone knowledgeable to handle things when my restoration business starts taking off.

HIRED WORKER: Fair enough. Hey—watch out!

[sound of a 5-gallon bucket full of paint falling to the ground and breaking open]

SAMUEL: That almost caved my skull!

HIRED WORKER: Damned near. I have no idea how that happened.

SAMUEL: One of your guys must have left it on the scaffolding.

HIRED WORKER: Why would they? It's interior paint.

SAMUEL: Well, it's exterior now. It's just about covered the front steps and part of the walkway. Could you get a hose and get it washed off before the sun bakes it onto the brick? I'd hate to lose it—it's all original. My ancestor had it brought here from one of the central Jersey iron villages when they tore its chapel down.

HIRED WORKER: I'm on it.

[sound of the worker descending the ladder]

SAMUEL: I have to get inside and measure the fireplaces so I can get the marble ordered.

HIRED WORKER: Marble, huh? You Ravenskalds really do like to be the best.

Scene 2. Cape May, New Jersey. That afternoon.

SAMUEL: [on the phone] I mean it, Uriel—there's some weird stuff happening in this house.

URIEL: [on the phone] You've taken one too many of those ghost tours that are all the rage down there. I knew I shouldn't have bought you volume 3 of the local ghost stories...

SAMUEL: Listen, I'm usually as skeptical as you are, but maybe there's some truth in all the lore. How else do you explain my keys going missing, then reappearing in a whole 'nother part of the house a few hours later? Or the sound of footsteps on the upper floors after everyone has left? That bucket of paint almost crushed my skull.

URIEL: Honestly? It sounds like your father's underpaying your crew and they're having some fun with you. Everything you've described is easily explained.

SAMUEL: Come on, Uriel. Don't go Agent Scully on me. Hold on.

[there is a faint sound of boards creaking far above]

SAMUEL: There's someone in the tower. I'll call you back.

[We hear Samuel walk to the tower's interior door. It creaks as it opens. He begins to ascend the stairs]

SAMUEL: Listen, this isn't funny. If you want a raise, this is the wrong way to get it. Hello?

[We hear the door slam behind him and a window in the tower shatters]

SAMUEL: Holy Christ!

Scene 3. Cape May, New Jersey. That night, 3 hours later

URIEL: Look, I didn't drive two and a half hours in Parkway traffic for you to go all wuss on me. Drink this.

SAMUEL: Glenlivet. At least you brought the good stuff. Here's to a quiet night in a haunted house.

URIEL: And to Tommy.

SAMUEL: [pause] To Tommy.

[sound of crystal glasses clinking in a toast. They drink.]

URIEL: So tell me more about the house. I told Maury I was driving down to do a story on Victorian architecture as it relates to the economic prosperity of modern New Jersey.

SAMUEL: You're kidding, right?

URIEL: You know what this trip would have cost me in gas and tolls?

SAMUEL: Fine. You sure the psychic's coming?

URIEL: She'll be here in the morning. Her name's Clarissa Tate. My father set it up. He works with her on some of his trips to Mayan dig sites.

SAMUEL: I didn't know there was much of a need for psychics in Mesoamerican anthropological studies. It's a little too *Ancient Aliens*...

URIEL: It originally had do with 2012. The end of the Mayan calendar and all. But after December 21 came and went with nary an apocalyptic peep, there was still enough merit in the actual archaeology to keep the project funded. I think he pays the psychic out of his own pocket to keep it quiet. I guess she gets messages from dead shamans from some of the dig finds and they're stronger when she's near the ruins.

SAMUEL: Bartender, pour me another. And make it a double. And yours too. Then I'll tell you all about this place. My lectures tend to be more interesting when my audience is buzzed.

URIEL: [pouring the drinks] Just be sure to leave out the part about the chick you saw in the tower. At least for now. I want to get this all on tape. Maury likes proof before he honors my receipts.

Scene 4. Cape May, New Jersey. The next morning

[knock on front door]

URIEL: God, that's loud. Who ordered all the sunlight?

SAMUEL: That's what we get for killing the Glenlivet.

[another, louder, knock on the door]

SAMUEL: I'm coming! [*sotto voce*] Kill me. Just. Kill. Me. [opens the front door] Ms. Tate?

CLARISSA: You must be Samuel.

URIEL: I told you she's good.

SAMUEL: Come on in. Don't mind my friend Uriel. He's a confirmed skeptic.

URIEL: Even worse. I'm a reporter.

CLARISSA: It's nice to finally meet you. Your father's told me a lot about you on our trips to Mexico. Shall we get started?

SAMUEL: You can do your thing in the daytime? I mean, it doesn't have to be after dark with candles and all?

URIEL: [*sotto voce*] Loser...

CLARISSA: Not at all. There are many misconceptions about my work. I'll be happy to clear them up as we go. You've experienced phenomena at all times of the day and night, is that right?

SAMUEL: And both inside and in the front yard. But I saw her at night, in the tower, coming down from the widow's walk.

URIEL: Which happens to be sealed off.

CLARISSA: Ghost sightings are quite prevalent in this area. Are you familiar with ley lines?

SAMUEL: Areas of high electromagnetic energy.

CLARISSA: In simplistic terms, yes. Many sacred sites—megaliths, churches, stone circles—mark significant areas of concentrated energy and ley lines connect them. Several ley lines pass through and intersect with one another near this house, and several others.

URIEL: So they “juice the ghosts up,” so to speak?

CLARISSA: That depends. There are different types of hauntings. A *residual* haunting is merely an energy imprint, as if a few feet of film were being played on a loop.

SAMUEL: That's not at all what I saw. She moved up and down the stairway, looking me either right in the eyes or out the window. And I swear to God I saw her cry, and wipe away the tears. Then the window she kept looking at shattered. It... it felt like she was angry at herself for crying in front of a stranger.

CLARISSA: That could very well be. It takes a great deal of energy to enable a ghost to break a window. Anger can be the “juice” they need, as Uriel called it. I'd like to try and channel this woman and find out why she's refusing to move on. Why she so desperately wants you to know she's here.

URIEL: You're going to let her speak through you? That's *possession*.

CLARISSA: She'll no more possess me than you'd say an amplification system was possessed by the person who speaks into the microphone so their voice comes through the speakers. If you don't mind, I'd like to get started. I feel her in this house. In the tower. I can sense her agitation. May I?

SAMUEL: Go ahead.

[sound of tower door opening]

URIEL: I'd like to tag along...

CLARISSA: Please do.

[sound of them ascending the stairs]

SAMUEL: See that window half way up? That's the one she broke. She was right there.

CLARISSA: Yes. Yes. It's alright. You can trust me. Yes. I feel the pain you feel. These men want to hear your story... to help you if they can. You can use my voice. You needn't be afraid.

[her voice alters, becoming otherworldly]

CLARISSA/EVE: I didn't want to come here... I...I told him no. That I was afraid...But...but Sol said I had to...that I was the Chosen. The vessel for the seed.

URIEL: What's your name?

CLARISSA/EVE: Eve. Eve... Stanton.

URIEL: Jesus, Samuel. That's my aunt! My father's sister. This has to be a joke. Who the hell are you, really?

CLARISSA/EVE: Eve Stanton. I...I was brought to bring a life. Sol had friends. Evil men in hoods. They burned candles. Drew pentagrams... Smearred their skin with cock's blood. They laughed at my screams... Here in this tower. The light of the moon exposing me through the window. The vessel for the seed. Solomon's seed. To bring the one that will bring the one three years hence. I must make a special child. One of three. There must always be the three. The triad is the key.

URIEL: Solomon's seed? She's talking about your dad!

SAMUEL: That's not possible. My mother died in childbirth. She was in England, in Glastonbury. He sent her there when she got pregnant.

CLARISSA/EVE: She could not bear him children. She was sent away to die. The vessel had to be a Stanton. Families have ley lines. Ravenskald and Stanton. Stanton and Sicari. Always three. Always a triad and a triad it must be. I can hear them chanting. Oh how I struggled. How I begged. But there were so many. And there was Sol. I the vessel and he the seed... I... I...

URIEL: She's gonna pass out!

[sound of body collapsing and being caught]

SAMUEL: Eve! It's okay. I've got you. It's gonna be okay.

CLARISSA [no longer channeling Eve]: Thank you. I'm...I'm fine.

SAMUEL: Where's Eve? Where's she gone?

CLARISSA: I sense that she's moved on. She told you what she must. It's for the best. It's as it should be.

SAMUEL: As it should be? Are you kidding? My father raped my best friend's aunt. His oldest friend's sister. This is nuts!

URIEL: Sam...

SAMUEL: Save it, *cousin*. You couldn't possibly make this better. As a matter of fact, I'd like both of you to go. I need to make a call.

URIEL: To your father? Are you serious? On the word of some ghost?

SAMUEL: Who has no reason to lie. Look at us, man. Our whole lives people have said we look alike. That I was more a Stanton than a Ravenskald, in almost every way... God...

CLARISSA: Uriel. Tell me what happened to your aunt.

URIEL: Besides being raped in some kind of Satanic black mass?

CLARISSA: How did she die?

URIEL: She was in an asylum in upstate New York. I...I never asked why.

SAMUEL: I need both of you to leave. Now.

Scene 5. Cape May, New Jersey. An hour later

SAMUEL: [on the phone] Uriel was here. But he left. About an hour ago. Look, I'm sorry you're in a meeting. But this is important. It won't wait. You and I need to talk. About my mother. My *real* mother. We need to talk about Eve.

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