

Quid Pro Quo

(Season three of London's Night Stalkers)

Chapter 2 – Sam's Legacy

“The problem with not having a body or a crime scene is that blame tends to be spread about, like paint out of a spray gun. A lot was liberally applied to Simon and her, even though they'd had nothing to do with killing the leader of The Psochic Order.”

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~ Judith ~

After years of refusing to drive, Simon had taken enough driving lessons from Clara to feel safe on the road. Once he felt comfortable behind the wheel, he'd bought a second hand fiat van; the sort small shopkeepers seemed to love. He even had a driving license, though not one provided by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency. Cyril had given him the licence and a legit looking insurance certificate.

“They'll pass the usual checks if you get pulled over by the police.” Cyril had told him. “Just try not to run into anyone, claiming on the insurance could be a problem.”

It was fine for Laura, the baby of the group. She had proper documents, including a genuine birth certificate. Once Simon needed to drive, he appreciated all the problems Clara had been through to get her Peugeot 208 on the road. A lack of legit paperwork had caused more than a few vampires to drop everything and move to a new town, sometimes even another country.

“You can't drive.” He told Clara. “We'll use my van.”

Her car was at the end of Park Row, the last gap before the main road. Ideal if Clara wasn't still favouring her uninjured side for just about everything. Jake still seemed in shock and Clara's car was a bit small anyway.

“There's a mattress in the van, you can get comfortable.” He added.

“Fine, where did you park?”

“Outside a school in Old Woolwich Road, it's not far.”

They were just another three people walking along the pavement now. The police vehicles ignored them, as they hurtled past on their way to the Old Naval College. Sirens, always more vehicles with sirens, including a large fire brigade truck.

“Everybody welcome, bring a bottle and your favourite dip.” Said Clara.

Jake might have been a problem, but he seemed completely out of it. At one point, Simon had to stop him walking into traffic on Trafalgar Road. It was a relief to turn left away from the main road. It was still awkward keeping an eye on Jake, while trying to help Clara.

“What do you think is wrong with him?” Asked Clara.

“He was fine until we had to walk past all the dead bodies.”

“Snap out of it Jake.” Said Clara. “You must have seen death before.”

No good, it was as if they'd injected him with a mainline tranquiliser. Simon just hoped the Psochics didn't moan about getting their leader back in less than perfect condition.

“He's not used to seeing his people die Clara..... Something in his head broke.”

Jake was twitchy, constantly looking around. Like a pet cat, he seemed to see things that weren't there. His twitchiness was catching though and might have saved Simon from a blade between the

ribs. Just a shadow near his van, a shadow with something in its hand that glinted silver under the streetlights.

"Monsters..... All of you.....Nothing but monsters." Shouted Jake.

Nice to hear the new head of the Psochics talk again. Simon might have been more pleased, if the shadow with the blade wasn't running at him. Clara was already injured, yet she had her Yemeni Janbiya in her hand, ready to fight.

"This one's mine." Shouted Simon.

There was a nagging feeling he might have done more in the fight at the Naval College, a distinct feeling of guilt for simply letting the herd thin itself out. Simon was determined to deal with the fighter from the Silver Dawn.

"Animals..... You're all animals." Shouted Jake.

It was all over fairly quickly, once Simon had cut the assassin's throat. Easy.... Far too easy really. There was no satisfaction in such an easy kill. Even the blood was useless once an opponent was dead. The body on the ground was now about a hundred and eighty pounds of annoyance and bother.

"We'll need to take the body with us." Said Simon.

The van was parked outside a school, which had been locked up for the night hours before. The streetlights were that wonderful shade of yellow, which seemed designed to help anyone up to no good. Simon opened the rear doors of his rather tatty looking van and threw in the dead member of the Silver Dawn.

"Animals..... Monsters.....You're all the same." Shouted Jake.

He was fighting with Clara, actually trying to hit her. Not that she had any trouble in handling him, even with two bullets still inside her.

"Hey, enough Jake..... These two monsters just saved your life." She snapped.

"Sorry."

Like a petulant child told off by a parent, Jake Rice allowed Clara to take him inside the back of the van.

"I do hope he's alright by the time Judith picks him up." Said Simon.

"You intend to call Judith?" Asked Clara. "I don't think she likes us much since Magda died."

"They all hate us.....But at least we know Judith."

Clara was looking at him, as if questioning whether Judith knowing them was a good thing. One way or another, the Psochics had lost a lot of people in the pursuit of certain artefacts. Rightly or wrong, Simon and Clara had been blamed for most of those deaths.

"Alright..... Where are you going to meet her? It can't be our house."

"I'll tell her to meet us where Samuel Westcott is buried." Said Simon. "They'll know where that is and it's fairly open there.....No chance for them to set up an ambush."

"I remember that place..... Mabina said it was muddy."

"No plan is ever perfect."

Old Woolwich Road had probably been a major road once, but now it was a quiet backstreet. Simon didn't see another vehicle, until he turned right onto Trafalgar Road to head towards the cemetery where Samuel Westcott had been buried. Just a cloth curtain behind the seats, he pulled it open about an inch.

"Tie Jake up if you need to sleep." He called.

"It's alright, he seems much better now." Said Clara.

"I'm so sorry." Muttered Jake. "I'm not sure what came over me."

“No problem.” Said Simon. “I’m about to call Judith and ask her to come and get you.”

Illegal to use his phone while driving. Simon thought it’d be safe enough, as just about every cop in South London was probably trudging around the crime scene at the Naval College. He selected the number for Judith.

Just Judith, he had no idea what her second name was. Clara would know of course and she’d know her birthday, maybe her favourite colour too. Clara was like that, she was a people person and..... He wasn’t. Judith answered her phone after one ring.

“Hi Simon, I was hoping you’d call.”

“I heard you were running things in London. I have something of yours.”

“Yes, you were seen taking it away. Can I have it back ?”

“Yes, of course.”

“Was it damaged ?”

“No Judith..... It’s in perfect condition.”

“Where do we meet ?”

“The burial place of Samuel Westcott. I’m sure you know where that is.”

“Of course.....One of the founders of our order.”

She sounded quite friendly. Simon decided to risk something he really didn’t excel at.... Small talk.

“Are you enjoying running the London office ?” He asked.

“Not really Simon, I was ordered here after Clara killed the previous woman in the job..... After having sex with her in a seedy hotel first of course. I’ll see you at Samuel Westcott’s grave.”

The change of tone had been so fast, that he just sat there for a while, driving on autopilot. Clara put her head through the gap in the curtains.

“Was she alright ?” She asked.

“I’m not sure..... I know one thing Clara. I don’t think we’ll be sharing a pizza with any of the Psochics anytime soon.”

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~ **Elizabeth (Liz)** ~

Liz Grant had called a halt to her previous career as a highly paid escort. About five foot four, a figure worthy of a centrefold and, thanks to her Jewish ancestry, long raven black hair. She turned heads everywhere she went and not just the men’s. Liz had made a good living at being an escort, but now there was Brendan in her life. He was a bit of a pug, but she couldn’t imagine life without him.

“Brendan, if you don’t stop fidgeting.....I’ll go and sleep on the sofa, for a week.”

“Sorry, my back is giving me a bad night.”

“Roll over, go on, on your side.” She said. “I can do something about that.”

There had been other changes for Liz, including being transformed into the Nameless One, the guardian of the final gate into the underworld. Not that it affected her daily life, well not that much. Immortality was nice, as was being even tougher than a vampire. Her vast untapped powers had other more mundane uses.

“Keep still.” She muttered.

“Your fingers are cold.”

Not really her fingers anymore. Her hand had become a mass of black tendrils, which were burrowing into her lover’s back. No pain for him of course, though she had used her transformed body to tear and rend the flesh of her enemies.

“Now it tickles.” Said Brendan.

“You’re such a baby..... Keep still.”

Healing his bones was well within her ability, she just hadn't mastered it yet. Her tendrils became thin, then tiny, then microscopic. Liz had no idea how it worked, it was something in the other part of her mind. Her body joined with Brendan's at a deep cellular level, healing tissues, calming aggravated nerves.

"Oh.... That feels so good."

"See....Don't leave things until they get so bad."

A little more probing to ease angry nerves near his right hip and she was finished. It wasn't that Brendan was old, it was his job. Nothing worse than being a self-employed builder to wreck a healthy body. She withdrew her long thin tendrils from his flesh, turning them back into four normal fingers and a thumb.

"Now you should be able to sleep." She said.

No reply, he was already into a deep, and hopefully untroubled sleep. Using her gifts made her thirsty, Liz stumbled her way into the kitchen of the apartment they shared. She caught a glimpse of her naked body in the stainless steel door of the fridge.

"Still got it girl." She muttered.

A can of the fizzy drink Brendan was addicted to, before the less pleasant side effect of using her healing skills. They hadn't lived in the apartment long, she bashed her toe on the way to the bathroom.

"Fuck." She mumbled.

Once in the bathroom with the door closed, she turned on the light. What was about to happen was nasty, but she felt compelled to look at the results. Liz sat on the toilet and grabbed the edge of the bath. It was always painful, always, worse than severe stomach cramps. Magda had mentioned the pain lessening over time. No asking for more details of course, Magda had been killed by Patsy.

"I will not scream out." She mumbled. "I will not scream out."

She could hold it, the pain only started when she emptied her bladder after using her new powers. It was nice to get it over with though, in the middle on the night. The pain was dreadful, but only for a short period of time. Peeing took a while, and there was always a little residual pain, accompanied by an unpleasant odour.

"It will get easier, Magda said it will get easier."

The main worry had been turning into the Nameless One and not turning back. According to the ancient texts that was unlikely to happen for thousands of years, if it happened at all. Sadly the texts failed to mention the contents of the toilet bowl.

"To think.....I used to dread catching cystitis."

She'd shown Brendan once, just so he knew what happened. Just the once, really to get it out of the way. He'd told her the black ooze looked like Guinness. There was even black froth on top, and on a bad day, it could bubble for a while. Easy to get rid of, a flush and it was gone. A little ritual with the toilet brush and a splash of bleach and the bathroom was spotless once again. Liz found something else to stub her toe on, while heading back to bed.

"Crap ! We need a few night lights."

Her phone was on the kitchen table, set to be silent. It was flashing at her, telling her someone wanted to talk to her at close to three in the morning. The icon for Laura was lighting up the table.

"Hi Laura."

"Glad you're awake..... Are you busy ?"

"Well.....I've just peed half a gallon of foul gunk, after quite a bit of pain. Otherwise.....I'm all yours."

"Sorry....I suppose it is a bit late, or early." Said Laura. "I'll let you get to sleep."

“No.... Talk to me Laura, why the late call ?”

Liz had a lot of time for Laura, she had brought Brendan back from the dead. He'd been shot and killed, his blood covering the floor. Laura had taken him somewhere, carrying the huge Irishman in her arms. A few hours later she'd returned with him. He was alive, properly alive. No sudden craving for human brains, or weird behaviour. Her Brendan had returned to her, though she suspected Laura had needed to make a deal with the Ancient Gods to do it.

“We could talk over a pizza.” Said Laura.

“Alright, where ?”

“Our place, Simon and Clara are on their way to see Judith. We've pizza and garlic bread in the freezer.”

“Judith ! Why are they seeing Judith ?”

“I'll tell you when you get here.”

“On my way.”

No waking Brendan now he was asleep. She left a note in front of the clock on his side of the bed.

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~ **Patsy** ~

Patsy Smart had come home tired, really tired. She was still enjoying working at Hayle's Motor Factors; she'd even been promoted to Assistant Manager Counter Sales. It meant getting all the admin work the manager wanted to avoid, but a pay rise also came with the promotion. Her boss had given her a pep talk to go along with the new title and extra cash.

“Learn about cars Patsy and you could be managing this place in a few years. Take a college course or something; I'll even chip in for the fees. We've reached that point. You need to understand what the parts do, if you want to progress. You seem happy here.... Do you think you'll be with us for a while ?”

“Yes.... I love it here.” She'd told him.

She really did love the work and it was a lot better than the options the Job Centre had tried to aim her at. Two legs, two arms and no criminal record seemed to mean being pushed at burger flipping, cleaning or delivering pizzas. Patsy had decided her future was in selling car parts. She'd been relying on the computer too much though, she had to know a fuel pump from an alternator. It would be fun, she'd get the regulars to join in by testing her knowledge.

Automotive Technologies they called it at Southgate College and telling the regulars had been a mistake. There had been two fights over a disagreement and threats against 'the clown who wrote that textbook.' Silly really, she knew the lads at the counter well enough to have seen that one coming. Two nights a week and a day release was a lot of hard work, but her boss was paying all the college fees. He still seemed to view Simon as some sort of mobster and her as Simon's gangster's moll. In a way of course, her boss was right. It had been a busy day and a demanding evening class. Patsy's head had hit her pillow and she'd gone straight to sleep. She woke at about three in the morning, really needing a pee.

“Oh Timmy, you've made my leg go dead.” She muttered.

Her mum's cat was fourteen years old and heavy. He tended to sleep with her mum, though he seemed to prefer sleeping with Patsy on chilly nights. He was using her as a hot water bottle, but she didn't mind. The weight on her leg could be a problem. Once he'd slept right across her left knee all night. She'd had a weird walk until lunchtime.

“Wake up you daft thing....I need to pee.”

Patsy put her hand out to gently push him off and realised there was something wrong. He hadn't responded, not even his usual weird chortling sound. Still in the dark she ran her hand over his tummy, which always got some kind of response. Nothing..... And he felt cold.

"Oh Fuck.....Timmy..... No.... Wake up."

It was so close to the anniversary of her dad's death and her mum loved the cat so much..... She loved the cat so much. A rare thing, she put on the big light in her room and had a good look at Timothy, hoping he'd suddenly spring up and start purring.

"Please..... Please, let him be alive."

Her fingers went up under his left front leg. There was no heart beat and he was completely cold. Timothy had been part of the family since before she'd even reached her teens. Patsy found herself crying and worrying about how her mum was going to take it. Perhaps if it looked like he'd just vanished, run away in the night ? No, her mum would begin a huge 'Find Timothy' campaign, she'd probably call the local newspapers. For better or worse, her mum would have to be told as soon Patsy heard her moving about.

"You need a box.....I've just the thing."

Some clothes ordered online had turned up in a particularly nice box. It had gone on top of a wardrobe for when it was needed for something. A fluffy hand towel in the bottom and Patsy picked Timmy up and put him in the box. She leant down to plant a kiss on his forehead.

"Daft cat, I'll miss you..... You're about to break mum's heart."

The box went onto the old easy chair by the window, the one Simon usually sat in when he visited. It was three thirty, far too early to start digging a box sized hole in the back garden. Patsy had the pee she'd got up to have half an hour earlier, before trying to get to sleep again.

"Daft cat.....I might get mum a kitten."

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Clara had once quite liked Judith. That was before Sam Isaacs had vanished, assumed killed and disposed of. The problem with not having a body or a crime scene is that blame tends to be spread about, like paint out of a spray gun. A lot was liberally applied to Simon and her, even though they'd had nothing to do with killing the leader of The Psochic Order.

Clara had killed a senior member of the Psochics in London. Camille's death had been in a sordid, grubby hotel and it had followed a night of sex. Camille had attacked her first, though she hadn't bothered to tell that to Judith.

"Where are they ?....We've been here a long time and the night is getting chilly." Said Jake.

"They've been here for a while." Said Simon. "I've noticed them lurking about near the chapel, trying not to be seen."

"Hardly surprising really." Said Jake. "They've walked into one Silver Dawn trap tonight."

"If we'd wanted you dead, you'd be dead by now." Said Clara.

"I know...I know. If I yelled out to them, it might make things worse." Said Jake. "Just be patient with them....Please."

"No problem." Said Simon.

The night had turned chilly, it wasn't a night to be sat in a damp graveyard. Holy ground could be a problem too, Clara could feel pain from her wounds again. They were quite close to the grave of Samuel Westcott, one of the founders of the Psochic Order. Another of their founders was Howard Carter, the famous archaeologist. When he wasn't digging in the sands of Egypt, Carter had been a keen believer in the occult.

"I will give his grave a little dignity again." Muttered Jake. "It should never have been left like this."

Mabina and Brendan had dug into the grave, though Brendan had done all of the actual digging. They'd been looking for a copy of the Psochic's bible. Unlike many legends, a copy really had been buried with its author, the late Samuel Westcott. Brendan had made an attempt to fill in the grave afterwards. Mabina had told Simon and her the story one night, over a meal at her house in Chelsea. "I've seen it before." Said Simon. "Fill in a grave with loose freshly dug soil and it'll settle. You end up with a surface that looks like a ploughed field."

"Sam Isaacs should have had the grave restored." Muttered Jake. "It's an insult to the great man." Judith had obviously decided it wasn't a trap. She walked down the path from the chapel. No obvious sign of a weapon on her, certainly no gun in her hands. The others were probably armed though, the half dozen or so men and women spreading out, getting behind gravestones to use as cover.

"It's fine Judith, let's get this over with." Called out Jake. "I'm tired, cold and want to get to bed." Judith approached her, not saying anything until she close enough to talk without raising her voice. "He's had quite a night Clara." She said. "Can I take him home?"

"Yes, of course you can."

Simon tried it occasionally, even though it wasn't a natural skill to him. It was her fault of course, trying to get him to use small talk to get to know people.

"I see the mark left in your hair won't go away." He said.

A white mark in her hair, which went all the way from front to back. Not a good subject for small talk, as it obviously upset Judith. She'd tried to cover it with a scarf and refused to give details about the event. All they knew was that it had been in Jerusalem and probably the work of something left behind by Sam.

"Oh this." Said Judith. "One of Sam's watchdogs....I got a little too close."

"I'm surprised you haven't used dye on it." Said Clara.

"I have, but the mark comes back."

Judith's people had Jake, leading him away towards the road. Judith just stood there though, looking at her.

"Take Jake to the car Sonia." Called Judith. "There's something I need to do here."

"Leave you alone.....Are you sure?" Asked Sonia.

"Are you going to ask them to about the problem in Jerusalem?" Asked Jake.

"Yes, I think it's the right moment."

"Come on then, take me to a nice warm car." Said Jake. "Judith will be fine."

Once the others were out of earshot, Clara had to ask.

"So, out with it Judith..... What problem in Jerusalem?"

"Sam's watchdog refuses to go away and we need to empty the building. Come on, we opened the chapel and there's no alarm. We might as well talk in comfort."

Simon gave her a look, before nodding. Hollywood had told the world a lot about vampires, and most of it was crap. Holly ground could be a problem though and no one really understood the rules. Normal crosses weren't a problem, but ancient crosses hung in churches could be trouble. It was as if they stored something up from all the thousands of people who had knelt in prayer.

"Probably nothing to do with Christianity." Daniel had once told her. "It's probably a kind of stored energy that's seeped into the fabric of the building."

Not that Daniel was certain about it, but he was the best source of information they had. There was no vampire bible, being turned didn't come with instructions. Not that Clara was going to admit a weakness to Judith. She strode into the chapel, Simon right behind her.

“Oh...I should have asked.” Said Judith. “Are you alright being in a place of worship ?”

“Fine.” Said Clara.

“Never believe anything you see in films, or on TV.” Added Simon.

It seemed strange to sit on a pew, only a short distance from the altar. They were learning all the time though, especially after Laura had unintentionally destroyed one of the oldest churches in England. Sitting in a pew was probably fine....The cross behind the altar was the thing to avoid. Laura had caused one to burst into flames, only just escaping with her life.

“So.... Tell us about the problem in Jerusalem ?” Asked Clara.

“Sam’s family are loyal to the order.” Said Judith. “Even though it’ll be several years until Sam can be officially treated as being deceased, they know the order needs to move on. I am the executor of Sam’s will and I hold his power of attorney. His family have been compensated and as far as they’re concerned, everything in his office building in Jerusalem is now the property of the order.”

“I get it, you’re legally and morally entitled to take his things.” Said Simon.

“Not just the contents, the building belonged to Sam too. It was hoped to clear it out and sell it. Property in that part of Jerusalem has tripled in value recently.”

First a lesson in the legal standing of the presumed dead and now Jerusalem property values. Clara had a fairly good attention span for a vampire, but there were limits.

“All sounds great in Psochic land..... So why do you need us ?” She asked.

“I didn’t say.....”

“Oh come on Judith, we know how you guys work.” Said Simon.

Clara was getting the feelings usually associated with being outside on a particularly sunny day. Her eyes were itching, the skin on her cheeks felt a little warm and she was fighting a need to sneeze. The cemetery chapel was hardly a major holy site, but it had probably been there for over two hundred years. Worryingly, her wounds from earlier were beginning to ache again. The sooner they were finished talking to Judith, the better.

“To be honest we’re not sure if it is something left behind by Sam.” Said Judith. “It did this..... Thing to my hair and I can’t imagine Sam ever being that cruel. I felt its presence, but couldn’t look directly at it. I just knew that looking directly into its eyes.....I just froze, looking at the ground.”

“Has it killed anyone ?” Asked Clara.

“Yes, the first was the man who looked after building maintenance. Nothing outwardly violent, there wasn’t a mark on his body. There was a look of horror on his face, when I found him. His heart had simply stopped beating.”

Simon sneezed, a full on loud sneeze, followed by another. Judith was staring at him, it was known to all the Psochics that vampires were immune to colds and flu. Simon smiled back at her.

“Sorry.....I get dreadful dust allergies.” He said.

“You said he was the first Judith. Tell us about the others ?” Asked Clara.

“It started off in the top floor store room, but then whatever it is began to affect other floors. A cleaner was horrible injured. One of the men sent to crate up Sam’s pictures had his face slashed. There were other injuries too, though none were fatal.”

“Definitely sounds like Sam left a surprise for would be burglars.” Said Simon.

“After the maintenance man disturbed whatever it is, it probably got bored. So..... Who else has it killed Judith ?” Asked Clara.

Judith was looking awkward, something had obviously gone badly wrong in Jerusalem. Clara could feel her hip going numb and desperately wanted to get out of the chapel. Admitting such a weakness to Judith though.....

"We sent in a team, the people who usual handle hauntings and possessions." Said Judith.

"You have your own exorcists?" Asked Simon.

"We did have.....A team of three went into the top floor storeroom and all of them were killed. A clean up team removed the bodies, thought two of them were badly wounded. Our top people went into that storeroom and their flesh was sliced from their bones."

"They were humans though." Said Simon. "We're not."

"Which is why Jake gave me permission to ask you to go to Jerusalem and get rid of.....Whatever this damn thing is."

A pain dial in her head, had reached its limit for Clara, she needed to be out of the chapel and off hallowed ground.

"Bottom line Judith, what's in it for us?" She asked.

"The contents of three crates from the stores and we'll pay your expenses. Best hotel, first class tickets going out and returning home. The crates contain everything from priceless art to powerful artefacts. Hundreds of crates.... You can open them all and pick what you want from three of them."

"Do they come with descriptions of the contents?" Asked Simon.

"No and some might be dangerous.....But for two vampires who'd just taken care of our problem.....I can't see there be anything you can't handle."

Simon sneezed again and Clara felt the bullet shift in her shoulder.

"The contents of six crated, take it or leave it." Said Clara.

"But some of the crates contain priceless art....There may be a Picasso in one of them, no one knows for sure. Sam could be a little eccentric."

Clara stood up, trying her best not to show that she was feeling nauseous.

"Did it ever occur to you that every time this thing of Sam's hurts someone, it might be getting stronger?" Asked Simon. "It might get restless and take a look in the building next door, or the one across the road."

"It might not be Sam's.....Six crates though....I'll need to discuss it with Jake."

Priceless art or not, Clara really had ceased to care. Mabina had once mentioned being drained by the graveyard, but that had been during her crazy phase.

"Talk to him and get back to us.....Just don't leave it too long." Said Clara.

They hadn't even reached the chapel door.

"Alright....The contents of six crates." Shouted Judith. "Call me when you have an arrival date in Jerusalem."

Better, she felt far better as soon as they walked out of the chapel. Clara put her hand under her jacket and felt the stickiness of fresh blood near her shoulder.

"I hereby suggest that if anyone wants to talk to us in a church or a chapel....." She said.

"We find an excuse not to....." Said Simon.

"Oh yes.....So, we're going to Jerusalem. That finally gives me an excuse to leave the job at the hotel."

"You've left there before."

"Yes, and if they call when I get back, I might work there again. The hotel is like that comfy pair of old slippers you just can't throw away."

"We have to take Laura." Said Simon. "If we leave her at home on her own.....She'll get up to all sorts of nonsense. Remember last time she was left on her own?"

"Yes, we had to move....She wants to travel around the Middle East anyway. I'm sure she won't take much persuading to begin her trip in Jerusalem."

“What is she going to do with Tim ?”

‘Do with’ sounded strange, but she knew what Simon meant. Laura’s relationship with Tim had survived a lot of ups and downs and now she was off abroad again.

“I have no idea, you know Laura. She might marry him and take him with her, or feed on him and dispose of the body. Either way, she’s already told HR she’s leaving the hotel.”

Her wounds were still painful, she grunted as she sat in the passenger seat of Simon’s van.

“Are you alright ?” Asked Simon. “You should be more careful.... At your age.”

“Oh, you wait until I’m fully healed Simon Atherton..... You just wait.”

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Liz had been a bit wary of Laura when she’d been an ordinary human. Since becoming some sort of servant of the ancient Egyptian Gods, she’d viewed Laura differently. Liz had her own urges sometimes, urges to kill. Plus she’d fought alongside Laura in a strange pocket universe. Liz was beginning to understand how it must be for soldiers. Fighting side by side, going through so much together. It created something, a bond likely to last a lifetime. Even if that lifetime lasted forever. “So you all decided to keep this Jake Rice alive.” Said Liz. “I can see the sense in that. My enemy’s enemy is my friend and all that. And these Silver Dawn people.....They sound complete arseholes.” They’d eaten an entire large pizza, several portions of garlic bread, and drunk half a bottle of wine each. Becoming a guardian of the last gateway to the underworld hadn’t improved her tolerance for alcohol. Liz was at the stage where she was aware of what she was saying, even if she might regret saying it once she was sober.

“It makes so much sense when you put it like that.” Said Laura. “Clara makes everything too complicated and as for Simon.....Yes, I get it now... Jake had to live. Did you learn how to explain things in the new job with Goldberg, Kemp & thingy ?”

“Not really, I’ll just be a junior for a while, but I quite like it. It’s called Isenberg, Kemp & Gerrin. Shit no it isn’t.....You’ve got me drunk again Selway.”

“But you’re enjoying working for a PR company ?”

“Yes, I suppose.”

“I’m determined to do something different when I get back to London.” Said Laura. “The hotel is the longest job I’ve ever had....Think about that..... Anyway, what was the name of your new place ?”

“Alright....I need to see it written down in my head and say it fast.....Isenberg, Kemp & Drabin...Fuck that’s it..... Yay.”

They cheered for a while and decided such a feat called for another bottle of wine. Red wine, white wine ? All Liz really knew was that it was cool and tasted really good.

“Come with me if you’re not that into the new job.” Said Laura.

“I can’t, not now I’ve moved into the new place with Brendan.”

“Do you love him ?”

“Yes.....I suppose I must do. I used to go for handsome business types. Tall dark and have some as they say.”

“Oh, Brendan isn’t like that.” Said Laura.

“No he isn’t.....I think I do love him though. Sometimes I think of all the people at work and I picture them with crushed skulls.....I never think about Brendan like that.”

“Must be love then.” Said Laura. “I sometimes imagine everyone at the hotel with their throat slashed from ear to ear. There they all are, piled up in the reception area. Never Tim though.....Never Tim.”

“So you must love Tim then ?” Asked Liz.

"I suppose I must. I'd like to take him with me, he's not that keen on his job. A hotel trainee in his early thirties.....He can do better than that."

"So you're going to take him with you ?" Asked Liz.

"I'm not sure....I haven't asked him yet. Clara gave me a pep talk on not killing people we've been close to.... You know, too many people have seen us together. I'd never kill him though."

"Must be love then Laura."

"Yeah..... Could you kill Brendan ?"

"Hmmmmm no, I'm sure I couldn't."

"Love then.... Definitely..... Have you ever tried Sambuca ?"

"Yeah.....A long time ago... It was alright." Said Liz.

"There was a bottle in the back of a cupboard when we moved in. I've always wanted to try it. Shall we give it a go ?"

"Yeah, why not."

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