

The Hornsey Vampires

(Season two of London's Night Stalkers)

Chapter 4 – Dreams of the Forest

“The delivery guy reminded her of Felipe, the gorgeous Brazilian bike courier. It might just have been the crash helmet and clothing of course, but as he walked away Clara realised it had been a while since she'd seen Felipe. As flings went it had been good and he'd never once used the L word or become clingy. He'd committed the worst sin for a fling though, Felipe had become predictable.”

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Simon stood across the road for a while, watching who came and went from The Bear public house. The Bear was in E8, a postcode which included bits of Hackney and Dalston. It was an area property developers salivated over, lots of opportunities for gentrification and rocketing property prices. The Bear stood out as somewhere from a past age, a pub which still had a door marked 'Private Bar.' That had once meant a place to take the wife or girlfriend, away from the bad language and roughness of the public bar. It looked seedy, all peeling brown paint and grimy windows. The sort of pub you expected to see closed down and redeveloped as a boutique clothing store, or yet another coffee shop. He dialled Laura's mobile, knowing she was watching him from the bus stop across the street.

“I might be in there a while Laura.” He said. “I'll tell him I've somewhere else to be if it goes on for longer than an hour.”

“No problem, I won't move unless I see someone shifty looking enter the pub.”

“Every customer looks shifty Laura; it's a thug pub, somewhere for William Jarrold's crime world cronies to meet up.”

“I'll be ready Simon..... In case it's a hit.”

“Just..... Don't be too eager Laura, no going all Reservoir Dogs on the place. Shoot whoever might be trying to kill me and we leave..... Ok.”

“Alright.”

There probably was no one in there waiting to kill him. It was only his second visit to The Bear and on the previous occasion, there had been a few gentle threats from Tom. Bill Jarrold needed to be shown respect, informed about any jobs he might have planned in Bill's territory. Simon had given Tom a few exceptionally good prices for drugs, as a sign of respect.

Vampires were hard to kill, but a bullet in the head and he'd be as dead as any human. It helped his confidence to have Laura as backup, as he crossed the road and entered the pub. The police might wonder about two or three patrons of The Bear, who'd had their throats ripped out. Deaths from bullet wounds on the other hand, would be almost routine. Bradford saw Tom, sitting on his own, looking unhappily at a pint of weak bitter shandy.

“Hi Tom, has your doctor still got you drinking that crap ?”

“Yep, smells like piss, tastes even worse.”

“Can I buy you a decent single malt ?”

“Oh, yes please Simon. I might live longer drinking shandy, but I'm not sure if I'd want to.”

It was Tom's wife causing all the grief, though she was doing it with good intentions. Simon had no idea about Tom's home life, but Clara had even found out a name for Mrs Tom, though Simon

couldn't remember what it was. The Bear might not have been gentrified, but the prices had. Simon was glad he'd stopped at a cash point on the way.

"A proper drink, thank you Simon." Said Tom, as he sipped the yellow liquid.

"So what is it Tom, stop operating on Bill's turf or else?"

"No, no, nothing like that Simon. Bill asked me to talk to you about doing a little job for him. I know you're not short of cash, but it's an easy sixty thousand. If you're interested?"

Simon had bought himself a glass of scotch. He drank a good mouthful, guessing what the job was likely to be. Few easy jobs paid that kind of cash. There were few people in the bar and no one within earshot. He still leant towards Tom and lowered his voice.

"I assume Bill wants someone..... Removed?"

Simon saw a couple of large gnarly looking men enter the bar from the street and knew what he'd see next. Sure enough Laura walked past, no doubt with both her handguns ready for action. Her hood was pulled down; most wouldn't have noticed her slide by the open door. Simon had seen her though.

"I can see why you thought it might have been a removal Simon, good word that." Said Tom. "It isn't, though I've been told very little about it."

"Sorry to interrupt Tom, but I saw Laura outside, I asked her to meet me here. I'd like to bring her in to hear about this job, if that's alright?"

"Yes of course.....Actually I don't know much about it."

Simon went to the pub door and saw Laura waiting back at the bus stop. He waived her over and bought another round before joining Tom again. For some reason both she and Clara were going through a wine spritzer phase.

"Hello Laura.....Oh, another scotch." Said Tom. "Well, as you've bought it."

The last time they'd had a quick drink at The Bear, Simon had needed a day off work to recover.

"Right Tom, tell us about this job Bill want's doing?"

"As I was saying, the pay will be sixty thousand, though I'd ask for more money. Always ask for more, it's expected and Bill respects people who know their worth."

"Who do we have to kill?" Asked Laura.

"That's what I asked." Said Simon.

Tom was actually chuckling.

"I can see why you'd think that." He said. "Judging by the number of messy cars you bring in, you're certainly good at removals. Bill is..... Compartmentalising, yes that's the word he used. After his own cousin informed on him, we're now compartmentalised. I was just told to give you this card."

'Cyril's Petit Champignon

Everything we sell is 100% Organic and Vegan

Managing Director Cyril H Carter'

There was also a telephone number and an address in West London on the card, which Simon passed to Laura.

"Cyril's little mushroom." She said. "I wasn't expecting that."

"Yeah, but he's old school like me Laura, used to run a chain of pie and mash places, mainly in south London." Said Tom. "No money in it now though, not heathy enough for the kids. Cyril is doing well with his mushrooms, far better than he ever did with pie and mash."

"So we just go and see Cyril?" Asked Simon.

"That's it, just pop in there..... Can I get you both another drink ?"

They both agreed and it started to look like another drunken night with Tom. Tom held Laura's hand when he got back, which strangely she didn't object to.

"Say yes to the job Laura, you're both like family to me, Clara too. Bill is getting grouchy, two years in jail and another two to do. He's paranoid about people turning on him.... Just do the job, keep him happy. He'll then leave you in peace."

"I understand Tom, thank you for telling us." Said Laura.

"Don't worry, we'll see him and do the job." Said Simon. "Now, who wants another drink ? Or I could bring back the bottle ?"

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Daniel enjoyed sex with Gwen more since becoming a vampire and she seemed to enjoy it too. He had more strength, more stamina and contrary to recent film nonsense from Hollywood, there was no danger of him injuring Gwen. He smoothed the hair back from her sweat covered forehead.

"Such a pity you can never stay the night." He said.

"I would really love to, but..... The boy needs his breakfast and I think he'd panic if I wasn't there to get him up."

"We'll have to go on holiday together, all of us." He said.

"You Daniel... A holiday ! A nice idea, though there'd be the problem of finding someone to feed the animals while we're away."

"That can be arranged Gwen, any problem can be sorted out."

"You'd cancel it at the last moment, we both know it. You.... A holiday indeed !"

Gwen knew him too well. At first she'd just been a slightly eccentric neighbour. Actually slightly dotty was more accurate. They'd begun to look after each other's small holdings to cover family emergencies and rare trips away. At some point, he found it hard to recall exactly when, there had been sharing a bed a few times with no sex at all. Sharing a bed became kissing and touching, which inevitably led to penetration and hours of unhurried carnal delights.

Gwen was the wrong side of middle age, her hair was going grey and her figure was spreading. He loved her though, with a love that seemed to have crept up on him by stealth. One moment she'd just been Gwen who shared his bed a few times a year. Now he thought about her when making decisions and hated not having her around.

"We'll do it Gwen, I promise. I need to spend some time in London. We can all go, see the Tower of London, laugh at the awful waxworks in Tussauds. Has the boy ever been to London ?"

"No, I've only been three times and one of those was for a funeral. Are you serious Daniel ?"

"Yes, I am..... Come with me to London. We'll fly and stay in a decent hotel."

"It would be nice.... You can't get the boy all excited and let him down Daniel, or me for that matter. No changing your mind at the last moment."

"I promise you'll we'll go. I'll start arranging things in the morning."

At one time he'd have kissed her and rolled over, quickly going to sleep. There was the extra stamina now..... Gwen gasped with delight as he entered her.

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Laura wasn't at the passing out and waking up in a pool of urine stage, but she was fairly drunk. They both were, though Simon managed to handle it better than her. Probably from having over seven centuries of experience of drinking far too much. Luckily Simon had booked a cab and Clara had helped her undress.

"If only the room would stop spinning..... Stop it room !" She muttered.

“Go to sleep.” Called Clara.

“I’m trying to..... Not my fault.... Damn room.”

Crap ! Living in a house with other vampires could be hell. Even muttering to herself could be overheard. It was far too hot under her duvet, she kicked it off and lay there naked, apart from her panties. Anxiety about missing a day at work hadn’t arrived yet, though part of her knew it soon would. She looked at her bedside clock, the LED display showing three thirty one. Things were bad, she’d needed to close one eye to see the clock properly. At her old place in Potters Bar she’d have put on a CD and curled up into a ball on the floor, but that wasn’t an option with Clara and her vampire hearing.

“Ohhhh.”

“Are you alright ?”

“Fine Clara, just ignore me.”

Laura thought about listening to a Cyndi Lauper CD using headphones, it was always Cyndi for some reason after drinking far too much. Where were her headphones though ? Not only the room, her mental rolodex was spinning too, making it impossible to focus on where she’d last seen her headphones.

Sleep was impossible of course, until she realised she was asleep and dreaming. It was that dream again, her ethereal body swooping down and across the forest canopy. She could see properly and nothing was shifting about or spinning in her dream. Colours were a little strange, especially as her dream was always of the forest at night. The foliage below her had a definite light green tinge to it.

“Gudara, Gudara.” She heard.

The dream was an old friend, the forest clearing almost a second home. She felt her foot touch the ground and noticed she was still only wearing a pair of panties. It didn’t matter in the world of dreams of course. Wiremi was there, ignoring her as he usually did. The others interested her more, the sleepers forming a circle around the fire. An idea had begun to form in her mind the last time she’d joined them, sitting among them, letting her mind wander as it chose.

“Are you like me, dreamers from other times, other worlds ?” She muttered.

Laura had her place to sit now, her own spot between two other dreamers. At first it had just been a space on the grubby damp ground. One night it had been swept clean and now there was a covering of fresh dry leaves for her panties to rest on. She probably looked like the others when there, that sort of made sense. All the dreamers looked like Wiremi, right down to the loin cloth to cover their private bits. It amused Laura to think there might well be another girl from another world there and that she too might be nursing a hangover.

“Devourer, come here.” Said Wiremi.

It was the usual routine, like an old VHS tape set to repeat the same loop, over and over again. Laura ignored him and sat on the soft dry leaves, which someone had thoughtfully provided. Emptying her mind of all thoughts was impossible, especially with the alcohol still in her system. Colours were still weird, the fire far too orange, the trees far too green. Laura closed her eyes and tried to concentrate on nothing, nothing at all. After what felt like hours, the dampness of the ground under her buttocks seeped through the leaves and refused to be ignored.

“No use, I must try not coming here when I’m drunk.”

Laura opened her eyes and she wasn’t in the forest anymore. She was sat in a room she recognised, the medical room in Vlad’s house where Clara had stitched up her wounds. She was there, Mabina, though she didn’t look her old self.

“Who would after being shot in the head.” Laura muttered.

They hadn't heard her and Laura realised she wasn't really there, or at least not as a physical presence. She was watching it all from a spot close to the ceiling, looking down on them. A sickly looking Mabina Gladitch was injecting something into the shoulder of a large muscular man. He flinched every time the needle went in.

"Don't be such a baby..... There, now we'll give it a minute or two. As for Liz Grant, the date of travel is up to you really. How well are you learning all the information I gave you ?" Asked Mabina.

"Very well my queen, very well. I could be ready to go to Jerusalem next week."

My queen indeed, didn't he know Mabina was dead, her body being recycled by the compost floor in the cellar of Vlad's house ? Laura realised she wasn't seeing a dream, even though she was dreaming.

"You need to be certain and no marking the list of questions, no more highlighter pens. You need to remember the important questions without giving anything away to Sam Isaacs." Said Mabina.

"I know the question about the hungry ground is the most important my queen."

Sam Isaacs, Jerusalem and two weeks. Laura tried to force it all into her memory, every important word.

"I must not forget Liz Grant, she's obviously important." She muttered.

With the realisation that she'd actually dreamt within a dream, she was awake and looking at a pile of vomit on the floor next to her bed.

"Fuck ! Never, ever again."

Until the next time of course, she'd had the never again conversation with herself many times before. Laura looked at the clock and it was an hour away from the time the alarm went off, there was no morning light coming through her curtains. She felt good though, surprisingly good, ready and keen for another busy day at the hotel. There was the evil smelling puke to clean up of course, but that would come after she'd written down everything she'd seen and heard in Vlad's old house.

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Simon loved their new offices, no more cubicle barely separated from the bear pit, the open plan where everyone tried to make sixty or more productive calls every day. There was a bear pit in their new spacious offices, but Simon now had his own office.

'Simon Atherton – Senior Sales Consultant.'

It said on the door and he had a key to add a bit more gravitas and much needed privacy. Sales people were shameless, they'd sell their own children to get a few decent leads. Simon knew that trying to get into the bosses desk was considered fairly normal, he'd done it himself. Veronica Neophytou had put her heads around his door before he'd taken the cover off his Starbucks blonde espresso with extra oomph. He badly needed the coffee and not Veronica in full moan mode.

"Wow Simon, is that half a pint of espresso ? You'll die, honestly... Haven't you read about caffeine poisoning ?"

"I need it Ronnie, it was one of those nights."

He gave her what he hoped was his most roguish grin. Simon liked to cultivate a bit of a villain in a suit image at work. It helped to explain away the cuts and bruises that were sometimes visible on his face and neck.

"You picked a good day for a hangover, Anthony won't be in until this afternoon. He left a message on the office voicemail."

That was a piece of luck, it meant he could relax a bit and put into place his plan to find out if Mabina was really back from the dead. He sipped his coffee and noticed Veronica was still there,

hovering. He liked Veronica, even if she could moan at Olympic level. Small and dark haired, she looked harmless, yet was probably the most ruthless person on his sales team.

“Was there anything else Ronnie ?” He asked.

“Look Simon, you know how I hate to moan.”

He grinned and she grinned back, she used the same line at least three times a week.

“Sit down and talk to me Ronnie, while I give myself Espresso poisoning, or whatever it is.”

“Caffeine poisoning.... I don’t mind calling whoever you want, I just need a rest from trying to sell phone systems to small businesses.”

“But you’re good at it.” He pointed out.

“I know my numbers are good, but it’s soul destroying. The lists are crap and the people I call are bastards... really. They just seem to exist to give me a hard time. Can I do something else for a few days, just as a change ?”

He’d been there himself, hating every call. Ronnie needed a bit of change and it fitted in with his plans. If anyone could find out about Mabina, it was Ronnie. He still wasn’t sure if Laura’s dream had been nothing but booze induced nonsense, but it needed investigating.

“There is the pensions list, good money if we can get it right. Just checking out the information on the first call, sounding out the low hanging fruit. You’ll need to be persistent and ask them for a lot of personal information. Old people can be brutal Ronnie.... Still fancy a change ?”

“Yes, you know I can be persistent.”

“Ok, give me half an hour to wake up and I’ll send you a list.”

Simon didn’t have much information on Mabina, but he had an address, two phone numbers and he knew she’d been a healthcare professional. The lists they bought were often inaccurate, so he made up the rest. Ronnie would ferret out what they needed to know and her first question was likely to be the most important.

‘Am I speaking to Mrs Mabina Gladitch ?’

Clara had wanted to hire a private investigator, but there was the danger of them being too efficient and discovering the truth about Mabina. Or they might end up under the compost in the basement, which could mean the police investigating.

“You’re right Simon, the police finding that basement could be dangerous for all of us.”

Mabina might be pissed off about a sales call inviting her to swap her NHS pension for something else, but everyone hated sales calls.

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Group meetings were awkward with Simon working until nine some nights. Patsy had to be there of course, Mabina had once kidnapped her and tried to kill her. Mabina had tried to kill all of them, which was why everyone was in the lounge, drinking coffee and waiting for the pizza guy to arrive.

“Thank you, keep the change.” Said Clara.

The delivery guy reminded her of Felipe, the gorgeous Brazilian bike courier. It might just have been the crash helmet and clothing of course, but as he walked away Clara realised it had been a while since she’d seen Felipe. As flings went it had been good and he’d never once used the L word or become clingy. He’d committed the worst sin for a fling though, Felipe had become predictable.

“Can someone help me in the kitchen ?” She yelled.

“On my way.” Said Laura.

Laura helped her slice up the pizza and place the garlic bread on plates. Plates for everything as they had company, even if it was only Patsy. More beer and wine too of course, everything being spread over the coffee table in the lounge.

"Has everyone got food?" Asked Clara.

"Thank you Clara, the local pizza place is better here than Wood Green." Said Patsy.

The others were nodding and chewing, it was time for Simon to tell them his news. He just moved forward on his chair and stopped eating, rather than standing.

"I'll start with a fact; Mabina Gladitch is alive and still living at the house in Chelsea." He said.

They all knew of course, they'd been talking about nothing else while waiting for the pizza guy to arrive.

"How could she have survived what I did to her?" Asked Laura.

"Daniel talked about the dirt floor and all those bodies in the cellar being some kind of offering to gain resurrection when required. We all thought it was nonsense, but maybe it wasn't." Said Clara.

"Are we absolutely certain it's her?" Asked Patsy. "I saw her head blown apart."

Patsy was actually beginning to tremble, until Laura hugged her. They were really good friends, which had surprised Clara. It might complicate things though if Simon decided Patsy had become a little too predictable.

"It's her, all our calls are recorded." Said Simon. "I have listened to the call between Mabina and Ronnie at the office and there's no mistake, it's Mabina."

"Can we hear the recording?" Asked Laura.

"Yes, I put it on a USB memory stick." Said Simon. "Ronnie reported on her call, but sales people only ever report the basics, the things that went right. It's obvious Mabina isn't well, she talks about a long illness."

"Illness..... Three bullets, two of them in her head. Crap! Will nothing ever kill her?" Asked Laura.

"Our bad luck, her good fortune." Said Clara. "If we'd moved her out of the cellar... But Simon had been stabbed in the heart and none of us was having a good day."

Simon had walked over and pushed the USB stick into their music system, before turning to look at Patsy.

"You can hear the recording, or I can tell you what she said." He said. "I realise some of you might not want to hear her voice again."

"Play it." Said Patsy.

"Yeah.... We need to be certain." Said Laura. "I know you've heard her voice, but part of me still doesn't believe anyone can come back from..... That."

"Play it Simon." Said Clara.

It was Mabina, that voice was hard wired into Clara's brain. An unwell Mabina though who'd misunderstood the call, thinking it was from someone at the NHS. She'd rambled on for quite some time, talking about an unspecified illness, which was responding to treatment. Mabina wanted her old job back, or something similar. Once she'd realised it was a sales call her tone had changed, becoming threatening and angry. Patsy began to cry when Mabina's shouting filled the lounge.

"Turn it off Simon, we've heard enough." Said Clara.

People talk about a deafening silence and Clara now knew what that meant. Everyone simply ate Pizza or drank for a while.

"Fuck..... It's really her, back from the dead and twice as nasty." Said Laura.

"No storming in this time." Said Simon. "We'll need to watch her house and see how many people she has to help her. The big Irish guy might be just one out of a house full."

"Daniel will be here soon." Said Clara. "That'll mean four of us to fight her."

Poor Patsy looked up, her face full of tears and ruined makeup.

“Five..... Five of us to fight her.” She snapped. “I want to be there, I want to see her die again. I want to see her cut up into pieces so tiny that there’s no chance of her coming back again.”

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Two days after the meeting and Simon was with Clara, both of them looking at a fairly nondescript office building in SW17. They might have all been worried about Mabina returning from the dead, but life had to go on and there was a well-paid job for William Jarrold, which needed to be done.

Ideally he’d have brought Laura with them, but she had a function to look after at the hotel.

“Looks like Cyril makes a few bob with his mushrooms.” Said Clara. “He seems to have every floor in the building.”

“His secretary said Mr Carter only does mornings.” Said Simon. “He sounds more like a bank manager than a mobster.”

Simon still had no idea about what the job entailed and was yet to speak to Cyril H Cater in person. His secretary had arranged everything, even sending an email which put the appointment into his Outlook calendar. It was all so efficient compared to Tom and his breakers yard. Even the girl on reception didn’t have the almost obligatory reception desk attitude. She smiled, actually seemed pleased to see them.

“Good morning, welcome to Cyril’s Petit Champignon. How can I help you ?”

“I’m Simon Atherton, we’ve a ten fifteen meeting booked with Cyril Carter.”

They had to sign in and wear visitor’s badges, before being allowed to get in the lift for the top floor.

“It’s not exactly clandestine.” Said Clara.

“Tom seems to think Cyril is alright.”

A young man met them at the lift on the 5th floor and took them to Cyril’s office. It was huge, taking up a good third of the entire floor. Lots of wood panelling and marble sculptures on plinths. Simon began to feel a little intimidated by the opulence, especially when he saw the office had doors, which led out onto a private roof garden.

“Good isn’t it..... All for the effect of course. Even the cops call me Sir when they see this place.”

Cyril was a small man in a very expensive suit. A round face topped by grey hair, he moved quickly for a man of his age. Cyril was round his desk in an instant, shaking their hands, while grinning like a Cheshire Cat.

“There must be money in mushrooms Cyril.” Said Clara.

“Oh there is, we’re now into the mycoprotein stuff they use to make fake burgers.”

“I promise not to hold that against you.” Said Simon.

“Hmmm know what you mean, never eat it myself.” Said Cyril. “There’s big money in it though, fake meat is the future, or so my marketing people tell me.”

There were at least five places to sit in the office, but Cyril was opening the door and walking out into the garden.

“Not the hottest day of the year, but my other office is nice and warm.” Said Cyril.

They followed him through the garden, which even had a fish pond and two plastic herons.

“The garden is my Chinese wall.” Said Cyril. “On one side I’m Mr Carter with a successful food sector business. On the other I’m Cyril who used to run a string of pie and mash shops and ran with a fairly useful South London mob.”

At the far side of the roof was a portacabin and it was warm in there, with the smell of decent coffee welcoming them inside.

“Nice garden shed Cyril.” Said Simon.

“Secure and discreet, the tech guys run all sorts of anti-bug devices over it. As far as anyone is concerned all the secrecy is because artificial meat is a cut throat business with a high risk of corporate espionage. Coffee ? It’s fresh, or there’s fizzy water in the fridge.”

“Coffee sounds perfect.” Said Clara. “I like this place Cyril, your own private workplace den.”

“Coffee for me too.” Said Simon.

The portacabin had just one partition, separating Cyril’s office from what looked like a break room with plenty of tables and chairs. They took their coffee into the office and sat around Cyril’s desk. Simon noticed there was a thin plain manilla file in the centre of the desk.

“Tom likes you, tells me you’re the sort of people who get things done.” Said Cyril. “Versatile was the word he used, a long word for Tom. Adaptable I heard and not afraid to get your hands dirty if you have to.”

“We quite like Tom too.” Said Simon.

“Almost family.” Added Clara.

Cyril looked to be daydreaming, a faraway look in his eyes.

“We were villains in our day, but nothing like now.” He said. “The newcomers are all designer drugs, Italian suits and machine guns. You must have noticed the violence on the streets, dreadful, truly dreadful. Sadly, it’ll get worse before it gets better.”

Simon smiled at Clara and waited for Cyril to get to the point, the job that seemed so important. Cyril pushed the file across the desk. It contained pictures of boxes, floor plans and details of an alarm system.

“Tell us about it Cyril ?” Asked Simon. “What did these newcomers do ?”

“They stole something from us, it’s in this box. Not heavy, but the size means you’ll need two or three people to carry it. Bill wants his box back.”

Cyril Carter was stabbing his finger at a picture of a long wooden crate, which had the letters E T H stencilled on the outside.

“What’s in it ?” Asked Simon.

“I can’t tell you, apart from saying there’s nothing toxic or likely to explode in the crate. It’s Bill’s big secret you see, one if his cock ups.”

They didn’t really see what he meant, everything was still as clear as mud.

“Nice pictures, you must have a man on the inside ?” Asked Clara.

“Oh yes, several. No use of course.... If we go after it there will be a war and we don’t want a war. Look around, you can see what I now have. Twenty years ago and I’ve have been in their front door with a club hammer in one hand and a sawn off in the other. Now though..... I’m legit.... You must understand what I’m saying ?”

“Yes, you have a nasty problem you didn’t ask for.” Said Simon.

“And you want us to make the problem go away.” Said Clara.

Cyril was off into a daydream again. They drank their coffee and waited for the ageing mobster to continue.

“I can see why Tom likes you guys.” Said Cyril. “Making the problem go away is what I had in mind. Even though you won’t be recognised, anyone stealing the box is obviously working for us. War again, a war we’re likely to lose. Bill won’t listen to reason though, never has. I’d like you to destroy the crate, burn it and everything else inside that steel cage. Will you do that for me ?”

“Won’t Bill be a little miffed at us, to put it mildly ?” Asked Simon.

“Oh, for a while of course, but he’ll be fine... Destroying that damned box is as good as getting it back. Bill was only going to get it incinerated anyway. Tom might sulk for a while, but he’ll get over it. Make it look like a theft that went wrong, lots of inflammable chemical locked away in that cage.”
“Anything in there worth stealing ?” Asked Simon.

“Yes, Tom was right about you. I heard you deal in a few designer drugs yourself ? Not that I care what you normally do for a living.”

“I’ve sold a few boxes to Tom, but you must already know that.”

“There are boxes of the best stuff in there, take the lot if you want.” Said Cyril. “Just burn that crate, burn it all... Make it look like bonfire night. Just burn that fucking crate. I’ll pay you two hundred thousand and you can keep all the pills you can carry... Do we have a deal ?”

It wasn’t a straightforward job, but it did sound their kind of thing. There was likely to be the opportunity to feed and destroy the bodies by fire. Then there were the drugs, which almost sold themselves these days. Simon was about to say yes.

“My lucky number is three.” Said Clara. “Make it three hundred thousand and we guarantee to make your problem go away forever.”

Cyril laughed and stood to shake their hands.

“I really can see why Tom likes you guys. Three hundred thousand it is, you can collect the cash from Tom once I hear the crate has been destroyed.”

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