

The Hornsey Vampires

(Season two of London's Night Stalkers)

Chapter 8 – Grains of Sand

**“I stand amid the roar
Of a surf-tormented shore,
And I hold within my hand
Grains of the golden sand—
Edgar Allan Poe”**

»

Laura met Tim outside Southgate Tube Station on Saturday night. There had been a quick kiss on both cheeks, which seemed the best way to greet a potential boyfriend she hadn't even kissed yet.

“Do you like Greek food ?” She asked him.

“Yes, great.”

His facial expression said otherwise, so she ignored his answer.

“Indian then ? I know a decent place in Palmers Green.”

“Being honest, I'd prefer the Indian food.”

There was a decent place along Green Lanes, she'd been there with Patsy a few times. It was one of the places Simon had discovered and used for his first few dates with Patsy.

“Great for chicken Jalfrezi and cobra beer.” Simon had once told her. “Just avoid the frozen desserts.”

Tim was bound to ask her awkward questions of course, they began when they arrived where she'd parked her SUV, the pimped Chevrolet Suburban V8 with a fancy paint job.

“Wow Laura, that's beautiful..... Do you have a rich dad or something ?”

“I could tell you Tim, but then I'd have to.....”

“Yeah, yeah, I'm being nosey Laura. Feel free to tell me to mind my own business, as often as you like.”

She was warming to him, which carried on as he looked at the interior of her SUV and didn't ask her how she could afford all the extras on just above minimum wage hotel work. It had everything, from an improved SatNav, to heated leather seats. The back was more comfortable than most motel rooms. Bill Jarrold had decided on the spec for the V8, a gift for his wife, or so he claimed. Laura thought Bill had bought the vehicle for himself. No use owning a shag pad on wheels when you're in jail, so after a little bartering between Tom and Simon. The vehicle was hers.

“This is nicer than the staff accommodation at the hotel.” Said Tim.

Laura had already decided he was going to find out how comfortable the back was and how ideal for carnal delights. That would come later though, after the dating rituals, the etiquette of a meal and a few drinks before the sex.

She drove down Bourne Hill and turned right into Green Lanes. A quick left into Windsor Road and there was a gap to park in without having a long walk back to the SUV. The restaurant was small, but they'd never been too full on a Saturday night for her and Patsy to get a table without booking.

“Hello, nice to see you again.”

They knew her, which was good and bad, vampires instinctively avoid being known too well. Their table wasn't the best in the place, but it was alright and not within earshot of the other customers.

“This is nice, how did you discover it ?” He asked.

“Some friends recommended it. I now come in here quite a bit.”

No asking her who she came there with, he was learning fast. Another huge no-no for Laura were people who tried to order for her.

‘Oh you must try this....If we get lots of different things, we can share.’

Not just men, she’d had female friends who did it. Tim showed no sign of either wanting to share lots of things or tell her about food she ‘simply must try.’ They ordered drinks and a bottle of wine for drinking with the meal, while they both studied the menu.

“Do they do a decent vegetable biryani ?” He asked.

“Everything is good apart from the desserts.”

Tim put on a fake serious face, which was actually quite attractive.

“Oh, never order dessert in an Indian restaurant.” He said. “I think they make them dreadful to punish you for ordering it.”

She laughed at his joke and felt comfortable with him, always a good first step with someone new.

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Mabina had bought the van privately from an online advert. It was quite old, though it fitted all her requirements, including an automatic gearbox. There was quite a bit of rust beginning to bubble up on the wheel arches and one tyre was fairly bald. The asking price was on the high side, probably to give the seller a little wriggle room.

“I’ll take it now.” She’d told him. “I assume cash is acceptable ?”

Things had changed since the last time she’d bought a cheap vehicle to use once and dump. There was something called continuous registration and it seemed to worry the odious man who was obviously a car dealer pretending to be a private seller.

“I’ll need some ID and proof of address. Sorry, but I’ve had so much grief in the past.”

Mabina brought the twenty pound notes out of her pocket and riffled through them a few times. It was an old trick, but it still worked surprisingly well.

“I came out without my driving licence. I’ll pay the full asking price and take the van now, or.....

There are plenty of other vehicles being advertised.”

A fake name and several hundred pounds later and Mabina was driving her single use van through West London. It had hit her quite suddenly the previous afternoon, how to abduct half a dozen sick old people in one go. The risks were the same for abducting one as they were for six. She knew lots of terminally ill elderly people of course; she’d been responsible for arranging their care after leaving hospital.

“Sit on the memory foam Irene..... Good girl.”

Three were already in the back, full of sedatives and sitting on large pieces of memory foam. Mabina had decided to go for a full six, more than Sam’s estimate with Neil Scoular already absorbed by the hungry ground. She wanted to make sure the one run in the van was enough, just one evening taking ludicrous risks. Besides, she needed a spare in case one of the oldsters died en-route. She checked the next name and address on her hand written list.

“Bert Silver in New Southgate, I remember you Bert.” She muttered. “Cantankerous old devil who muttered Hail Marys all night when you were in hospital. Sending you kicking and screaming into the great hereafter will be a pleasure.”

Some might have found it surprising that so many elderly with dreadful illnesses lived alone. It didn’t surprise Mabina, siblings died, families broke up and sometimes even loving grandchildren couldn’t cope with looking after granny. It all meant easy pickings for a vampire in need of sullied offerings. She looked in the back and all three of her passengers were sleeping soundly.

“Be good, I won’t be long.” She muttered at them.

Anaesthesia was the trick, enough given intravenously to keep them quiet and obedient, without actually killing them. A difficult task when dealing with seriously ill people, many in their nineties. Mabina got out of the van and checked the door numbers. She walked up the garden path; the neglected garden telling her she had the right house. The bell didn’t work, so she used her knuckles on the door. Bert Silver opened the door, followed by the sound of a TV gameshow.

“Hello Bert, sorry to call on you in the evening.” She said. “It’s just that you’ve missed a few appointments with the consultant.”

“Did I ? Maybe I did.....Come in.”

She had no idea if he’d missed an appointment or not, she was relying on him not being sure about it either. He smiled and offered her the obligatory tea and biscuits. She was going through the same routine time after time, with sometimes coffee instead of tea, cupcakes instead of biscuits. Fifteen minutes after entering his house, she had Bert sat next to her in the van, happy to do anything she asked. She’d put him in the back somewhere out of the way and less well lit. Her list came out of her pocket again.

“Gill Trew next Bert, you had a bit of thing about her, didn’t you ?”

Bert smiled but didn’t answer. Gill lived in Barnet, not that far away from Bert and she’d make it five, with just one left and all done before the ten o’clock news. Mabina had a few alternative names, substitutions in case no one came to the door, or there was a relative there. So far though, it had all gone like clockwork. With luck it would take months for someone to realise Bert wasn’t at home, or Gill wasn’t returning telephone calls. Far too long for anyone to connect the disappearances or see a pattern in them.

“God bless our fractured and dysfunctional society.....” She mumbled.

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Laura didn’t want to use one of the dark quiet streets she knew. Most of those had been used as places to feed or one night stands, often with men and women she’d never seen again. With Tim it had to all be fresh and if possible, spontaneous.

“That food was wonderful.” Said Tim. “I drank a bit too much though.”

She drove down Windsor Road and carried on going, deliberately getting lost in a maze of small streets. There was a perfect piece of road near the A406, dark and quiet, but not seedy. A stretch of wall with only a few houses on the other side of the road. Laura pulled up and turned off the SUV’s lights. Tim was looking at her, as if uncertain how to react.

“You don’t have to Tim, if you feel the time isn’t right.” She said.

Something inside her made her run with it, teasing him.

“I understand that the first time can be scary..... If you want to wait for the right girl to come along, or you’re saving it for marriage ? I will understand.”

He was good, actually joining in, his lower lip quivering as he spoke.

“But..... I’m only thirty.... Mummy wouldn’t like it.”

“Mummy isn’t getting it.”

Anyone who says they don’t have a sexual routine, a repertoire of what happens when and how, is a liar. Laura had it all worked out in her head and it all went out of the window when Tim pulled down her panties to go down on her. It was wonderful though, oral sex while still almost fully dressed. It was also another item ticked off her list of desirable boyfriend attributes... He was really good at it.

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Mabina Gladitch reversed the van up her driveway to get the rear doors close to the door in her garden wall. Do it right and it would all be screened from the street, the unloading of six heavily sedated elderly people. It was dark in the back of the van, but her vampire senses told her they were all still alive, their hearts still beat. A few beat with an unsteady rhythm, but all her offerings to the hungry ground were still alive.

"No noise, that's important." She told them.

"Yes nurse Gladitch." Said Bert.

She hadn't expected a reply, they were beginning to recover from the anaesthetic. Mabina went round to the back of the van and opened the doors. The nurse part of her was rebelling in her head, the nurse side of her which had treated geriatric patients for over a decade. It was easily beaten down and defeated, by the part of her that demanded to be strong again.

"One at a time, I'll help you get out.....Gill first."

"It's too high."

"You'll be fine Gill, I'll hold you."

It was hard work, getting six gradually waking oldsters through the garden and into her kitchen. Mabina locked the kitchen door and pocketed the key, in case one of her offerings decided to make a break for it. No taking them down to the cellar one at a time, her preferred option. She took all six down there, knowing the six shallow graves would worry those awake enough to understand.

"Why are we here ?" Someone asked her.

Bert understood, she could see it in his expression. His eyes told her he knew and that he didn't care. Bert was first, her fangs going deep into his neck, feeding on his blood.

"No, No! Let us out !"

Someone was trying to open the cellar door to get out, impossible unless you knew the six digit code. There was panic as she dropped Bert into a hole in the ground and raked compost over his dead body. The panic turned to screams as the green tendrils appeared and began to absorb his body.

"Dear God, please save us !"

"Silence, you are offerings to a far older and darker deity." Snapped Mabina.

Mabina ignored the screams, pleadings and occasional reciting of the Lord's Prayer. The cellar was deep and fairly soundproof. Her stomach was full of blood by the time offering number three was being absorbed, her body needed several hours to digest it.

"Will you stop making so much noise." She yelled. "You're giving me a headache."

She used her jaws to rip out the throat of number four, which just increased the volume of the screaming. Offering a drained body seemed important, so she let the blood pour out over another part of the cellar.

"Good, that worked." She mumbled.

The tendrils arrived to absorb the body, quickly leaving nothing but a dark stain on the soil floor. Mabina used the same technique with number five, draining the body before offering it to the hungry ground.

"Sam was right." She stated, to the only living offering.

The last survivor was an old lady, Mabina didn't even recognise her from the back. Number six was using her fingernails to try and pull open the locked cellar door. Mabina was interested in number five though, the ground had only digested about a tenth of the body. Six offerings was obviously enough to satisfy the ground, her debt seemed to be settled.

"I can hardly apologise and take you home Doris."

Doris from Wood Green, she recognised the woman as she dragged her away from the door. Doris had breathing problems, a lung condition likely to kill her. The condition didn't seem to stop her from screaming. The cellar was silent once Doris had been drained of blood, her body lightly covered in a thin layer of compost. The tendrils arrived but did nothing, leaving the remains unmolested. "Now to dump the van somewhere and set it alight." She muttered. "Wanstead way I think, I seem to remember a few perfect spots over there."

Mabina only made it halfway to the door, before the tendrils grabbed her legs, anchoring her to the spot. They moved up her thighs, breaking her skin. The pain was intense and unexpected.

"I did it all, seven fresh sullied offerings. Why are you doing this?"

The pain became worse, she could feel the tendrils pushing deeper, under her skin, into her flesh.

"Was it that bastard Sam Isaacs? Did he deliberately forget to mention something? I curse him and his offspring if he did."

It was strange, the pain was unbearable, yet she felt better, strong, sharper. The pain was winning in grabbing her attention though, as the tendrils went deeper. Her spine felt as though it was being pulled apart, bones rubbing against bones. Every muscle in her back felt as though it was on fire.

"Why?!" She screamed.

Mabina Gladitch passed out from the pain, a rare thing for a vampire, especially a truly ancient one.

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The sex had been good, really good. There was another item to tick off her list, his dick had filled her to perfection. Not ridiculously huge, but it had reached the places that needed reaching. She stroked his hair as he slept.

"You're a keeper, I just hope you feel the same about me." She muttered, quietly.

Laura drifted off into peaceful sleep and her recurring dream began to go through the usual stages to leave her in the village, sat with the others around the fire. This time it all felt different, far more real than ever before. She even felt the touch of a leaf on her cheek, as she descended through the forest canopy. Was it sleeping so soon after sex? Her body had to be full of hormones, endorphins racing through her bloodstream, causing all sorts of mental changes. Her feet touched the ground and Laura was fully corporeal.

"Crap, I'm naked." She muttered.

Not just naked, she still had that tang, the scent of recently enjoyed sex about her. Laura hoped she looked just like any other sleeper, as she found her spot by the fire.

"I wonder if I'll end up with a proper chair?"

Her place had been swept, before leaves had been spread around. The difference was a piece of fabric placed over the leaves. Had her nakedness changed something in the realm of dreams? Laura wasn't sure, she was just grateful to have something better than leaves to sit her naked bottom on. She closed her eyes and began to try and focus her thoughts on..... Nothing, nothing at all.

"Oh..... Oh, I don't like this."

Dreaming within a dream, it was what she aimed for almost every night. It was the suddenness of it all which scared and shocked her. A vast ocean circling above her rather than below, sand dunes stretched below her..... Ending too far away for her to see.....

"Wiremi..... Help me." She yelled.

At least up was up and down was down again, even if it was all still obviously a dream. To her right there was a vast ocean with a storm above it. A terrible storm whipping up mountainous waves. A dark storm, hinting at unnameable horrors lurking within it. To her left were dunes, going on until her eyes couldn't see where they ended. Laura was in between the two, walking on dry hard sand.

“Laura, you are immortal, but few immortals ever live truly long lives.”

Wiremi’s voice, talking to her from somewhere above her. All she can see is a sky where the storm and stillness are fighting for supremacy.

“Wiremi, are you there ?”

“Time is like grains of sand Laura, they slip through your finger..... Don’t waste any.”

“Wiremi !”

The sky above her was even more chaotic, the storm seemed to be winning. Laura didn’t care, she had enough sand to fill two hands, which comforted her. The sand was running away though, seeping through the gaps in her fingers.

“The sand is too fine Wiremi, the gaps between my fingers too large.”

“Don’t waste any.....”

Laura screamed as the last few grains of precious sand went through her fingers and vanished. The dream changed again.

“Obtaining the other items won’t be so easy Sam.”

“I know and once I tell her what they are, she’ll need our help to find them.”

“You’re certain it’s her ? There have been false sightings in the past.”

Laura knew it was important; the conversation the man was having on the phone. She could hear both sides of the call, which seemed natural; it was a dream after all. She seemed to be nothing but an invisible presence in the room, but she could move around.

“It’s a feeling Magda and the questions she put together. I feel certain it’s her, as certain as if she was sat here in my office. In return for our help she’ll need to join the order, take our vows. Imagine what we can accomplish with her as a member of the order.”

Sam and Magda, Laura was determined to remember the names, even if everything else faded from her memory after she woke. She moved, effortlessly gliding across the room, to look at the papers Sam had on his desk.

“It does sound exciting Sam. I won’t trust a courier with the Half Moon, I’ll bring it myself, if that’s alright.”

“Yes of course, it’ll be good to see you.”

The call ended and Sam thanked a man called Yosef for bringing him coffee. Laura noticed that Yosef was armed, a handgun in a holster on his belt. Sam began to read the papers on his desk, looking at one page for quite some time. It was important; she sensed it, very important. Laura moved her view to get a good look at the handwritten list he was examining so carefully.

Half Moon of Thoth

Scales of Pendally

Tooth of the Saint

Circle of Arcardis

Egg of Astaroth

There were notes too; most written in a language she couldn’t read. There was a note in English next to the Half Moon of Thoth.

‘Essential for her, Brendan’s Queen, now calling herself Mabina Gladitch.’

Her again, everything seemed to lead back to that awful creature. Laura did her best to drive everything into her memory, hoping some of it stuck.

Waking was as disturbing and sudden as the beginning of the dream within a dream. One moment Laura was reading the list, the next she was wide awake in the back of her van, Tim asleep next to her.

“Damn, I must remember.” She muttered. “Sam, Magda, Yosef and the artefacts. I must remember it all.”

Her phone was next to her clothes, volume turned down until the morning. Laura had never used the record function before, but she quickly found the correct icon.

“I dreamt about someone called Sam. It was important and involved her...Mabina...”

The details were fresh in her memory, nothing forgotten or confused in the way dreams often are. Laura remembered all the artefacts, even if she had no idea why they were important. Getting the details recorded was what mattered; writing it all down and telling the others could wait.

“.....Sam had written that the Half Moon was essential for her, Mabina.”

Every detail was now on her phone. She played it back, satisfying herself that every important fact in her memory was now recorded.

“What are you doing ?”

“Sorry Tim, did I wake you ? My phone rang.”

“What time is it ? I need to get home.”

“About two-ish. It’s the weekend Tim, neither of us is working tomorrow.”

Her hands and lips found his dick in the darkness, waking him up for a fresh session of carnal delights.

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Mabina Gladitch didn’t so much wake up as come to, her eyes level with the partly absorbed body of the fifth offering. She ached all over, every bone and muscle in her body was complaining. Just being alive was a surprise; she’d assumed her eyes would never open again.

“Maybe the ground has finished punishing me.” She muttered.

Rolling onto her back was agony, she almost passed out again. There was no clock, no windows to help gauge the time and Mabina knew her phone was in the kitchen. Her best guess at the time was the early hours of the morning, somewhere around two-ish.

“If only Brendan was here.”

Would he have helped her, or run away when she’d begun to offer the terminally ill to a dark deity older than mankind ? Mabina drifted into a natural sleep, to be woken by someone ringing her doorbell.

“Probably the postie with more herbs..... The fool will leave them by the door again.”

Mabina noticed her voice sounded different, far younger, clearer than it had for years, even before that bitch had shot her. She moved her shoulders about a little and there were aches, but no pain.

“Well..... I can’t lie here until Brendan returns.”

Again her voice sounded different, wrong, as if someone else was speaking for her. Mabina rolled over onto her side. It hurt a little, but nothing she couldn’t handle. She noticed there was the start of an unpleasant smell coming from the fifth offering, she’d need to cover the remains with more compost. Mabina took a breath, counted to three and stood up.

“That..... Wasn’t too bad.”

About the same pain level as throbbing tooth ache. It meant that she could get out of the cellar and take a few pills to relieve the pain, or a few drinks, she hadn't quite decided which. Something was wrong with her walk though.... It wasn't hers.

"What the fuck has happened to me?"

Her posture was all wrong and even after just three painful steps, she knew her walk was wrong. Mabina felt more erect, maybe even slightly taller. There was no use in speculating, she needed to get to her medical room and run a few tests. Mabina froze as her hand moved to enter the code for the cellar door. The young flesh, the slender fingers.... It most definitely wasn't her hand.

"Calm yourself, this might be a good thing."

A mirror first even before any medical tests, she had a full length mirror in her bedroom, one that tilted to just about any angle. She ignored being able to take the stairs two at a time and how her knees felt as though they belonged to a much younger woman. She ignored the stranger's hands she used to open every door.

No one really understood the ancient holy rituals, not even her family who had practised them for thousands of years. There was talk of rebirth in some of the scrolls she'd read in the royal palace in the old country. Mabina had never considered the idea that rebirth might have a literal meaning. The cheval mirror caught her reflection as she entered her bedroom.

"Oh, thank you..... I will bring other offerings, many offerings."

There was a young woman looking back at her from the mirror, a woman in her early twenties. A young woman who could easily have been her daughter, there was a likeness about the eyes. No one else would know it was her though.

"I'll need to bite Brendan again, to convince him it's me."

Mabina undid her filthy clothes, letting her blouse and skirt drop to the floor. Her tights were ruined anyway, ripped apart by the invasive green tentacles. Her bra and panties joined the pile of compost stained clothing, until she could see herself completely naked.

"Wonderful."

Her breasts felt firm, hanging perfectly without the support of a bra. Touching her new body was addictive, she prodded her buttocks, and squeezed her arms to find the bingo wings had gone. Mabina actually giggled, as she twirled in front of the mirror. There was one slight drawback.

"Well.... This fucks up any chance of getting back my old job with the NHS."

Her new body still ached and twirling had brought pain along as an uninvited guest, but she was certain the aches and pains would go quite quickly. Her hair was now dark black again, as dark as a raven's wing. All the grey had gone, even from the well-trimmed bush between her legs. It was irresistible... Mabina ran her index finger through her bush, gently probing. It was moist and soft down there. Deeper went her finger, barely touching that wonderful clump of nerves nature seemed to have put in the wrong place. Even a gently touch brought instant pleasure.

"Perfect." She muttered. "You'll have to be Elena I think, wayward daughter who has now returned to the fold."

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Judith never had really taken to Brendan Roche. There was something about him, a darkness behind the rather daft affability. She didn't consider him the violent type, just a weird guy, a very weird guy. She respected Sam's greater knowledge though and his assessment of the situation.

"If Brendan has been under her control for some time, he'll be capable of anything, even killing us both. He won't even regret it afterwards."

She'd asked Yosef to find someone in the police who didn't look like a cop. Someone who could carry a gun and still look like a harmless office worker. Someone who knew them of course, a cop who'd taken the vows of the Psochic Order. Yosef had chosen Omer, who looked like a supply teacher, which was perfect.

"Just hover, look busy without actually doing much." She'd told him.

It was all about having other people in the office, someone to help Sam if things turned nasty. By the time Brendan and Liz arrived, Omer was hovering about like a pro. Judith opened the door to the outside world, welcoming them in.

"Brendan, nice to see you again." She said. "Liz too of course, you're both very welcome."

He was smiling, the weird obsession that had caused him to leave voicemail messages in the middle of the night was obviously forgotten. Omer was in the main office, sorting files which were already in order. Had Brendan reacted to someone else being in the office? Judith was certain he had.

"Come in, so sorry I had to be elsewhere yesterday." Said Sam.

Judith had prepared the office, assuming Brendan would be on time. There was coffee and nibbles on the table and her old Ruger automatic was pushed down the side of her chair.

"Actually the delay was good luck." Said Brendan. "My employer has just called, singing your praises. I can offer you a substantial fee and an ongoing retainer."

"I will be honest Brendan, I expected as much." Said Sam. "Forgive my deception, I never did go away on business. I knew your employer would see the benefits of my information, but perhaps not immediately. I have helped others..... Of her kind."

No reaction from their guests. Sam had talked about the nature of Brendan's employer at their previous meeting. There had been no reaction then either.

"I am authorised to offer you a fee of three hundred thousand Sam, pounds not dollars. That is just for your notes on the questions and any follow up queries." Said Brendan. "My employer would like you to come to London. First class air fare and accommodation of course, all paid for by us."

It had been discussed; Sam had foreseen that offer and fully intended to go to England, but not yet.

"Yes Brendan, I can see a need for me to go to London." Said Sam. "In the short term though I wish your employer to come here, to Jerusalem. I can go through the questions with you, but there are artefacts your employer will need."

Poor Brendan, the smile had left his face.

"I can't see that happening Sam. My employer has never shown any inclination to travel abroad, at least not recently."

"Still, there are reasons why I must insist she comes here..... Can I be honest with you Brendan?"

"Yes, of course."

Judith knew the dangerous moment had arrived, her fingers felt for her gun.

"Where to begin Brendan, where to begin? I often wonder how many senior people in any church really believe in deities or supernatural beings. They may publicly make claims about faith and infallibility, but how many really believe?"

"The nuns who taught at my school believed Sam, trust me, they believed alright."

There was laughter and laughter was good, it broke the tension.

"I think your nuns believed in keeping naughty children under control Brendan, but I take your point. If a real demon was to appear though..... I think they'd have probably died of fright. No one believes any more. Apart from us Brendan, we know there really are supernatural creatures, don't we?"

Judith was glad that Omer was there, even if he had been told not enter Sam's office unless there were obvious signs of unrest. Omer was a trusted member of the order, but he wasn't aware of

several great truths. He wasn't one of the miniscule percentage of humanity who knew vampires really existed.

"I don't understand what you're saying." Said Brendan.

She could see the veins in his neck standing out, as Brendan appeared to be fighting some kind of inner conflict. Judith carefully pulled back the safety catch on her gun.

"I know who your employer is Brendan." Said Sam. "She was once queen of a huge part of what we now call Eastern Europe. She's one of a rare kind, a vampire born into a vampire family. She now goes by the name of Mabina Gladitch and resides in London."

"Utter nonsense, there are no such things as vampires." Spat Brendan.

"This is silly..... We're all intelligent adults." Said Liz.

Apart from asking for coffee, it was the first thing Liz Grant had said. Judith still wasn't sure if Liz was another person acting for Mabina and under her influence, or merely as she claimed to be, an interpreter and companion for Brendan. Sam was actually chuckling, which obviously annoyed Brendan.

"Oh Brendan, we both need to be honest with one another," said Sam, "who else but a vampire would need to try and feed the hungry ground? Your queen has nothing to fear from us, we've no intention of doing her any harm. The order used to be neutral observers of such beings, but now we'd like your queen to join us."

"What order, who are you people?" Asked Brendan.

Brendan was angry, his face had gone a very unhealthy shade of red. Liz was on her feet, trying to pull him out of his chair.

"They're crazy people Brendan." Said Liz. "We should leave here..... Now."

Judith knew that Sam was going to tell Brendan something that might trigger violence. It depended on how much being around Mabina had affected him. He might have been promised immortality as a reward for being her faithful servant, or he might be under her control, even from three thousand miles away in London. She kept the gun hidden behind her back, but she had it in her hand, her finger lightly on the trigger.

"Mabina may think of us as enemies Brendan, but we aren't." Said Sam. "We have so much to offer her..... We are the Psochic Order and I am its leader."

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Sunday morning and Simon was in the kitchen, cooking bacon to go into sandwiches for him and Clara. Laura wasn't home and being Laura, she hadn't called in to leave a message on anyone's voicemail. She had been on a first date with Tim, so they were assuming their surrogate daughter had got lucky.

"Extra brown sauce on mine." Shouted Clara from the lounge.

A lazy morning with just the two of them, or it would have been if Laura hadn't arrived home, accompanied by a tall man who had to be Tim Chance. He looked older than Simon had imagined. Simon was suddenly aware that he was only wearing boxer shorts and the shirt he'd been wearing the previous day.

"Hi everyone, this is Tim." Said Laura. "We'd both love some breakfast."

Their little girl had brought a muggle home after their first date. Clara arrived in the kitchen, her hair was dishevelled, but at least she was wearing a dressing gown.

"Hi Tim, welcome to our home." She said. "Sunday is very much a take us how you find us sort of day. Coffee?"

"I'm cooking bacon sandwiches." Added Simon. "Or we have about half a dozen different types of muesli."

"Coffee and a bacon sandwich sounds brilliant." Said Tim.

Clara was giving him the 'our little girl has brought a boyfriend home,' smile. Simon took more bacon out of the fridge and put a few more slices of bread out ready. It looked like being a nice Sunday morning, until his phone rang.

"If it's work ?..... They take advantage Simon, let it ring." Said Clara.

"It's Ronnie, I'd better take it. She can be a bit..... Temperamental."

Veronica Neophytou was coming up on his phone, from where Ronnie had tapped her own details into his phone. He liked her, she was his best sales person, but Ronnie was the queen of high maintenance.

"Hi Ronnie, it's Sunday..... Someone better have died, or I'll be a little angry."

"Sorry, but I'm in the office today, calling a few more pensioners. There was a note on my desk from Anthony. It appears I'm selling burglar alarms next month.....For Christ's sake....They're worse than selling phone systems."

"I thought you wanted a change.....We can talk about it in the morning."

"Promise ?"

"I promise Ronnie."

The call ended with perfect timing, Tim's bacon was nice and crispy, without being burned. He watched their guest eat, while trying to give Clara a 'remember when it was just us on Sunday mornings, discussing our best kills,' sort of smile.

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