

Kalila Stormfire's Economical Magick Services. The following entry is for initiated ears only. Case Thirty Three: Truth.

FADE IN: KALILA's living room, evening.

KALILA

Ugh. Nearly forgot to do this and I have to head out to Grimmer & Daughters in like 5 minutes.

Oh, right. Today's date is October 13th. Private recording.

So I texted the shadowdancing group chat about what, uh, what Clarence and Queen Una could share through Eldritch's radio. About Gabrielle and the Shadow of Brushland. Janelle and Gloria are talking to Finvarra and Aphrodite, probably to get more information that we can use.

In the meantime, Amad is developing his ability to understand non-human communication with Finvarra. Eldritch is also really interested in sharing some of his magick with Chen? I don't know how that's going to work, what with Amad still developing his translation skills, but...I don't know.

The two of them come over every other day or so and I try to give them the space they need to figure out their magick. It's...it's an...interesting development in this household.

ELDRITCH meows.

Yes, yes, I know this is supposed to be about my soul work. I'm getting there!

Followup inner child trance with Aphrodite went...fine. It's been easier now since I've been working with Amad and Chen to map out the connections with the fae. Still difficult when I... Well.

Amad and Chen are like a buffer. It's harder to do soul work when it's just...me. When I'm focused on me and my own child self. My headaches are going away though. Not

completely gone, but they seem to have faded.
I don't want to get too into it--

SHADOW

That's my cue. The trance worked. I mean, I feel like it could have been done without all the screaming and tantruming, but that's what you can expect when you have to click your inner child back into place in your soul. I guess? There was a lot of baby talk involved. I mostly just tried to tune it out.

Anyway, Kalila just doesn't want to let you know how quickly she can regress into her terrible twos when she really puts her mind to it.

KALILA

Dammit Shadow, I'm trying to keep this short. Okay. Long story short: apparently my inner child needs more outlets to...well. Play. After the community shadowdance connection to the fae realm, it seems like I'm in danger of, well. Okay, so there's a reason Finvarra and everyone warned about the intensity of the trance. Aphrodite implied that I was in danger of my child self getting addicted to it, because...because I was neglecting her. Gloria suggested I do something creative, and not just crafting spell bags for client purposes. So I bought a box of watercolors, and I'm supposed to go to town for at least an hour a day. No direction, no theme, just play with paint.

Super simple, right? But. Boom. Overnight, headaches go from daily to...I think maybe one small one in the last three days? It's wild.

I know, I know I shouldn't be surprised. Magick is real, I see it every day. Still. My soul is still...disjointed. Not just because of Shadow. I get it, my spell caused a ripple effect. All parts of my self, my *soul* drifted apart from my conscious mind.

I just didn't realize that something so simple as watercolor painting would...add another layer back to my aura, basically. Desiree checked, they said it's broader now that my animex and my child self are back in alignment.

Now, if only Shadow would--

Phone beeps.

Oops. Gotta go.

End recording.

Recorder clicks off.

FADE IN, KALILA is walking briskly outside, DUSK. Her phone RINGS.

MUSIC FADES IN: JONDON BY BLUE DOT SESSIONS.

KALILA

(a little breathless) Hello, you've reached Kalila Stormfire's Economical Magick Services, how can I help you?

OCTAVIE

Hello! My name is Octavie Thomas. Is this Kalila Stormfire?

KALILA

Yes, I am Kalila.

OCTAVIE

I am a journalist with Southeast Regional Public Radio. I am calling about a piece I'm doing on borderlands. Are you available for a quick chat?

KALILA

Um. A-a quick one. I'm actually on my way somewhere...

OCTAVIE

No problem, I am just making sure I have the right person. I got your contact information from your website. Can I get your pronouns? I use she/her.

KALILA

I use she/her as well. So, you're...a journalist? What kind of story were you writing again?

OCTAVIE

Like I said, I'm calling about some research I'm doing looking into borderlands. Not just what is happening in Brushland, of course, but in other places in the country. I am in town for a while and I'd like to compare what is happening here to the magick at other borders, specifically the border between what we call the United States and Mexico.

KALILA

Oh. What have you noticed?

OCTAVIE

Well, if you don't mind me saying so...I've noticed a lot of people like you.

KALILA

Me? How so?

OCTAVIE

Magick workers, healers, wise folk, tricksters, holy people. They are always drawn to borderlands. For various reasons. But I can't help but think that all these comparisons ignore what physically draws and affects them? What is it about the land, that does something new?

KALILA

I...I haven't really thought about that.

OCTAVIE

As an indigenous person, and as a journalist, I think it is important to ask the unasked questions. Make the invisible visible once again. And, in some ways, the land is often an invisible entity.

KALILA

And how do you think I can help with your research?

OCTAVIE

I want to know more about what is happening in Southside. You're right in the middle of it.

KALILA

Listen, Octavie? I really appreciate you reaching out but I'm not sure I'm the most qualified to comment.

OCTAVIE

You are in ground zero! Who could possibly be more qualified?

KALILA begins making some choked off noises, restraining SHADOW while OCTAVIE speaks.

And with the city considering additional restrictions on magick, I'm curious how that affects the practice of magick in the Liminal. But, I understand. If you have other people in mind, I would be happy to talk to them too. I've talked with Coven leaders and city officials already. I want to hear from people who are elbow deep in the magick of the Liminal.

KALILA

Well. Um. Excuse me a moment.

KALILA mutes the phone.

SHADOW

Why are you muting us? Let me talk to her.

KALILA

Yeah, and that went SO WELL the last time you were in front of a journalist. And...AND don't think you can pretend to speak for me!

SHADOW

I am you. Just because you like to dance around your real feelings about things, doesn't mean--

KALILA

No, no that's not a good excuse. Just. (groans) What if this is a trap? The Grimmers have been very clear about informants and police infiltration. What if this woman is a Coven plant?

MUSIC FADES OUT.

SHADOW

Now *you're* talking like *me*.

KALILA

Oh. Oh, yeah. Good point.

KALILA unmutes phone.

KALILA

Hi? Octavie?

OCTAVIE

Yep. Still here.

KALILA

There's a group I think you should sit in on. But I can contact the facilitator first, see if they are comfortable with you joining us. I'll share your phone number, if that's okay?

OCTAVIE

I mean I'd love to talk to you, or anyone who is willing to shed some light on what's going on in Southside. I'm happy to be as transparent as possible, for everyone's safety. I just want the truth.

KALILA

Yeah, well. Don't we all.

MUSIC FADES IN: MUST BY BLEAR MOON

PHONE CUTS.

FADE IN: Outside of Grimmer & Daughters meeting room. DESIREE is talking heatedly with JANELLE as KALILA approaches NADIA and AMAD.

NADIA

Hey, Kalila.

KALILA

Sorry, I'm late! Today is just full of obstacles. Ha. Hey, Nadia. Amad. (gesturing to Desiree and Janelle) What's going on over there?

NADIA

Desiree's trying to convince Janelle to place illegal curses on our perimeter to protect our meetings.

KALILA

What? What for?!

AMAD

Didn't you hear about the new city assembly bill? They're changing the charter for magick use by registered religious organizations.

NADIA

Basically, it's going to allow the Coven to place curses on their perimeter hex.

KALILA

Curses?! That's...gods. But why would the coven change the charter? That means it should be applicable to everyone.

NADIA

They are proposing an amendment--or, as some would call it, a *loophole*--allowing for certain traditions who have at least ten years of chartered hex work, thirteen Dragons certified by the city, and a dedicated oversight committee of at least twenty third-degree initiates or higher.

AMAD

Funny enough, there is only one tradition in the city that qualifies. Give you one guess which one.

KALILA

Oh, great. That's just...great. Well, I'm sure it'll come up in the session. I-I need to check on Desiree. See you guys inside?

KALILA begins to walk closer to where JANELLE and DESIREE are talking, right at the door of the building.

DESIREE

I'm telling you Janelle, if we don't get these up, it's only a matter of time until the Coven exploits their own loopholes to go directly after *your* protective wards.

JANELLE

I am not comfortable with placing *binding hexes* within the wards, let alone curses. I'm sorry, Desiree, we're going to have to rely on the gods and Finvarra, and our own magick.

DESIREE

That's not going to--

JANELLE

I'll tell you what, though. After the session tonight, let's do a perimeter check together with the Powers. I'm sure there are other ways to strengthen our protections without resorting to baneful magick.

DESIREE

Baneful magick is necessary sometimes. The Powers would agree with me.

JANELLE

I know they would. This is my building though, I am responsible for it. And as the person with the final say on the type of magick that happens here, I am withholding that option until we run out of better ones.

DESIREE

I just hope it won't come too late.

KALILA

Hey! Desiree!

DESIREE

Kal, hey. I'm just...(breathes) Just chatting with Janelle. Meet you inside?

KALILA

Um. Sure. Everything okay? How was the protest? I heard about the assembly bill.

DESIREE

Yeah, it's...not good. I'll share in the session. Save me a seat?

SHADOW

Not good isn't good enough. Kal may not be able to sense it, but I do. What did you get yourself into, Desiree?

DESIREE

I told you, I'll talk about it inside. It's something everyone should know.

SHADOW

Oh, this has to be good. Your energy is all over the place.

JANELLE

(trying to de-escalate) Shadow, I have something to talk to you about before we start anyway. It's related.

MUSIC FADES OUT.

SHADOW

Me? Not Kalila?

JANELLE

Yes. Follow me.

SHADOW hesitates, but is too curious. She follows JANELLE inside.

JANELLE

We're going to talk about it in the group. Sha...c'mon, we can talk in my office.

JANELLE AND SHADOW walk into a back office, JANELLE closes the door.

JANELLE

It'll just be a second. So you and Kalila know about the assembly bill.

SHADOW

Yes. Well, I understand it a little more than Kalila. But. You know. Occupational hazard. Why do you need to talk to me again, that you think Kal can't handle?

JANELLE

This isn't...it's not about what Kalila can't handle. She can take the front seat for this, but I need you to share more. I think you have a better understanding of what the Queen meant with her message on the Shadow of Brushland. You know more about the shape of Shadows. Occupational hazard, right?

SHADOW

Fair.

JANELLE

I want you to share what you know after
Desiree tells everyone what they know.

SHADOW

Hmm. What's in it for me?

FADE IN MUSIC: Sleepwalker_II BY Sergey Cheremisinov

JANELLE

We're going to start to plan the ritual. Tonight.

SHADOW

Wait. Tonight? Really? Oh...you must be really
rattled.

JANELLE

Desiree made a good point about the Coven
escalating their tactics. And I've talked with
Aphrodite--

SHADOW

(muttering, overtalking) Of course.

JANELLE

--We might not have enough time. You and
Kalila are ready to step up. And the rest of us
are ready to meet you.

SHADOW

I'm sure this is going to go very smoothly.

JANELLE

Can I talk to Kalila, now? Just to be sure she
heard as well?

SHADOW (as Kalila)

I heard, don't worry.

JANELLE

Great. Well, are you ready?

SHADOW (as Kalila)

Ready as I'll ever be.

JANELLE

Let's get to the circle then.

JANELLE and SHADOW walk out of the office.

Oh! Gloria's here. I'll let her know I talked with you.

JANELLE walks away.

KALILA

(dazed) What...what did she want to talk to you about?

SHADOW

Hmm? Me? Oh, just to not be so harsh on dear Desiree. Go back to sleep, beloved. Unless...you want to talk about we learned about Gabrielle?

KALILA

No...no that's fine...

SHADOW

Ah. So you're still wrapped up in fear. Even if you did want to listen, you wouldn't be able to share the truth. You aren't ready for what's coming. I am though. (sighs) This will be much more interesting with *me* in the front seat anyway.

MUSIC FADES OUT.

SHADOW walks up to Desiree, who is sitting in a chair at the circle.

SHADOW (as KALILA)

Anyone sitting here?

DESIREE

(flirting) You are.

SHADOW sits.

SHADOW (as KALILA)

I have to apologize for Shadow. She's really just saying what's top of mind. What was she talking about though, this thing hanging over you?

DESIREE

There's nothing--

JANELLE

Alright everyone, please take your seats, we have a lot to do today. Aphrodite, sweet goddess. We welcome you once again into our circle, for this sacred act of community shadow work. We ask for your guidance and blessing.

APHRODITE

You always have it. From what I understand, however, you are interested in something...different this time.

JANELLE

Considering recent news, I hope you agree that we need to talk about concrete next steps.

APHRODITE

For tonight, I am here to bear witness.

(Light innuendo) Well, and if you get yourselves in a tight spot. I'm good with those.

JANELLE

Um. Thank you, Aphrodite.

APHRODITE

Of course! I give my blessing. May all your desires be heard.

JANELLE

Um. Thank you, Aphrodite.

(to the group) Tonight we're not going to be doing an official ritual. As part of any community shadowdancing, we must also explore our conscious minds, our full selves. Because of the events of the last day, I thought it would be a good time for us to have a moderated discussion.

JANELLE holds a bundle of bells aloft. They ring lightly.

As we each get a turn to speak, each person will hold the bells. This bundle is blessed with Fae magick, allowing you to sit in your own truth. It is not a truth spell, don't worry, it simply gives you an opportunity to say what you mean, how you mean it.

Last night, during a protest outside of the Grand Temple, one of our own experienced another aspect of the Shadow of Brushland.

SHADOW (AS KALILA)

(quietly) Oh?

JANELLE

Desiree?

JANELLE passes the bells to DESIREE.

DESIREE

Hi, everyone. So, last night, I went with a local artist collective to the Grand Temple. I've been joining the protests for the last few weeks. You know, pushing back against the Coven's involvement in city politics, their suppression of uninitiated witches, all of that. So far, we'd just kept outside the gates and we'd leave posters and art propped on the walls. The wards don't let people tape anything up, so we worked around it. It's been relatively peaceful. Obviously some of the Coven's Dragons have been trying to intimidate us from behind the gate but that's it.

But last night, we noticed something different about the wards. I was with a group of my housemates, including Vic. When we approached, Vic felt a stinging, like he was walking through a patch of nettles. Thankfully, he stopped, but one of the street medics had to apply blessed salve to his feet and hands. I did a scan, and sure enough I felt...something baneful. Not just the stinging hex--there was something else.

We kept to the other side of the street for the rest of the night, but none of us want to risk going back in case this new law lets them insert something worse into the wards.

This morning, I checked in with my fellow protestors and all of us had bad dreams of an unknown stalker. And Vic was getting the sense he's being watched. He wanted to come

today, but he said that he's afraid the Coven put some kind of surveillance curse on him.

NADIA

You mean, anyone who goes to a protest might get, what, a pair of magickal eyes latched to them? They could know what we're doing here!

JANELLE

Nadia, the protocol please.

DESIREE

It's okay. Here, Nadia.

Bells go from DESIREE to NADIA.

NADIA

Sorry, Janelle, but this is dangerous, isn't it? If any of us get too close to the Temple, it's going to compromise our shadowdancing. I propose that none of us go anywhere near the Temple until we figure out what's going on.

Murmurs of "yes", "no", "that makes sense", "how long?"

JANELLE

The bells, everyone. Yes, Desiree?

Bells go from NADIA to DESIREE.

DESIREE

There are ways to clear curses. Vic can work with us, or with Kalila, and we can find a way to protect ourselves too. We shouldn't let fear drive us away from direct action. Right. Here, Janelle.

Bells go from DESIREE to JANELLE.

JANELLE

I understand your concern, Nadia. It's completely valid. You are one of the people under Grimmer & Daughters' protection. It is important for us to remember that we have people here who are more vulnerable than others to the effects of the Shadow of Brushland, and all of our actions.

We can work on protection charms and uncrossing. If Vic wants to meet with me later tomorrow, Desiree, please send him here. Kalila?

SHADOW (as KALILA)

Yes?

JANELLE

You have some experience with breaking curses. Would you like to help?

SHADOW (as KALILA)

Of course. Besides, maybe we'll learn more about the magick that the Grand Coven doesn't want us to know.

JANELLE

That's a good point. And I think this also lends us to the next matter of discussion. The purpose on why we are here in the first place. Community shadowdancing is not only a way for us to address how we individually contribute to the Shadow of Brushland, but it is also a way for us to better understand how to pull us all back from the brink of collective destruction. The Coven has ramped up its tactics in a dangerous way, I think we can all agree about that.

I want to now open the floor to the more serious discussion of how we are going to remove the Shadow of Brushland's hold on the Coven, and specifically Gabrielle Ravenwood.

Because I agree with Desiree, we can't just keep working here without direct action. Aphrodite has made it very clear that this Shadow must be understood. We now know where it sits within Gabrielle's soul, in her connection with the collective and with the greater than human. We can't defeat the city's shadow, but maybe we can reorient it back into the collective, not just sitting on one person.

I want to turn this over to Kalila, who has been our example in understanding our personal shadows. Kalila has agreed to talk about her personal experience, and about the ritual that

helped her reorient her Shadow back to where it belongs. I believe it is something that can teach us about what we can do with Gabrielle and the Shadow of Brushland.

Kalila, if you will.

SHADOW (as KALILA)

First of all, I want to thank Janelle for taking such quick action in reorienting this meeting towards our primary goal--which is to, um, what's the best way to put it? Put the Shadow of Brushland back in its place.

MUSIC FADES IN: SWARM BY PARALLEL PARK

Aphrodite, too, has made this clear. Perhaps not as clear as she could have but--

APHRODITE

(warning) Kalila--

SHADOW (as KALILA)

Ah, ah, love goddess. I have the bells. Or do human rules not apply to the gods? I always forget where you stand on that.

APHRODITE

There is a story to be told right now, dear child, and that's not the one.

SHADOW (as KALILA)

No. Let's be clear. This is the story that is being told. The truth is I have watched all of you go on and on about getting your hands dirty, reaching into your souls. Through the muck. Everything I did. And you're all hoping for the solution. You think I've found a solution. Well, here's the deal. To be perfectly honest, I don't think I've been oriented correctly. Sorry to disappoint.

There is a format we followed. The question is...will it actually work here? For this? I can tell you all about what herbs I used, what oils, how deep the cut on my palm. But will it actually keep you from taking the plunge? Or will some of us--hell, all of us--be too afraid when we are asked to show up?

I was too scared to show up for so long, and I've been struggling with just myself in shadowdancing longer than you have.

You are chomping at the bit to jump into the fire just because Gabrielle fires a warning shot.

NADIA INTERJECTS: "Warning shot?!"

(tsks) Are you actually ready? Or are we all overreacting because the Coven made one tiny little policy change? Do you think we have all we need to know because of one message about the Shadow of Brushland squatting on Gabrielle's crown like a--

APHRODITE

Kalila.

AMAD

(whispers) Are we sure that's--?

SHADOW (as Kalila)

(snaps) What?

APHRODITE

Thank you. I knew I could count on you to tell the truth.

MUSIC FADES OUT.

SHADOW (as herself)

Hold on, I am not done!

APHRODITE

Yes. You are.

SILENCE.

Good. Oh. Right. Verbal clarification. Sorry, Janelle. Let me take over as facilitator. No bells this time. I wanted to let this play out for a moment longer. Tell me, any of you, what just happened?

AMAD

Um. Shadow just pretended to be Kalila again?

SHADOW (as self)

At least you're smarter than the rest of these gullible--

APHRODITE

(cutting in) *Why* yes, Amad. Shadow took the front seat, as you humans like to say. But what else? Remember, Shadows don't act without reason. Not like this.

SHADOW grumbles.

DESIREE

Shadow just...played the role of the collective. She called out all of us.

NADIA

How is talking about the purpose of this group a call out?

DESIREE

We were all debating what to do, how we should act. I mean, it's pretty clear that fear was a part of us not knowing whether we should put more protective wards up--

MUSIC FADES IN: DRUMMING IN THE RAIN BY CHAD CROUCH

APHRODITE

Be careful, Desiree. You were a part of that fear, too. Shadow did play the role of voicing the collective fear. Because she's so close to that truth, she could see it more easily. But this is what you all don't realize. Shadow did not do this on purpose. She does not plan on talking as Kalila. It is not premeditated, not in the way you think. She does it because Kalila is too frightened about what just happened to be in the driver's seat. That's not a judgement on her. All of you were frightened, and that collective fear fed the one person in the room most vulnerable to that miasma. Kalila's reaction was just more...vocal.

Fear is not going to help you. That's the lesson here. Knowing the truth, and acting on it, requires more nuance than you are currently capable of.

Perhaps you have been moving too slowly, focused too much on personal shadow work and only ancillary collective work. Janelle is right. The next stage has to be now. But as you move forward, take care my loves. Look at Kalila, look at Shadow. See the dangers of acting from fear. Your Shadow can give you the truth you don't want to see, but it can also shut down the collective process of growth and enlightenment.

You may be in fear, but you are ready to grow. You are always ready to grow. Meditate on that, I think. And then, next time, we can talk about where to start with the process of reorienting the Shadow of Brushland.

MUSIC FADES OUT.

Janelle, you can take them to meditation now.

JANELLE

(rattled out of introspection) I...um. Thank you, again, love goddess. Your words of wisdom are invaluable. It certainly...brought some of my own fears to light. Right. So, everyone, I want us to take a moment of silence to think about what was just said. How did your fear come up just now? What was the shape of it, and did a part of you tell you exactly how to react?

We'll take this moment of meditation, then let's share how a single person's fear can feed into the group.

Remember. This is difficult work. Breathe and ground. We get through this together. We learn together. We grow together.

FADE OUT.

OUTRO.

Kalila Stormfire's Economical Magick Services is written and produced by Lisette Alvarez. This script was edited by Gabriel Urbina. Kalila and her Shadow are played by Lisette Alvarez. Introducing Marguerite Croft as Octavie Thomas. Nadia Pillai is played by Anjali Kunapeneni. Amad Khan is played by AJ Beckles. Desiree Onasis is played by Zayn

Thiam. Janelle Grimmer is played by Anairis Quinones.
Aphrodite is played by Sena Bryer.

This episode was edited by Sarah Buchynski.

I would like to take the time to thank those who supported our final season with a tarot card:

- Anne Baird
- Chris Magilton

Your reading for this episode is: The Hermit. Take time soon to withdraw and observe. This is not a time for rest in a sense, but a time to watch and listen, and absorb the world around us. It is a time to learn.

If you would also like to support the show, become a patron at patreon.com/kalilastormfire.

Thank you for listening.