

The Hornsey Vampires

(Season two of London's Night Stalkers)

Chapter 19 – Circle of Arcardis

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“You’re asking me as though I understand what’s going on.” Said Laura. “Well I don’t.”

They were still avoiding any vehicle with flashing lights and a siren. Some were fire brigade and the occasional ambulance, but most were the police. Laura was driving without lights, relying on her vampire sight and senses. She’d driven up a lane into some woods, to watch the half dozen police vehicles hurtle past. Another mile and they’d be just another SUV on the main London road.

“Don’t drive off for a minute; this is as good a place as any to talk.” Said Mabina. “Tell me about this mysterious warrior and why he didn’t kill you ?”

“He could have killed me. I was over confident and made a stupid mistake. Horus said he wouldn’t seriously injure me though. As to why ? It felt like some kind of test.”

“Test for what ?”

“You’re doing it again, expecting me to understand what the hell is going on.” Said Laura.

The more she thought it over, the more it felt like she was being tested. Had she passed ?

“I did get first blood..... He’ll need a few stitches in his shoulder.”

Mabina smiled at her, she understood the importance of such things.

“So, the big question Laura..... Do we recover the last item or simply take the three items we definitely need ?”

“There is the matter of knowing the right words and ingredients for the ritual.”

“I’m sure I can easily persuade Magda to tell us everything she knows.”

Did they need the Circle ? Was it even a good idea to try ? She tried to remember everything Horus had said to her and then think about the meaning behind the words.

“We should recover the Circle of Arcardis.” She said. “I had the distinct feeling that the best had been saved for last. No, don’t ask me what it does, I have no idea. Horus told me to be careful, that it wasn’t of this world.”

“That..... Sounds almost like a challenge.” Said Mabina.

“And it must be against our warrior’s code to refuse a challenge.”

“If we had a warrior’s code.”

Mabina laughed and Laura knew they were going after the last artefact. A warning and a hint about an object from another world.... Of course they were going to retrieve it from wherever it was. Laura started her SUV and still didn’t turn on any lights, as she headed toward the London road.

“I know this sounds a bit strange, but I think we should include Liz in our plans.” She said.

“At one time I might have laughed.” Said Mabina. “But she survived a bullet through her heart, something we’d never be able to do. Liz Grant may have started off as Brendan’s translator and bed warmer, but she’s much more than that now.”

“It’s nice when we agree on something.” Said Laura.

“Not as rare as it used to be..... Liz could be useful as a third person in our coup, when we’re ready to take everything away from Sam Isaacs. Yes, we’ll definitely keep her in the loop.”

Laura turned on the SUV’s light just before they merged with a main road heading north.

"I'd like some time to interrogate Sam before you..... Do whatever you plan to do." Said Laura. "He's been the leader of the Psochics for some time, his head must be full of useful information."

"Information I'd like to hear too. Alright Laura you may have as long as you want with Sam to get him to talk. I want to drink his blood though, every drop, no sharing. Agreed ?"

"Fine, he's all yours."

"Good."

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Liz Grant had felt something changing inside her. She'd left the bed she shared with Brendan, just in case whatever was happening might hurt him. She'd even pulled up the sheet, tucking him in. It wasn't love, but there were genuine feelings for Brendan. A first, she'd never become emotionally attached to a client before. She sat in a window seat that overlooked the front of the house.

"What are you doing ? Come back to bed." Brendan muttered at her.

"I will in a minute, go back to sleep."

He'd been half asleep anyway, he often muttered in the middle of the night. His head rested back on the pillow and he was likely to sleep soundly until morning. Actually it was morning, or at least close to it. Liz could see a slight lightening of the sky to the east.

"Looks like they succeeded..... Or at least one of them did." She muttered, quietly.

Headlights were approaching and as the house was the only dwelling at the end of the lane, it was probably Laura's SUV. As Liz pulled the net curtains to one side, she noticed the black veins on her hands again. This time they didn't go away if she rubbed her skin. Whatever was going to happen to her was in the middle of happening and there was no stopping it.

The SUV with its ludicrous paint job pulled up and Magda was there, running out to meet it in her nightgown. Two car doors slammed and Liz knew they weren't going to be mourning one of the vampires.

"Are they back ?" Brendan, awake and sitting up in bed.

"Yes, go and greet them if you want..... I just need a minute."

"I understand..... We were all a bit worried."

He didn't really understand her problem, but he did put on a coat and leave the room. She could see Laura and Mabina now and Laura was taking a large bag out of the back of her pimped SUV. All looked well, even Sam had gone out to welcome them home. Actually not home, but back among whatever their group had become.

"Oh, I should never have used the Half Moon."

The dark veins were spreading, as was the feeling of panic. Pain too, quite a lot of pain. Her muscles felt as though they were trying to rip her ligaments and crack her bones. The upper most emotion was panic, blind terror about what was happening to her. It had all been a bit of a game, persuading Magda to use the Half Moon of Thoth on her. All the talk about consequences, yet she'd believed it was mostly hype, or she'd be immune to it all.

"No, please stop.....I didn't want this."

She gripped the window frame in hands that no longer looked human. She felt it was a mercy there wasn't enough light to see colours, the grotesque claws were a uniform grey. Her legs changed and the pain caused her to pass out for a few seconds. Pain woke her up, pain mixed with panic at what she might be once the pain had finished with her.

The moving and shifting of muscles was nothing to the pain of changing internal organs. Liz passed out several times, only for the pain to drag her out of oblivion. She thought the pain would stop her heart, she actually hoped it would. She could no longer scream out, something was happening in her

throat. The hand she used to rub her throat wasn't even a claw anymore, it was something completely inhuman. She forced air out of her lungs, shouting, screaming, a howl that the throat of no creature born of woman had ever created. The second howl was easier, the third a pleasure.

"What am I?" She muttered.

The pain had gone, the anxiety had gone. Liz looked out of the window and saw everyone looking in her direction. Laura was pointing and Brendan was running towards the house. The howls of course, her howls. They probably thought a hell sent beast was attacking her, not realising the beast in the room was her. Brendan rushed in, turning on the lights.

"Are you alright? That sound..... Even Laura was worried."

"I'm fine Brendan, I heard it too. Probably Magda howling at the moon."

She was fine, her hands and arms looked human again and judging by Brendan's smile, so did her face.

"We haven't showered together in a while." She said. "Are you up for it?"

"Yes of course..... But the others, they're quite concerned."

"Then run down and tell them I'm alright..... Hurry back though."

"I will."

Liz let her gown fall to the floor after he'd gone. She couldn't see her back, but everything at the front looked perfect. Nice taught muscles across her tummy, thighs with skin like velvet. Fine, everything was fine, though she knew something had gone that had been part of Liz Grant, to be replaced by..... She wasn't quite sure yet. Still naked she walked to the window and waved at Laura, who waved back.

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His new solicitor specialised in criminal law, which was good and bad. Lots of experience, but the police knew that Godfrey, Spence & Grainger were crooked. It meant that every defence witness and expert was looked at closely. There were even rumours that Nigel Godfrey could be a bit of a gossip, not a good personality trait in a criminal lawyer. Bill Jarrold was about to deal with that issue.

"Thank you for representing me Nigel, I've heard good things about you." Said Bill.

"Glad to be here, I heard your previous people let you down Mr Jarrold."

"Oh they did Nigel, big time. Call me Bill..... Did my guys give you the retainer?"

"Yes Bill, very generous. As I said, Godfrey, Spence & Grainger are very pleased to have you as a client."

Of course he was, Bill had given him about three times the going rate. Nigel wouldn't be sitting there for free either. His new solicitors might be a bit back street compared to the last guys, but they probably still charged an exorbitant hourly rate.

"I have little anecdote Nigel, have you got time to hear it? Not rushing off anywhere?"

"No, I'm all yours this morning."

"Good.....I take it everything we talk about is now covered by client confidentiality?"

"Yes, I'm now your solicitor. Whatever you tell me goes no further."

Nigel was probably mentally clicking off a clock at hundreds of pounds an hour. Sometimes solicitors seemed little better than his ways of earning a crust, but they called it extortion or demanding money with menaces when he did it.

"Years back when Cyril and I were a lot younger than we are now.... You know Cyril of course?"

"Heard of him of course, but we've never had him as a client."

"Good, perfect..... Anyway we used to meet to discuss confidential matters in bits of the old Woolwich Arsenal that were still standing. It took them years to develop the site and there were a

lot of empty factories over there and office buildings. One I especially liked was painted bright blue inside..... Seemed a bit odd. Does any of this mean anything to you Nigel ?”

“South East London isn’t my patch Bill, but I did hear about the redevelopment of the old arsenal site.”

Bill leant back and refreshed his own memory of that place and the day a young man had died.

“It was beautiful over there on a spring morning.” He said. “Lots of areas of grass, all split up by ponds and small rivers. No one was supposed to be there of course, but I never remember seeing a copper. It was all going to be pulled down anyway. Before the days of CCTV and miniature microphones. Once you were in one of those abandoned buildings, you probably had more privacy than the Prime Minister.”

“I wish I’d seen it Bill..... All gone now of course.”

“Yes all gone..... Where was I ? I remember, that spring morning. Steve Gorman was in charge of security that day, though he was a lot younger then, we all were. Did you hear that Steve might have vanished, presumed carved up by some Glasgow nutter ?”

Yes he knew, his eyes were almost swivelling. He liked Nigel, he’d be easy to scare and manipulate.

“I did hear a rumour Bill. Not that I pass on such things.”

“Good, good.... This story is all about how seriously I take my privacy. Anyway, we were in the old blue painted office block, discussing a few highly private pieces of business. Steve had searched the building from top to bottom, or so he said afterwards. Three other guys he had with him, all supposed to making sure we weren’t disturbed. Guess what happened Nigel ?”

“I’m guessing someone disturbed you ?”

Good, Nigel was quick on the uptake.

“They did, a young guy appeared from nowhere, shouting that we shouldn’t be there. He wasn’t a security guard of course, Steve thought he was probably a nonce. A guy claiming to be some sort of security guard, leaping out to scare gangs of kids. He soon shut up when he saw we weren’t a bunch of kids. As I say, Steve thought he was probably a kiddie fiddler.... Though he might have said that to feel better about killing him.”

Bill let that sink in for a second or two, enjoying seeing Nigel get a film of sweat on his forehead.

Nigel was never going to say a word to anyone or question anything after Bill had finished with him, he was certain of it.

“I mean he might have been harmless, wrong place at the worst possible time. There was no knowing what he might have heard though and we’d been discussing a piece of mayhem that hadn’t happened yet. Steve took care of him, finding somewhere to lose the body. There was no telling if he might talk you see..... You do understand don’t you ?”

“Yes, I understand perfectly.”

“I want you to hold a meeting at your office.” Said Bill. “Everyone, even the girl who stands at the copier all day, every office seems to have one of those. Tell them any papers with my name on, any notes, anything from the courts. It’s all private, ultra fucking private. Will you do that for me ?”

“I will Bill, as soon as I get back.”

“I have a job for you before you go back. I want you to write this down, your writing in your notebook.”

No arguing, he could see Nigel was going to be a real asset. The worried looking solicitor opened his notebook, his pen hovering over a blank line.

“I’m going to give you a note to take to the man who gave you the retainer, it’s to be delivered today. Not one of your staff, you must deliver it in person.”

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Sam Isaacs hadn't wanted the extra security to be that obvious. Instead of just one moonlighting Jerusalem cop, he now had five. A contact of his in the Jerusalem District Police had told him to be careful as questions were being asked about the sudden epidemic of officers calling in sick. They were there because of the two vampires, just in case they tried to kill them all and take the artefacts. If Mabina and Laura were feeling intimidated by the five armed men, they weren't showing it. "Every time we talked, every agreement we made." He said. "Part of it was you taking the Psochic oath before retrieving the final artefact."

Mabina didn't even have the decency to look contrite or awkward about it. She seemed to have a constant smirk on her face since returning with the Scales of Pendally.

"She should have taken the oath in Jerusalem." Snapped Magda.

It was supposed to be a breakfast meeting to discuss the last object to be recovered. Instead it was turning into a pestering session, most of it aimed at Mabina. Not all of it though, Laura was still refusing to cut the metal disc out of her side. He was beginning to wonder if the vampires suspected him of trying to kill Liz and Brendan.

"I will take the oath, when we have every artefact." Said Mabina. "I have no idea what most of the objects do and I can't use them without your help. As for your extra manpower.....I thought we were allies, yet every plane from the east seems to bring another well trained cop."

Yosef fidgeted and looked away from Mabina. Going after hoodlums on the streets of Jerusalem was one thing, but Yosef understood the true nature of the two young women. Had he told the other cops the importance of aiming for head or heart? He hoped he had.

"I just wish we could get through one of these meetings without quarrelling." Said Liz.

Brendan was there too of course, though he tended to leave the talking to Liz.

"You haven't even handed over everything you've recovered." Yelled Magda. "Laura still hasn't removed the Egg of Astaroth from her side. Her keeping it was never part of our agreement."

"Oh, not that crap again." Said Laura. "I think it might be useful in obtaining the last item."

"If you told us why, we might understand your actions Laura." Said Sam. "At the moment it just looks as though you're trying to be awkward."

"Talk to them Laura, or we'll be here all day." Said Brendan.

"It's just a feeling, call it a hunch." Said Laura. "I'm not going to even try to explain. I will cut out the Egg from my side when we have the last object. I've been saying that since we were in Egypt."

"She has Magda, I remember Laura saying that in my office." Said Sam.

Magda was giving him a look that said she didn't trust anyone, maybe including him. Her words were more careful than her expression.

"Laura has been awkward, but at least her story has been consistent." She said. "Mabina keeps promising to take the oath after the next artefact, then the next. She needs to take it right now, or we shouldn't give her a location for the Circle of Arcardis."

An ultimatum, Magda had gone nuclear without even talking it over with him first.

"I don't understand." Said Liz. "All these things are just lumps of junk unless you know how to use them. So why not let Mabina and Laura find the last one?"

"She has a point." Said Brendan.

"I'm definitely not taking the oath today" Said Mabina. "So decide if you're going to tell us about the last item, or I'm asking Laura for a lift back to London."

"You're happy for her to talk for you?" Magda asked Laura.

"We arrived together, we'll leave together." Said Laura. "My collaboration is with her, not the Psochic order. Personally though, I intend to keep the Egg if I go. After all, it is nice and snug in there, right up against my ribs."

It was order Yosef and his team to start shooting or get on with the briefing. Magda was glaring at him, she obviously wanted to kill the vampires or force Mabina to take the oath. Forcing an ancient vampire to do anything was almost impossible. A fight had its obvious drawbacks, they might all die in the ensuing chaos. Sam decided to kick the tin a little further down the road.

"I am the leader of the Psochic order, my word is final." He said. "As long as Mabina agrees to take the oath when she returns, we will tell you all we know about the last item, the Circle of Arcardis."

"Christ Sam, they're walking all over you." Yelled Magda.

He rarely felt genuine anger. You didn't rise to the top of an organisation like the Psochics without learning how to handle internal politics. He wasn't really angry with Magda, he just needed to appear to be angry.

"I am the leader, you will show respect." He told her. "Apologise for your outburst or leave the room."

"I'm sorry Sam."

He looked around the room and the cops did look like an act of desperation. There to intimidate, though their intended targets didn't seem concerned.

"As a sign of good faith I think your men can wait in the hall outside Yosef." He said. "You can remain, but don't hover by the door, find a chair and join us for breakfast."

"A rather cold breakfast." Said Brendan.

"Yes.... Magda can you chivvy the cook for at least some fresh coffee and hot toast?" He asked.

Once fresh coffee arrived the room felt more relaxed. Sam put a few rashers of cold bacon between two slices of toast, which tasted better than he'd imagined.

"We're here to discuss the retrieval of the Circle of Arcardis." He said. "As with all the previous artefacts, we're here to give Mabina and Laura every piece of useful information they might need. They will be our feet on the ground, our recovery team."

"I want to go with them, if they'll have me." Said Liz.

"But you're not a fighter, that's crazy." Yelled Brendan. "You might get killed."

"Getting shot doesn't seem to slow her down much." Said Magda. "It is crazy though.... What next, an emotional support dog and a couple of boy scouts?"

"I'm a grown woman, it's my decision." Shouted Liz.

"I think she'd be useful." Said Laura.

"So do I, she can come." Said Mabina.

When Magda began to throw insults at just about everyone in the room, Sam banged his hand on the table. He had to do it three times to get a quiet dining room.

"No, we're not going back to squabbles.....The meeting will talk about the recovery of the last item. It will not descend into arguments and insults." He said. "Liz is old enough to make her own decisions and Mabina may choose who she wants for her team. If she wants to take Liz, she can go."

"She'll be going with us." Said Mabina.

"Preposterous." Said Magda.

"No, I won't have it." Yelled Brendan.

Sam used his fist on the table, actually hurting his fingers in the process.

"Be quiet or leave the room, both of you." He said.

Magda stayed, but Brendan stormed out of the room. Not a huge loss, as long as his departure didn't upset the group dynamic.

"He'll be alright, I'll talk to him later." Said Liz.

"Do that, we don't need him running off into the wild." Said Mabina. "Keep him happy Liz."

Sam finished his toast and bacon and hoped there were no more rows. He put a picture of a house on the table. Not a huge house, just two floors and an attic. Three bedrooms and no basement, the type of house you'd see in any town.

"This is The Gables, Cherry Tree Lane." He said. "A very ordinary name for a very strange house. Our dowsers and seers are certain the object is inside that house, we just don't know where."

"Dowsers Sam ? You mean people waving twigs about to find water ?" Asked Laura.

"Ours are very skilled and reliable." Said Magda.

"Yes they do use what you call twigs Laura, and they search for much more than just water. Gold, precious gems, even oil deposits." Said Sam. "Back up their finding with skilled seers and the results are rarely wrong. They've been saying it for decades, the Circle is in that house."

"Can't you go in there and search for it ?" Asked Liz.

"Oh we have, no less than fifty senior members of the order once went through that house when it was between owners." Said Magda. "They lifted boards, banged on walls. There were even specialists with ground penetrating radar. Nothing, not a damn sign of the Circle."

Sam put the picture back in a file, before pushing it all across the table.

"A little background information, I'll just run through it briefly." He said. "The Gables was once owned by a member of the order, a knight of the realm no less. Sir Andrew Mordaunt was something rare, a member thrown out of the order for practising.... Certain dark arts."

"I thought they were your sort of thing." Said Mabina.

"Trust me Mabina..... It was during the leadership of my predecessor, but Andrew's arts were far too dark. After he died the house was empty for a year, which was when the order went through the place with the finest of tooth combs. Nothing was found and we're relying on your vampire Mojo, the ability to sense artefacts that contain enchantments."

"This doesn't sound like an easy job..... Where is The Gables ?" Asked Laura.

"The address is in the file, complete with floor plans and pictures taken while it was empty. It's not far from Whitby, just a few miles further north along the coast." Said Sam.

"It's currently owned by Millicent Spooner." Said Magda. "An artist who specialises in painting plants, the wild flora of Britain. You may have heard of her ?"

"I have, some of her pictures are quite famous." Said Liz.

"Good, you can hold her hand while we ransack her house." Said Mabina.

Sam really didn't care what happened to Millicent Spooner, but the police would put a lot of effort into finding her if she vanished.

"Obviously accidents happen....." He said. "Ms Spooner is over eighty now and harmless. If you could avoid killing her....."

"Or burning her house down." Added Magda.

"We'll handle her like glass." Said Laura.

"Anything else we need to know ?" Asked Mabina.

Was there anything else ? There was a legend in the order that Arcardis had been born into another reality, but it was probably nonsense. There was one other rumour that might be useful, it would probably make them more careful.

"Probably nonsense, but the Circle is supposed to exist outside of the normal laws of physics.....I'm really saying be careful, extra special careful."

"Oh we will be." Said Mabina.

"So, find your own way to Whitby and spend a day or so reconnoitring The Gables if you wish." He said. "Acquire the Circle from wherever it's hidden and bring it back."

"You make it sound so simple." Said Laura.

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It had been a while and being given a few days to get to Whitby and have a look around, had just told her she had the opportunity to see Tim. Sex with Tim really, she had a need that surprised even her by its intensity. The phone call hadn't even been that weird.

"I'm on my way north, but my life will soon be back to normal."

Whatever the hell normal was..... She decided not to even joke with him about that.

"It's so nice to hear your voice Laura. I did think you were dumping me in a very weird and over complex way."

"No..... I did think you might..... No, do you want to meet and spend the night in my van ?"

That had sounded a bit weird. If Tim thought so, it hadn't stopped him accepting.

"Yes, where shall we meet ?"

"Somewhere at the end of the Piccadilly Line. How about Arnos Grove at about eight ? We can find somewhere to have a drink and a meal."

"Brilliant..... Where are you going to up north ?"

"I'll tell you about it over dinner."

Damn she had to be a good lay, he hadn't asked her any awkward questions. A call from Simon had been strange, even for Simon. He'd wanted to meet her in the early hours of the morning and said he'd find her in the Arnos Grove area.

"How will you find me ?"

"I turned you, I can find you anywhere Laura."

Really weird, she'd begun to realise what Tim had to put up with from her. A busy day, she'd dropped Liz and Mabina off at Vlad's old house, as Mabina was going to drive them both to Whitby.

"I'll book you a room where we decide to stay and text you the details." Mabina had told her.

"Don't take too long to arrive." Added Liz.

All set and quite a bit of organising for just a night of sex with Tim. There would be repeats in the morning of course and sex in a van always seemed better than sex in a proper bedroom. Edgier in some way and slightly illicit. Laura was currently on her back, with Tim thrusting his dick into her.

"Oh.... That is so good.....Don't ever stop." She muttered.

The shocks on her Chevrolet Suburban were too tough for it to bounce about, but her SUV did shudder as he pounded her between the legs. The top of her head actually hit the walls a few times. It was brutal, wonderful sex that felt slightly sordid, but in a good way. She wrapped her legs round him and pulled him inside her as he thrust.

"I'm never leaving it that long again....." She mumbled.

There was that rare moment, when she climaxed at the same moment as him. She actually shouted out his name as he thrust in deep and held it there for a minute or so. Was that kind of sex possible if you both hadn't been on a self-imposed period of abstinence ? Probably not, but trying to repeat the intensity of the pleasure was going to be fun. Tim fell away from her, a huge smile on his face.

"I know one day we'll hate each other and never want to see each other again, it's inevitable." She said. "But until then I promise never to leave it as long between sex. I'm sure it can't be healthy."

Tim was actually laughing at her.

"I used to think you were the weirdest girl I'd ever dated Laura Selway." He said. "Now I think you're the weirdest girl I've ever met, probably the weirdest girl in the world."

"Thank you." She replied.

They fell asleep in the van, which was parked in a side Street close to Arnos Grove station. Laura felt herself entering a dream, one of her strange dreams. Dreaming after sex with all those hormones raging through her bloodstream. She should have known it was going to be a very weird dream. There were the two opposing sides in a battle above her head. Not warriors, but forces far greater than any army. The ocean was sending massive waves to hit red hot sand dunes. The sand was being cooled and washed away, as water was turned to steam. A battle that had probably been going on since the dawn of time, though eventually there would be a victor.

"Wiremi..... Why do you keep showing me this dreadful place ?"

Clouds under her feet and oceans above her, it was a place of nightmares.

"Come to me one last time Laura."

Wiremi's voice, but one last time ? Laura felt drunk, even though she'd only had one glass of wine with her meal that evening. Without warning she fell, dropping through the clouds. No trip over the forest, she fell through the branches and landed hard. Bruised and sore she stood up and realised she was there, in the village. The huge ancient tree was there, with Wiremi sat next to it, but all the other dreamers had gone. Laura realised she was naked, but she was more worried about other things.

"Come to me Laura."

No wondering if he'd actually speak to her, he was on his feet and walking towards her. She ran to meet him, holding his hand.

"What do you mean one last time ?" She asked.

"Calm yourself, you may come here forever, I hope you do." Said Wiremi. "I will no longer be your guide though, you've surpassed anything I can ever show you. All my hints about grains of sand, but you never understood."

One of the villagers approached and handed her a cloak to cover herself. Laura had thought herself so clever at working out Wiremi's riddles, but now she felt like a fool.

"I thought you meant my life was running away." She said.

"You are a creature of the darkness Laura, your life may be long or end in an instant. You shouldn't waste a moment, but I was talking about another arriving to teach you. Laura Selway, you've gained the attention of one of the oldest of the Gods."

"You mean Horus ?"

"You may have the courage to name him, but I'm more cautious. There will be a price for his aid Laura, there will be what you'd call a quid pro quo. Worth it though I believe, but that is for you to decide."

Her head was filling with the possibilities of having a deity as her mentor. The idea of owing a favour to an ancient Egyptian deity didn't worry her that much. He was a deity after all, how bad could any favour he asked of her be ?

"I had hoped..... There is so much more I wanted to ask you." She said.

"Come here every night if you can, sit with the other dreamers and enter a dream within a dream.

There is still a lot to be learned here, but I will no longer be your guide."

"Will my Gudara still answer my call ?"

“Yes and we shall carry on feeding him, or at least my people will. Your devourer knows you now Laura, you put yourself at risk to save him. That is something he will never forget. Summon him anywhere and he will do your bidding.”

Something sharp dug into her bare foot. Looking down she saw a thorn sticking out of the side of her big toe. She bent to remove it and as she looked up, Wiremi was gone. His people were gone too. Laura was alone in front of the great tree with the ever burning fire in front of it. Only one way to get home, she sat alone in front of the tree, taking the place where Wiremi usually sat. As she felt tiredness pulling her deeper into the realm of dreams, she heard Tim shouting at someone.

“What do you want ? I’ll call the police if you don’t go away.”

Hard to wake up and she was still wrapped in the cloak. Her toe was still hurting too, the dream world had been far more real than usual. She could hear Simon rattling the side door of her van and trying to talk Tim into letting him in. A voice loud enough to be heard, though he was obviously trying not to wake the whole street.

“It’s Simon, Laura’s friend..... She is expecting me.”

“Expecting you..... How the hell did you find us ?”

Laura gripped Tim’s hand and looked for her shoes, she wasn’t walking the streets of North London in bare feet.

“It’s alright Tim, I knew he was coming.” She said. “I just thought I’d be here when he did.”

“Open the door, I need to see Laura.” Hissed Simon.

“But you are here Laura.....Why does he need to see you at three in the morning ?” Asked Tim.

Laura pulled back the door a little.

“I’m just finding my shoes Simon, be patient.”

“Alright, but it’s urgent.....Bill’s not going to go without a fight.”

Laura found her shoes and thanked her luck that she’d chosen to wear flats. A quick kiss for Tim and a few words to calm him down.

“It’s a family thing Tim. Stay in here where it’s comfortable, I won’t be long.”

Simon was grinning at her, she could see his face in the yellow street lights.

“Why the cloak Laura ?” He asked. “Auditioning for Gandalf in a school panto ?”

She hadn’t taken much notice of the rough cloak that was covering her nakedness. Black and woven out of some fabric she didn’t recognise. It was the high collar that made it look out of place in Arnos Grove.

“A present from Wiremi I think.” She said. “A goodbye present, he’s passing me onto a new guide.”

Simon walked and she followed. They both did what only vampires can do, vanishing into the shadows as though they weren’t there.

“Who is your new guide ?” Asked Simon.

“An ancient Egyptian deity, he’s already helped me at least twice.”

“Wow, do I have to start calling you my queen now ?”

She playfully thumped him on the chest, it was nice to see him again. Simon seemed to take nothing seriously, but it was all an act, part of the persona he’d spent years creating.

“So, why are you disturbing my love life Simon Atherton ?” She asked.

“Bill Jarrold sent two men to see Tasha, probably to shut her up by killing her. Luckily the guards we hired scared them off. They won’t stay scared though and next time they’ll come back with guns.”

“Crap.... Are we taking it in turns to guard her house ?” Asked Laura.

“That idea did come up, but a few dead gangsters in a quiet little street is likely to get noticed. Clara brought her and Rocky back to our place. Rocky has claimed your bed by the way.”

“Bill’s seems good at finding people and he must guess you’re not his friend anymore.”

Simon had turned her and there was something linking them. Like the thin thread of guilt that always binds mothers to their daughters, but theirs was more useful. He had found where she was sleeping after all. Laura knew what he was going to ask before he said a word.

“You want me to kill him don’t you ?” She asked.

“Yes, I think this is more of a job for your sniper rifle than my fangs. Bill is in Belmarsh, a category A prison. They keep all the top nutters and terrorists in there. I’m hoping you can get a clean shot when he gets taken to court.”

Laura had a plan, it was obvious really. It didn’t need Mabina to help her or a cupboard full of high tech weapons. She just needed Simon to do what he was good at.... Creating chaos and mayhem.

“We’ll do it tomorrow night, actually it’s tonight now.....You can create a diversion for me while I take care of Bill Jarrold.”

Tim was asleep when she got back to her SUV. She snuggled up to him and tried to get a couple of hours sleep.

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