

## The Hornsey Vampires

(Season two of London's Night Stalkers)

### Chapter 16 – Tooth of the Saint

**“There was something about Brendan’s hired companion, a feeling. It felt as though storm clouds were gathering around Liz Grant. Laura was quite looking forward to seeing what happened when the storm arrived.”**

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Tasha Wallis was deep into writing an instruction manual for a piece of banking software. She’d already invested a lot of her time in the project. There had been several weeks working with the development team in Woking and several days seeing the old version being used at a major high street bank. She wasn’t an expert on the system, that wasn’t what she did. Tasha was incredibly good at asking the questions the bank staff would ask. She made sure she understood what they needed to know. For anything really strange, they could call their IT department. Her doorbell rang and rang again when she’d ignored it the first time.

“Crap.” She muttered.

Things were flowing, her almost laid back writing style was working well for her. Some mornings were good for a couple of thousand words and some mornings were.....

“Alright, alright..... I’m coming.” She yelled.

Three rings on the doorbell, few callers were that persistent. The man on her doorstep was good looking and wearing a very smart suit. Tasha hadn’t slept with many men, but she wasn’t totally immune to the charms of an attractive twenty something guy. His eyes held her attention, the hint of green as he stood sneezing in the morning sun.

“Sorry..... Damn hay fever.” He said.

Booted and suited and he had an arm full of leaflets. A sales guy, she’d have normally politely told him she wasn’t interested. The eyes though, those pretty green eyes. She might even invite him in for coffee if he seemed nice.

“Bit late in the year for hay fever.” She said.

“I’m a slave to it. I can have a sneezy day in January.”

“I don’t want to seem impolite, but I am busy at the moment.”

“Yes, of course..... I did notice you don’t have an alarm box on your wall. Crime is rising all over London and the company I represent is a leader in the field..... We do offer payment terms...”

Damn a man selling alarms, and he looked set to carry on giving her the hard sell for some time. He was opening a leaflet with a post-it note inside.

‘I’m a friend of Daniel’s. Please invite me in, it’s important.’

Tasha liked him and liked to think she was a good judge of character.

“You’d better come in and tell me about the payment options.” She said.

She took him through into the lounge, where Rocky was fast asleep on the windowsill. Her cat looked up and hissed a couple of times, before running out of the room.

“He obviously doesn’t like salesmen.” Said her visitor.

“Your patter was good; you could take it up for a living.”

He was much too young for her of course, but at her age a good part of the thrill was imagining what might happen, but was never likely to. Tasha flirted as she poured the coffee and gave him a selection of biscuits.

"I don't even know your name."

"I'm Simon Atherton."

"Real name or made up one?"

"Genuine, you can see my driving license if you like?"

"No, that's alright. I'm sorry if I caused any trouble for Daniel. I felt bad for days after telling Bill's thugs about him..... I have an elderly relative he keeps threatening. I really am very sorry."

"That's alright, you did what you had to."

"Is Daniel alright?"

"Yes fine, Bill's people seem to have had a run in with a Glasgow gang. Some of it was in the local papers and I doubt if you'll ever see Steve Gorman again."

"Good, he's an animal who enjoys hurting people."

"Anyway, they never did see Daniel. I came to ask you a favour, one that might see Bill Jarrold in jail for the rest of his life. There will be some risk though, so I will understand if you say no."

Tasha was no hero, but she wanted her revenge on Bill. As if to encourage her, Rocky brought in a dead bird and laid it at Simon's feet. She might be a good judge of character, but Rocky was never wrong.

"He's never done that before." She said.

"Maybe he thinks I need feeding up."

Simon was a little on the thin side, but he was best looking man to have been in her home for a while. Too young for her though, way too young. She wasn't about to make a fool of herself.

"So, what is this favour you want me to do Simon?"

"Firstly I have to tell you that Olivia Reed's body has been found. I know that must be a shock, but it has to be kept a secret for now."

For a second the carpet seemed to rush up towards her and she almost dropped her coffee cup. She was right to have trusted him, Simon helped her without being over talkative. He put her cup on the table and held her hand.

"Where is her body Simon? Is it.....Is there anything to recognise after all this time?"

"Yes, you will know her. I can't tell you too much, your reactions need to be genuine. I have a few friends involved in setting a trap for Bill Jarrold. We need you to spring that trap. Will you do it for us?"

"Oh yes, I definitely will."

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Laura had told Tim she was back in the UK. Perhaps it had been a mistake, he'd begun to make plans to come and see her. She wanted to keep the two halves of her life apart though; the Psochics were potentially more dangerous than Mabina.

"Just another week or so Tim, I promise." She'd told him. "Then everything will be back to normal."

Or as normal as her life could ever be, with Wiremi, her Gudara and of course the whole creature of the night thing going on. He'd sounded miserable as she'd ended the phone call, something she hadn't wanted to happen. Clara had understood though, and had arranged for one of Tom's people to drop off her pimped V8. No getting in a huff because Laura wanted to keep London separate from the house in Tonbridge. Not that much seemed to ever get Clara in a huff.

"It's a cold night, come inside we're about to watch a movie." Said Liz.

Liz was still a mystery in so many ways. Not just having no heartbeat for a while, yet coming back from the dead. There was something about Brendan's hired companion, a feeling. It felt as though

storm clouds were gathering around Liz Grant. Laura was quite looking forward to seeing what happened when the storm arrived.

"I'm waiting for my van; someone is driving it down from London." She said.

"Are we going to meet another vampire?" Asked Liz. "Magda told me you're very rare, vampires who've formed almost a family group."

"You make us sound like a soap opera Liz. No, Clara and Simon don't share my enthusiasm for a truce with Mabina. Either of them coming here in person might cause problems. A minion is dropping off my van. How is your wound Liz?"

"I still can't stretch or bend down without causing pain, but I'm healing."

"So what happened to you Liz? You can tell me, I've no loyalty to anyone here and I rarely divulge a confidence."

"I don't know what you mean." Said Liz.

"Leaving aside coming back from the dead, your heartbeat is now slower and your body temperature a degree or so lower than it used to be. I'm a predator that hunts only humans, I know your physiology better than you do."

There was annoyance rather than fear in Liz, something fundamental had changed, though Laura still hadn't worked out what. She would though, eventually.

"I really don't know what.....This must be your van arriving."

The SatNav in her Chevrolet Suburban was an expensive upgrade. Give it a UK postcode and it got you there, every single time. Beetle was late though, he must have had problems following the SatNav's instructions. It was so nice to see her vehicle again, as it arrived in front of the house. There was a motorbike following behind it, probably Beetle's ride home.

"Wow, that is some van Laura." Said Liz. "Not exactly low profile though."

"You'd be amazed how easily it blends in, I've even slept in it a few times."

Laura still had the few thousand Simon had given her as an emergency escape fund. Beetle would be paid by Tom, but she felt the need to give him something.

"Thank you for delivering my van." She told him.

"Sorry I'm late.....No street lights out in the sticks. It all looks the same."

"It doesn't matter, you got here."

No hugging, it wouldn't suit the psycho bitch persona she'd tried so hard to cultivate with Tom and his people. She leant forward and kissed him on the cheek. He blushed and looked even more awkward as she pushed a small bundle of notes into his hand.

"No, you don't need to do that Miss Laura."

"I know, but it's a long way to come and you've a long journey home."

Beetle put on a crash helmet and got on the back of the motorbike. A few seconds later its taillight was just a red dot at the end of the lane. Liz joined her, giving her SUV's paint job a few appreciative noises. It was dark though and the yellow lights outside the house didn't do the flame effect justice.

"That is beautiful Laura."

"Wait until you see it in the daylight."

"We'd better go in." Said Liz. "Sam wants to give us another pep talk before the movie."

"Oh, crap, another Psochic pep talk and all in bed by one in the morning."

"Sam reminds me of the Rabbi who ran the local youth club when I was a kid."

"We have my van, we can escape now Liz. If we go into Tonbridge we're bound to find somewhere to buy nibbles and a bottle of wine."

Liz was shaking her head, but her look was shouting to be out of there.

"We couldn't."

"Yes we can Liz."

"Sam will be really pissed off."

"A good part of the fun is knowing Sam will be pissed off. Come on Liz, I promise not to bite anyone. We can even sleep in the van if we get locked out."

"Fine, but if we get into trouble..... You talked me into it. You are probably centuries older than me."

"No, I'm only twenty four."

"What.... How....."

"I'll explain it over wine and fried chicken wings."

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The Underhill Chapel was quite close to Brockham, one of the prettiest small villages in Surrey. According to Magda the chapel had never been open to the public, though a few weddings had taken place there. A private chapel near a large house that had burned down in the late sixteen hundreds. Now the chapel stood alone in several acres of mixed woodland and farmer's fields. The ancient building wasn't a ruin, grade one listing had ensured that it was regularly maintained. That and a generous fund set up by the surviving members of the Underhill family.

"Middle of nowhere and I can't sense a human heartbeat anywhere." Said Mabina. "This should be a piece of cake."

"Sam said there's an Underhill family curse and some sort of guardian." Said Laura.

"Everywhere seems to have a curse and a haunting, this is Surrey Laura. I doubt if we'll get baboons and giant snakes in Brockham."

"I'm just grateful we're not trudging through dusty tunnels again."

Mabina felt something was wrong about the small family chapel, but Laura seemed completely relaxed. Out of the two of them Laura seemed to have the strongest ability to sense trouble, so Mabina relaxed. They walked up to the chapel doors.

"A sign of the times, three hefty chains and padlocks." Said Mabina. "At one time the holy places were left open all night. No one dared to steal from such buildings."

"Just don't pee on any relics, trust me..... It can get gnarly." Said Laura.

They had a rough floorplan of the building and the plan was to go down into the basement and come up again inside the chapel. It appeared that Laura had experience of breaking into old churches, though she wasn't keen on giving details.

"There Mabina.... The grating. We can easily pull it up."

Impossible for a human, or even a group of human burglars. Two vampires had the grate up out of the ground next to the wall in seconds. They dropped the ten feet or so onto the cellar floor. Mabina turned on a Maglite supplied by the Psochics.

"Gloves, not another step without gloves." Said Laura. "It's obvious you don't do much housebreaking these days."

"I don't think my prints are on file anywhere."

"And gloves will make sure they never are."

It hurt to be tutored by one as young as Laura. She was talking sense though. Mabina pulled on a pair of strong rubber gloves. They were in a room that smelled of damp. Just one door and that was easy enough to force open. There was going to be no subtlety about their raid on the old chapel, no finesse. They were there for the artefact and everything that got in their way was expendable.

"Damn, a corridor with at least six doors." Said Laura. "You take the left, I'll take the right."

Every door was made of thick hardwood and every one was locked. It took several kicks to break the locks and the last door on the left gave access to a spiral staircase leading up. There was a large black cat halfway up the stairs.

"Hello fella, who do you belong to?" Asked Laura.

The animal went through the gap in the door at the top of the stairs.

"It probably lives here, kept to get rid of mice." Said Mabina.

They followed the cat into the chapel, where it sat on the back of a pew and observed them.

"Are you picking anything up?" Asked Mabina. "Last time you knew where the Egg was, even before we entered the tunnels."

"I'm not getting much, but the wall over there is.....Let's just say it feels lukewarm rather than a red hot certainty."

Two Maglites aimed at it and the stone placed in the wall was easy to read. It was the final resting place for the ashes of William Underhill of Oxford. Mabina knew the name from her studies of the Psochic Order.

"He was one of their leaders, almost a disciple of Howard Carter. There were all sorts of rumours about William being a man with real power, dark power. Everyone claimed to be an occultist then and most had all the dark power of a pet rabbit."

"That sounds like a story with a 'but' at the end of it." Said Laura.

"Indeed there are stories about William Underhill creating storms to send against his enemies.

Controlling the weather requires immense power and skill. If it's true of course and as a whole most rumours from around that time are rubbish."

The stone in the wall gave a ninety year lifespan for William, a rare thing in the age he lived in. He'd died in nineteen thirty seven, two years before his mentor Howard Carter. The stone was more than priceless, it was a piece of history. It still needed to be pulled from the wall though, they needed to see what was behind it. Laura took a hammer and chisel out of her pack, more presents from Sam and his Psochics.

"I burned down one of the oldest churches in England, but this....It just doesn't feel right." Said Laura.

Her feelings didn't stop her using the chisel on the edges of the stone. As soon as the first hammer blow struck the chisel, the cat began to howl.

"Poor thing, it's probably terrified." Said Laura.

It took about a dozen hits to loosen the stone and then it was two sets of strong vampire hands to pull it out of the wall. The stone with its inscription to the late William Underhill, shattered as it dropped to the ground.

"Damn, I didn't mean to drop it." Said Laura.

"At least the cat has stopped screeching."

The hole in the wall was deep, dug right into the stones used to build the wall. There was only one thing in the hole and it was still intact.

"That's a child's coffin, a fancy one at that." Said Mabina. "There was no mention of that in the journal of Samuel Westcott."

"The dagger is probably inside it." Said Laura. "It's stuck, too big for the hole.... Help me pull."

They both pulled and eventually the tiny coffin came out of the wall.

"Carvings on the sides, brass fittings, this was a coffin made for a child of the nobility." Said Mabina.

"How old do you think it is?"

“Old, the carvings will give an accurate date, but it’s likely to predate William Underhill by three hundred years, at least. Why it was jammed into the wall, is a mystery.”

They both looked at the coffin, with small animals carved along the sides. It looked so out of place in the old chapel with its dusty pews and persistent smell of damp.

“We’ll have to open it.” Said Laura. “We can’t take Magda a box full of dust. She’s not happy at the best of times.”

“HmMMM I’d quite like to see her face.... Liz would enjoy us upsetting Magda.”

“We’ll have to talk about Liz sometime, you must have felt her heart stop.” Said Laura.

“I did and something has changed inside her, maybe for the better. It’ll be interesting to see what happens when the change is complete.”

Laura wasn’t happy, Mabina was learning to pick up her moods. Moods weren’t that common in vampires. But Laura still had a lot of human emotions. They’d go with time, if she survived.

“That doesn’t seem much of a plan Mabina, just waiting for her to become something that might be dangerous.”

“So my dear Laura, you want us to fret and worry, perhaps be so anxious we don’t sleep properly. All a waste of time, anxiety is a pointless human emotion. What will be, will be, and I’m sure we will be able to deal with it at the time.”

“But to have no plan at all.....”

“Kill her if it worries you that much.”

“No, I..... Come on, let’s open this coffin.”

The strange sound made them look towards the altar at the eastern end of the chapel. Even with two Maglites it took a few seconds to find the source of the dreadful wailing. The cat was convulsing, probably dying. It arched its back and let out a hideous wail. Fur was falling off it, cracks were opening along its body, yet the shrieks and wails meant it was still alive. It even managed a feline scream when its backbone broke out of its skin.

“Now that is something to worry about.” Said Mabina. “It might have triggered the Underhill curse. We should leave and open the coffin back at your SUV.”

Even when common sense said the cat had to be dead, it refused to be ignored. The wailing became a loud deep growl.

“What the crap !” Said Laura.

The fur was discarded as the mess of tissue and blood grew. The cat was becoming something else, like a caterpillar becoming a moth. This was faster though, happening in front of them. The gruesome mess that had once been a cat, grew and began to form muscle and bone. A jaw with sharp canine teeth was formed before the rest of the skull. It was impossible of course, all the separate body parts forming, growing, linking together.

“Grab the coffin Laura, time for us to leave.”

There was something definitely feline about the beast forming in front of the altar. A guardian of some kind perhaps, though the Underhill family were rumoured to be a genuine rarity, occultists with real power. William Underhill might well have left a guard dog to look after the dagger, or a guard cat to be more accurate. When the creature stopped growing it was about eight feet long, with thick black fur. They were half way to the door at the top of the spiral staircase when its ears went back.

“Run Mabina, it’s going to attack.” Shouted Laura.

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Simon Atherton had worked at many jobs in his long life of over seven hundred and forty five years. When he thought about, there were few jobs he hadn't worked at, even if some only lasted a few weeks. Hundreds of jobs, maybe thousands, though few had become anything he could have called a career. Careers tended to mean study and certificates, usually membership of a trade organisation. Those sorts of things became difficult if you didn't appear to age or die. Mabina had managed to hold down a career in medicine, though that was rare.

"Sorry Olivia, time for you to make a sensational reappearance." He muttered.

Simon had been an undertaker for several years, or rather an undertaker's assistant. He'd enjoyed it and learned a huge amount about human anatomy. Even wearing black a lot hadn't worried him, though walking in front of the horse drawn hearse on a sunny day hadn't been fun. He knew that bacteria wouldn't make up for years of lost time by having a huge feast on Olivia's body. That kind of thing only happened in horror films. No bug sprays, no tissue fixers, that would all make the police forensics people curious. Olivia was simply going to be unwrapped and left to be found, her body suffering a few hours of decay at the most.

"You'll soon get a proper burial.....Tasha has missed you."

Embalming worked best at keeping corruption at bay, but even that wasn't perfect. Eventually everything decayed, it was as inevitable as death and taxes. Olivia had to look as natural as anyone who'd been dead for years could look. He'd leave the pathologist to wonder about the near miraculous state of preservation.

"Fuck..... Don't nick her skin you idiot." He muttered.

Simon was working in the back of his van, which was parked in a quiet lane near Welling in South East London. He was also constantly focusing on heartbeats nearby, human heartbeats. No security plan is ever perfect, but he was confident no one was going to surprise him. He used the freshly sharpened shears again to cut away layers of the plastic wrap.

"Well, at least I can tell Laura it wasn't millions of layers of shrink wrap."

The plastic was thick in places, especially around her face. There were no obvious signs of how she'd died. No sign of strangulation, no bullet holes, no external wounds of any kind. There might be something to see once he'd removed all the plastic. Washing her down was going to be difficult, but it had to be done. Nothing was going to be allowed to confuse the DNA evidence he was going to leave on her. He leant forward after completely clearing her face of plastic.

"Good, you smell reasonably fresh."

A vampire's sense of smell wasn't brilliant, though it was many times better than that of a human. Olivia didn't smell like a long dead corpse. He felt her face with the back of his hand. Good, the flesh was still firm. His phone rang, Clara's name coming up.

"Hi, found out anything?" He asked.

"No, I've followed Sam around all night. A bar in Soho to meet a large man called Hugo, before dinner with Magda in an Italian restaurant in Beauchamp Place. He's up to something, I'm just not sure what. Have you finished..... You know?"

"A lot harder than I thought, I'll be home really late."

"Need help?"

"Tempting, but I'm on the other side on London. I'll finish things up on my own."

"Alright, call if you need me."

He instantly regretted not asking her to come and help. There was still a lot of plastic to remove and washing the body down was going to be awkward in the back of the van.

"Then I need to place you in just the right spot, before planting the evidence..... Easy." He muttered.

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It hurt when Laura rolled over, the rough edges on the lead roof dug into the wounds. Mabina was lying next to her, looking up at the stars.

“We need to plan next time.” Said Laura. “We can’t keep rushing in and hoping for the best.”

“A basic sort of plan I agree Laura, but it’s worked well so far.”

“We’re injured and hiding on the roof Mabina. I don’t call that working well.”

“It could have been worse.”

Yes it could, they might both be dead. Laura kept her mouth closed, she didn’t want a full on argument with Mabina. They’d both been gashed quite badly by the creature’s razor sharp claws. It didn’t climb well though for something which looked like a large panther. The roof looked to be a safe refuge, at least for now.

“Tell me about the old church you burned down ?” Asked Mabina.

“Now ?”

“Humour me, it might give us an idea how to deal with William Underhill’s pet.”

“You think he set the trap ?”

“Oh yes, since you’re not getting any pain from the metal disc in your side, we can probably rule out anything involving ancient Egyptian deities. This will be a guard set by William.... Now tell me about the church you destroyed ?”

“I’m surprised you haven’t heard about it.” Said Laura. “According to Daniel I’m supposed to be some kind of living legend to other vampires.”

“We’re not social beings Laura, gossip can take years to spread among us, sometimes decades. This isn’t just idle curiosity, tell me everything.”

“It was St Mary’s Church, said to be the oldest in London, though it was really just over the border into Hertfordshire.....”

Laura told her it all, every naïve mistake she’d made. As Clara had told her afterwards, she’d been lucky to survive. Pouring a little vampire blood over an ancient cross was one thing, but pouring a bottle of urine.....Whatever God or Gods you might believe in, centuries of worship left something behind, a power resentful of those who defiled holy places. Laura had been lucky to escape with just a headache and a few days of constant nausea.

“So whatever vengeful force you let loose, threw you off a chair ?” Asked Mabina.

“Yes I was thrown some distance. I know it sounds cheesy, but it felt like being hit by a lightning bolt. I was so weak afterwards, it took all my strength to just pick up my things and get out of the burning church.”

“Good, very good, just the sort of spiritual force we need.” Said Mabina. “There is a cross in the chapel below, one just as ancient as the one at St Mary’s. If we pour some vampire urine over it..... Mixed with a little of our blood...”

“The spiritual force might destroy us.” Said Laura.

“No, no, we’ll be up above as it were, pouring from the rafters. The guardian beast though Laura, it might well be completely destroyed. At the very least it’ll be hurt enough for us to escape. After we pick up the coffin of course. Why did you leave it on top of the mausoleum ?”

An unstoppable guardian that looked like a huge panther had been chasing them. Her assassins blade didn’t even manage to cut its fur, yet Mabina was asking why she’d put the child’s coffin in a place of safety. There were times when Laura really wanted to shoot Mabina again.

“We can simply jump down, grab the coffin and run.” She snapped. “The beast is probably linked to the chapel in some way, it’s unlikely to chase us back to my SUV.”

"We'd be relying on a lot of ifs and supposings." Said Mabina. "It moves faster than us, we have the wounds to prove it. You can try outrunning it if you like Laura. I'll miss you a little, we've become almost friends."

Laura might have become angry, if she hadn't heard Mabina chuckle in the dark.

"Bitch." She said. "Alright, we'll try pouring pee over the cross. We'll need something to hold it in though."

"We both brought water bottles."

Ewww, but saying it would sound a little immature. Laura dug her reusable water bottle out of her back pack and began to quickly drink the contents, while Mabina did the same with hers. Soon her body decided it needed to get rid of excess fluid. Surprisingly quickly they had quite a lot of vampire urine.

"Blood next, bite your wrist Laura..... Then we'll give it all a good shake to mix it all up. If you're right, pouring it over the cross will disable Underhill's creature."

If she was right ! Laura realised Mabina was already thinking of ways to blame her if it all went wrong. No wonder vampires weren't social creatures. Mabina shook her bottle of vampire's bodily fluid and they were ready. Laura began to pull lead off the roof, throwing the heavy metal tiles off the roof.

"You've disturbed the beast, it's come out to see what we're doing." Said Mabina.

"I'll try and hit it with a piece of lead."

It was impossible to hold a flashlight and throw accurately. She missed with the lead and the creature hid behind the mausoleum where she'd placed the small coffin.

"Damn." She said.

"Feel grateful it doesn't climb well, or we'd be in trouble."

Under the lead was the original roof structure to hold the weight. Lots of thick wooden slats covered in whatever the builders had used for filler. It took a while to punch a person sized hole through the slats, long enough to add a few more fluid ounces to the bottles.

"The damn thing is back inside now." Said Laura. "I'm tempted to take a few shots at it."

"Your blade didn't harm it, so I doubt if bullets will." Said Mabina. "Besides we talked about this on the way here. In some places gunfire is a normal feature of the night. In leafy Surrey though.....Someone will hear and call the police. Try if you want though."

"You're just lining me up to take the blame if it all goes tits up."

"That's what friends are for Laura."

There was no floor under the roof, just the beams and rafters that held up several tons of lead. As she looked down, Laura could see the creature running around, occasionally leaping up, scabbling at the walls.

"It's been waiting centuries for someone to rip apart." She said.

The beams were solid and wide enough to walk on, as long as she was careful.

"If you're going to do this, you should have both bottles." Said Mabina.

Laura took the bottle and pushed it into her jacket pocket.

"I can see what you're doing Mabina. If it goes wrong stupid Laura gets the blame. If it works it'll all be because of your wonderful plan."

She couldn't see Mabina's face that well in the dark, but she could imagine the smug grin.

"Just don't drop the bottles Laura."

"Just keep your flashlight aimed at that cross."

Laura got down onto her knees as the wide timbers joined narrower ones near the altar. The cross looked old enough to have seen tens of thousands of worshippers knelt in front of it. All those years, all those people fervently hoping someone was up there, listening to their prayers. Some of that spiritual energy would have been absorbed by the stone walls, but a lot of it would have gone into the wooden cross.

“Keep your legs up Laura, the creature is leaping higher.” Shouted Mabina.

So intent on the cross, Laura hadn’t even noticed the guardian creature trying to pull her off the beam with its claws. The chapel wasn’t that large, but the roof beams were at least forty feet above the floor tiles below. The beast nearly reached her once, though the effort seemed to tire it.

“I’m alright..... The cross is mounted away from the wall. I should be able to get right over the top of it.”

The wooden beam she needed to get onto was quite thin. Laura made sure the bottles were securely held by the velcro pockets on her jacket, before getting down on her tummy. The creature was no longer jumping at her, it was howling at her, an angry aggressive howl.

“Yeah, fuck you too.” She shouted at it.

She was there, right over the top of the cross. It took a bit of moving about to get the bottle out of her pocket, the thin wooden beam rocked a little.

“Careful.” Shouted Mabina.

“I know.”

Laura shook the bottle before taking off the top. The contents looked frothy in the light from Mabina’s Maglite. Fast pour or slow and steady ? She poured it slowly, eager to see if it worked, but prepared to start thinking up a plan B if it didn’t.

“I saw that..... It glowed red.....” Yelled Mabina.

Laura carried on pouring, as heat began to rise up into her face. Crap, the stupid plan was actually working. By the time she dropped the empty bottle, flames were beginning to rise from the cross she’d just defiled. Smoke too, enough to make her cough.

“The next bottle Laura. You’re definitely hurting the creature.”

Nausea was the problem, just moving her head made her want to vomit. She looked down and the beast was obviously unwell. The howling had become plaintiff, it was even shedding lumps of fur.

Laura took the second bottle out of her pocket and gave it a shake. As she began to pour the wooden beam she was lying on began to shake. No, it was the chapel, the whole damned building was shaking.

“The flames Laura..... Move back a little.”

“No time, have to finish this now.”

Not just nausea, she was feeling deep fatigue. Laura was sure that if she tried to move back from the rising flames, she’d fall off her precarious perch. She poured the liquid over the cross, hearing the wood crack as the flames went from red to deep yellow. Her jacket was smouldering as she dropped the empty bottle. She heard Mabina shouting, but couldn’t make out the words.

The blast from the cross pushed her up into the air, but she still clung to the wooden beam. Around her the chapel was collapsing, ancient walls toppling inwards.

“More lost grains of sand.....” She muttered.

When her hands were too tired to hold on Laura fell from the beam and landed in front of the ruined cross.

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Cyril Carter's heart beat a little faster when he heard the knock on the French windows which led from his lounge to the back garden. He was sweating as he opened the curtains. Once he'd never have thought Bill Jarrold might see him as a loose end that needed tidying up, but lately.... Bill wasn't the same man he'd known when they'd both decided an extortion racket was more rewarding than a nine to five job.

"It's you..... You're lucky I'm up. I haven't been sleeping well." He said.

Cyril wasn't scared of Simon, even though Tom said he could be dangerous. If he and his team wanted to take over the designer drugs business in London, that was alright with him. To him Simon was a professional, a businessman with a product to promote, a brand to protect. True the product was illegal, but that didn't worry Cyril. Simon reminded him of how Bill's firm had been, before Bill became more than a little paranoid.

"It's happening tonight." Said Simon. "Actually it's already happened, the police will probably be calling you quite soon."

"Then I will pretend to be suitably shocked. Is everyone fully briefed ?"

"Yes, there's no changing your mind now." Said Simon.

All that energy and enthusiasm, Cyril remembered when he'd spent three days without sleep, tracking down someone who'd tried to muscle into their turf. The world belonged to the young not because they were cleverer, but because they had the enthusiasm.

"I'll do my bit, don't you worry Simon. Have you spoken to Tom ?"

"Yes, just called him."

"So I'm the linchpin of the whole plan ?"

"Actually Tom is, I just didn't tell him because he'd have asked for more money."

Cyril found himself laughing and slapping Simon on the shoulder. He'd probably used the same line about him to Tom.

"And I will still be the new head of the firm ?" Asked Cyril.

"Yes, I have no wish to run a criminal empire Cyril, I just want to be left in peace."

"Good..... And if Bill manages to wriggle free of the trap ?"

"I have a woman with a sniper rifle who can get anywhere and never misses."

"Even inside one of Her Majesty's prisons ?"

"She can get into anywhere Cyril."

~ ~

As Mabina saw Laura fall, she'd jumped down to the ground. The fire looked fierce and unnatural, it was burning and cracking the stone walls. The creature was finished, though it did try to run at her. Halfway to her it was consumed by purple fire and became nothing but a scorch mark on the floor. The wooden cross behind the altar cracked open and hot yellow flames rose up into what was left of the roof. Mabina felt tired, worse than after coming back after Laura had put three bullets into her head.

"Laura, we have to leave." She shouted.

Laura wasn't unconscious, but she wasn't really awake either. Mabina held her arms and pulled, dragging her towards where the huge front doors had once stood. They'd collapsed with a large section of the wall.

"It's dangerous in here Laura, wake up..... We have to get out."

"The monster...."

"It's dead Laura, destroyed by purple flames."

They leant on each other and Mabina remembered to take the coffin with them. Laura woke up a little more as they walked across the fields, their route lit up by the inferno behind them.

“Did we leave anything behind ?” Asked Laura.

“Probably, but the flames will wipe everything away. That’s not natural fire Laura, the site of the Underhill Chapel is being cleansed.”

By the time they reached a group of trees not that far from the SUV, Mabina thought they’d gone far enough to risk taking a rest.

“No falling asleep Laura, but we both need to rest.”

“Still no sirens.” Said Laura.

“It hasn’t been that long, they’ll be here. Though they’ll probably just find ashes.”

Old buildings don’t die silently, several louds bangs accompanied every collapsed wall. They sat and watched as the chapel fell apart. Still the flames found something to burn.

“I’ve destroyed another part of our heritage.” Said Laura.

“Yours Laura not mine, I was born far to the east.”

“We should open the box Mabina. Just in case it contains nothing but dust or another of Underhill’s traps.”

“Come on Laura, we’ll do it together.”

The lid was held in place by screws, but they weren’t in a mood to be careful. They ripped off the coffin lid, to reveal the contents.

“I’m feeling nothing Laura, is that it ?”

“Yes, that’s it, the blunt dagger, the Tooth of the Saint.”

“Why do that with it ?”

“I have no idea Mabina, but we should give it to Magda as it is.”

There was the skeleton of a young child in the coffin and its arms had been wrapped around the dagger.

~ ~