

City of the Lost God

Part 32 - Rebirth

“How much blood could you lose without dying ? For the daughter of a famous warrior, her education was woefully poor on such matters.”



Tarin could feel the shock and turmoil, as he raised his weapon and advanced on Yam Kermul. The remnants of the ghost army moved out of his way, sensing he still served chaos. He did, he was and always would be a ghūl, a creature who fed on the flesh of the dead.

“You took an oath of loyalty.” Said Yam Kermul. “Attack me and you will die.”

The slithering things reappeared, sliding through the solid cavern walls, gathering in vast numbers. It wasn't Tarin they stood against; they surrounded the Lord of Chaos, as if waiting for a signal.

“I have taken many oaths since I picked up a sword and joined the armies of chaos.” Said Tarin. “You are attacking the City of the Lost God and I doubt if all of chaos supports you.”

Tarin felt Muzzie release the spell and it felt like being reborn. None of them had known what to expect, most of the spells were a mystery to Muzzie.

“Godlike powers and something else, but only for a few minutes.” Muzzie had told him.

His skin was tingling and he could hear everything. Every word and thought uttered in the City, was his to hear, every secret, every conspiracy. Tarin didn't think his vision had changed, until he looked directly at the Lord of Chaos.

“What you see is an illusion !” Shouted Tarin. “I see him for what he really is. Only I can kill him.”

He saw the real Yam Kermul, the creature who had served chaos for millions upon millions of years. He must have been a creature of flesh and bone once, a sorcerer of Leng, maybe an invoker. That had been a very long time ago and serving chaos has its own consequences. Long contact with unimaginable powers had turned Yam Kermul into something else, something that resembled the great crawling chaos itself. Tarin saw the real form of Yam Kermul, the creature that seemed formed of green swirling mist, with tentacles that ended in hands, or other body parts that were unknown to him. A dark mist surrounded Yam Kermul and for the first time, Tarin actually felt a little fear. There was no time to ponder on such things, the powers he possessed were short lived.

“To me !” Shouted Tarin. “To me !”

There weren't many of Babaef's ghost army left, but those that survived obeyed Tarin. The warriors attacked Yam Kermul and the magic users, used waves of destructive spells. It was useless, Tarin knew that, but they'd keep Yam Kermul busy and give him an opportunity to attack. He found out what one of the Godlike powers was, when he went to run at Yam Kermul and flew instead. His feet came off the ground and he flew at his enemy and struck him, landed a good solid blow with his sword. Yam Kermul yelled in pain, he could be hurt, he could be killed.

“No Muzzie, you'll die.”

Muzzie had been coming to his aid.

“This is my fight. Use your spells.”

The green mist, which seemed to be the body of Yam Kermul, had a wound where his sword had hit. Not a deep wound, but it was ragged and was obviously causing the Lord of Chaos some pain. Tarin hit again and again, seeing pieces of Yam Kermul fly off. Now whoever controlled the slithering things had decided to join the side which looked likely to win. There were millions of the creatures, who had travelled from all parts of the rifts.

'Each one formed from a murder, or an evil deed.' Said the legends.

Yam Kermul killed dozen with every defensive blow, but they were legion and there were always others ready to bite him. The slithering things, the things with the texture of stagnant water, they bit him and kept on biting. Yam Kermul started to scream, as the small wounds began to mount in number and it looked like he might actually be devoured.

"Die, in the name of chaos, die !" Shouted Tarin.

Yam Kermul was fighting back. Some of the tentacles ended in sharp black claws and they were ripping Tarin's armour apart. Yam Kermul also had numerous hands and some wielded knives, which stabbed frantically at Tarin. His armour was in shreds, his shield destroyed, but Tarin was unharmed. He kept stabbing at Yam Kermul, enjoying the screams of his opponent. Even Muzzie was helping, by burning Yam Kermul, with fire spells.

"You can't win fool." Said Yam Kermul.

That voice ! Tarin felt his soul cringe, what was left of it. The voice was completely evil to his new Godlike hearing. Yam Kermul wasn't beaten. The Lord of Chaos used much of his remaining power, to create a huge sphere of fire, which moved outwards, throwing Tarin against the cavern wall. He was coughing up smoke and naked, everything burned from his body. Tarin looked at his right hand and all that was left of his sword was a hilt, which was still glowing red hot. Unharmed though, the spell Muzzie had placed on him had kept him unscathed by the hellfire Yam Kermul had sent against him.

"How long have I got left on the spell ?" He asked Muzzie.

Yam Kermul was hurt and he'd run. There was a hole in the far wall of the cavern, where he'd crashed through it and run for his life.

"I'm not sure." Answered Muzzie. "A couple of minutes at most, maybe less."

Bailig was still unconscious. Tarin picked up Bailig's discarded sword and felt the dark power it possessed. It would kill Yam Kermul, or at least throw him back into the darkness.

"Don't follow me." He said to Muzzie. "Get the others out of here. You'll soon know if I'm successful, or not."

Still naked, apart from Bailig's sword, Tarin ran to follow Yam Kermul. He heard the sound of screams and knew the slithering things were still biting the Lord of Chaos. Yam Kermul had summoned the creatures in their millions and they were devouring him, one tiny bite at a time. Tarin ran, hoping Muzzie's spell lasted long enough for him to destroy Yam Kermul.

~ ~

Adamaz had sent a librarian to wake Aeony, it seemed right that she saw the newly discovered rooms of the Upper Dome. How the dark angel could sleep through the turmoil was beyond him, she was obviously made of sterner stuff than most in the City. It had been many years since a dark angel had slept in The Dome and Aeony arrived with quite a crowd of followers. Even a kitchen girl had come to stare. Adamaz would have a word with her later.

"I always knew we'd find a way into the Upper Dome, it was just a matter of time." Said Aeony. Adamaz clapped his hands and waved the librarians away. The girl from the kitchen actually ran away, Adamaz was known to have a temper.

"The quakes were a blessing for us." Answered Adamaz. "Even just looking in a few drawers, I've found some wondrous things."

Aeony was looking at the cracked plaster on the walls and ruined furniture, as though wondering why she'd bothered getting out of a nice comfortable bed.

“Look ! I collected these, without even really trying.” Said Adamaz. “There is one room with drawers that go from floor to ceiling, all full of human spell parchments.”

Adamaz led her to one of the almost perfect looking rooms, right at the top of the Upper Dome. It was the one where Caspian and Vella had slept on their last night there, but there was no trace of their presence. Vella and Torfi had managed to clear it out, just before Adamaz arrived.

“Each of these is truly priceless.” Said Adamaz.

Several bundles of yellow parchment were on the table and they didn’t look at all impressive. Aeony knew spells when she saw them though and she recognised some of the human written languages, even if she couldn’t read them. She reverentially picked up a piece of parchment and scanned the beautiful, hand written page.

“Can you read these ?” She asked.

“Yes. The humans infested many worlds and used hundreds of languages. This one though, they used throughout the rifts and I am fluent in it.”

“This one is beautiful.” Said Aeony. “What does it do ?”

He took the spell back from her, his hand trembling with excitement.

“I can show you.” He said. “Most of the spells we sell in the library are single use. This human parchment can be used over and over again. Step back a little, it is likely to slightly disrupt the atmosphere in the room.”

Aeony was looking at him, her face beaming like an excited child.

“Tell me Adamaz, please.” She pleaded. “What does it do.”

“Be patient.” He teased. “Our spells tend to be effect magic. Burning things, freezing them, perhaps even cursing them. The humans had the ability to bend the fabric of..... anyway you’ll see.”

Adamaz stepped back a little and read the fourteen lines of the human tongue, which had been written on the parchment. He then dropped the spell on the floor and waited.

“What now ?” Asked Aeony.

“Patience child.”

Something was forming on the floor and it felt as if all the air in the room was rushing to that point. Adamaz knew it was an illusion, but he held onto the table and gripped it with all his strength. Not just the air, it felt like everything around them was bending and centring itself on a small part of the floor, just in front of where he’d dropped the spell.

“Adamaz !” Shouted Aeony. “What is happening.”

He ignored her, the result of the spell should be self-evident fairly soon. Others tried to enter the room, nosey librarians, Adamaz shooed them away. The walls began to vibrate as the object on the floor took on a golden hue.

“It comes, it comes.” Said Adamaz.

There was a popping sound and more illusions, as the room seemed to spring back from whatever was sucking it in. On the floor was a large pile of pure gold. Not bullion or coins, but ragged pieces that looked to have been ripped from the ground. Aeony moved forward and picked up one of the pieces and turned it round in her hand.

“Pure as imperial, I’d stake my life on it.” She said.

Adamaz looked over the pile and there was more than he thought there’d be, a lot more.

“Enough there to make someone rich.” He said. “And the spell can be used many times.”

Aeony was actually using her tongue to taste the gold in her hand.

“Pure, so pure.” She said. “Will you share the knowledge from the Upper Dome ?”

Adamaz laughed and sat down, the spell had weakened him. There was more commotion at the door and Caspian enquiring if he was needed.

“Not now, carry on getting the Dome in order and stop them panicking Caspian. Panic is no one’s friend.”

Adamaz stood and as he did, he picked up a slightly different odour in that corner of the room. Not the usual dark angel pheromones that Aeony constantly exuded, but something mild and different. Vella ! It was her perfume and from her being there quite recently. He chuckled, a long and genuine chuckle that had Aeony staring at him.

“Are you well old friend ?” She asked.

“Yes, quite well, though that spell did weaken me. I’ll need to feed quite soon. I just realised who has been in the Upper Dome, blowing in doors and breaking the furniture.”

Aeony instantly had her hand on the blade she kept in her belt.

“Who ?” She asked.

“Oh don’t worry. In a strange way, they are to be trusted and I can deal with the problem. In answer to your question; yes I will share everything. I can read everything we’re likely to find, but I lack the magical power to use most of the spells. If Babaef is victorious in the catacombs, he will have more power than any since the great human sorcerers. If he fails, then we’ll all be either dead or slaves of the darkness in the catacombs.”

“Have a care.” Said Aeony. “Talk of great human sorcerers is heresy.”

He was angry now, he hadn’t expected small minded stupidity from Aeony.

“Look around you !” She said. “All of this, everything is human. Let’s have no more talk of heresy. Your dark angels will be needed to protect the City, especially the Upper Dome. I can read the knowledge here and Babaef will be able to use it, but it will all be worthless without your sisters to protect it.”

“Half our number have died since we came to the City, most by the hand of our own kind. You’ll have our protection though, for what it’s worth.”

Adamaz felt quite weak, a visit to the slums looked essential in the next day or so. There’d be plenty of injured to feed on after the quakes. He picked up a few of the spell parchments and thumbed through the pages of a large, three page spell.

“There is everything here from producing pure metals to controlling the weather, most of it beyond my powers to cast. There is this one spell that I’m sure will interest you.”

He passed it to her and watched as she tensed, obviously recognising the human words for dark angel. Those words were carved all over the City and their meaning was known to all.

“The writing is beautiful.” She said. “What does this one do, turn us all to gold ?”

“There may be spells here to create new dark angels, though I doubt if even Babaef will ever have that kind of power. Plus I believe one of the ingredients was the heart of a human female virgin. Very few, if any, of those left on the rifts. What you’re holding Aeony is the spell of rebirth. There are quite a few in various drawers, they must have used it quite often. It creates a new dark angel from the remains of your kind.”

She was angry, her eyes going a deep red, her blade drawn.

“No Adamaz, no. You can’t expect me to allow you to bring back Silsk.”

“You do still keep the remains in urns though ?” He asked.

“Yes, but to disturb them is the ultimate heresy. Even entering the sacred place where they are kept, is punishable by death, for those not of our kind.”

Adamaz sighed, there was the word heresy again. Aeony was thumping her tail against the floor, a danger sign for a dark angel.

"Calm my friend." He said.

He took a chance and put his hand on hers, the one holding a wicked looking dagger. She relaxed and he saw the deep red go from her eyes.

"I'm not talking about some kind of resurrection." He said. "The remains are mixed, a little of one, a little of another. The dark angel created is a new individual. I can't guarantee their temperament, but it unlikely you'll get someone as crazy and vicious as Silsk."

She was calm now, just looking at the floor and shaking her head.

"Such a heresy, my sisters would never allow it."

"It is your choice, I am just suggesting a way to increase your numbers. Of course, if Babaef fails, it will all be academic anyway."

~ ~

With the happiness of the ignorant, Vella was content. The quakes had stopped and she'd passed lots of librarians getting the Dome back in order. She had no idea about Yam Kermul being in the catacombs, or the battle that still raged between various factions of chaos. She and Torfi had used the portal to exit the Upper Dome, content that every trace of her and Caspian had been removed. Caspian might have told her to wash off her perfume, or cover it with something stronger and less memorable. Vella though, had no idea about Adamaz having a sense of smell that was over a hundred times greater than hers.

"So Caspian, what have you found." She muttered.

Back in their rooms, she dug his notes on Gorshan out from under their bed. It wasn't a great hiding place, but the cleaning staff never opened anything that was closed. Vella pulled out the wooden chest and put it on their bed. Part of her hoped that Caspian had left the puzzle in the chest, but she knew he'd have hidden it better than that. She ignored the ancient tomes, which she couldn't read anyway. His notes though, they were all in the common tongue.

"Awful writing Casp."

Her heart sank as she searched every corner of the chest and the puzzle wasn't there. She read his notes and began to cheer up.

'Once a major human fortress, Gorshan has been a deserted ruin for millennia.'

He'd already told her that. Going to a deserted castle was much less frightening to her than facing an army of human warriors.

'Legends of guardian Vargouille, have been confirmed by various sources.'

There was a picture in his notes, a creature that seemed to be all wings, claws and vicious teeth. Still, they had to be less of a threat than an entire army of humans.

'Still no clue about what must be achieved, to release the Angel Inanna.'

'Going to Gorshan is likely to be incredibly dangerous. But to preserve Vella's sanity, I see no option. We will have to go to Gorshan.'

Part of her knew that her sanity was an issue, she was obsessed with finding the puzzle and going to Gorshan. If the puzzle had been in the box, she'd have already been in Gorshan, providing a meal for the evil looking Vargouille. Knowing it, knowing that desire was insane, didn't help. Caspian had said a trip there was inevitable and Vella was happier than she'd been for a long time.

~ ~

Tarin heard the noises of the slithering things as they bit Yam Kermul. He also heard the sounds of them dying, as the Lord of Chaos killed them. It was no good, too many had been summoned to the

catacombs. His servants were now his enemies and their numbers seemed limitless. Tarin discovered the other power granted by the Godlike spell, the something else which had mystified Muzzie.

“Damn you Yam Kermul.” Tarin muttered.

The entire tunnel in front had been collapsed by his enemy and the clock was ticking on the Godlike spell. Tarin was resigned to backtracking, when out of frustration he raised his hands and thrust at the rock filling the tunnel. The rocks moved. Not just a little, they rushed away from his hands, pulverising those in front and turning tons of rock to dust.

“Thank you Muzzie.” Muttered Tarin.

Tarin ran forward, using whatever power he’d been given to turn the rubble to dust. He couldn’t breathe, but didn’t need to. He was hit by loose rocks from above, but none of it harmed him. He was naked and filthy, but so far, nothing had even left a bruise on his flesh. He emerged into a large cavern, strewing rubble and dust around him. In front of him was Yam Kermul, covered in a twitching mass of the slithering things. They bit, they strangled, they tried to rip his body apart.

“Come to gloat ghūl ?”

He might have heard the question in his head, but the voice was still the pure evil of Yam Kermul. It looked like the Lord of Chaos was dying, the death of a million tiny bites. Tarin was tired, it was tempting to simply let his own dark creatures finish him off. The Lord of Chaos still lived though and he killed dozens of the slithering things with every swing of one of his tentacles. Babaef wouldn’t gain his full power until the monster died and Tarin suspected that the shrine wouldn’t allow them to leave the catacombs.

There was something else too, something nagging at him, quite gently. He’d taken an oath to serve chaos, quite a few oaths over the years. Chaos didn’t do personal choice or hints, it gave orders and expected them to be carried out. Yet the insistent prodding at the back of his mind was telling him that it might be a good idea to finish off Yam Kermul.

“Have you any final words my Lord ?” Asked Tarin.

Tarin walked forwards and the slithering things moved aside, giving him a clear space to thrust a sword.

“I will be back.” Said Yam Kermul. “And you will suffer an eternity of pain.”

“You won’t be back. I know who’s been nagging at my mind now. Leng wants you dead.”

Tarin held Bailig’s blade high, the Kveld killing blade, the sword with a thirst for anything of the darkness. It had tasted thousands of the slithering things and it wanted more, much more. He almost expected some kind of last minute attempt to save the Lord of Chaos. Some of the undead coming to the rescue, or maybe an army sent by the darkness. Nothing arrived though and Tarin thrust the blade into Yam Kermul.

“No ! It wasn’t supposed to end like this.” Screamed Yam Kermul.

As he twisted Bailig’s sword, Tarin felt the Godlike spell expire. His skin no longer tingled and for a second he felt as if he’d gone blind. He no longer saw the cavern in detail, it was almost completely dark. None of it mattered though, the blade was devouring Yam Kermul, sucking the life force into itself and nothing could stop it now.

“No !” Screamed the Lord of Chaos.

Tarin didn’t need the strength from the spell to drive the blade in deeper, he was a ghūl, one of the few still alive and walking the rifts. He twisted the blade and pushed it further into Yam Kermul. He had thought that part of the Lord of Chaos would be thrown into the darkness, but he felt Yam Kermul die. Nothing left, no remnant crawling into a gap in the rocks, no chance to return, ever. The death of his enemy was a bit of an anti-climax and Tarin felt tired, very tired. He collapsed onto the

damp floor of the cavern and allowed himself to sleep. Nothing mattered now, the City was safe. He let the sweetness of oblivion wash over him, as he fell into unconsciousness.

~ ~

Nethra was still a long way from the City, a good day or more with the carts and those hired to pull them. She felt it go though, the dark thing that had seemed likely to engulf the entire rift. It had gone, but the glow of chaos in the sky above the City remained.

“We’ll soon be there Nethra.” Said Merrick. “Two days at the most and we’ll be arguing with Muzzie about the price of a room.”

“It’s gone.” Said Nethra. “The dark thing has died, or been sent back to hell.”

“I feel it too.” Said Waide.

Merrick wasn’t like them. Nethra knew his sight was poor and he wouldn’t see the glow of chaos. He was good with a sword and the best haggler she’d ever known, but he had almost nothing of the sight.

“I could offer them a bonus to get us there quicker, if you want ?” Asked Merrick

“Save your gold, you’re likely to need it once we get there.” Said Waide.

Waide gave Nethra a sorrowful look and uttered a single word.

“Consequences.” She said.

Nethra nodded at her.

“Consequences.” She agreed.

Merrick was looking at her as though she was crazy, but he’d see, once they were back in the City. The dark thing might be gone, but the entire City of the Lost God, had been bathed in the glow of chaos for some time. There would be consequences that none of them could even guess at.

“You both just need a decent bed and a proper breakfast.” Said Merrick.

Nethra said no more, the hired porters were already restless. None of them had run away, but only because they feared what might be waiting in the trees.

“Come on, let’s get moving.” Said Merrick.

~ ~

Galla woke, knowing that the City had been cleansed. She got up and examined the seals she’d placed over the doors and the blessing over the window shutters. Galla could move silently when she had to and none of the family woke, as she used fresh powders on their outside windows. It wasn’t first light yet and the dark one may have been defeated, but the creatures of chaos still ruled the dark.

“The door remains sealed until after first light.” She muttered.

Galla rooted through the embers of the fire, but none were hot enough to start a new fire. She put more logs on the fire and then looked around. Pure paranoia of course, every living thing in the house was asleep, apart from her. It was just that Galla hated anyone to see her using anything as vulgar as spoken magic. Satisfied that no one was watching, she spoke the three words necessary and the logs burst into flame. Her, Galla, using the magic of the gutter. She shook her head and settled back into the very comfortable chair. At first light she’d go and make sure her home had been left undisturbed and feed her bird.

“Babaef must have won.” She chuckled. “Who would ever have believed it.”

In less than two seconds, she was once again, fast asleep.

~ ~

It took a while, for Runa to realise the pool of congealed blood was hers. It was light and she'd drifted for a while, half in and half out of being asleep. The blood though, hadn't been a dream, it was still there when she was fully awake. It made her dress stick to the floor.

"I'm alive." She muttered, almost not believing it.

The weapon shed door was still closed and obviously nothing had found her during the night. Runa tried to sit up and her back hurt. Another small congealed pool of blood, informed her of another wound, this time in her back. She didn't remember getting the wound, or the long cuts on her legs. How much blood could you lose without dying? For the daughter of a famous warrior, her education was woefully poor on such matters.

"Cold." She muttered. "Father mentioned being cold and disoriented."

Her father had once been close to death, on one of his many campaigns. He'd mentioned shivering from loss of blood and feeling giddy. Runa felt wide awake and alert, so she decided that the pool of congealed blood wasn't enough to prove fatal. The cuts in her legs looked bad enough to need stitching, but they'd stopped bleeding at some time during the night.

Runa stood up and everything ached. She felt the back of her head and found a bump that once again, she didn't remember happening. The run back from Muzzie's, getting lost for a while in Old Town. Her memory was full of dodging monsters who glowed with a blueish light. She had fallen a few times, but the wounds hadn't seemed to bother her then. She pulled her dress loose from the sticky blood and decided to find a weapon of some kind.

"Father's dagger, perfect."

It had been his pride and joy. A dagger made from the finest steel, presented to him on his retirement. She picked it up and just holding it gave her courage. Clothing would have been nice, even just a coat, but all that was in the house. A wash first, then clean clothes and something to drink. Then she'd go back to Muzzie's, she'd be safe there.

The house was gone, or most of it was. The fire she remembered had obviously spread and all that remained was the entrance hall and one end of the stairs. Mostly just smoking ruins remained, but part of the kitchen still burned, with a bright yellow flame. Her father dead, her mother likely to be dead too. Now the house destroyed, it felt more like a nightmare than real life. Only a day or so before, she'd been worrying about her parents forcing her to leave Muzzie's. Now Muzzie's seemed likely to be the only safe place she had left to go.

Runa was thirsty and hungry and all her beautiful clothes had been lost with the house. She turned and saw the cook's daughter sat on the garden wall, a girl not much younger than herself. Runa approached her, but the girl just looked at the ground.

"They're all dead." Said the girl. "Everyone, they're all dead."

Runa looked around and there was just smoke coming from where their nearest neighbour's house should be. Back towards the City, the houses were still there, but many had smoke rising up from them. In the distance, orange flames rose high into the sky. There was no screaming though, everything was so silent. Where were the people trying to put out fires? Where were the rushing helpers, digging through rubble for survivors? Something truly terrible had happened in the night and Runa had never felt so completely alone. She pulled the girl up on her feet and put her arm around her shoulders. Only then did she notice that the girl had a hand that looked crushed, her left hand. It had stopped bleeding, but the wound looked pretty bad.

"Come with me." Said Runa. "We'll go to Muzzie's. He'll know what to do. Muzzie always knows what to do."

~

~

Tarin was still half asleep, the face in front of his was female though, the voice familiar.

“Wake up Tarin. I need to leave you for a while and all the servants have run off.”

“Nethra ?” He asked.

“No, it’s Maya. I carried you to Bailig’s. You need to wake up. Keep still though, your leg is broken and needs setting. I’m going to see if I can find Galla, or another healer.”

Tarin tried to sit up, but it felt as if someone was stabbing his right leg with a red hot poker. He winced and lay back.

“What happened ?” He asked. “How did I get here ?”

Maya looked almost as bad as he felt. Her face had a nasty cut that went from the top of her forehead to her chin and would almost certainly leave an ugly scar. She was also favouring her right side, as though everything on the left side of her body was sore.

“You were under the body of that thing, barely alive and covered in wounds. I’ve no idea how your leg was broken. I brought you here, carried you out of the catacombs.” Said Maya. “It wasn’t easy. Bailig had been injured and couldn’t help. It’s Bailig that I’m most worried about.”

He turned slightly and saw Bailig lying on a nearby sofa. He looked filthy, but so did they all, otherwise he looked unharmed.

“That..... monster did something to his arm.” Said Maya. “I must find Galla, but I don’t want to leave him alone, He’s said little, but what he does say scares me.”

“Yes of course Maya, prop me up a little and I’ll keep an eye on him.”

“Thank you.”

She found a couple of cushions and used them to sit Tarin up, so that he could see most of the room and the sofa where Bailig lay. He could see the window now and the curtains being blown by the morning breeze. Everything looked so normal. Maya was pulling on her outdoor boots, but there was so much he wanted to know.

“What of the others ?” He asked. “Babaef, Muzzie, are they safe ? Did they escape the catacombs ?” He’d thought that Bailig was asleep, but he turned towards him.

“It doesn’t matter now.” He said. “None of it matters.”

“Be calm my love.” Said Maya. “I’m going to find Galla, she’ll be able to heal your arm.”

Bailig had knocked his blanket onto the floor. Maya picked it up and covered him up, making soothing noises, as though he was a child.

“The others, I must know, are they alive ?” Asked Tarin.

She had her coat on and a blade on her belt. Maya looked as though she was expecting trouble in the City.

“I came to find you, while Muzzie was trying to wake up Lilleth. Bailig was behind me, I hadn’t even realised he’d regained consciousness.” She said. “We found you and then the tunnel collapsed. It took ages to walk out of the catacombs, but nothing else attacked us. Muzzie was alive, but I have no idea about the others.”

“The City, is it safe now ?” He asked.

“I have to go !” Shouted Maya. “I’ll tell you everything when I get back, the little that I know. I have to find a healer for his arm, I really have to go.”

She was gone, leaving him to wonder if his friends were alive or dead. He couldn’t move and the servants had gone, so he had no alternative other than waiting for Maya to return. Bailig was silent and seemed lost in his own thoughts.

“She won’t be long.” Said Tarin.

“No use. I’ve been touched, seen it before. No one has the power to help me.”

“Bailig, it’s just an arm. You’re alive, that’s what matters.”

Bailig threw off the blanket and held up his arm.

“You call this just an arm ?!” He shrieked.

It may not have been Yam Kermul, there had been a lot of other creatures of chaos in the catacombs. Somewhere, at some point, one of them had touched Bailig’s arm. It may not have been a blow, sometimes a gentle caress was enough. Or it might have been a consequence of that much chaotic power in the City. Bailig was holding up not an arm, but a green tentacle. It was as thick and muscular as an arm, but he was right. It wasn’t anything that any sane person would call, just an arm.

~ ~

© Ed Cowling – May 2016

Part 33 will be posted at the end of June.