

The Presence

Chapter 18 – Summoning The Gatekeeper

“A car had dropped off Suki, a limousine no less. Betsy had bought a brand new cat carrier for her pet to arrive in. There had been a few bowls too and some toys. Suki looked happy and healthy, though she had definitely put on a little weight. Drew wasn’t sure if the extra weight was a good thing, but far better than her being underfed.”

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Celia Margolin had hated sleeping in the car. It was hot and sticky, but neither of them fancied sleeping in the open, not anymore. They’d both seen too much and if Celia had ever been a non-believer, Aiwass had changed all that. Not only were there things that went bump in the night, they also created lakes of fire. Celia doubted if she’d ever fully get over events in the Libyan Desert. So many deaths, none of the police were likely to have survived. About lunchtime and they were close to Tripoli. Just a few miles to go, all of it on decent roads.

“All the police officers were killed, Jerry.” She said. “I just realised that we’re almost certain to be arrested.”

“Nonsense, I know people.” Said Jerry. “A phone call when we get back to the hotel and no one will arrest us.”

She was driving, which meant a dramatic pulling off to the side of the road and braking hard. Jerry’s head hadn’t bounced off the windscreen, but she had his full attention.

“Bullshit. Jerry.....Someone sent those helicopters.” Said Celia. “We will be arrested and they’ll take the statue. I was nearly burned alive getting that damned statue.”

“Is it special in some way ? Did Aiwass tell you that ?” Asked Jerry.

He insisted on talking to her as though she had a hotline to whoever had saved her from the flames. It had been rather endearing, but now it was starting to be annoying. Mainly because she had no answers to his questions.

“I have no idea, but it was the only surviving artefact.” Said Celia. “It’s priceless, Jerry.....Think of the history of that temple and we have the only surviving gold statue. Louise at the university should get it, not some wealthy Libyan who’ll keep it locked up in a safe forever.”

“So.....We’ll give it to her.” Said Jerry. “Tomorrow.....First thing, I promise.”

“Jerry, wake up.....We’ll be arrested as soon as we get to the hotel.” Said Celia. “There’ll be people there, waiting for us to arrive. We need to hide the statue.”

“Alright, I’ll play the game.....Where do we hide it ?”

“Here.” Said Celia.

Her choice of spot to screech to a halt, hadn’t been random. Not far from their car, was a large blue road sign for Tripoli. At the bottom right of the sign was a number and from observing lots of similar signs, the numbers looked to be unique. As Celia left the car carrying the statue, Jerry followed her.

“Road sign number 87.....We both need to remember that.” Said Celia.

“Number 87.....I won’t forget.”

So far, only two trucks had driven past. It wasn’t exactly a deserted road, but it wasn’t that busy either. They’d look like two people taking a walk, maybe to stretch their legs, or to answer the call of nature. The statue was wrapped in an old towel from the car’s boot, and could have been anything.

There was a fence, which was strong in places, but broken apart in others. Celia walked through a gap in the fence, with Jerry still following her. There was rubble in a pile, probably crap from when the road had been constructed. Wind and sand had hidden some of the rubble, but not a boulder sized piece, with several splashes of blue paint on the side.

“Perfect.....Marker 87 and the blue boulder.” Said Celia. “We both need to remember that, in case one of us doesn’t make it.”

“I wish you wouldn’t talk like that, my sun and moon.” Said Jerry.

“I do appreciate a little flattery.....For now though, help me dig a hole.” Said Celia.

Right next to the boulder, they dug with bare hands. Mostly sand, with enough hard pieces of rubble to ruin her nails. Jerry moaned, but Celia didn’t stop digging until they had a four feet deep hole in front of them. In went the statue.

“Seriously Jerry.....87, blue boulder.” Said Celia. “No writing it down....We both have to remember it.”

“I will, I’m a journalist.....I make a living out of remembering things.”

Filling the hole was easier than digging it. A little smoothing of the surface and it looked as good as when they’d arrived. No one would ever suspect a priceless object had been buried there.

“You’re right, now I’ve thought about it.” Said Jerry. “There will be plain clothes cops waiting at our hotel. Most of our belongings are still there....They know we have to return there.”

“We could abandon our things and go straight to the airport.” Said Celia.

“No, I’m not running away.....The cops will have to eventually let us go.”

A few nights out in the desert, hadn’t done their hired car any favours. It looked almost like a derelict, covered in dirt, with sand driven into every crevice by the wind. In a way it was perfect for them. It looked like the kind of car local teens might drive.

“Can you drive ? I’m feeling shattered.”

“Yeah.....No problem.” Said Jerry.

Celia fell asleep, though it might have been her mind taking a time out. When she woke, she definitely didn’t feel rested and refreshed. They were soon going to be arrested, Celia was sure of it. Would they be hurt during the interrogation ? It wasn’t unheard of, but they were both United States citizens.....Surely that had to count for something.

“Glad you’re awake; the hotel is two streets away.” Said Jerry.

“Do you remember what you need to never forget ?” Asked Celia.

“Marker 87.....Blue boulder.”

“Perfect.”

There were cops outside the hotel and they weren’t exactly special ops. Several of them and they’d all reacted as she and Jerry got out of the car. No grabbing them on the spot though, that would come when they were in their room and away from the public gaze. At least eight or nine cops in civilian clothes, all watching them enter the hotel.

“There’s more of them than I thought there’d be.” Said Jerry.

“And no American embassy in Tripoli.” Said Celia. “I hate to say we’re fucked, but.....”

Up in the lift and the plastic card still opened their room, which was something. Inside their room and Jerry put on the door chain. It wouldn’t stop their unwanted guests, but it would slow them down a little.

“If we’re going to be interrogated.....I need to pee.” Said Celia.

“Alright.....You first, but then I need to go.”

Celia had finished, but Jerry was still in the bathroom, when a fist began banging on their door.

“Police.....Open the door.” In truly dreadful English.

“Wait.....I need to get dressed.” Yelled Celia.

Someone used a card on the door, after giving her a count of about twenty to get dressed. The door chain lasted all of thirty seconds of pounding on the door, before breaking. It was the violence that shocked Celia, the pointless violence. She put her hands up as several armed cops entered their hotel room.

“You’re under arrest.” Yelled someone with decent English.

“What for ?” She asked.

They ignored her question; Jerry seemed to be annoying them the most. Celia could hear him arguing with them, through a locked bathroom door. No shoulder barging, the cops knew how to do it. Feet up and a few kicks with the heels of their shoes. The door flew inward and Jerry was dragged out to where Celia was still standing, still holding her hands up. One of the cops slammed Jerry face down onto the floor.

“There was no need for that.” Said Celia.

“He resisted arrest.”

Jerry was mumbling about a broken nose, as they handcuffed him. Celia decided to be the perfect arrestee, if that was an actual word. She stood there quietly, still holding her hands up. The cops dragged Jerry to his feet. His nose was so badly broken, that it looked like a bloody hole in his face.

“Did you bring anything back from the site ?” Asked a cop.

“No, nothing at all.” Celia lied.

Damn there was her camera, underneath the passenger seat in the car. They’d find it, with all her once in a lifetime pictures of flames, dead bodies and wrecked helicopters. She’d been so worried about the statue, that her mind had ignored everything else. Not all the cops were ruffians. One used a hotel towel to clear the blood from Jerry’s face.

“We’re American citizens.” Said Celia. “There’ll be trouble if anything happens to us.”

A couple of derisive sneers, but the main cop, the one who seemed to be in charge....He looked at her and nodded.

“You will be questioned, in accordance with the laws of the State of Libya. Then you will be charged with any crimes you’ve committed, or released.”

No mention of how long they might be held. Celia comforted herself by thinking about how well her biography would sell one day. Being held in strange regions of the world, by even stranger regimes.....The public loved all that. She might make a fortune. Celia decided to ask, not really expecting a sensible answer. Poor Jerry was still snorting blood out of his squashed nose.

“How long will we be held ?” Asked Celia.

“As long as is necessary.”

More cops arrived as they were taken from the hotel. The new cops were probably there to take the room apart and go through all their things. Celia was handcuffed, just before they were bundled into the back of a cop van. Sat side by side, she hoped Jerry was still able to talk.

“Oh Jerry....Your poor nose.” She said.

“Three times.” Muttered Jerry. “Broken twice playing football.....Now this.”

The cop in the van didn’t even tell her not to. Celia leant towards Jerry and very gently. Kissed him on the cheek.

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James Larner had spent two hours using a Kango, the kind of drill councils use to dig up the roads. Hired at a huge discount from someone he knew, who ran a plant hire business in Harwich. Mutual

favours of that kind were how small businesses survived. When he'd quoted for the job, he'd never expected Doris to say yes. Yet there he was in Ramsey Road in Dovercourt, breaking apart an old concrete pond. Doris had already paid him half the quote in cash.

"Oh, you're covered in dust.....I made you some tea; and there are biscuits." Said Doris.

There were advantages to having a client base of mainly elderly ladies with large gardens. One was the constant supply of tea and nibbles. Doris had even been known to make him platefuls of fresh cookies.

"Perfect timing.....The drilling is finished." Said James.

"What happens next?" Asked Doris.

"I use the hammer attachment and break all the lumps of concrete into small pieces. Then it all gets bagged up and taken to the council dump. After that; I begin putting in your new fibreglass pond."

"Wow, you do sound busy." Said Doris. "I'll leave you to it. If you need anything, you know where I'll be."

Some of his customers liked to watch what he was doing, but most left him to get the job done. James felt he was getting on a bit for smashing up concrete ponds, but the exercise would do him good. Putting in the new pond would be the fun part. It took wildlife a little time to find new ponds, but Doris could have tadpoles and baby frogs the following year.

"Oh, one of you guys again." Said James. "I told one of you before.....There's nothing for you here."

James called them minions, but there were other names for them. Foot soldiers for the various deities and demons who most didn't realise were all around them. Usually the minions were nothing more than a hint of a glow, which moved quite slowly. If they wanted to, minions could become solid enough to injure people and damage property. Quiet and seemingly harmless minions, had even been known to kill. Seeing one near his house could be ignored. Seeing another in the back garden in Ramsey Street.....That might mean serious trouble.

"I knew it.....The war never really ends." James muttered.

First some tea and a biscuit. James hated doing it, but it was essential to call Nick Rees. He'd come close to removing Nick's numbers from his phone. Minions appearing in Harwich though and then sleepy Dovercourt. Minions were often harbingers of far worse to come. James called Nick's number, and his call went straight to voicemail.

"Nick.....Drew too, both of you." Said James. "There are friends of the one you messed up summoning. They're here, near my daughter and my home. I will not allow my daughter to be at risk from the result of you screwing up. We need to go to that damned pub near Old Street. Come of your own accord, or I will come and drag you there. This matter has to be resolved.....Call me."

James thought his message sounded a bit wild man in the woods, but Nick didn't respond to civilised requests. That had always been the problem.....You needed to light a fire under Nick Rees, to get a normal reaction out of him.

"I will.....I'll drag him to the Brown Bear pub if I have to." James Muttered.

Back to smashing lumps of concrete with a Kango. James had to admit it; hard physical work could be wonderfully cathartic.

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Marsha Miller quickly forgot who'd called her first and who had told her what. Sovi was one of those calling her to tell her everyone was back home; everyone apart from Travis. Drew had been on the phone too, giving her the news about Travis and a little about how they'd returned to Britain. It seemed the police were less than thrilled with there being no record of Nick and the others, entering Britain. To Marsha it all sounded exciting, apart from Adie coming home alone. Marsha became

hooked on the story, as though it was a fictional soap opera. She rang everyone connected with events in Libya, for whom she had a telephone number. Calling as PA to Eric Hardy, she'd got through to people who rarely answered their own phone. People might not like Eric, but they respected his influence with the average angry man on the street.....

"I know you need me in Manchester." Said Marsha. "But I really should attend the funeral of Travis Givens in London."

"A funeral.....What did they find to bury?" Asked Eric.

With him in his glass, sound proof office where the podcasts were recorded. Nick had referred to the office as the crazy side of the glass, with the sane people outside the glass. A reference to old time mental asylums, which she was finding hard to shift out of her head. She quietened her inner turmoil, by once again remembering that Eric paid her well, exceedingly well.

"No body, Eric." She said. "His wife wants some kind of service though, mainly for their son. A sort of rite of passage thing.....Something to mark the death of his dad. There'll bury an empty coffin, but there will be a gravestone to visit. I believe a few TV news organisations will be covering the service and the interment."

"Have you spoken to Adalind Givens?" Asked Eric.

"Adie, everyone knows her as Adie." Said Marsha. "I spoke to her briefly and she's taking it all very calmly. Personally.....I think a burial without a body is a good idea. It gives her and Silas some closure."

Marsha thought that after years of working for Eric, she might well belong on the crazy side of the glass. Eric definitely belonged there. He was giving her a look that was impossible to read. He might ban her going, or let her go after a huge lecture on not running up huge bills for hotel room service. On the other hand, the same look had been a precursor to one of his rare Mr Nice Guy periods.

"Has Adie got a firm date in mind?" Asked Eric.

"Thursday of next week."

There was the look again, that might mean anything. If Marsha could find a mind reading webinar, she'd have definitely paid to view it.

"Alright, but don't vanish for weeks." Said Eric. "I need you.....You're my admin super person, Marsha. The business begins to crumble if you're gone too long. And.....I can never trust the dates on anything out of the fridge."

"Oh Eric, you're not safe to be let out.....I promise I'll be back on the Monday after the funeral." She said.

"All that fuss to bury an empty coffin." Said Eric. "Take lots of cards with you and give them out.....Don't look at me like that, you said a lot of the media will be there. I have an ambition to do a podcast for the BBC."

A funeral as a PR opportunity.....Only Eric would consider that as acceptable. He was letting her go though and he had been fairly complimentary. His admin super person indeed. Marsha hugged Eric, just a little and without overdoing it.

"Can I run up the room service charges..... Just a little?" She asked.

"Yes, fine.....Just be back on the Monday." Said Eric. "And give my condolences to Adie Givens."

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Drew Benton had always accepted that her cat was a bit of a child substitute. Just a temporary one of course, she was only in her mid-twenties. Her love life had never been exactly wonderful; she seemed to have a knack for choosing toxic guys. There was plenty of time though; her biological clock was hardly sounding an alarm. If Nick worked out.....Maybe there'd be a child. As her mind

thought about having several kids with Nick, she knew it was time to rein in her imagination.

Wonderful if it happened, but for now.....

“Yes, Suki.....You’re my little fur baby.” Drew muttered.

A car had dropped off Suki, a limousine no less. Betsy had bought a brand new cat carrier for her pet to arrive in. There had been a few bowls too and some toys. Suki looked happy and healthy, though she had definitely put on a little weight. Drew wasn’t sure if the extra weight was a good thing, but far better than her being underfed. Suki looked like a cat who’d been spoiled rotten. Drew was playing with Suki, on the bed she shared with Nick.

“I didn’t intend you to live with strangers.” Drew mumbled.

Well fed, but in her own home, had been the plan. Suki had already had more than enough moves for one year. When Drew thought about it, Betsy had been wonderful. Not many people would have given her pet a temporary home. Nick put his head round the bedroom door.

“Is she alright ?” Asked Nick.

Drew lifted up her arm, with Suki clambering all over it like an excited kitten. Her cat was also making a deep purring sound.

“I think I can safely say, she missed me.” Said Drew.

“And we missed her.....Move over a bit, I want to give her a cuddle.” Said Nick.

It was nice to see Suki clambering over Nick, while still purring. They were complete again, their family, of a sorts, was back together again. So far, most of their energy had been directed towards getting the new book published and selling the film rights to that book. It mattered, if they wanted to keep the lights on and Suki supplied with cat food. There were other matters, but in fairness, they hadn’t been back in London for that long.

“I know the BBC interview is important, but you need to call James.” Said Drew.

“Selling the book has been easy.” Said Nick. “The death of Travis almost guaranteed to get it on the best seller lists.”

“Oh, Nick.....Don’t say that anywhere near Adie.” Said Drew.

“I won’t, but that doesn’t stop it being true.” Said Nick. “The hard part starts now though, actually turning a lot of post it notes and memories, into a book. A decent book, one that will get good reviews from a few critics. I now need to go into hermit mode and get it written.”

Drew knew that the book had to take priority. Someone else could cobble a screenplay together, but Nick had to write the book. She’d already volunteered to be his firewall against the annoyances of the world. She’d take calls from reporters and fend them off. Drew had even volunteered to work with their solicitors, to get the police off their backs. They never had arranged to go in for an interview at Islington cop shop. She had to work though, keeping the lights on in the short term, required her to get back to a nine to five work ethic.

“James sounds beyond worried, he seems scared.” Said Drew.

“You called him ?” Asked Nick.

“Yes and now you should call him.” Said Drew. “You used to say how much you respected his opinions, but now you won’t pick up the phone. Then there is the book.....”

“What about the book ? I can write the book.” Said Nick. “I don’t need any writing help from a retired accounts guy.”

Egos were getting involved now, always a bad thing. Betsy had hinted at using an entire team of ghost writers and Nick had begun to get a little paranoid. Timescale was an issue and Nick’s idea that three hundred words a day was an acceptable target. The book would turn up on the shelves, just

after the public had forgotten the all about the news items. Drew had a few ideas to motivate the man in her life, but first.....Nick had to call James.

"I'm not suggesting anyone else writes so much as a word of your book." Said Drew. "You have mentioned it a few times though, the obvious conclusion to the book. The last chapter will revolve around a visit to the toilets of the Brown Bear pub. Baphomet can be beaten, but only after he's been released into our world."

"We're still not totally sure that the Presence is Baphomet." Said Nick.

"See....How can the book be written without an ending?" Asked Drew.

"The ending might be that we all die." Said Nick.

"Then I'm sure Betsy will wheel in her army of ghost writers." Said Drew. "We need to make friends with James again. Then we need to get everyone together, even Adie. Then we'll go to those odious gents' toilets at the Brown Bear."

"They are rather unpleasant.....Though gents' toilets in pubs usually are." Said Nick.

"You need to finish the summoning, Nick." She said. "Or, the book has no conclusion, no ending."

Drew was expecting him to say he'd think about it, or that it would happen after their meeting with the BBC. There'd be a whole list of excuses, she was sure of it. Drew had done a little telesales during a college summer vacation though, she knew all about handling objection. Nick actually surprised her, by nodding at her.

"You're right, the book needs an ending." Said Nick. "I'll call James.....Right now."

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Naomi had been rushed into the hospital on a trolley, as though she'd just been in a traffic accident. It had felt a little silly at the time, to be hurtled along, with several nurses rushing along with her.

"I'm fine.....My leg feels much better." She'd told them, quite often.

Henrike had been left behind at a set of doors that marked the end of where the public were allowed, even concerned boyfriends. Yes, she actually thought of him as hers now, her boyfriend. They both had complications in their private lives, but who didn't. As Naomi was wheeled into an operating theatre, she was sure their respective complications could be sorted out.

"Just a small injection, a little pinch, Naomi." Said a nurse. "Count down from ten for me."

"But I don't need an operation." Said Naomi.

Naomi never did countdown from ten. Her consciousness left her, as if it was fleeing a sinking ship. No memories of being asleep, or being operated on. She been in surgery for hours, or so she'd been told as her mind came back online. A recovery team were telling her to keep still, as they removed tubes and checked her vitals. They asked her name and date of birth, but didn't seem happy with just that.

"Talk to me.....I need a little conversation." Said a nurse.

"What about?" Asked Naomi. "I'm no good at small talk.....Never have been."

One of the nurses nodded at another one.

"She's fine.....Take her up to the ward."

No rushing this time, quite a leisurely stroll as two of the recovery nurses pushed her trolley into an elevator. They seemed to go up several floor and then along a very clean looking corridor.

"Someone is waiting for you.....He's been here all day." Said a nurse.

Hopefully it was Henrike, though there was a dreadful possibility that it was a local cop. They pushed her into a private room and asked her if she needed help getting onto the toilet.

"I volunteered to help Naomi move around." Said Henrike.

The nurses smiled and left; in what felt like far too much hurry. No one had gone through the post-surgery dos and don'ts. In fact, she still didn't know what part of her had been operated on. For a moment, the dark thought of amputation, ran through her mind.

"Oh, Henrike.....Have they amputated my leg?" She asked.

He laughed, which instantly cheered her up. It was the anaesthesia of course, her grandma had imagined all sorts of nonsense after he stomach ulcer operation. Henrike held her hand, which made her think everything, just might be alright.

"Where to begin? You're safe here, this is an American hospital." Said Henrike. "Once military I believe, it now treats civilians who can afford the charges. Don't worry, Louise knows people, who don't mind leaning on other people. You won't get a bill and if the police want to see you, they need to come here. One of the British intelligence people used the word cherished about you. I'm assuming it means no one will be allowed to cause you any trouble."

"All wonderful.....What did they operate on?" Asked Naomi. "I'm assuming my leg, but that seemed to be healing nicely."

"Yeah, we were being a bit naïve, though neither of us is a doctor." Said Henrike. "Your leg was locking up the knee joint. A while longer and you'd have been walking like a pirate for the rest of your life.....They replaced your knee, Naomi."

"Fuck." Said Naomi.

"Don't freak out, it's for the best." Said Henrike. "The doctor should be around to see you soon. They'll know how long it'll take to heal. I was told you'll be walking properly in no time."

After worrying about losing her leg, a replacement knee wasn't too bad. One of her aunts had both of her hip joints replaced, mainly because of arthritis. She'd healed well and still enjoyed long Sunday afternoon walks.

"Alright panic over.....I needed a replacement knee joint, I get that." Said Naomi. "Isn't someone supposed to give informed consent though? Who did they get to agree to the surgery?"

Henrike was giving her a guilty look, as though he'd forgotten her birthday, or the anniversary of when they'd first had sex. It seemed that a lot of huge things had occurred, while she'd been unconscious and having a knee replaced.

"Louise provided a number for your next of kin." Said Henrike. "It seems you listed quite a few on your student induction form."

Her family was colourful, which was being polite about it. Naomi had several aunts, most of whom were downright feral. Wonderful ladies, but not the sort you'd want talking to the person who ran the university where you were studying. One did improv at a local bar and went by the name Diablo.

"Oh no, did they call Aunt Diablo?" Asked Naomi.

"No, Louise gave them a number for an Aunt Roberta."

"Ahhhh, Bobby, the most normal of the lot." Said Naomi. "That's good, no panic about good old Bobby."

"She's getting the earliest flight she can. Your dear Aunt Roberta, is coming to Tripoli." Said Henrike. Again, not too bad and nothing to panic about. Naomi did squeeze Henrike's hand quite hard though, as she asked the question.

"Anything else I need to worry about?"

"I did ask Louise to give you a couple of days." Said Henrike. "I've told her everything I remembered about Kevin being killed. She wants to see you though, crossing I's and dotting T's I expect. Louise did mention an inquest being held, but that might take a while."

"Fuck.....Am I allowed two fucks today?" Asked Naomi.

“Definitely.....It is a lot to wake up to, after surgery.” Said Henrike.

“Kevin will have a family looking for answers.” Said Naomi. “Not today, I want my head clear of anaesthetic. Tell Louise I’ll talk to her tomorrow, if she has time.”

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Marwa had her own problems. A mother who wanted her back home in Tripoli being the major cause of making her feel bad. She was hardly a teen runaway, but every call to her mum, made her feel guilty. Then there was her lack of the proper documentation to stay in Britain. Actually, Marwa had arrived at the airstrip in Kent, with no paperwork at all. The Givens family were on the evening news, almost every night. Eventually a reporter would realise she was in the country illegally.

“Never mind.....The worse they can do is send me home.” Muttered Marwa. “That would make my mum happy.”

“I won’t let them send you back, just to be arrested.” Said Adie. “When you want to go home.....That’s different. Not until after things have quietened down a bit though.”

“It is nice to see another country.....For a while.” Said Marwa.

Marwa needed something to do, preferably something that put a little cash in her pocket. Mentioning that to Adie seemed wrong for some reason. After all, Adie was coping with worse than a little boredom and a lack of funds. Thinking of money and pockets, reminded her about one of Adie’s concerns.

“Have you heard any more from the insurance company ?” Asked Marwa.

“Oh them.....They do have rules to work to, I suppose.” Said Adie. “After all.....While there are unresolved issue with the death of my husband, they can delay paying out. I might have bumped off Travis for the insurance money. Weirder things have happened. I’ve got my solicitors chasing them.” Marwa was eating well, sleeping well and enjoying the delights of cable TV and Netflix. All of it for free.....It was beginning to nibble away at an already guilty conscience. Marwa gave Adie an impromptu hug, which seemed to surprise her.

“Wow.....Thank you, but why the sudden hug ?” Asked Adie.

“I just wish I could help.....But I have no money.” Said Marwa.

“Don’t worry, we won’t starve.” Said Adie. “Travis left me a legacy, the back catalogue of his books, articles, podcasts and TV appearances. It all usually keeps me busy for most of the week and brings in serious money. With his.....Dreadful death, the demand for his work will increase. We’ll be fine for money, Marwa.....We really will.”

“That is such a relief.”

They sat there for a while, hugging on the sofa, while Silas played with his toy cars. The boy was old enough to know about death, but didn’t seem to fully understand it. Once he’d asked Marwa when his dad was going to come back from being dead.

“Actually you could help me.” Said Adie. “There will be a demand for everything in the Travis back catalogue. I have to look after Silas and deal with insurance companies.....Not to mention the police keep wanting me to see them. I can only put them off for so long. How do you fancy being my paid assistant, my PA if you prefer that title. It won’t pay a fortune, but it’ll put money in your pocket. The free board and lodging will continue....Of course.”

“Oh Adie.....I think you must be a mind reader.” Said Marwa. “Yes please, I’d love to be your PA.”

“Good, I’ll give you access to my online diary.” Said Adie. “Your first job will be to deal with the backlog of orders and general enquiries. We were away for quite some time.”

They'd both seen them, but it was the first time they'd seen Silas react to the minions. He was eight or nine, Marwa had forgotten his exact age. At primary school, his spoken English was pretty good. He was pointing at a glow on the wall, which was moving slowly towards the ceiling.

"Pretty.....Pretty lady." Said Silas.

"Maybe he sees them differently to us." Said Marwa. "I just see a glow, but Silas might see a woman."

"I hate these things, but James thinks they're probably harmless." Said Adie. "Just lurking about, watching us and reporting back to the Presence."

"Do you think they listen to us?" Asked Marwa.

"Yes, definitely.....As I said, James thinks we're safe. I still hate them though." Said Adie. "We need to all go to that pub in London.....And we need to go soon."

"I'll be there.....We're all family now." Said Marwa.

Silas laughed as the glow vanished through the wall and reappeared in the garden. Harmless or not, Marwa agreed with Adie. The minions had to go.....The entire problem they called the Presence, had to be resolved, once and for all.

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