

## The Presence

### Chapter 6 – Islington Cop Shop

**“Drew had missed a day at work, with no phone call to explain why. It was something Andrea hated and Andrea was the head of human resources. She was also related to one of the directors.”**

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They'd both been taken to Islington Police Station, or the local cop shop as Nick called it. A large building on Tolpuddle St, they'd arrived through the back door, when it was far too late, or early, to be awake. Nick didn't know the place that well, but he had been in there before. To Drew it was all a new experience, though she suspected it wouldn't be her last visit to Tolpuddle Street. She never remembered protagonists in horror films having much to do with the police, which had to be a flaw. All that blood and carnage.....An interview under caution had to be inevitable. Drew began to wonder how Buffy had avoided being carted off to the cells at least once per episode. She and Nick hadn't been arrested for anything, but they had both been cautioned. They'd been separated and Drew only realised Nick had asked for a solicitor, when a tired looking man had arrived at around five in the morning. He gave her a business card, which she'd read when she was fully awake. Bert being killed, Mary attacked and then being bundled into a police car. It wasn't just fatigue beginning to take its toll on her, the entire world felt wrong in some way. Surreal was the word her memory chose for her.....It was all so surreal.....

“My name is Carl Wood, please call me Carl.” Said her visitor. “Nick called Betsy Nagle, his agent. I'm from Holland Klein & Martin, the solicitors Ms Nagle uses for matters involving the police. I don't like using the term criminal law, as neither of you has actually been charged with anything.”

“Are you here to help me, Carl ?” Asked Drew. “I'm so tired and with the murder.....I just want to go home.”

He had a briefcase, which he placed on the table between them. He rummaged a little and brought out a form of some kind and a pen. He quickly filled in a few items on the form, before pushing it across the table.

“I'm hoping to get you both released quite quickly.” Said Carl. “But first.....I need you to sign the form, making me your legal representation in this matter. Normally I'd recommend you have separate solicitors, but given the hour and the urgency.”

“No problem.” Said Drew.

Drew signed the form, making Holland Klein & Martin her solicitors. Again, there was a feeling that she'd be getting to know that name very well, and Carl Wood. Carl looked at her signature and the form went back into his briefcase.

“I'm not wealthy, Carl.” Said Drew. “I know nothing about legal aid, but if there are forms I can fill in ?”

“Ms Nagle employs Holland Klein & Martin under a retainer agreement, Drew.” Said Carl. “Whatever happens, no one will expect you to pay.”

“That is a relief.....So, what happens next ?”

“Two police officers are coming to interview both of you, though they'll probably talk to you separately.” Said Carl. “I believe you know them.....let me see.”

More digging in his briefcase, coming out with a large notebook, the kind she'd used for lecture notes at college.

"Yes.....Barlow is the senior one and.....Jennings. Do you know them?"

"Oh yes, they can be quite rude when they want to be." Said Drew.

"I'll be here, so there shouldn't be any of that nonsense.....How sleepy are you, Drew? If I asked you to give your recollections of last night, are you able to do it for me?"

"I'll manage." Said Drew. "Probably best to do it while my memories are fresh."

"May I record you? The police will never hear what you say. Just relax and talk as though you're talking to a friend."

Drew hoped she was talking to a friend. Carl seemed tired too. What time had Betsy's call got him out of bed? He looked about the right age to have a wife and a couple of young kids. There must have been a little chaos in the Wood household. The briefcase was opened again and there was more rummaging. Carl put a recorder on the table and seemed to forget she hadn't said yes to being recorded. He pressed the record button.

"When you're ready, Drew." Said Carl. "Begin when Mary Seeley rang your doorbell."

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Waiting for one another at the police station. It was kind of romantic in a weird way; though Nick hoped it wasn't going to become a regular thing. Drew's turn to be sat waiting for him on a bench, though Carl was sat with her. Their solicitor must have had a very long day. Nick was glad Betsy had volunteered to pick up the bill.

"You can repay me out of your next movie deal." She'd told him over the phone.

Which was wonderful and showed faith in him as a writer, though it did lock him in as a client until he might be old and grey. Drew looked happy to see him, though she looked very tired. The evening after poor Bert had died and they'd both been awake for a very long time. It felt bizarre to have spent about twelve hours in Islington Cop Shop, because of the death of a window cleaner he barely knew. Then again, he had discovered the body.....

"Any last minute snags, Nick?" Asked Carl. "Did they ask to see you again?"

"No.....Just a very sarcastic see you later from Barlow." Said Nick. "Jennings told me not to leave town, with a smirk on his face. Can they do that?"

"Yeah, I had that too.....Don't leave town Miss Benson from Jennings." Said Drew. "They didn't ask for my passport."

"There were at least two American cop shows that used don't leave town as a regular thing, a kind of running gag." Said Carl. "Even in the USA, the police can't restrict someone's movements without a very good reason. It definitely can't be done in the UK. Neither of you has been charged with anything, nor been asked to surrender your passports. Then there is the whole restriction of trade angle.....But I can see you both falling asleep. If you need to go abroad for any reason.....Go. Out of courtesy though, always make sure I have a contact number."

"Of course we will." Said Nick.

"Yes, you've been so nice.....Thank you, Carl." Said Drew.

"I'm parked about three streets away." Said Carl. "Can I give you a lift back home?"

Nick looked at Drew, desperate to get a few minutes to talk things over and hear what had happened to her during the interview that had really been an interrogation.

"Thank you, but we're just a ten minute walk from home." Said Nick. "Unless Drew is feeling a bit too tired?"

“No.....A walk would be nice.....Shake out the cobwebs.” Said Drew. “Thanks for the offer though, Carl.”

As Carl left the police station, Nick wondered how much had been added to Betsy’s legal bill. A full day of a solicitor’s time at around four or five hundred per hour. It was a lot and Nick hoped another movie deal turned up, or one of his books made one of the best seller lists. He was beginning to understand Betsy’s idea that all and any exposure, was a good thing. Maybe it was time to forget about privacy and get the media involved. Travis was bound to have the numbers of a few friendly journalists.

“Are you alright ?” He asked. “We haven’t really had a chance to talk, since.....Since I found Bert’s body.”

“Can we get out of this building ?” Asked Drew. “I’m hoping there’s a breeze to wake me up a bit. They were just like on TV, making me go over and over the same thing. Then Barlow would moan if I got something even slightly different to the time before. Of course I made mistakes.....I hadn’t slept since the previous night.”

Outside in Tolpuddle Street they hugged and there was a fresh breeze. It all seemed a world away from the flat, with its scared residents and a dead window cleaner. Poor Bert, Nick didn’t even know his full name.

“We could go to a bed and breakfast.....Just for tonight.” Said Nick.

“Tempting, but; you can’t do that if you have a cat.” Said Drew. “Suki would be so upset, mainly about not being fed at her usual time. She’ll already be wondering where we are.”

“Yes, of course.....We’ll get her some treats on the way home.”

The flat was home now, for both of them. Nick knew with certainty that once everything calmed down and sleep patterns had returned, that the flat would feel like home again.

“Do you really think Suki wonders where we are ?” Asked Nick.

“Of course.....And all cats know the time in every time zone, throughout the globe.”

They were both so tired.....If Drew hadn’t laughed; he honestly wouldn’t have known it was a joke. They bought all sort of cat treats in a convenience store, most of them food, or food related. By the time they turned into their street, it was close to eight thirty in the evening. There were still two police cars, lights flashing, jamming up the street. There was also a larger vehicle, a major incident mobile centre, or whatever the police called it. A gruesome murder in a nice part of N1, the media wouldn’t be far away.

“Crap.....Can we get a sit in meal somewhere, Nick ?” Asked Drew. “Somewhere we can take our time and come back here after.....When hopefully they’ve all gone away.”

The major incident vehicle was probably there for a while and their block would probably already be pictured on most news websites. Maybe even on CNN, as a tragic murder in good old London, with its constant waist high fog. For now though.....Hiding in a nearby curry house, seemed a good idea.

“Yes.....I know a place.....Do you like Jalfrezi ?” He asked. “They do a wonderful chicken Jalfrezi.”

“Perfect.” Said Drew.

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Drew had missed a day at work, with no phone call to explain why. It was something Andrea hated and Andrea was the head of human resources. She was also related to one of the directors.

Apologising profusely might have worked, if there had been a good explanation to go with it. Drew had decided on ‘family problem,’ rather than admitting to about twelve hours in Islington Police Station. There still might have been just a few stink eyed looks, if Drew hadn’t given Andrea a letter containing her resignation. She’d flowered it up a bit, but the gist of the reason for resigning was to

work abroad for an unspecified period. Add on the need for a few extra hours in the sleep bank and Drew knew it was going to be a bad day. Every time anyone asked her why she was leaving, she was trying to reply using as few words as possible. Andrea put her head around the office door at about eleven.

“How long are you going to be abroad ?” Asked Andrea.

“About six months.”

“Where are you going and what will you be doing ?”

“I’m going to Libya with my boyfriend Nick Rees.” Said Drew. “I’m helping him research a new book.”

“Libya huh ?”

“Yes, Libya.” Said Drew.

“Is this the Nick Rees who had something to do with that film.....The Expert ?”

“Yes, it was based on his book.” Said Drew.

“Right.”

Andrea went away and when a call came to see human resources before going home, Drew thought she was going to be fired. A P45, her final pay, all topped up with a few negative comments about her attitude. No one in marketing likes those who resign; it can unsettle the team dynamic. Andrea had actually smiled as she’d given her a fairly thin A4 envelope.

“Consider it, Drew.....There’s a good pay bump if you accept.” Said Andrea.

Drew read the letter walking along Cleveland Street, on her way to Warren Street tube station.

There was a mutter about informing human resources about any absences. The rest of the letter was complimentary, talking about her contribution to the company. Drew had asked to leave in two weeks and they’d given her two weeks to respond to the offer.

“A promotion.....A fucking promotion.” She mumbled.

A title for her that sounded a bit hokey and made up. There was nothing wrong with the extra pay though. She’d actually have the luxury of a bit left at the end of the month, after paying her bills. All she had to do was accept and sign a declaration that she’d start the new job in sixth months’ time. It was marvellous, it was wonderful and.....Of course she was going to accept it. Andrea had added a scribbled note by hand, saying that she’d be given full control of the new men’s perfume account.

“Well, Andrea.” Drew mumbled. “Maybe you’re not a total bitch after all.”

The Victoria Line fuffed about a bit, it always did. The board showed no delays, but the boards lied. There were always delays, but nothing worse than the usual delays she allowed for. Out of Highbury and Islington tube station and Drew no longer felt tired and depressed. She was wondering which of her credit cards to use. She was going to treat Nick to a blow out, go to town, banquet of a meal. Somewhere really nice, Den had mentioned a few good places along Upper Street.

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Travis Givens was having a few problems. Adalind was upset and when Adie, his wife, was upset.....She could hold onto a bad mood for days. Adie knew about the trip to Libya, of course she did. He’d been on research trips before and his wife had never gone with him. There was Silas to look after and although now older than the pictures on social media; their son was still only eight. Travis had assumed Adie wouldn’t want to go. It was true what they said about assume, it really could make an ‘ass-out-of-u-and me.’

“We can hardly throw our son out.” Yelled Adie. “Like a fox cub who’s outgrown the den.”

He’d never suggested anything close to that weird analogy, but the atmosphere in the Givens household was icy. Logically arguments had largely ceased to exist a couple of days ago. He’d

suggested that if Adie wanted to go with him to Libya, then they needed to find someone to look after Silas.

"I only suggested talking to Barry and Yvonne, because their daughter babysits for us. They're nice people, but asking them to look after Silas for about six months.....It's a lot to ask." Said Travis. Things were different this time, he could feel it. Trips before had usually just meant him getting on a plane and going alone. Sometimes he'd meet a local agent or guide, who was usually male. This time Nick was bringing Drew and there'd been talk about asking Marsha to go with them. Even Travis could see how that might sound like two couple having a holiday in Libya. Plus.....And it was a big plus.....Silas was now eight and there'd, so far, been no sign of him having a little sister or brother. Things were definitely icy in their house in Hillingdon, Uxbridge.

"We could go as a family." Said Adie. "To Silas it would all seem like a nice long holiday. I know his school would complain.....But to hell with them."

"Not a good idea.....There are dangers associated with where we're going." Said Travis.

"You never mentioned that.....How much danger?"

"When Nick was there; a local guide was killed." Said Travis.

"How did they die?" Asked Adie.

"It was.....Look.....Just say and I'll cancel the whole thing." Said Travis. "I've a conference call link with Nick and Drew, booked for after dinner. I can tell them then and we can go back to how things used to be. Me at home writing most days and no six month trips to strange tombs in the Libyan desert. The more I think about it.....Yes, I'll pull out of the project."

"No.....I don't want that." Said Adie. "I just want to be included. There has to be a way, without ending up in court for abandoning Silas."

Adie had been a pincher when they'd first met. It had been so endearing, with her pinching him and running away before he could retaliate. She still made the pinching movement with her fingers, but never actually pinched him. It was symbolic now; a way of showing the argument was over. His wife pretended to pinch him and then put her arms round him.

"There has to be a way, horror book guy." Said Adie. "Think of something."

"Silas loves his grandmother and I'm sure she'd love to look after him." Said Travis. "My older sister could look in on her and help. They'd spoil him of course, but it is only for six months."

"You mean your sister Bree, the one with a dozen cats?" Asked Adie.

"Yes.....They'll smother him a bit, but Silas will be safe and well looked after. And he can still go to school. No coming home to hear that the truancy people have been hammering on the door."

"Are we doing this?" Asked Adie. "Are we really going to abandon our son for six months?"

"I'll only answer that, if you promise not to pinch me really hard."

His wife nuzzled his neck, which he loved. After a few days of sniping at each other, it felt wonderful.

"You baby.....Alright, I promise." Said Adie.

"Yes, I think we should leave Silas with my mother." Said Travis.

"HmMMM, I agree.....Call your mother right away." Said Adie. "If she agrees, I'll take part in tonight's conference call. We can tell Drew and Nick that'll I'll be going to Libya."

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It wasn't really a teleconferencing system, but Nick had successfully used it before. Basically a widescreen monitor at either end, with fixed camera positions. Fine if it was just one person talking to one other person, but Adie kept moving about. At the moment, Nick could only see about two thirds of her face.

"Ermmmm.....I hate to moan, but Adie needs to get comfortable and keep still." Said Nick.

Both he and Drew had talked to Adalind Givens over the phone and sent her the occasional email. This was the first time they'd actually seen Mrs Givens, or Adie as she liked to be known. A tall slender woman with blonde hair that reached right down to her bottom.

"Sorry.....I'll be alright once we begin." Said Adie.

"So.....Did you guys have a good meal ?" Asked Travis. "Sounds like Drew has a great job to return to."

"Yes, we went to an Italian place a neighbour recommended." Said Drew.

There was the occasional glimpse of Silas, the son of Travis and Adie. He hurtled past the screen like a rocket, leaving just a giggle behind. From various snippets of conversation, it seemed Silas should have already been in bed.

"Come on.....Way past your bedtime." Said Adie.

"Bye, Silas.....See you next time." Said Nick.

There had already been the news that Aide was going to Libya. It had been used as the test section of the session; the time usually spent reciting the alphabet to get the volume right. Travis used his wife as an almost full time researcher, so it wasn't a total surprise. What were they going to do with Silas ? It was none of their business of course, but Nick had to wonder.

"Can we get going, please ?" Asked Drew. "I've got a lot of work to catch up on in the morning."

"Sorry.....Wait until you've got a kid." Said Travis.

Nick looked at Drew, who looked a bit like the proverbial deer in the headlights. They hadn't been together long, but Travis had obviously decided they were in a long term relationship. So long term that they might mingle their bodily fluids to create a child. Aide came back and moved her chair a bit closer to the camera.

"Alright.....You guys in London." Said Aide. "The Givens guys in Uxbridge are ready to go."

"Quick sound check.....Can you hear us ?" Asked Nick.

"Volume is fine, but you sound a bit.....Fuzzy." Said Travis.

"Sorry.....That's as good as it gets." Said Nick.

There they were, the four of them looking into their respective cameras and sounding like the fuzzy sound system so beloved of low budget movies. They never had a proper agenda, so it was who could leap in the quickest.

"Can I talk about the writing that appeared in Drew's flat ?" Asked Travis.

"Yes please, I was wondering about that." Said Drew.

"Was it written in a primitive form of Aramaic ?" Asked Nick.

Travis had printed the picture he'd seen sent, of the line of text that had appeared in Drew's Clapham flat. The text had vanished quite quickly, but not until after Nick had taken a picture on his phone. Travis held up the picture of the words, written in what looked like, fresh blood.

"You were right, Nick." Said Travis. "It's not any version of Arabic, or Hebrew and it's definitely not even the most ancient form of Aramaic."

"Did you manage to make any sense out of it ?" Asked Drew.

"Well, I did and then again, maybe not." Said Travis. "There is a so-called language of the Gods. For every scholar who believes in it, you'll find half a dozen who says it's all nonsense. Adie helped by calling a renowned expert in Jerusalem."

"The best there is.....Or maybe not. It depends if you want to believe there is a language of the Gods." Said Adie. "The best living expert on the subject, says it's a purifying symbol, a kind of incantation to scare off evil spirits. That would back up Aleister Crowley's idea that.....The bad guy you don't name, is really a good guy, a guardian spirit of some kind."

"I understand, a guardian angel." Said Drew.

"Only maybe.....Remember that much of the established church thinks there is no language of the Gods." Said Travis. "If you wanted to, putting a print of the symbols on every door in your flat, might help."

"It might cleanse the threshold of all your rooms." Added Aide.

"Yes.....I'll do ours and if it looks to be working.....I'll do Mary's doors and Denise." Said Nick.

"It might not help.....But then again, it won't do any harm." Said Aide.

Nick had to ask, mainly because neither Travis nor Aide had mentioned it. If they were intending to take their son to Libya, there might well be an argument brewing.

"Sorry if I'm being nosey, but what do you intended to do with Silas, while you're in Libya ?" Asked Nick.

"I was wondering too.....The Libyan desert isn't a safe place." Added Drew.

"Don't worry; our little monster will be staying with his grandmother." Said Adie. "There'll just be the four of us going to Libya."

"Any news on hiring local guides ?" Asked Travis.

"It might be five of us, if I can talk James into going." Said Nick. "He sets his own agenda and is putting all his time into research to protect Denise. He's good, our big hitter if you like. James will find a name for whatever I seem to have annoyed. But; if we need dragging out of the tomb in Libya, James is the guy to do it."

"It's his daughter really." Added Drew. "I need to talk her into letting him go overseas with us. James is still.....A bit shell shocked from previous encounters with demonic forces."

"Obviously keeping Denise safe really matters." Said Travis. "How about the local guides.....Do you still have contacts out there ?"

"It's been a few years, but I occasionally go into the Uni of London to give talks on creative writing. Once the movie was out there and being watched, I seem to have....." Said Nick.

"The students hero worship him a bit." Said Drew. "I've spoken to a few of them."

Nick actually found himself blushing a little. One of the lecturers had made a comment about there not being a dry pair of panties when Nick gave a talk. He'd added that included some of the male students.

"They have an archaeological dig in Libya, several actually." Said Nick. "I've already arranged to use a few students to help us and two local guides. I'd still prefer a small group with James.....But I'll settle for half a dozen Uni students with local knowledge."

"Sounds perfect." Said Travis.

"I was going to ask who wanted coffee." Said Aide. "I keep forgetting it's all online. Who else has something to report ?"

"I could tell you enough about my promotion, to make everyone beg for mercy." Said Drew.

"Go on, Drew.....Give us every detail.....Be merciless." Said Aide.

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Marsha Miller still got excited by staying in five star hotels with twenty four hour room service.

There was still the amazement of being able to get food delivered to her room at three in the morning. Eric would go through the bill and moan of course, but he'd told her to enjoy herself. Her room was wonderful, with a view of the river Thames.

"If I ever become a millionaire.....I'll move into this place, permanently." She muttered.

Chelsea Harbour was a bit dull to be honest, but Marsha saw no real reason to leave the hotel in the evenings. There was everything there; she could even get her nails done at eight in the evening.

Another addition to the bill, another thing to get Eric's blood pressure soaring. He owed her the occasional luxury outing though, to make up for having ninety nine crazy messages to listen to.....Every damn day. The phone rang.....Or rather it gave a gentle buzz.

"You taxi is here."

"I'll be straight down."

Even the woman on the phone had an accent a casting agent would have loved. A mixture of the Mediterranean and a good dollop of bond villain. Yes, Marsha knew she was getting a bit too over excited by the whole thing. Just a few more days though and she'd be back in Manchester, working in a repurposed shop front. A grotty repurposed shop front. She took another picture of the room to send to a few friends, about the tenth picture that day. Pick up the bag containing the wine and gifts she'd bought; it was impolite to arrive empty handed. Then down in the lift, which smelled of perfume and seemed to purr as it descended.

"Maybe I can talk Eric into staying for a month." She mumbled.

The reception desk pointed her towards a door and the taxi was waiting outside. Her last business trip had been to a nice hotel in Cardiff, but she hadn't been able to order cheeseburgers and fries around the clock. Plus, some seagulls had mobbed her one evening, trying to grab her takeaway kebab. The taxi driver actually opened the door for her.

"I believe, I'm taking you to Islington tonight." Said the driver.

"Yes."

Marsha confirmed the address with him and after enjoying looking at a few of the places they went past, she had an involuntary nap. Well, it had been a long week, after a few very strange weeks. When she woke up, the taxi driver had the door open and was trying to gently wake her up.

"Miss Miller.....We're there.....This is your destination, Miss Miller."

She'd been dreaming about a temple somewhere hot and dry, that smelled of Jasmine. Well, it had been a very busy week, after.....The hospital were happy with the wound in her arm, but it still occasionally tingled.

"Yes.....Thank you." She said.

The taxi needed paying, not everything was going on the hotel bill. Eric had given her an allowance though, a couple of hundred pounds to pay for incidentals. The taxi sounded like an incidental to her, as did the generous tip she gave the driver. She was still feeling a little light headed, when she pressed the button on the entry phone.

"Hi, saw your taxi arrive.....We're on the second floor.....Sorry, no lift."

Drew's voice, though all entry systems seemed designed to make voices sound a bit crackly. The door buzzed and Marsha was inside, trying to work out how to turn the lights on. There were plunger buttons, of course there were, Drew had mentioned them in an email. Press them and, with luck, you'd have enough time to reach the next button.

"Must be fun carrying four bags of shopping." Muttered Marsha.

Drew was waiting for her on the second floor, with light pouring out of the open flat door. There was a nice aroma too, of garlic bread and pizza.

"Welcome to our bit of Islington." Said Drew.

"Hi, you look just like your Twitter picture." Said Marsha.

There was Nick to say hello to, though she'd seen him in Manchester, complete with his dreadful, dark aura. A cat was fussing round Marsha's feet, who had to be Suki. Picking up strange cats was a bit risky, but there was a good feel about Suki. Marsha picked up Suki and was rewarded with a loud purr and a nose bump.



"She likes you." Said Drew, who sounded relieved.

"I like her." Said Marsha.

"Suki doesn't take to everyone." Said Nick.

No more small talk, the pizza was smelling too good to be ignored. No picking at her food, the Islington couple already felt like friends. Marsha ate her pizza in huge bites and drank her wine in large mouthfuls. Garlic bread last, Marsha always ate it that way.

"Ohhhh, let that go down and there's cheesecake for dessert." Said Nick.

"Wonderful.....You guys must come to the hotel." Said Marsha. "We can run up Eric's room service bill."

"Make it a Friday night and I'm in." Said Drew.

"Me too." Added Nick.

There was only one more Friday, before Eric finished his conference engagements and headed back to annoy the good folk of Manchester. They agreed to do massive damage to Eric's hotel bill, the coming Friday. Marsha had given the bottle of decent wine to Drew, but it was time for the presenting of gifts.

"I have something for both of you." Said Marsha.

"You shouldn't have, we didn't get you anything." Said Drew.

"You haven't seen them yet !" Said Marsha. "I bought them especially for both of you. They look pretty, so even if you don't believe in it.....Please don't throw them away."

"I'm sure we'd never do that." Said Nick.

Marsha had been to a shop she knew, more like a dealer in shamanic items. An old woman most thought was a witch, was particularly good at matching crystals with a person's needs. Marsha had described Nick's rather disturbing aura and mentioned that Drew lived with him, sharing whatever bad vibes that aura was throwing out. The three crystals wrapped in layers of tissue, had been very expensive. There was a gorgeous amethyst geode and two yellowish crystals that came with cards, giving their full geological names. The old woman had promised nothing of the crystals, but hoped they might limit the damage.....Of Nick's quite worrying aura.

"Marsha.....They're beautiful." Said Drew.

"They must have cost you a fortune." Said Nick. "I.....I don't know what to say....Thank you."

"That aura you have, Nick." Said Marsha. "These are to try and stop it damaging Drew. Leave them on her dressing table and please.....Don't be tempted to throw them out, or stick them in a drawer."

"I won't.....We won't." Said Drew. "I will treasure these Marsha, probably forever."

"Any chance of you coming to Libya ?" Nick asked. "We really could do with you there."

There was that darkness around Nick, the aura of someone she didn't want to follow to Libya. There was going to be death waiting in that tomb in the desert, Marsha could feel it. No amount of money was enough to get her on a plane with them. Not that she intended to be honest about it.

"No.....Eric pays me well and Manchester is my home now." Said Marsha.

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Mary's flat was empty; she was staying with a relative until the scratches on her face looked less livid. She'd called a few residents of the block to assure them she'd be back soon. After all, there was the post to sort out and put in the right wire baskets. There was a general suspicion that the relative would be climbing the walls within a week and Mary Seeley would return home. The crime scene investigation was largely over, though there were still some bloody and taped off parts of her lounge. It would all need a thorough clean before an elderly lady was allowed back into her flat.

Something wandered around the empty rooms, stirring up little clouds of dust as it passed. What Drew had christened the Presence, had nothing at all to do with Christianity. It went quickly from the bedroom to the lounge and stopped where Bert's ruined body had lain over a wrecked coffee table. There was still blood there, which made it happy. It muttered to itself in a voice almost too quiet to be heard. Not that anyone was there to hear.

"Baphomet." Said the Presence. "Behemoth.....Marduk.....Moloch."

It carried on reciting the Infernal Names, until it reached Thoth and began again with Abaddon the destroyer. Not a summoning, it knew many of the names were false, but just reciting the list gave it strength. Christians had rosary beads and the names of the saints to recite. The Presence had the Infernal Names to repeat during the darkest hour of the night.

"Adrammelech.....Ahriman.....Amun....."

It continued through the list it had named thousands upon thousands of times. There were new names now; the humans were good at venerating creatures of the dark, despite claiming to love goodness. The things the Presence had seen Alexander do to his enemies.....Yet he was still known as Alexander the Great. The Presence preferred the old names though, the ancient Infernal Names. It stopped at one name and sniffed at the congealed blood on Mary's lounge carpet.

"Azazel.....I offer this blood to you."

Some of the Infernal Names responded without being summoned. There was a slight breeze in the flat, that arrived from nowhere. Azazel was pleased with the offering. Whoever lived in the flat, or whatever dwelling might be built there, would never know peace.

"Baal Berith.....Balaam.....Baphomet."

The Presence would carry on reciting the Infernal Names until just a minute or so before sunrise.

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