

London's Night Stalkers

Chapter 10 – A Kidnap

“Kidnap as a verb is first seen in about the seventeenth century. The Kid part is as it seems, a commonly word used for children. Nap is an old word for thieving something, taking what isn't rightfully yours. It originates from a time when strong healthy children were taken off the streets, to work as servants in the American colonies. Now of course, it has a broader meaning.....”

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Clara was working; the hotel was hosting a wedding fair. Someone well above her pay grade, had decided the hotel needed to pull in more wedding business. Saturday morning and Simon and Laura were left to look after the alarm installer, while Clara gave out brochures to prospective brides and grooms. Sometimes two grooms or two brides, the gay wedding special offer was currently being advertised in the pink press. Back in Wood Green, the man up the ladder was busy sucking at his teeth.

“Even for a friend of Tom's, this isn't going to be cheap. Full alarm system with night time setting, all cabled up to avoid the well-known problems with Wi-Fi..... Then small hidden CCTV cameras And you insist on two thirty day hard drive recorders.....”

Simon had already called the landlord, who hadn't objected. As long as the installer did a professional looking job and he didn't have to pay for it, the landlord was happy.

“Tell me the worst ?” Asked Simon. “I will be paying cash of course.”

Laura was in the small amount of shade offered by the recessed front door, leaving him to stand outside in the bright morning sunlight. Simon knew he was going to have a headache for days. He had to look up quite a lot, which was the problem.

“At one time paying cash did mean a discount, but now..... It all has to go through the books.”

Tom had recommended the alarm installer, which was good enough for Simon. Tom would hardly send someone incompetent to work on the house of someone he thought of as the UK's answer to the Cali Cartel.

“Do you want it done now, today ?”

“Yes please.”

More muttering and the inevitable sucking of teeth, before a number that didn't seem frightening at all. It would have been once, but since pillaging Vlad's house, they had some disposable income at last.

“Six thousand all in and I'll do it all today.”

“How much ?!” Shrieked Laura.

“Ok, five and half, best price.”

Bless Laura, he'd have happily paid the six thousand.

“Fine, get it all installed.” Said Simon.

The guy's van was an Aladdin's cave of the latest in security equipment. He'd obviously assumed Simon would say yes to his price and had brought everything needed to get the installation done. Simon helped him carry it all inside, glad to get out of the morning sun and its ultra violet light, which caused his face to itch.

“There's a cupboard under the stairs,” said Simon, “with room to stand up. I think everything will fit nicely in there.”

It would, the engineer was even willing to fix a fold down table to the wall. Simon ticked another job off his mental list and went back to the kitchen, to finally get some morning coffee. Laura was already there, pouring coffee into one of the mugs kept for guests.

"There's a fresh pot," she said, "I made some for Jack."

Clara was right about his lack of curiosity and people skills. He still hadn't known Jack's name, he would have been the 'alarm guy' forever. Laura had found out his name and was taking him coffee and a few biscuits. Maybe it was just women who were like that, all women, vampires and non vampires ?

"A bacon sandwich I think, with brown sauce." He muttered.

He made one for Laura too, he'd never known her to refuse food. She came back into the kitchen and smiled when she saw he was making enough for two.

"Where did you learn to cook ?" She asked.

"In the army, lots of different armies." He replied. "I was a field cook once, making meals for fifty or sixty men at a time, sometimes more. I'm no cordon bleu chef, but I make a damn good bacon sandwich."

He could hear Jack as they ate, putting ladders against the outside of the house, going from room to room, pondering on the best spot for internal movement sensors. Vampire hearing was good and Jack hadn't even opened any drawers in the bedrooms. Almost a first, the cable TV guy and a BT engineer, had both succumbed to the temptation of looking in Clara's knicker drawer. They'd hidden anything incriminating the night before, but Jack didn't seem the curious type anyway. Definitely not the sort to go looking for bloodstains on their rugs.

"I feel better already," said Laura, "just hearing him putting the detectors up. It's a plus really isn't it, having no external ties ? I mean, there's no one for this Mabina to go after, no wives, no husbands. Everyone who matters in my life, lives under this roof, protected by Jack's alarms. Or will be, when he's finished."

"Yes, all my family are long dead, the same with Clara." He said. "As for where I work ? If Mabina threatened to kill Anthony... Well, there are days I might offer to help her."

He grinned at her, deliberately not mentioning her family. She'd told him all he needed to know that night when he'd turned her. If she told him anything else, it would be of her own free will, probably after far too much vodka. He'd never push her for details.

"I know !" She chuckled. "Half the people at the hotel are so unpleasant. One of the managers actually reported me, for wearing the wrong type of shoes, bastard ! It is liberating, having no one but ourselves to worry about."

"It is and once our home is secure, we can go hunting for this Mabina." He replied.

For a few seconds he thought about Patsy, the one person he did care about, who wasn't resident in the house in Wood Green. She didn't even realise that her lover was a vampire, hadn't the slightest inkling that she might be in danger. No, he put the idea out of his mind, Patsy was in her own compartment in his life, even Clara had no idea about her. Sadly he was wrong, in so many ways.

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Her feet always gave up first. By about three in the afternoon, just a few hard core wedding planners were left in the building, so Clara decided to ease off her heels and put on flats. Against the rules of course, but she was about to do worse, far worse. She had an hour, maybe two and a hotel with quite a few unoccupied rooms. She also had a management access card and a libido quickly going from urgently in need of a good fuck, to gagging for it. Her phone gently rang on just about its lowest volume. Good hotel staff were expected to be seen, but seldom heard.

“This is Grace, on reception. He’s here !”

“Thank you, I owe you one. Put him in a lift up to the 3rd floor.”

Room 312 had a few problems, or so the previous occupant had claimed. Some hotel guests were like that, nothing was ever right. Others put up with just about anything, never complaining. It appeared the air con in 312 was too noisy, the mini bar too warm, the bed too lumpy....etc. A whole list of faults, written in neat tidy block capitals on the note paper provided by the hotel.

“Professional bloody moaners.” She muttered.

It might just be a con to get a free upgrade on the next visit, or maybe the room really was full of faults. The hotel always veered towards the side of caution. No one wanted bad reviews on TripAdvisor ! Room 312 had been cleaned and locked, until maintenance gave it a good look over on the Monday. Which meant no one would enter that room over the weekend. It was hers to enjoy for the next two hours..... With Felipe of course. She’d left the door ajar so she could hear the slight clang of the lift doors opening. Clara didn’t run, but she moved quickly out into the corridor. He was stood by the closing lift doors, looking lost and something else ? Hot, yes he looked so fucking hot ! “Felipe ! Over here.” She called.

Oh that smile ! Mentally she was already naked and lying on the bed, legs spread and ready to go. She kissed him, a full open mouth kiss, full of promise. Clara hadn’t wanted to appear too eager, like a girl who’d been at sea for the last five years, with an all-female crew. Actually that thought just made her even hornier, she’d had quite a few sensational encounters with other women. Felipe was looking over the room.

“Wow, we can really.... You know ? Here ?!”

“Yes, but I have to leave by five at the latest.”

Once you were over five hundred years old, acting chaste and demure became a bit of a bore. It was all about getting naked and getting down to it, with as little messing about as possible. Clara undid her skirt, letting it drop to the floor. She was undoing her bra, before Felipe even had his trousers off. She almost helped him undress, but decide not to. Instead she decided to act out the mental fantasy, she’d visualised in the corridor. She took off every bit of clothing and lay on the bed, legs spread, arms too, forming a kind of human starfish. Actually a vampire starfish.

“You are gorgeous.” Said Felipe.

She quite liked compliments, if they sounded sincere and his did. Good, he’d taken his socks off. Leaving socks on was a pet peeve of hers, even Simon had done it sometimes. Felipe kissed the tip of her left breast, before his head went further down her body. His lips and tongue teased her, brushing through the small bush between her legs. No complete wax job for her, she’d feel strange without her tiny clump of pubes, almost deformed. She arched her back a little, as his tongue tasted her.

“Hmm, you taste of peaches and cream.”

Not really, but it was hardly the moment to argue the point. She’d gone down on a few women herself and the most honest description she’d heard was ‘Ocean Spray.’ Which was good, no one wanted to tongue a pussy that smelt of pine shower gel.

“That is so nice.” She said.

Good ! He wasn’t a twenty seconds and move up to start screwing type of guy. She was already thinking that Felipe might be more than a onetime fling. He put his tongue in deep and she pushed her shoulders back into the pillow and let out a long moan. Oh crap ! How badly she’d needed a casual sexual partner again. She loved Simon, but sometimes..... She needed someone different. Needed it so badly that her body seemed to physically ache.

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Daniel couldn't sleep, his mind was full of wild and conflicting ideas. Besides, it wasn't that late, his bedside clock was showing just after nine pm. It always happened when Gwen came over, with that certain look in her eye. They'd end up in bed by seven and drop off to sleep after the sex. His body clock was now messed up, he was now wide awake and might have trouble sleeping that night.

Daniel tried to get out of bed without disturbing her and failed. A hand grabbed his arm.

"Where are you going?"

"I can't sleep, thought I'd read a little. I won't be long, promise."

"Fine."

She smiled at him, knowing his ways as well as he knew hers. A perfect relationship for him, enough affection to make him feel human, but not enough to be suffocating. Gwen seemed to think a lot of him too, though they rarely talked about feeling and the dreaded love word, had never cropped up. She had her son to worry about and his problems. He had learning difficulties, which seemed a catchall for a lot of problems, including some life threatening disorders. Her son was just a bit slow, which didn't stop him being useful around her smallholding. The boy even posted parcels for Daniel, when he was off on one of his trips. You didn't need to be Stephen Hawking to be useful on a farm.

"Don't let me sleep too long in the morning, the boy needs his breakfast." Gwen called.

"I won't."

There would be more sex of course, before Gwen was dressed and on her way home by five in the morning. Daniel went downstairs and pulled the carpet in the lounge to one side. Plain floorboards were underneath, grubby, perhaps cut and shaped before Scotland joined the Union. He knew where to press, so that half the floor came up and folded back against the wall. He wasn't worried about her knowing his various hiding places, his modern day equivalent of priest holes. She was trusted and even more paranoid about talking to strangers than him. Daniel had to run his hand over the top of the dresser in the kitchen, to find the key. Long and thin, made out of carbon steel, when few had the skill to work such metals. A long key, the shaft about eight inches, with a six sided head on top it. Like the key to a bank vault, but much, much older.

"Better than any computer encryption." He muttered.

He'd designed the lead lined box along the designs of a Roman coffin he'd seen. All his own work, including the three locks along one side. Not just lead of course, it was a soft metal, easy to cut through. The lead lining was large enough to have held three dead Romans, if anyone had wanted to. The outside container was carbon steel again, hardened until most metal working tools, simply skidded off the surface. It was his box of wonders, his books, his maps, then various tape recordings and segments of old celluloid film. It was proof that vampires existed.

"Overwhelming, a tsunami of proof." He muttered. "Too much to be ignored."

He was right ! Books could be forged, films faked, sound recording edited. It was the sheer volume of data that made it prove the existence of the undead. No one could be presented with the contents of Daniel's box and remain an unbeliever. Not that he ever intended to show the contents to anyone, who wasn't already a firm believer in vampires. The three locks held the top down, giving a good airtight seal. Add the lead lining and anything stored inside would remain free of decay and corruption for hundreds of years, maybe thousands.

"One day dear Laura." He mumbled. "I might show you the treasures held within this box."

No writing on the key, no clues about how to use it. Open each lock in the right order, pushing the key in just right, turning it the correct number of times. And the locks would open and the lid could be lifted, provided you had the strength. Most humans didn't, though they could easily get someone

to help them. The complexity of the locks had stopped Daniel from opening the box while intoxicated, which he viewed as a plus. No filling his precious notebooks with the mindless ramblings of a drunk. He took the copy of Mabina's journal from the box, though he was yet to know her name. To him it was the journal of an unknown female vampire, written over a number of centuries. "I must see the original."

One of his numbered journals came out next, the latest out of over four hundred such journals. His ponderings were in there, on the implications of the photocopied book. The original would tell him more than the copy ever could. The type of ink, the inevitable stains on the paper. Bindings too, held seeds, pollen and mould spores. There might even be some of the writers breakfast tucked into the binding, from hundreds of years before.

"A good book is so much more than just words." He muttered. "It's a treasure trove of information, if you know how to look."

"Are you coming back to bed Daniel?"

Gwen on the stairs, naked apart from a sheet wrapped around her shoulders. Gwen was no super model, too much sand at the bottom half of her hourglass. Having a child had done its damage in the form of stretch marks and working the land had added muscles. She exited him though, more than any woman had for a very long time.

"Yes I'll be up. Though I will need to go to London soon, probably flying down. I was hoping you might look after the animals if that's alright? Perhaps the boy can post a few parcels?"

"Flying Daniel?! You?!"

"Yes, the research is rather urgent and I don't want to be gone for too long."

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Clara rarely drove into work, it was simply impossible to park near the hotel, even at weekends. She'd showered and dressed after her fun with Felipe and used the Tube to get home. The Victoria Line and then the Piccadilly Line to take her to Wood Green Station. It was a nice evening and her head was full of Felipe, until she remembered a whole list of things she'd promised to buy on the way home. There were shops within walking distance, but she decided to get her car and drive north, to the supermarket she liked in Winchmore Hill. A simple decision, that was to prove fortuitous.

She might have simply gone home and gone shopping the next day, or walked to one of the numerous local convenience stores. Or inconvenience stores as Simon insisted on calling them, after buying gravy granules about three years past their sell by date. It was a nice evening though, so she didn't go straight home and instead she drove north.

"That's the same van." She mumbled.

Vampires seemed to pick it up during the change, a healthy dose of anger and paranoia. It helped them to survive and Clara knew the van had followed her all the way up Green Lanes, before deliberately getting in front of her. It was clumsy driving, almost certain to get noticed.

"Is that you Mabina?"

Her first thought was Mabina, or maybe people hired by Mabina. The police were well down on any mental list she had, there was no reason for the police to be following her. There had been the business with Laura's ex-boss, but that had been dealt with. Besides, the police would never be that clumsy when they followed people. Clara pulled into the Sainsbury's car park and the van parked some distance away. She waited for a while, but no one got out of the rather grubby old van.

"Come on Clara, get the shopping and get home."

She was dying to get home and see the new alarm system and the CCTV. She wasn't as into the whole thing the way Simon was, but she still liked gadgets. She walked into the supermarket and grabbed a trolley, instead of a basket. A few treats, maybe a bottle or two of decent wine. The trolley had a good layer of goodies in it, before she arrived at the checkout.

"Oh, these are my favourite."

The checkout girl, pushing the massive bar of Toblerone over the bar code reader.

"They're so addictive." She agreed.

She left the checkout with enough bags to weigh her down quite a bit and one of them burst open, before she was out of the store. Stupid ! She normally put the bags back in the trolley, but hadn't this time. At least three helpful members of staff came to her aid. New carrier bags arrived as if by magic and one young guy remained to help her to her car. It was embarrassing and nice in about equal measure. It might also have been a piece of good luck. Perhaps the one supposed to be watching her became confused by the small crowd of helpful staff ? Maybe it was because she left the store by a side door, with the young man in front of her ?

"My car is the Peugeot 208." She said. "The one behind the grubby van."

Whatever the reason, the men in the van weren't expecting her. They'd moved the van, so that it was right in front of her car and the rear doors of the van were wide open. They were police, they had that whole shabby plain clothes thing, that was far too overdone. Scruffy and neither of them would have made good poker players. Their expressions said it all, as she opened the rear of her car. She almost wanted to shout 'caught you,' but resisted the urge. A lens could be seen in the back of the van, connected to an expensive looking camera.

"They must be making a documentary." Said the young man.

"Yes, I wonder what about ?" She replied, loudly.

The third copper, the failed lookout, arrived back at the van, all three of them trying far too hard to avoid eye contact with her. They were hardly the A team, but she doubted if the real talent wanted to do routine surveillance on a Saturday night. Why park so close to her car though ? Their van blocked the view from the store, giving them a good half an hour to plant bugs and trackers on her much loved Peugeot. She'd get one of Tom's connections to check it over, before her next hunting trip.

"Thank you, that was so sweet."

She kissed the young man on the cheek, making him blush. Clara drove home through the back streets, checking her mirror constantly. No van ! They'd obviously decided that vehicle was completely compromised. The police had other vehicles though, probably lots to choose from. It had to be the trouble with Laura's ex-boss, had to be. Laura had a shiny new SUV and they'd just spent a small fortune on a new state of the art security system. If the police weren't interested before, it was certain they would be now. A gap right outside the house to park in, rare on a Saturday evening. Laura had obviously been watching from the kitchen window and ran out to help with the bags.

"Wow, wait until you see the CCTV picture Clara, it's got better HD than our TV. Oh, you bought chocolate, lots of it !"

She let Laura enthuse over the goodies she'd bought to eat and the bottles of expensive wine, before telling them both the bad news.

"We need to be extra careful for a while." She said. "I'm certain that we're under police surveillance."

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Patsy never saw Simon on Saturday night, it was one item on the list of things they didn't discuss. Yes, she knew he was probably at home with her, the woman he lived with. Knowing and talking about it were a world apart though, she didn't want to know any details. She had her own routine, though where they went to had been known to vary. A night out in the general Southgate area, with her best friend Gina, her BFF since primary school. She'd even chosen to go to Southgate College, so that they could carry on their friendship.

"Butch and Sundance, or two of the musketeers, that's us." Said Gina. "Do you want me to walk you home?"

"Then I'll walk you back to your home and then you walk me...We've done this so often Gina. We end up wandering around North London, until the sun comes up." She replied.

"Fun though."

"It can be! I'll walk on my own though, it's not far. I want to check on mum, she's still acting a bit weird."

"Hardly surprising Patsy. How about your dad's ashes? Can you scatter them over the Arsenal ground?"

She grinned at Gina, who knew that she never, ever accepted no for an answer.

"They say no, but I will. I'm going to get Simon to help."

"Count me in."

It took another twenty minutes, to get away from Gina. They'd always been like that, chatter all day and still find things that couldn't wait, when it was time to go home. Patsy saw a few people while walking home, North London never seemed to shut down completely at weekends. She did see the ordinary looking woman with dark hair, as she ran towards her at an amazing speed. She must have hit her, the next few hours she saw as a kind of waking dream. Perhaps drugged? Yes, a needle had gone into her arm at one point.

"Keep quiet and I won't hurt you."

Perfect English with just the merest hint of Eastern Europe. You got used to accents from the new Europe, if you lived in Southgate. Patsy could even swear a little in Bulgarian, learned from a few girls in her secondary school. She was in the back of a car, under a blanket. Not on the back seat, she'd been jammed into the foot well, between the seats. Jammed in so hard, that her left arm was going numb.

"Who are you? Where are we going?" She asked.

It wasn't a prank, even in the dream state she realised that. The car pulled up and an arm reached over the seats. Another needle and Patsy drifted into a real dream, about unicorns and dragons for some reason. Quite a nice dream, the awfulness of reality, hit her hard when she woke from it.

"Hello!" She tried to shout.

Her throat was so dry and her head had been leaning forward, her neck resting on a rope tied to something behind her. It felt as though there was a thistle stuck in her throat, digging into her vocal chords. She worked some saliva into a spit ball and swallowed it. It helped a little.

"Hello! Is anyone there?"

Crap, her throat still hurt and she was so thirsty. More rolling saliva round her mouth and swallowing it, until her throat stopped feeling scratchy. Someone had tied her to large wooden chair and they'd probably done it for a reason she wouldn't like.

"Hello! Talk to me! Is there anyone there?"

Nothing, no reply. The only sound was a vague idea of traffic in the distance. She was in some kind of cellar, with two low wattage bulbs hanging down from the ceiling on bare flex. For some reason the

floor was soil, some of the best kept and most raked over soil she'd ever seen. The soil worried her, people buried things under dirt floors, she'd seen enough horror movies to know that.

"Please ! Talk to me !"

As the fog cleared from her thoughts, she felt the cool air against her bottom. Her trousers and panties had been pulled right down to her knees. That was something to panic about and she spent several minutes, trying not to scream. There was cool air on her lower regions, the chair had a hole in the seat. The obvious conclusion wasn't the pervert with various things to insert inside her intimate areas after all. She'd probably been placed over a bucket, so that she could empty her bladder. And her bowels of course, but she didn't want to think about that, at least for now.

"Ok, ok." She muttered at herself. "They want me to be comfortable, which is good. It probably means I'll be here for a while, which isn't !"

Patsy needed to pee, but opening her sphincter into thin air was harder than she thought. Ignoring all that potty training she'd had as a kid, was almost impossible. Nice girls didn't pee on the floor, the mental blocks were giving her a headache.

"Crap ! Pee you daft bitch ! Before your bladder bursts."

Actually it wouldn't, she'd read that somewhere. Eventually her bladder would empty, whether she wanted it to or not. Patsy peed, actually chuckling at the sound of it hitting a metal bucket. For some reason it felt like a small victory and cheered her up. The ropes were tight, but she could just about make out a table to her left. There was bottled water and some of those huge bags of junk food, the sort people bought at Christmas, to keep their kids quiet.

"If they intend to feed me, they must intend keeping me alive."

Sound logic, but she was still alone in a dimly lit cellar. No chance of sleeping, she leant back in the chair and waited. It really was all she could do.

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Simon left his phone propped up at an angle, so that the illumination usually woke him, if a call came in overnight. He had no relatives likely to pop their clogs, but there had been emergencies in the past. The glow of an incoming text, pulled him out of yet another dream about trench warfare. He was pleased to be woken up, but worried that the text was from Patsy. He woke up with the foggy mind that most people were used to, but vampires could shrug it off. Simon picked up his phone, as he swung his legs over the side of the bed.

'Get somewhere private and call me – Patsy.'

It was all wrong and the message wasn't from Patsy. She always used text speak, some of it took him hours to understand. Plus she never signed them, it was her phone, who else would it be from ?

Who else was the big question of course, he was becoming anxious.

"You alright ?"

Clara, barely awake, her eyes only half open.

"Yeah, I think Anthony is texting while pissed again. I'd better go downstairs and call him."

"Ok."

Once he'd have walked downstairs naked, but he put on his boxers shorts. Laura and her trips to the kitchen for coffee in the middle of the night, were becoming a regular event. Simon didn't go to the kitchen, he went to the cupboard under the stairs and closed the door behind him. A low light, a table full of screens and a chair to sit in. It was a nerds dream and Simon was going to claim it as his den. He called Patsy's number, not at all surprised when a stranger answered.

"Simon, good to speak to you at last."

He'd expected the female equivalent of a Bond villain, yet her voice sounded quite nice. Middle aged with a slight inclination towards the east. Romania, of course it had to be Romania, that's where the journal talked about. She'd been a Queen once, he remembered Laura telling him that.

"Mabina Gladitch I'm guessing." He said. "Why are you using Patsy's phone?"

"Simon, you're smart, good. I knew Roy would never be killed by a fool. I take it that it was you that killed him?"

His mind closed down, just the anger and rage remained. He wasn't going to give her information. He didn't really want to talk to her at all. Most of him just wanted to find her and hack at her with sharp weapons, until she was dead.

"What do you want Mabina?" He asked.

"You have something of mine, a journal and the contents of my jewellery box. You might have sold the jewellery, but I'll settle for the journal, in exchange for your whore."

"Patsy isn't a whore."

"If you say so Simon, if you say so. I only see your number on her phone, no trace of Clara or Laura. Yes Simon, I do know there are three of you, I've been quite busy lately. Does Clara know about your pet bitch? I think she probably doesn't."

No, he wasn't going to tell her anything. His mind was full of hate, full of anger. He just wanted to hack Mabina into very small pieces.

"Your jewels were meant to have been sold, but we never got round to it." He said. "They're in a cloth bag, nothing missing. I'll happily give you the journal and the jewels. How do you want to do the exchange?"

"Did you copy it Simon? Did you put my journal through the copier where you work?"

She was trying to mess with his head, not knowing that he no longer cared about anything, other than giving her a painful death. He ignored her, letting a good three minutes pass, with neither of them speaking. Mabina blinked first;

"Cat got your tongue Simon? Bring the jewels and journal to me Simon, you know where to come. I'll be in the cellar with your whore, getting better acquainted with her. Come alone, one hint that you've brought the rest of your little family and I'll kill Patsy Smart. I'll leave the back door unlocked and the lights on."

"Once you've got the journal, you'll just kill her anyway."

"No Simon, No! You may have been born street trash, but I was born an aristocrat. I keep my word! Bring me the journal and my jewels and you can both simply leave. You have my word, the word of a Queen."

Crap of course, Mabina would kill Patsy and do her best to kill him too. There was no honour when vampires fought, no sacred code, no rules of engagement.

"I will be there soon Mabina." He said.

"Hurry Simon, or I might be tempted to see if Patsy is a screamer."

He sat for a while after the call, collecting his thoughts. It was tempting to go alone and kill Mabina. Simply not care about anything, even Patsy. He'd done it before, allowed the berserker inside his mind to take control. On those occasions nothing had mattered to him, not even his own life. Now though, things were different.

"I like this life." He muttered.

The screens were on, showing the outside of the house. Everything was peaceful, the two female vampires he cared about sleeping safely upstairs. He had a family life of sorts and he liked it. Patsy

too was a part of his life that mattered, even if their relationship didn't last that long. The decision was quite easy to make, even if he was about to break several unwritten rules.

"Laura first, she's probably awake anyway."

He went upstairs and Laura was awake, reading Mabina's journal for what had to be the fifth or sixth time.

"Emergency powwow downstairs." He said. "Get the coffee going, I'll wake up Clara."

"Is it serious?"

"Yes, we'll be taking weapons."

She actually looked pleased. Next Clara, who was going to be the awkward one to tell. To Laura he was the ancient vampire who'd given her immortality, she'd always forgive him for just about anything. Clara might be a little more tricky. She had her eyes open, glaring at him as he entered their bedroom.

"Why are you getting everyone up?"

"It's an emergency Clara. Get dressed and come to the kitchen."

There was something about kitchens, he'd often wondered how anyone had planned anything, before kitchens were invented. There was soon hot coffee to be drunk and toast to be eaten. There were also two tired looking women, watching him over their coffee cups, waiting for an explanation. Crap! They had an open relationship, Clara had enjoyed quite a few dalliances in her time. So why was this going to be so hard? He knew of course, it was because he actually cared about Patsy and the thought of her dying, troubled him. Was caring a betrayal? It felt like it.

"Mabina has abducted a young woman called Patsy Smart." He began.

He had their attention at the mention of Mabina, but neither of them had ever heard of Patsy.

"I have been seeing Patsy, for quite some time and Mabina has been watching me." He continued.

"She has Patsy in the cellar of Vlad's house and is threatening to kill her, if I don't give her back the journal we found and the contents of her jewellery box."

It was Laura looking at him as though he was a monster, holding Clara's hand. Clara looked at her feet for a while, at the worn out slippers he'd bought her two Christmases ago. He dreaded her looking up, but when she did, she was smiling.

"Then it looks like it's time for us to kill Mabina Gladitch." She said.

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