

MIKA'S TIME

By: Lynn Case

Eps #4: "The Gibbet"

Mika was staring at a window of a dress shop downtown when her cell phone began to ring in her pocket. She knew it was her Father calling as she has a special ring tone assigned for him.

"Good Morning Father" she replied as she held the phone to her ear.

"Well good morning my beautiful intelligent favorite daughter." He Father joking replied. "What are you up to this fine morning?" He asked

"Just doing some window shopping with Tara." She replied with a smile as she looked over at Tara and rolled her eyes. Knowing that there was probably another assignment that needed to be handled right away.

"I have an assignment for you my dear." He told her.

"I knew it!" Mika exclaimed. "Pop, can't I just have one day or part of a day to myself?" She asked exasperated.

"Sorry honey, this one is urgent. It just came over by personal courier a moment ago." He said apologetically. "I promise, you will have a day off soon, but for now I need you on this one. I am sending a car over to you as we speak."

"How do you know where I am?" She asked looking at Tara with a bit of surprise on her face.

"I traced your phone." He replied. "I told you, this was urgent."

Just then a black four door sedan, with dark tinted windows, pulled up at the curb beside her and a man in a dark suit got out and opened the passenger door for her.

"Now get in the car quickly and I will brief you in a few minutes." He said hanging up the phone.

"Sorry Tara" Mika replied placing her phone back in her pocket. "Looks like I have an urgent issue at work that I need to take care of. I'll call you when I get back." Mika said as she climbed in the back seat and the man in the dark suit closed the door and they sped off into traffic.

Mika entered the office to see her father sitting at his desk in the far corner surrounded by white boards and an old worn map of what seemed to be Sweden.

"Good morning Father." Mika said as she took a seat in front of his desk. "What is the urgent task that couldn't wait." She said as she dropped her shopping bags and purse on the floor next to the chair. Then crossed her legs and looked at her father who was working relentlessly on something.

"Hello, My dear." He replied as he took a quick glance in her direction then focused on the white board in front of him again. "I received this file by courier this morning." He picked up a file from his desk and handed it to her then turned back around to his white board.

Mike opened the folder and began to read its contents. "This is bad. This is really bad." She said as she filled through the pages. "What can we possibly do?" She asked her father in a concerned voice.

"We must stop the trade." He replied as a matter of factly. "I have almost worked out all the details. You will need to get ready. Go home and prepare to be gone for a few days.

"A few days?" Mika exclaimed loudly.

"Yes, this will not be a quick trip." He said as he turned to look at her. "Now go home and get things in order then return here immediately. I will have the car wait for you. Now get going." He said sternly.

Mika picked up her bags and headed for the door. "Be back shortly." She replied as she closed the office door behind her.

Mike climbed in the back of the waiting car and headed for home. On the way, she called Tara and asked her to keep an eye on Sissy her lovable pet cat.

The car pulled up to her apartment building and Mika stepped out of the car with her bags in hand.

"Be back in just a moment" She told the driver then headed into the building and stopped at the elevator. She pushed the button and waited impatiently for them to arrive.

Mike unlocked the door to her apartment then quickly entered as Sissy, her cat, meowed her welcome home. Mika tossed her bags on the bed and began to remove her clothes. She needed to change into something more comfortable for this trip. She quickly changed clothes and slid on her favorite pair of boots. She fed Sissy and gave her a few treats along with a kiss on the head and a stroke down her furry back. "See you in a few days Sissy" She told her cat. "Tara will come check on you."

With that she was out the door back down the elevator to the car waiting to take her back to the office for further instructions.

Mika took a seat in the small dark room in the back of the office. The room was small at only six feet by six feet. Just large enough for the black leather chair in the middle. Mika sat down with her feet flat on the floor. She took one last look at the file and her instructions then placed her hands on her knees. She took a deep breath and reached up and pressed the button on her pendant.

A few moments later Mika found herself riding on the back of a dark steed with red glaring eyes riding on an old dirt path through the thick woods. It smelled like smoke and moss from the lake nearby.

Mika held tightly onto the reins of the tall dark horse as he trotted along the path. Mika felt the chill of the cold mist coming off the water. She looked around at the dark forest. The sun seemed to be raising over the tall mountains to the far East. The horse trotted along at a steady pace. She listened to the "clop clop clop" of his hoofs on the dirt path. Mika looked at her attire. She was covered in a heavy crimson cloak with a large hood that easily covered her head and face. Mika was dressed in brown leather pants and a heavy shirt or tunic with brown gloves. She looked around the forest one again. Mika began to see a large tall building sitting along the edge of the lake coming into view as the sun rose higher in the sky.

Mika stopped the horse at a small clearing near the edge of the lake and let him take a drink. She held his reins as she looked around at her surroundings. Mika didn't feel right, something was off. She didn't

feel safe. Someone was watching her as she stood along the water line. Mika climbed back on her horse and nudged him in the direction of the large building.

Mika went through her instructions in her mind. *"It would be tricky, but it could be done."* she thought to herself. Mika felt the sword at her side hit her leg as she rode along.

Before long she was at the gate of the large building. Which turned out to be a rather dark and gloomy wet looking castle. There was moss growing up the sides and the smell of smoke whirling upwards from a few turrets on top of the wall. The ground was wet and muddy in some areas like they had just had a small rain storm come through.

Mika approached the guard at the gate, then dismounted her horse.

"Halt!" one of the guards yelled as he drew his sword and pointed it at her.

"I come in friendship." Mika replied quickly as she held her hands up in the air. "I am Sir Isaak Von Sputtin, from the valley of Heinffenword to the East. "The Duke is expecting me I believe?"

The guard let down his sword as both guards began to open the heavy large gates to let her in to the castle yard.

"Have a good day." She told the guards as she passed through the gates to a beautiful courtyard. In the center was a large white fountain of a white steed being ridden and raised up on back legs by a tall white knight with sword down in victory. The fountain was surrounded by colorful flower beds then a gavel walkway all around it with smaller walkways off towards each doorway. The courtyard itself was the size of a small farm that littered the land leading up to the castle.

There were a few servants walking about getting things ready for the day.

Mika dismounted her dark steed and held his reins as she stepped in front of him and ran her hand down his face, calming him and turning his red glaring eyes to a deep brown. "Good boy" She said quietly to him as a young stable boy approached.

"May I take your steed?" Said the boy.

Mika handed him the reins then removed a felt bag from the saddle horn and wrapped it around her neck then removed the hood to her crimson cloak. To reveal a full head of wavy light brownish red hair. She adjusted her sword and decorative hand engraved sheath on her side.

A tall man dressed in skin tight black pants, tall boots to his knees and a heavy felt tunic and decorative robe.

"The Duke was expecting you later this evening." Replied the man.

"I made good time. There was no resistance as anticipated." Mika replied in a rather deep voice as she headed toward the man.

"I am Sir Vackenon. I am the Duke's right hand. I will make your stay comfortable until the Duke is ready to receive you. Please follow me." Sir Vackenon said gesturing Mika to follow him into the castle.

Mika looked around as they walked into the main entrance. She removed her gloves to reveal a large gold ring on one hand. Mika thought she hand felt something in her glove. It seemed to be a crest of some sort.

“Please, make yourself comfortable. There is some wine for your thirst on the try. I will have a servant attend to you in a moment.” Sir Vackenon said as he gestured for a servant from another room to come to him.

“No need I can serve myself.” Mika replied as she removed her large cloak from her shoulders.

“May I take that for you?” Said the servants with their head held down.

“Yes, thank you.” Mika replied as she handed the heavy cloak to him. “When do you expect the Duke to be ready to receive me? This is an urgent matter and I wish to be headed back before dark.” Mika replied as she tucked her gloves under her belt for holding.

“I will see. Please make yourself comfortable.” Sir Vackenon said as he closed the large heavy doors to the room.

As soon as the door closed the servant girl looked around and ran up to Mika and whispered. “Are you here for the trade for the tall dark one?”

“Yes” Mika replied quietly.

“His life in in danger.” The servant replied quietly and quickly. “The Duke thinks he is some sort of warlock or wizard and plans to have him killed this afternoon. He was to be killed before your arrival this evening in front of all his subjects to show his power is stronger than a mere wizard.”

Mika, of course knew this, but showed surprise and distain for the order to have the prison killed. “Then why suggest a trade if he was going to kill him all along?” Mika asked the girl.

“He wanted your Valley to fear him. He wanted to show you that he can kill a wizard so your people would fear him.” The servant replied as she poured pretended to pour another glass of wine for Mika.

Just then they heard the heavy door to the room open and in walked Sir Vackenon.

“The Duke will not be ready to receive you until evening. I have been instructed to make you comfortable in one of our many guest rooms until then. Please follow me Sir Isaak.” He gestured for Mika to follow him.

Mika handed the servant the wine glass and rose from the chair and make her way toward the door to follow.

Sir Vackenon grabbed a large lite candle holder and made his way up the large stone stairway. The stairway curved to the left as it made its way to the second floor of the castle. They walked up to the third floor then down a long hallway. Mika admired the oil paintings hanging in various places throughout the hallway. Some were of apparent family members. Some depicted hunting scenes and yet other were of ships wrecked at sea with bodies floating amongst the waves. There were colorful tapestries along the walls as well as dark purple floor covering along their path.

They made a turn down another long narrower hallway. Sir Vackanon stopped in front of a heavy dark wood and metal door and leaned into it to open it.

“Please make yourself comfortable. Someone will come to collect you when the Duke is ready.” Sir Vackanon replied as he held the door opened for Mika to enter. He then placed the lit candle on the table in the center of the room. Then walked over to the windows and opened the curtain, letting in sun light to light the room. he then exited the room and closed the heavy door behind him.

Mika looked around to see a large four poster bed covered in red and gold silk blanket and pillows. There were red curtains on each corner of the bed tied back to show the bed. There were various pieces of dark wood furniture pieces around the room. Including a table, with the candle holder on it, and a few chairs with silk covered over stuffed pillows on them.

Mika took a seat in one of the chairs and waited. It wasn't long before the servant that was down stairs made her way up to her room. She knocked quietly then entered the room quickly closing the door quietly behind her.

“Quickly we must hurry if you want to save the tall man.” Mika Stood up and followed the fast-moving woman towards a tall life size painting in the corner of the room. The servant pulled the painting away from the wall to reveal a hidden passageway.

Mika followed the servant into the dark narrow passageway. Door past other guest rooms to a narrow stairway that curved around like a snake. The servant held a small torch in front of them to light the way. Mika had to stay close to be able to see the way as the torch didn't light up a large area. Down another long narrow hallway with a few twists and turns. Then down one last narrow stairway.

The servant woman placed her finger to her lips signaling Mika to be quiet as she put out the torch. They both walked up to a stone wall that was in front of them. The servant girl listened for a few moments until she felt the coast was clear. She leaned again one side of the wall and it opened up to a dark dirty dimly lit smelly dungeon.

Mika followed the servant women to a cell about halfway down the hallway. She leaned up against the door. “Sir, Sir are you in there?” She said quietly as she could so as not to be heard by the guards.

“I'm here.” Said a voice from the cell. “Angelica is that you?”

“Yes, master it is I, come to let you out.” Angelica replied as she tried to open the lock on the door.

“that's a strong lock. You will never break it off.” Mika told her. “Where are the keys?” She asked Angelica.

“The guards have them.” Angelica replied looking around for something to try and break it open.

Mika stood back into the darkness knowing the sound would make a guard curious. Sure enough, just as Angelica began to hit the lock with a stone a large dirty guard entered the hallway.

“You there!” Yelled the guard. “What are you doing in here!” He said picking her up with one arm and tossing her away to one corner. Hitting her head on the wall and knocking her unconscious. She lay there on the floor.

“So, your wench tries to break you out.” The guard laughed. “She won’t be trying that again.” The guard walked over to Angelica and raised his sword to kill her. Mika leaped from the shadows and ran him through with her sword. Quickly silencing his screams so as not to bring other guards.

Mika removed the keys from the guard’s belt and unlocked the cell door releasing the prisoner. The tall man ran to Angelica’s side. He picked her up in his arms and said “Here follow me. We must leave here immediately.”

Mika followed the tall man back through the stone wall, closing it behind them. They made their way back to Mika’s guest room. The tall man laid Angelica on the bed gently. He looked around for a cloth and a water picture.

“There on the table.” The man told Mika. “Pour me some water and give me a wet cloth.”

Mika did as he asked. She poured water into a bowl and drenched the cloth in the cool water then handed it to the man.

The man placed the cool cloth on Angelica’s forehead. “She will be alright. She will just have a little headache.”

“We must leave here now, before they find that guard and your gone.” Mika told the man.

“Yes, yes we must go now.” He looked down at Angelica. “My pour sweet Angelica.” He said leaning down and kissing her on the forehead. “Farewell.”

Mike lead the way back into the hidden passage as the tall man closed the painting behind them. “Where shall we go? Do you know the way out?” Mika asked.

“Yes, but we will have to wait until dark to make our escape.” The tall man said as he took the lead as they made their way down another narrow hallway to a sloped walkway. That led them on a downward path to a small stone room with a few benches and a table.

“We can wait here until dark. They used to hide the Duke and his family in here when the castle was raided during the crusades. It hasn’t been used in centuries.” Said the tall man.

“We probably should try and get some rest now. Since we will need the strength later tonight.” Mika told him.

“Good idea. We will be safe here.” The tall man said as he kicked a pile of dirt and straw into a corner and made himself a bed and laid down.

Mika stretched out across one of the long benches and folded her arms and tried to get some sleep.

Before long they awoke to the sound of horns and yelling of guards in the courtyard.

“They know you’ve escaped now. They will be on alert.” Mika told the man.

“Yes, I anticipated that.” He replied.

They heard the yelling of a woman off in the distance. “they have found Angelica!” the tall man said sadly.

“Will they kill her?” Mika asked.

“Most certainly.” He replied. “She has helped me in the past. They will know she had something to do with my escape, but since she was probably found in your room, they will now look for you as well.”

“You’re right.” Mika replied. “We must leave soon. Is it dark enough outside yet?”

The tall man walked out of the room and looked through a hole in the wall to the outside. “Yes, it is dark enough. Let’s wait awhile until the crowd dies down a bit.” He replied.

They waiting for what seemed like hours in that small dark room. Soon it was time to leave.

“Here follow closely behind me.” The tall man told Mika. “This path will lead to the stables. From there we will have to stay in the shadows.

“But aren’t the stables inside the castle walls?” Mika asked as she followed him.

“No, actually they are not. The entrance to the stables is the stable wall. The stables themselves are outside the walls. We can take a couple of horses and be off in no time.” Said the tall man.

Mika led the way now into the stables. The tall man following close behind. “Here, here is my horse.” Mika replied as she removed the saddle from the holder and placed it on him. “Shhh Good Boy.” Mika told him to keep him quiet. “Get that saddle over there and put it on a horse quietly.”

The tall man did as Mika asked and soon they were quietly leading their horses out of the gate beyond the castle walls. The guards were still on high alert. It was dark out now, but they could still see the shadows of guards moving about the wall and some in the forest patrolling.

“We will need to stay close to the fence line to avoid being seen so easily.” Mika said quietly, almost in a whisper.

They made their way away from the castle. After they had put a fair amount of distance between them and the castle they mounted up.

“On the count of three, kick your heels into his side as hard as you can. We need to ride fast from the start if we are to make it to the tree line without being shot at.” Mika told the tall man. “Ready?”

“Ready.” The tall man replied.

“One. . . Two. . . Three.” Mika said as they both kicked their horses and they shot out of a stand like a bullet from a gun.

“We can make it.” Mika said as they were almost at the tree line. As a guard stepped out of the shadows with his sword drawn to block their path.

Mika drew her sword and readied to take the hit as they got closer and closer. The eyes of her black steed turning bright red and glowing as they got closer to the guards.

The red eyes of the horse frightening the guard as he stood back without taking a swing with his sword. Mika and the tall man jumped into the deep dark forest out of sight.

They reached a small dirt path deep in the wood before they slowed their horses to a walk to give them some rest.

“I think we lost them.” Mika said in a normal voice as they continued along the path.

“I do believe we have.” The tall man said as he began to let out a loud long whistle.

“What are you doing?” Mika asked scared that it would bring the guards into them.

“You will see.” The tall man said as he dismounted his horse and tied him to a tree.

Mika stayed mounted on her horse in case a quick get-away was needed.

A few moments passed then Mika started to hear movement in the trees. “What is that.”

“Don’t worry, it’s just my men.” Replied the tall man.

Within a few moments, they were surround by woodsmen there to assist them.

The men and women happily greeted them with food and wine. They had set up a camp nearby for them to rest for a time.

Before long they were all eating drinking and telling tall tales by the fire. One by one the men and women began to retired to their tents for the night. There were a few men outside the encampment to stand guard. Soon it was just Mika and the tall man sitting by the fire.

I guess you soon will be gone now that your task is done?” Asked the tall man.

“Yes.” Mika replied removing her gloves from her belt and putting them on her hands.

“Thank you for helping me escape.” Said the tall man.

“Sorry we couldn’t help Angelica.” Mika replied as she got up from the place on the fallen log where she was sitting.

“It was her time.’ The tall man replied sadly. “We can no longer control our death as we control our birth. And with that I say farewell my friend.” The tall man said grabbing Mika’s hand and shaking it. Then retiring to his tent.

Mika climbed upon her horse and made her way down the path into the dark woods. After sometime she came to the small lake she had passed when this adventure began. Along the waters-edge she could see a line of gibbets, from one gibbet was hanging a body. Lifeless and blowing with the wind. As Mika got closer she could see it the lifeless body of Angelica.

With that, Mika closed her eyes and pressed the button on her pendant.