

## Quid Pro Quo

(Season three of London's Night Stalkers)

### Chapter 10 – The Silver Dawn

**“Simon Atherton didn’t just have more strength and speed than a human. His senses were better too, far better. He noticed subtle changes in colours; he heard sounds no human ear could pick up. His reaction speed to a threat was at least ten times faster than the best, highly trained human soldier.”**

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Two moons in the morning sky and neither of them looked like the moon Liz Grant was familiar with, the one so beloved by poets and song writers.

“I know we have no idea where we are.” Said Clara. “There’s nil chance that I’ll ever return here....But it’s a beautiful place.”

“If it wasn’t for the forty or so warriors in our way, it’d be the perfect spot for breakfast.” Added Mabina.

“It seems the Ancient Gods weren’t just Gods of planet Earth.” Said Liz. “Or of course, we might be in some really weird alternative reality.”

“Hmmm....Maybe.” Said Clara.

Liz had packed a large number of flapjacks, neatly arranged in a Tupperware box. As the warriors were showing no inclination to attack them, she picked up another one and began to nibble at it. The grass they were sat on looked familiar, as did the trees in the small valley. Birds were making the usual noises birds make around dawn. It was those moons though; they shrieked that they were no longer on the planet they called home.

“I’ve nothing against wholesale slaughter.” Said Clara. “What’s in it for them though ? Why would these warriors guard the gateway ?”

They’d carved through the fierce looking fighters at gate two with ease, though they were still bearing the bloodstains. Water was scarce until luck brought them to a river or an ocean. Faces had been washed, but weapons and jackets were still covered in congealed blood. A wolf like creature had attacked them at gate three, before Mabina had snapped its neck. No one or thing had harassed them or impeded them at gate four. Now they were at gate five and the warriors had arrived during Clara’s turn on watch.

“They’re probably just attacking us because we’re three people they don’t know. We’re obviously seen as interlopers in their territory.” Said Mabina. “It might have been nice to talk to them.....But this is going to end up as a fight.”

“Attacking us because we’re strangers.....Fuck Em.” Said Clara.

“I agree with Clara.” Said Liz.

Liz finished her flapjack and put the Tupperware box back in her pack. The enormous Viking axe she’d helped acquire from a museum was still covered in the blood of those who’d stood in their way at the second gate. Mabina thought a little blood and gore might instil a little fear in the forty or so warriors between them, and the path leading to the standing stone in the glade at the bottom of the valley. Liz hoped she was right.

“Ready ?” Asked Liz.

“No.” Said Clara.

The warriors facing them wore armour plate to cover their shoulders and elbows, relying on thick leather to protect the rest of their bodies. Human in appearance, with dark hair and a fierce look on every face. Predominantly male, though there were a few females. Both sides were walking quite slowly and were likely to meet at the bottom of the valley.

“What happens if someone destroys one of the gates ?” Asked Clara.

“They’re just about indestructible.” Said Liz. “I don’t know everything, though I might when I truly become the Unnamed. I do know that if one of the gates is rendered unusable, by say.....being buried by a continental shift. The gate will move to a new location.”

“When you become this Unnamed creature.....Is there a chance you might attack us ?” Asked Mabina.

“I have no idea, though.....I suppose that is a possibility.”

The warriors had picked up their pace a little to get between them and the large standing stone. Their leader was shouting at them in a language Liz didn’t understand. He was a huge man and he seemed quite intense about whatever it was he was yelling.

“What’s his problem ?” Asked Clara.

“No idea, don’t understand a word of it.” Said Liz. “Of course I might....”

“I know, when we get to gate twenty one, you might know what he’s shouting at us.....Really helpful Liz, really helpful.” Said Clara.

“Pointing at things is pretty universal.” Said Mabina.

Liz pointed at the standing stone, even thrusting her forefinger at it. The leader of the unknown warriors understood. He shook his head at her. Liz lifted her enormous axe and swung it about with ease. There was muttering, their enemies were obviously impressed. Once again she pointed at the standing stone.

“I think you might have cracked it.” Said Clara.

The leader had held up his hand, an open palm thrust in her direction. Now he was talking to the warrior on his right. Liz didn’t want a battle with forty warriors on only the fifth gate. They might have been useless fighters of course, but Liz doubted it. She was resting her head on the top of her axe, when the talking stopped. The leader looked straight at her and shook his head.

“Here we go..... Are you ready ?” Asked Clara.

“No.” Said Liz.

Liz ran at the leader of the warriors, who were still unknown. She could hear the two vampires running with her, as she raised the weapon that had once belonged to the Viking hero Eric Bloodaxe. Her target was armed with a serious looking sword, which he raised to block her blow. No use, the axe was too heavy and her muscles were too strong. The momentum of her blow shattered her enemy’s blade. On her axe went, right through his forehead, slicing through his face.

“Kill them all.” Clara was shouting.

Liz let the mighty axe carry on, right down through the leader’s chest, finally digging itself several inches into the ground. She pulled the axe out of the ground and raised it high above her head. She meant her war cry to be something in English, a threat to any and all who might hinder the progress of the Unnamed, her. Instead a war cry came out of her throat that sounded so deep, so alien.....The air around her seemed to vibrate.

“They’re running..... After them.” Shouted Mabina.

Despite being virtually indestructible and despite the wound not being even vaguely life threatening, Liz felt intense pain as a weapon cut into her back. She spun around to find the man the leader had spent so long talking to. Perhaps a second in command, or a trusted general, he seemed to have

been the one to ruin any chance of the day passing without bloodshed. He swung a bloody sword at her again, aimed at her neck.

"Bastard." She said.

Liz was beginning to enjoy using the axe; it felt right in her hands. Almost as if a Viking smith had created it with her in mind. Downward blows were the most powerful and destructive, but a quick swing was enough to remove the second in command's head from his shoulders.

"It isn't right.....This place isn't right." Said Clara.

Despite all the shouted threats, the two vampires hadn't pursued and killed every enemy warrior. About half were lying on the ground though, dead or in the process of dying. The remainder were running along the valley floor and quickly vanishing into the trees. Clara was spitting out a mouthful of blood.

"It tastes like acid." She said.

Mabina crushed a leaf and it turned to dust in her hand. Dust which rose into the air, to be carried away in the morning breeze.

"She's right, this place is all wrong." Said Mabina. "Wherever we are.....It definitely isn't our world."

"Come on, we'll get our gear and use the gate." Said Liz.

"Bring my pack while I take care of the wounded." Said Clara. "They shouldn't be left to suffer."

By take care of, Clara had meant finish off. Liz watched her go from body to body, making sure they were dead, or using her Janbiya as a Misericorde to bring the mercy of death to the wounded. It looked brutal, but Liz knew it had to be done. When her gruesome task was finished, Clara put on her pack and joined them in front of the standing stone.

"Ready?" Asked Liz.

Not the usual No as an answer, Clara just looked at her and nodded.

"Let's get out of this shithole." Said Mabina.

There was a switch in her mind, though Liz had no idea how she managed to trigger it. A reflex or something in her unconscious, it made the standing stone glow as bright as the moons still in the sky above them.

"Keep close to me."

Liz stepped into the stone and the world appeared to revolve around her. From a dull early morning, to full daylight somewhere. She found herself walking on sand, under the brightest sunlight she'd ever seen. Not a good place for vampires, she could hear Clara and Mabina sneezing and spluttering. When her eyes would allow it, Liz looked up.

"Wow.....That is amazing." She said.

"Two moons to two suns in a split second." Said Clara. "I'm going to have headaches for a week.

Lead on Liz, get us out of this damned sunlight."

"I second all of that." Said Mabina.

Two suns in the sky, although only one was incredibly bright. The second sun looked either a long way off, or it had seen better days. It had a blueish tinge to it, as it was almost dazzled into invisibility by its brighter twin.

"There....." Said Liz pointing. "The gate is underground, inside or maybe under the largest pyramid."

"Underground, maybe there is a dark deity who looks after his creatures." Said Clara.

It was a long way to walk, but Liz knew the vampires wouldn't die from being out in bright sunlight for a while. They would sneeze, cough and splutter quite a lot, and there'd be complaining of course, quite a lot of that.

"I packed a large floppy hat, but I guarantee it'll be at the bottom of my pack." Said Mabina.

Liz ignored them as she set a good pace towards the largest of the pyramids. Familiar pyramids in style, they could have been built from the same plans as the ones on the Giza Plateau in Egypt. There were more than in Egypt though, lots more and they looked less damaged by wind erosion.

"They look better than the ones in Egypt." She said. "They're probably newer."

No proper answer, just a lot of sneezing and spluttering, with what sounded like 'get a move on,' thrown into the mix. Liz became staggered by the sheer size of the largest pyramid, as they gradually got closer to it. It had to be three times the height of The Great Pyramid of Giza. The line of pyramids stretched out to either side of them, seemingly stretching to the horizon in both directions.

"Are you guys seeing this?" Asked Liz. "This place is..... Amazing."

"Just get us under cover." Said Clara.

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The Akhens had refused to be coaxed out of the chamber with the tomb, they'd tried everything. Throwing rocks, yelling at them, even getting far too close for safety and waving weapons at them. The strange looking skeletal creatures would amble after her as far as the entrance to the chamber, but no further. Laura had come to the conclusion that testing her sniper rifle inside the chamber, was the only way to make sure it would kill the Akhens.

"Very dangerous Laura." Liam had told her. "They can move amazingly quickly when angered."

And of course killing one of them with a firearm was almost certain to anger their friends. Laura loved the sniper rifle which had been made for her by a weapons genius in Germany. Loosely based on the German DSR-Precision DSR-50, but completely redesigned and fitted with a far better blast compensator. Using the .50 BMG ammunition made it a genuine anti-materials weapon, as well as being a highly accurate sniper rifle. Put simply, if someone was hiding behind a wall, her new sniper rifle would penetrate the wall to hit them. The German genius had charged her a small fortune to create the weapon and she hadn't begrudged a single euro of the cost.

"Get ready to run like fuck." She said.

They were both there with her, helping as best as they were able. Akiva she was growing more fond of with each passing day. As for Liam Gagnon? Sadly she was going to kill him before she left the caverns. His idea of course, though she'd learned a few things that made killing him essential for several reasons. He'd been lying to them about quite a few things, mainly about how his two colleagues had died.

"They can run like the wind Laura." Said Liam.

.50 BMG ammunition wasn't new, it had been designed and used before the Second World War. Used with modern rifles that could handle extra loading in the shells, and the ammunition could stop just about anything. One in the engine block was enough to stop a truck.

"Ok you two, start to move." She said. "If it doesn't go down.....I'll risk a second shot."

"That sounds like suicide." Said Akiva.

"Gone on move..... Run....Both of you."

Laura had entered the chamber and then backed away as far as she could, but still have a good chance of hitting one of the Akhens. They were still slowly shuffling around the tomb, so it wasn't going to be a difficult shot. As the others moved away, she set the sight on her rifle to use an image intensifier. Instantly the murky, lamp lit inside of the chamber, became as clear as day.

"Our deity of enhanced vision, please don't fail me now." She mumbled.

She chose the Akhen by random, just one of the group quite close to the sarcophagus in the centre of the chamber. There came that moment of self-doubt, but it passed as quickly as it had arrived.

Laura knew she was good at using the heavy rifle that had been custom made for her size, reach and

requirements. She placed the sight over the Akhen's head, assuming that whatever it used to think and run its autonomic processes were still in its head.

"Boom."

The shot echoed through the caves, as her bullet hit the Akhen, right in the centre of its head. It looked like dust had come out of the exit wound rather than blood, a small cloud of brownish dust.

"Yay." She yelled.

She could follow the brute down as it hit the ground. None of his friends seemed to realise what was going on. Laura quickly aimed at the next nearest Akhen. A round aimed at its chest, to give a good idea of what was likely to kill the beasts, and what wasn't.

"Boom."

The Akhen went down, but only onto its knees. It looked unlikely to fall over. But as it tried to stand the monstrous brute fell over backwards and didn't move again.

"Easier than I thought." She muttered.

She'd forgotten to watch the other creatures, and how fast they could move. By the time she moved her eye out of the rifle sight, they were halfway to where she was lying on the top of a shattered column. Like one they moved, a large number of angry skeletal beasts. Laura picked up her beloved rifle and ran as fast as she could, which was faster than any human could run. She just hoped it was faster than any Akhen could run.

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Simon Atherton didn't just have more strength and speed than a human. His senses were better too, far better. He noticed subtle changes in colours; he heard sounds no human ear could pick up. His reaction speed to a threat was at least ten times faster than the best, highly trained human soldier. Which made it quite embarrassing, that he only noticed after they'd eaten a pizza and drank half a bottle of wine between them. As they watched an old movie on Netflix, Simon noticed something was missing.

"Crap !.....I think we've been burgled, the statue we took out of the crate has gone."

Patsy was looking about, but she wasn't showing the sort of shock and anxiety he'd expected.

"Nothing else seems to have been touched." She said. "You've all sorts of nice things in here."

"It was next to the coffee table and now it's gone." He said. "Come with me, but stay behind me, we'll need to check every place someone could hide."

"Alright.....If you think that's necessary."

Patsy had toughened up since he'd first met her on the Piccadilly Line; she'd toughened up a lot. Her reaction just didn't feel right though.

"There could still be someone in the house Patsy." He snapped.

"I know, don't yell at me.....I'm sure I saw the statue move as I closed the door."

"Sorry for yelling.....Why didn't you tell me ?" He asked.

"You'd have just told me I was imagining it."

"Maybe, maybe not.....The Walter & Emily who owned most of the stuff in the crates were well known to be on the crazy side of eccentric. Some supernatural creatures we find, might be like the snake on my arm. Others might be aggressive and leap on us while we're having sex on the sofa." There was a look on her face he knew well and loved to see, as it usually meant she was about to initiate sex.

"The sofa Simon.....We've the house to ourselves and I know you have a spare bedroom."

"There are no sheets on the bed, or pillows."

"It's a warm night, we'll manage."

For a few seconds he was away with the fairies, sexy, bad, naughty fairies. His mind filled with the thoughts of a night of really great sex in the bedroom on the top floor. Common sense won out though, just.

“Later....Come on, stay with me, just not too close.” He said. “We’ve got to go through everywhere big enough for it to have hidden, or whatever it’s doing. We’ll start in here and work our way up the house.”

“I know where there’s a gun in Laura’s room.” Said Patsy.

“No..... Oh, you and Laura do love your guns. Not every problem in the world can be solved by guns.”

“Some can though Simon, some can.”

“Alright, I’ll give you that. Fire one in here and the neighbours will call the police, so no guns.....Alright, first cupboard, the one with the old vinyl discs I refuse to throw away.”

There was a cupboard near the fireplace, which was still fairly dark, even after he’d thrown the doors wide open.

“I know where Laura has a flashlight.” Said Patsy.

“Go on then.”

Of course she brought the gun back with her. A heavy looking revolver that wouldn’t have looked out of place in an old Cagney movie. She obviously saw him noticing it in her hand.

“Just as a last resort, if either of us is in danger.” She said.

“It looks ancient, does it even work ?”

“If Laura had it, it will work.”

Patsy unlocked the cylinder, showing him it was full of bullets. She then pushed it back into place, before spinning it like a pro.

“Alright..... You’re now my go to gun expert.” He said.

Once he was happy there was no dragon statue hiding behind his collection of old records, they moved around the room. It took longer than he’d thought possible to look through about seven assorted cupboards and gaps behind things. The problem was not knowing what they were dealing with and how dangerous it might turn out to be.

“Right, next the kitchen or the cupboard under the stairs.” He said. “Your choice, or we could toss a coin ?”

“Kitchen.....And I think we need coffee while we search.” Said Patsy.

Coffee became coffee with nibbles. It was another half an hour before the kitchen was declared mythical creature free, and they were opening the door to the cupboard under the stairs.

“A lot of surveillance tech, sadly all watching the outside of the house.” He said.

“Luckily not many places to hide.”

Five minutes later they were on their way upstairs, with the bedroom he shared with Clara as the first bedroom to be searched. He hesitated at the threshold.

“We’re here for a good reason, but.....Clara must never know you were in our room.”

“I understand Simon, I really do. No problem, it can be our little secret.”

Simon entered the bedroom and tried to look happier than he felt. Clara had a vampire’s sense of smell and there was a chance she’d know Patsy had been looking through her things. Not that she was likely to harm Patsy, but he might be sleeping in the spare room for months.

“I can’t see it getting into the suit cases on top of the wardrobes.” Said Patsy.

“And Clara’s wardrobes are so crammed full with her.....Stuff...There’s no room for something that big to hide.”

“I’m a woman Simon, trust me.....Don’t use words like crammed and stuff if Clara is around.”

“Oh, I don’t.....Unless I want to deliberately annoy her.”

Simon drew the line at opening shoe boxes, but he did lift Clara’s dressed out of the way to look behind them. He felt a little ashamed of his own collection of scruffy clothing, but his work suits looked neat and tidy. The last thing he did was to get down on the floor and shine the flashlight under the bed.

“Jeezzzzzz.” He yelled.

“Did you find it ?”

“No.....Your face.....Sorry, I couldn’t resist.”

“Swine.”

She still kissed him..... Right there in Clara’s most private territory. He felt mildly guilty, but the kiss had been nice.

“Laura’s room next.” Said Patsy. “Lots more wardrobes and a few wooden trunks.”

“You probably know her stuff better than she does.”

“Oi Simon Atherton.....What do you mean by that ?”

“Look.... Girls are allowed to have a bit of a crush on other girls.”

“You swine.”

“Just invite me to join you if it gets.....Interesting.”

“That’s it..... You’re on the sofa tonight.”

There was a lot of play fighting, which turned into some kissing and touching by the time they were outside Laura’s room.

“That door is ajar.” Said Patsy. “Who’s room is that ? I’ve never seen it open before.”

Again he should have noticed. He was supposed to be an apex predator for fuck’s sake. Patsy hadn’t realised either of course, but it wasn’t her house.

“That it no one’s room.” He said. “There is no room there, it’s the rear wall of the house. A few inches of plaster, bricks and a cavity wall and you’d be falling into the back garden.”

“Wow..... Are we going in there ?”

“I don’t see how we have an option.....Probably safest if I put you in a cab home first.”

“No way..... You go in there and I go with you. Don’t forget, I do have Laura’s huge revolver.”

“How could I forget, it’s like a hand held howitzer. I’ll need to get a weapon for myself.”

“Oh.... Laura has just the thing.” Said Patsy.

She came out of Laura’s room carrying a sword that looked like a scimitar, but the blade looked thinner, sharper. It looked antique, incredibly well made and probably worth a fortune.

“Laura took it off a Silver Dawn guy, one of their leaders.” Said Patsy.

“I can see Laura is due another talk about what we keep in the house. Thank you, it’s a magnificent blade. Are you sure you don’t want to go home ?”

“Yes.....Where you go....I go.”

Simon opened the door that was ajar and noticed a slightly bad smell coming from wherever the door led. A smell of damp rather than corruption. The odour of neglected places where fungus have taken over.

“Ewww..... Smells a bit.....funky.” Said Patsy.

“To think that just a few hours ago, we were enjoying a burger at the Hard Rock. Here we go, keep that gun ready.”

He heard her thumbing back the safety catch as he opened the door and shone Laura’s flashlight down the passageway in front of him. It looked for all the world, as though someone had built a

Dickensian slum behind their house. The grubby walls, the damp, the general feeling of neglect. The unpleasant odour grew in strength as he passed through the doorway.

The gun Laura had brought from London was one Simon had taken from a drug dealer in North London. She wasn't sure if the drug dealer had survived the encounter and she didn't really care. Despite Liam craving death, he had told her several times that he considered suicide to be a mortal sin. Plus she now realised that much of what came out of Liam's mouth was a lie. She handed the worn and noisy revolver to Akiva.

"We can't trust Liam; I want you to lure the Akhens away from the chamber."

He took the revolver and extra rounds from her, though he didn't look happy about it. Despite being offered some of their food, Liam had reverted to hunting for rats and anything else he could catch. They currently had his lair to themselves.

"I never wanted Liam to have a gun.....But you said he'd be alright with it. Something about him not wanting to risk his immortal soul by putting it in his mouth and pulling the trigger."

"The gun is a Saturday night special Akiva; it's worn but won't jam on you. Really noisy, which is perfect to get the attention of the Akhens. Fire a few shots and run away.... You know the routine; we went through it lots of times with Liam. Keeping firing and running, but don't lose them until you hear the explosion."

"Don't ignore my questions Laura." Snapped Akiva. "Are you choosing Liam over me to help you place the explosives ? Do you know how crazy that is ? He eats rats Laura ! Think about that."

It was a real dilemma. Horus had diverted her for another chat, when she'd gone back to Jerusalem to pick up her sniper rifle. He hadn't sworn her to secrecy, but it was quite clear the Ancient God wasn't too fond of Akiva.

"His night vision is better than yours." She said.

"Oh come on, maybe, but only a little..... What is the real reason ? Don't you trust me ?"

She did, to a point, just not totally. Thinking about it, Laura realised that she didn't trust anyone without question, apart from Simon and Clara. Even they had their secrets, but that came from having such long and eventful lives. Offending Akiva felt like the wrong thing to do. He was a conspiracy nut who thought the Gods were out to screw him over. From what she's seen of the world, that made him saner than most.

"I had another audience with Horus, when I went to pick up my sniper rifle."

"That was some time ago. Why didn't you mention it ?"

Yep, definitely a conspiracy nut, but he was her conspiracy nut and she needed him.

"I could invent an excuse, or just tell you what Horus said."

They were alright again, he was smiling at her.

"Just tell me what he said Laura ?"

"Liam lied to us, there is an item in the tomb that we're supposed to take with us. Horus liked the idea of blowing everything up, so we didn't waste all the effort in bringing the C4 into the caves. He also said the creatures rarely wander far from the tomb chamber, so it's quite likely that Liam killed his two friends."

"Wow, that is quite a secret you've been sitting on Laura. Of course Liam would say that Horus is lying."

"Leaving aside the whole Ancient God versus a strange creature who eats rats....Thing. We are here to recover an item for Horus. Why would he lie about that ? He also told me not to trust Walter & Emily too far, which we'd already worked out for ourselves."

“As if finding the artefacts wasn’t going to be hard enough.” Said Akiva.

“If it was easy, they’d all be doing it. Do you want my theory about Liam ? Forget I asked, I’m going to tell you whether you want to hear it or not.”

“Come on vampire girl.... Tell me your words of wisdom ?”

“He’s been offered a way out of the caves by the Couziniers. All his bleating about wanting to die is a huge lie. My guess is that they want the artefact in the tomb.”

“What does Horus expect us to recover ?” Asked Akiva.

“He said it was the only item of value in the tomb. I’m looking forward to seeing Liam’s face when I push the lid off the sarcophagus and pick it up. He must have been planning to kill us both, once he had his hands on whatever it is. Can you torture ghosts ? We need to have a long talk with Walter & Emily once we’re back to your apartment in Rabat Eshkol.”

“Pain requires living nerves, but I can think of a few ways to scare them.” Said Akiva. “There are places that disembodied spirits fear being sent.”

Laura knew it was the verbal equivalent of lighting the touch paper on an entire box of fireworks. Akiva had to know though, it seemed telling him the truth was now habit forming.

“I need to be back in London next week. I’m seeing David Huynh of the Silver Dawn. You probably know him quite well ?”

Poor Akiva, he dropped the Saturday night special out of shock and had to bend down to recover it.

“Of course I know him, he’s the organiser. Nathalie Aurigny is the current leader. She comes up with the ideas and David makes those ideas happen. Why are you seeing him ?”

“Thanks for the info, we must talk about their office politics before I see him.”

“You’re doing it again Laura. Ignoring a direct question.”

She’d picked it up from Simon, he rarely gave a straight answer to anything.

“The best way to avoid answering a difficult question is to ignore it.”

He’d once told her. Actually it wasn’t just once, it seemed to be a piece of advice he liked to repeat quite often.

“They want to offer me a job I believe.” She said.

“You’re joking ?.....What as ?”

“Head of security.”

“Fuck !”

“I have no loyalty to the Psochics or the Silver Dawn Akiva. I’ll demand time to finish paying back my Quid Pro Quo for Horus. Who knows, they might have resources I can use. I can see it..... What is that phrase ? I haven’t had many job offer letters. Yes....It might well work out to be to our mutual benefit.”

Akiva looked ready to explode. Luckily fate gave her the perfect opportunity to avoid any further discussion with him.

“Shush, Liam is coming back.” She said.

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Evangeline Smart, known as Evie to her friends, had been having an afternoon nap. It was a cold day in London, but she’d left the back door wedged open so that Zeus could get into the garden when he wanted. The little black and white kitten had grown quite a bit, but there was still that kitten look about him. Ivy next door had teased her about his name of course.

“Zeus..... Who’d call such a tiny thing Zeus ?”

Evie didn’t care what Ivy thought, or anyone else for that matter. She thought Zeus was a cracking name for her growing kitten. There had been one incident where she was sure there had been

growling in the middle of the night. Not any noise a tiny kitten was likely to have made, or the average full grown cat for that matter. She'd put the noise down to her imagination and eating cheese close to bed time. Something had woken her out of her nap, a noise that quickly had her wide awake.

"That's Ivy's grandchild, I know it is Zeus." She muttered.

Zeus normally kept close to her when she napped, usually curled up on the arm of her recliner. The kitten was nowhere to be seen though, and the sound of child yelling was getting louder. Like many grandparents, Ivy had been drafted into the role of baby sitter by her daughter. The child was called Kylie and she was probably about six or seven. Too young to be left alone, though Ivy often said she could be a bit of a handful. The voice coming from next door's garden was definitely Kylie and she wasn't happy about something.

"I'd better look, you never know."

She found Zeus fairly easily, he was sitting on the back step, staring towards where all the sound was coming from. She picked her pet up, to be rewarded by his loud and friendly purr.

"Come on Zeus, let's see what all the hoo-ha is about."

He climbed up under her chin, as they both looked over the hedge that separated the two gardens. Quite a scruffy and bald hedge, Ivy's idiot dog kept scrambling through into her garden. Evie had no idea of the dog's breed, but she had never taken to it. Far too yappy for her and it had snapped at her once, when she'd tried to shoo it back through the hedge. Evie had found the brute wandering about in her kitchen, on more than one occasion. A horrid dog they'd decided to call Zak of all things. With a name like that it was bound to turn out bad.

"Is everything alright?" Asked Ivy.

Zak was cowering under an apple tree, while Kylie was yelling about a cat biting him. Her friend Ivy seemed to be trying to get hold of the dog to see what had happened to it. Zak didn't seem at all pleased to see her and Zeus. He began to let out a dreadful wailing sound.

"It was her cat...I saw it." Yelled Kylie. "Her nasty cat attacked poor Zak."

"Ridiculous." Said Evie. "As if my little kitten could hurt a dog that size."

"I saw it.....I really did grandma. Her cat made itself bigger."

"Stop it Kylie ! I won't tell you again." Shouted Ivy.

You can't choose your family or your neighbours and often both are far from ideal. Ivy was a good friend though, they'd helped each other through quite a few rough times over the years. Ivy shrugged at her.

"I'm sorry Evie, just ignore madam here..... She can be such a handful."

"Consider it already forgotten."

Zak really did seem to be trying to get away from her and Zeus, as he cowered under the tree. Evie hugged her kitten and hoped whatever had scared the stupid dog, kept it out of her garden in the future. As she walked back into her kitchen, Evie kissed her purring kitten on the top of his head.

"As if you'd hurt anyone, even that daft dog."

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