

Quid Pro Quo

(Season three of London's Night Stalkers)

Chapter 24 - Missing

"Liz had never thought of Clara as whimsical, until she'd decided the easiest way to name their hounds was to call them Dasher, Dancer, and Prancer."

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Patsy Smart was up very early that morning. She had to check the garden shed, even before she'd had a shower and got dressed. It was cool in the garden that morning; too cool to be dressed in just her knickers with a thin gown to cover the rest of her. Slippers of course, the concrete garden path had been put down by her dad and was full of sharp bits of hard core. She opened the door and instantly felt better.

"Thank you Simon, I knew I could count on you." She muttered.

No body, he'd kept his promise to remove the dead burglar during the night. Simon was usually reliable, but it was still an immense relief. A few garden tools had been moved to one side to make room for the body. Patsy moved everything back to where it had been, before returning to the house.

"Scrambled eggs I think..... Don't worry Zeus, I'll feed you first."

Her mum usually fed the cat when she got up, though that didn't stop Zeus rubbing up against her ankles and making 'feed me' type sounds. If he ended up being fed twice so be it, he was a growing cat after all. Just the usual cheap food from the supermarket, but he seemed to love it. Patsy stroked his head as he ate.

"Thanks for looking after mum." She muttered.

Eggs out of the fridge and a quick text to Simon as the pan heated up.

'Thank you for tidying up Patsy.'

He didn't reply, she hadn't been expecting him to, at least not that early. He'd have been up until the early hours losing a dead body wherever such things went. He didn't reply as she ate her eggs, or as she drank the obligatory morning three cups of coffee. Patsy wasn't concerned, though she did text him again from the bust stop on her way to work.

'Are you alright?'

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The eighteenth gate felt different and Liz was beginning to listen to her feelings. As her hand went out to touch the arched gateway, something made her snatch it back. The hounds were good at sensing things too, though their vanishing seemed to be permanent.

"Are we going or not?" Asked Clara.

"There's something.....We should drop our packs before I do this." Said Liz. "Get your weapons ready, something might come out of the gate."

By weapons Liz meant turning both her hands and arms into the wriggling tentacles of the Unnamed One. Only a partial change, she no longer trusted her ability to return to human form after fully becoming the keeper of the last gate to the underworld. She watched as Clara and Mabina prepared for battle.

"Any idea what might arrive?" Asked Mabina.

“No....Though it will probably be something.....Massive.” Said Liz.

Liz made a last attempt to summon the hounds in her mind and found nothing to summon. It seemed the gift of the guardian creatures had been removed. She ran her tentacle fingers over the gateway, before moving back quite a few paces.

“Here they come.” She said.

Muscled bodies and jaws full of nasty looking teeth. It took Liz a second or two to recognise the creatures of Anubis used to guard the underworld. Large, tough and difficult to kill, though they had defeated six of them close to a previous gateway.

“We know the drill with these guys.” Said Clara. “Hack at them and try not to get bitten.”

Liz had let Clara have the Viking axe. Her tentacles were just about unbeatable, while the two vampires had struggled to defeat a few of the creatures sent against them. Liz welcomed the opportunity to try out a new tactic, being a little shifty. As one of the brutes went for her, she side stepped and ran her tentacles down its right leg, from hip to knee. Oh how it screamed as its flesh became nothing but dead tissue. It fell over and Liz wasn't going to show it any mercy. Keeping well clear of its dangerous looking jaws. She moved in, ran her tentacles over a part its body, before moving away again. Moving in and moving out, without giving the brute a chance to hurt her, a form of guerrilla warfare. Eventually the heap of dead flesh in front of her had stopped howling in pain. Liz finished it off by letting her tendril thin fingers bore into its head.

“Mine is dead.” She yelled.

By the time she had the chance to look, Clara was finishing off the second creature with a massive axe blow to its head. It had all seemed so easy compared to their first fight with the large creatures of Anubis. Then again, practise and experience always helped, along with being a little shifty of course.

“Do you think there will be any more of them ?” Asked Mabina.

“No way of knowing.” Said Liz. “Keep your pack straps unbuckled and hope for the best.”

Nothing attacked them as they stepped through the eighteenth gateway, though a few friends were waiting to greet them. The three hounds were there, scampering around them like excited puppies.

“Yes, good to see you too.” Said Clara.

“Sorry to keep asking you Liz, but you are connected to this place.” Said Mabina. “The flames, the vanishing and reappearing hound trick, not to mention the ground tremors. Any idea what happened ?”

“Something has changed in this world and ours. What that is will probably become obvious once we return home.”

“Oh home, I'd almost forgotten there was anywhere other than this place.” Said Clara.

“And this year's Oscar for best dramatic actress goes to.....” Said Mabina.

“Come on, only twenty two miles to the nineteenth gate.” Said Liz.

“We should name the hounds.” Said Clara.

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Anthony Jordan had one main way of handling feeling out of control, he became angry, often very angry. There was nothing special happening that day, but Simon had promised to be in for a team brief at nine thirty. Anthony had ended up taking the meeting on his own, which left him feeling decidedly put upon. He called Simon's phone and left several spectacularly unpleasant messages, which made him feel a little better, for a while.

“Sorry to pester you Clara, Simon mentioned you were out of the country. I'm just trying to find him, your boyfriend has gone AWOL on me. Please get him to call me.”

An hour after leaving a message for Clara he was fuming again. Simon was his partner now, he owned half the business. To Anthony that meant Simon now had a few responsibilities, like turning up for meetings. Another hour and as everyone went out for lunch, Anthony was approaching boiling point again.

“Lunchtime and the bastard’s still a no show.” He muttered.

He hated doing it, but there was one person almost certain to know where his missing director might have vanished to.

“Hi Ronnie, long time no see..... How’s thing ?”

“Fine, though I am still owed a couple of hundred in commission.”

“Really ! Must be accounts fucking up. I’ll look into it.....Erm, I’m actually calling because Simon didn’t show up for the team brief today.”

“Wow, that’s not like him.” Said Ronnie.

“I know.....We both know this isn’t like him. Do you know where he is Ronnie ? I’m not asking you to betray a trust. I just want to know he’s alright. My next step is to call around the hospitals.”

“You’ve got me worried now too. I know a few people, who know people, who know Simon. I’ll make a few calls and get back to you this afternoon.” Said Ronnie

“Thanks....And I will get the commission money sent to you.”

A promise he intended to keep. After the call ended he called the accounts department, which was only the bookkeeping guy and a part time lady who helped with the admin.

“David.... Pop in will you and bring the company cheque book.”

It had been his fault really, Anthony knew that. His bookkeeper had mentioned Ronnie’s final bit of pay and Anthony had told him to sit on it. Not that Anthony would hold back when he yelled at David. Yelling always made him feel better.

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Tim seemed to think she’d had it all arranged before leaving France, though she hadn’t. She’d made her prediction that Yosef Khatib would invite them to dinner, purely because of the file held on him by the Silver Dawn. Such ways of behaving were so obviously his style, his modus operandi. She hadn’t been surprised when the written invitation left at the hotel’s reception desk, had been followed by a personal call to confirm.

“I believe you know an old friend of mine now calling herself Mabina Gladitch ?”

“I do, we’re actually fairly good friends.”

His voice had a trace of a dozen accents and dialects, though none really gave a clue about his country of origin. Flawless English of course, there were advantages to being such a ridiculous age and one of them was having time to pick up dozens of languages.

“You’ll love the Bourj Al Hamam Restaurant Laura. Please tell me you and your companion will come ?”

“Yes, of course Yosef....I had already intended to pop into your rug emporium and accept your kind invitation.”

“Yes.....I noticed you’d bought some of our rugs.....Very kind.”

He’d sounded like a wonderful uncle she only saw about one Christmas in five. She knew that he knew she was in Amman to cause him trouble, though he might not know she intended to kill him. Yosef had friends within the Silver Dawn and news of her going through his file must have reached him by now.

“This city is amazing.” Said Tim.

He'd been gushing about Amman since they'd arrived and she tended to agree with him. They had the taxi drop them off near Talaat Harb Street, to give them a short walk, just to get a feel of the area. It was something Laura always liked to do, merely to feel as though she knew the city a little better than tourists who were dropped on the doorstep everywhere they went.

"There it is Tim.....The building with all the tubs of plants outside."

Not just an opportunity to meet a mortal enemy over a really good meal, she was treating it as an adventure in a city she didn't know.

"Are you sure we weren't supposed to dress up a bit?" Asked Tim.

"No, we're on holiday. Smart casual will be fine."

They were taken to Mr Khatib's table, who was already there. A blonde woman was with him who had the look and manner of a secretary, rather than a date. Yosef looked exactly like one of the fairly recent pictures in the Silver Dawn files.

"So good to meet you both." Said Yosef. "Laura, Tim....This is Revna."

"My parents were Norwegians with a thing about the old Nordic names." Said Revna. "My friends call me Revie."

Scandinavian, so that explained the blonde hair. The way she'd grabbed the conversation too...Maybe she wasn't his PA after all.

"Drinks.....We all need drinks." Said Yosef, as he grabbed the attention of a waiter.

Yosef was tall, dark and incredibly good looking for a man rumoured to have been around since the last ice age. Daniel had been around a while and had a definite early man look about his features. Yosef didn't look a day over forty and there wasn't a single part of his features that looked stone age. He was a vampire of course, Laura could have sensed that across a crowded room. As for Revie.....As far she could tell, Yosef's date was a plain vanilla human female.

"So.....What do you think of Amman?" Asked Revie.

"I love it here." Said Tim. "We're hoping to extend our stay for a while."

"Wonderful city, though I will eventually have to return to work." Said Laura.

They ordered and Laura caught a glimpse of Akiva sat at the bar. He'd tried to get a booking for dinner, but it appeared the Bourj Al Hamam was booked up solid for weeks. It seemed that Yosef either had the right contacts, or really was some sort of local hero. They were into the main course before the conversation went past small talk. A bit of a relief as her jaws were beginning to ache from smiling at every inane comment she heard, or made.

"The Silver Dawn has changed over the years Laura." Said Yosef. "How do you see their focus moving in the future? I heard they're investing in technology rather than shamans."

"I've only just started with them Yosef. But from what I've seen they aren't about to issue a press statement denying the existence of the paranormal, while adding Bill Gates as a non-exec director."

"Glad to hear that." Said Revie.

"There might be hope for them yet." Said Yosef.

And so it went on, with Yosef trying to pick her brains about the Silver Dawn, without being too obvious about it. Hard to turn the conversation around to his rug business. Not that Laura didn't like rugs, but they were just rugs. She could appreciate the look and feel of a handmade rug, without wanting to know the details of how it was made. Eventually Revie excused herself to visit the bathroom and Laura joined her. Laura had her pee and was adjusting herself in the mirror, when the only other woman besides them left the restaurant's very clean and elegant ladies toilets.

"You won't be able to hurt him." Said Revie. "He knows you're here to kill him. You'll be the one to die if you try, you and that man of yours."

Such a blatant provocation couldn't go unanswered. Laura grabbed Revie by the arm, firmly but not brutal enough to leave a mark. She didn't feel fear from Revie, just defiance.

"I have no idea what you're talking about Revie. I'm just having an extended vacation with my boyfriend."

Laura left her and returned to their table. By the time Revie returned she'd obviously taken time to redo her makeup and look a cool calm Nordic blonde again. She actually smiled at her, as though nothing had happened. Laura told Tim about the encounter when they were in the tax heading back to The St Regis.

"Wow, she must be pretty tough." Said Tim.

"No, just a normal human, I'm certain of it. I did think she was a thrall, but I'm not so sure now. To get in my face like that while we were alone...."

"Maybe Revie is taking some sort of drugs."

"I think she'd addicted to Yosef and infected with something that can make her do just about anything. Love Tim, Revie is deeply and insanely in love with Yosef."

"HmMMM I just hope we don't need to kill her too...I quite like her."

"Actually.....So do I." She said.

Liking someone and not tidying them up as a loose end were two different things though. Revie knew Laura was in Amman to kill the man she loved. If Yosef suddenly vanished, Revie would be on the phone to the police. Sadly it looked as though she was a loose end that would need tidying up. The reception desk had a message for her, which she didn't read until they were both back in their room.

"Shall we open a bottle of wine ?" Asked Tim.

"Yeah, why not.....We are on holiday."

"Who is the message from ?"

"Patsy, it appears she's lost Simon."

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Liz had never thought of Clara as whimsical, until she'd decided the easiest way to name their hounds was to call them Dasher, Dancer, and Prancer.

"What about Rudolph ?" Mabina had asked her.

"That means them being Donner, Blitzen, and Rudolph."

"Yes, I see..... We'll go with the first choice."

Whimsical, definitely far too whimsical. Not that Liz could complain, a few weeks underground had definitely tilted her mental balance into the weird and quirky end of the scale. The really weird thing was that after just a twenty mile trudge along the road of the pharaohs, they could all tell which hound went with which name. Dasher had an ear with a lump bitten out, the right ear. Dancer was the one with a limp who hadn't been expected to survive a nasty bite. And last but not least, Prancer had a neck covered in spots, just like those on a Hyena. The problem was that the brutes didn't know their names and only obeyed group instructions like 'Stay' and 'Attack.'

"Stay ! You brutes....Stay !" Yelled Liz.

The nineteenth gate, the last before they used the gate Thoth had supposedly cursed. It was definitely the last ordinary gate, the final time there were not likely to be huge consequences from stepping through it.

"No sign of any bad guys." Said Clara.

"Good.....And I've just run out of salt." Said Mabina.

"I've still got plenty, though we might not need it." Said Liz.

Was it going to happen, were the Ancient Gods and their minions going to give them an easy ride for the nineteenth gate ? Liz kept the hounds with her, as she walked to within a few yards of the usual arched gateway.

“I don’t sense anything bad.” She said.

There was something though, a swirl in the air that still had an odd aroma to it. The swirl solidified and took shape. The hounds were silent as the woman in long flowing robes appeared before them. No one was reaching for a weapon.

“I have been sent here by a God and none may interfere with my business.” Said the woman.

“Oh crap, I knew this would happen.” Said Clara. “She’s going to ask us a riddle and I’m really shit at riddles.”

“Treat her with respect, she looks like an acolyte of Huh.” Said Mabina. “Even the other Gods are careful not to offend Huh.”

“I am commanded here by the God Huh.” Said the woman. “I have a message from him for one of you called Clara.”

“That’s me.”

They moved away to speak privately, though Liz definitely saw Clara crying at one point. Clara actually crying....Something truly terrible must have happened. Not that Clara had any living relatives to lose. Eventually they walked back closer to them.

“I can take you back.....If you wish ?”

“No, I’m needed to here. Besides, you said nothing can be done now.” Said Clara.

The woman became a swirl again, before vanishing. They were left with an upset looking Clara, with no notion what had upset her.

“Thank you for staying Clara, you are needed.” Said Liz.

“Out with it.....Who died ?” Asked Mabina.

“No one died.....I don’t want to have to think about it right now, not with what we’ve still got to face. I will tell you both about it when all this is over.” Said Clara. “Not that anything can be done.....Something written has been unwritten and now...Not even the Gods can change that.”

“Alright, keep your secrets.” Said Mabina.

Liz decided whatever secret Clara wanted to keep, could wait until they were all back in London. Or dead of course and then all the secrets in the world wouldn’t matter. She used her fingers to activate the gate in the usual way.

“Come on Dancer, Prancer, Clara and Mabina.” She said. “Time to go.....Dasher can come too if she wants.”

“Dasher is a he.” Said Clara.

Did it matter with the Hounds of Anubis ? Liz thought that it probably only mattered to other hounds. They passed through the gate, to find the road of the pharaohs had a surprise for them. All the lights down the sides of the road were turned on, or lit, or whatever needed to be done for them to emit a wonderful clean bright light.

“Lit up like a summer’s day.” Said Clara.

“Do you think this is normal, or something done in our honour ?” Asked Mabina.

“Our honour, definitely in our honour.” Said Liz.

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Patsy opened the front door to the house in Hornsey and then rang the front door bell a few times. No response and the usual mound of junk mail was still piled up on the rug behind the door.

“Anyone home ?”

It was late, she'd got into a conversation with some of her college course group and things had overrun a little. She'd even bought herself a Chinese takeaway on the walk up from Hornsey Station. She closed the door, turned on a few lights and went into the kitchen.

"Let's nuke the food." She mumbled.

It was a tradition, nuking takeaways in the microwave for a minute or two. Nice to get a piping hot meal and she was sure it stopped her getting bad guts, though she couldn't be sure of that. As the meal went round in the microwave, she called her mum.

"Hi Mum, I'm over at Simon's."

"Are you staying there tonight?"

"No, I'll be home in an hour or so."

No need to tell her mum about Simon not taking her calls all day. She sat in the kitchen she knew so well and ate her piping hot lemon chicken and egg fried rice. Patsy had thought about what she'd do if Simon wasn't home, it seemed to be the next logical step.

"Do it sober, or after two glasses of wine?" She mumbled.

Sober, definitely sober as she didn't want to risk breaking anything. Sober meant visiting the mysterious rooms on her own with no alcohol induced courage, but she could do that.

"I raided Mabina's house and stabbed her bed."

Mumbling about it to herself made it sound a bit naff, though it had felt such a brave thing to do at the time. She rinsed off the plates she'd used and headed towards the stairs. Her first stop was Laura's room, where she knew which drawer to open to find a vicious looking dagger. It even had a few stains on the blade that looked like dried blood. She sat on Laura's bed for a moment.

"Fuck....Am I really going to do this?"

Laura wouldn't have hesitated, Patsy knew that. Laura had vampire strength and a set of fangs, but it rarely came to that. Most of the time dealing with a situation boiled down to having a certain attitude. Patsy had attitude, bags of attitude. Dagger in her right hand, she opened the door that gave access to the extra rooms that seemed to be part of a mechanism to glimpse the past.

"Oh child, what have you done now?"

She ignored the sounds and voices coming from the rooms to either side and walked unerringly towards the room with the dragon statue. It was there on the table, in front of the window which constantly showed night time rooftops that definitely weren't in Hornsey. She stroked the statue and kissed it on the head, as though it was a pet.

"Wake up for me....Please wake up."

Breath is life was something she remembered Simon saying, though it might have been Laura. She used her breath to warm the statue, while rubbing her hands down its golden wings that were tipped with green. Slowly the statue came to life.

"That's it.....I need to get into that hidden room."

It was amazing how something made of solid gold came to life. By the time the creature had squawked at her and jumped off the table, it was hard to imagine that it had ever been a lifeless lump of metal and gems. It moved towards a wall and a door appeared, which Patsy pushed open. Another room, where Simon had shown her the trick of pressing a book to open yet another door.

"Don't run dragon....I haven't done this bit before."

The books on the shelves changed as the dragon entered the room. Simon had given one huge tome a hefty shove, she was certain of. Her heart still beat faster, as she put her left hand on the book and pushed. The click of the door opening to give access to the next room, was a huge relief.

"That's it, I'm there." She muttered.

The room with the window that showed the bridge Simon and Giovanni had fallen of when they'd both been drunk, leading to a drenching in the river below. A bridge near Florence in the 13th Century, which of course was impossible. Patsy had learned to revisit her definition of impossible, since she been seeing Simon Atherton.

"Now....The mirror."

Not easy to see if you didn't know where it was, set in a recess at the top of a heavy bookcase. Large and once she'd found it, the fact that she'd had to look for it was a little strange. An old fashioned mirror so big that Simon had managed to climb through it and enter the past. Only now the mirror was just showing a reflection of her.

"Crap."

No view of a room where Niña was trying to get a drunken Giovanni to sit still so that she could draw him with pen and ink. Now all the mirror was showing her was herself and the room. After all that effort and psyching herself up, it seemed so unfair. On the way from the room, she stopped and looked through the window again, at the impossible view of Italy during the time of the Medici. The bridge wasn't empty though, he was there.

"Simon !" She yelled.

Silly really, she reached her hand out as though she could touch him, but her fingers hit the glass of the window. He had his finger over his lips, as if telling her to be silent. For a moment Patsy felt a sense of unreality and thought she might faint. She grabbed the window frame and closed her eyes, willing herself not to pass out. When she opened her eyes again, the bridge was empty.

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Wiremi hadn't always been called Wiremi, though as far as he remembered he had always been a Seer of one kind or another. Many thought he was dead and just a wraith, but Wiremi knew he could still bleed and feel pain. In his eyes that meant he was still alive, or at least probably still alive.

"A truly wise Seer must be sure of nothing, but open to every idea." He muttered.

He really admired the certainty of René Descartes and his 'I think, therefore I am,' though he did think it was a little too simplistic. If asked and pestered, Wiremi would have replaced René's famous saying with 'When I think about it, I'm reasonably sure I exist.'

"After all.....Being reasonably sure of anything in such a bizarre universe.....Is something." He muttered.

Wiremi was stood waiting in the real world, or at least what he was reasonably sure was at least one of a huge number of 'real' realities. He no longer wore robes, they'd been replaced with a pair of scruffy jeans and padded jacket which he hated. Interacting with the real world meant fitting in and fitting in sadly meant wearing clothing he rarely liked. He looked at something else he didn't like, the large watch attached by a leather strap to his wrist. In the realm of dreams time had little meaning, whereas in the real world, it seemed to be everyone's master.

"It's time." He mumbled.

He was close enough to the small holding near Pitmedden in the Parish of Udny to see people move around, while remaining hidden among some bushes. He knew Jack was feeding the pigs, which he seemed to enjoy. Wiremi entered the barn where the pregnant female pigs were kept and approached Jack. The look in the eyes of Jack told him his arrival hadn't brought joy.

"It is time Jack.....I have come for you."

"Can I say goodbye to my mum ?"

“You know you can’t.....Saying goodbye to Gwen or Daniel will create a situation that will make your leaving impossible. They will try to stop you going and I won’t fight them to take you. You’re an adult Jack, quite capable of making your own decisions. Do you wish to go with me ?”

“If course I don’t want to, though I know I must.”

Wiremi liked Jack, he had the makings of a good Seer about him, if he survived the events of the next few days.

“Then we must go now Jack....Are you ready ?”

“Yes.”

Pulling a human into the realm of dreams while they were fully awake was more dramatic than simply shifting the reality of a sleeping dreamer. A lot of energy was required and Wiremi would feel weak for hours, maybe even days. It had to be done though, without Jack’s help the boundary between the worlds of the living and the dead might breakdown. Wiremi used prodigious amounts of power to create a spinning yellow portal.

“Hold onto me Jack.... I don’t do this very often... Hold on tight.”

More and more energy into the portal, until Wiremi could feel them being pulled into the gap between worlds. With Jack holding onto his arm, Wiremi leapt into the portal and concentrated his mind on the great tree and his village. There was almost an explosion of yellow flame, as he and Jack hit the ground. Bruised but unharmed, Wiremi helped Jack to his feet. They were just a few yards away from the great tree, the sacred tree, the tree at the centre of the oldest, greatest forest that had ever existed.

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Laura hadn’t been able to sleep and a quick call to Akiva had found him awake and willing to help with a little night time surveillance. She was swapping the company of the man she slept with, for the help of the man she fought alongside. It seemed a satisfactory arrangement as long as neither of them got over possessive. They’d met a block away from the rug emporium and after scaling the outside of an office block with no signs of life, they eventually had a rooftop view of Yosef’s building.

“I thought you’d leave it a while before going for a look.” Said Akiva. “Why tonight ?”

“Tim and I have been seen in his company. His girlfriend even collared me in the ladies toilet to warn me off trying to kill him. It has to be soon Akiva, or I might as well put an advert in the papers telling everyone I killed him.”

“How are you going to kill him ?” Asked Akiva.

“I told you, killing him will be the easy part, you’ll see. Pain was the problem, though I’m fairly sure I’ve cracked it.”

“Only fairly sure ?”

“The only way I’ll ever be certain of any idea concerning Yosef, is by trying it. If it doesn’t work.....I’ll need to think of a different way of getting him to tell me what I need to know.”

She hadn’t told Akiva or Tim much about her plan and she could see Akiva’s confused expression in the moonlight.

“I thought we had a one-time try at all this ?” He asked.

“I know, that was my original plan.” She said. “We will need to dispose of all his guards and even Revie if she’s with him. As for Yosef though.....We’ll capture him and keep him somewhere secure. That way we’ll have as long as we need to get him to talk. Not that we can take years over it, Horus isn’t a patient God.”

He chuckled, Akiva actually chuckled at her half-baked plan. Not that she blamed him, it was beginning to sound a bit over the top to her.

“So we capture an immensely powerful unstoppable, bullet proof killing machine. Mind telling me how we’re going to do that Laura ?”

Laura ignored him as she used a set of field glasses Tim had acquired from the tech guys at the Silver Dawn. Tim spending time with the team was paying off, even if it did mean him attending their pizza & porn nights. The glasses could see the electromagnetic field of most defence and alarm system, but they were showing her nothing but windows with the blinds down.

“Nothing using these things.” She said. “Yosef has had years to fortify the place and then hide all the defences.”

“Can I have a look ?”

She handed him the glasses and left it just long enough to answer his question about capturing Yosef. Answering too soon would look like the desperation of having to explain herself. Akiva always needed to remember he was helping her, not the other way around.

“I’ve read his file Akiva, I took a while over it. I know what our friend Yosef can do and what he can’t do. It’s all in the files, if you read between the lines. His abilities are in there and often by implication....his weaknesses. Capturing him will be as easy as killing him, you’ll see.”

“If you say so Laura.”

“I do say so.....You’ll say how easy it was when we do it. His building will need a deep clean when we’re finished by the way, as good as they give the Whitehouse when a new president arrives. A team we can trust....Do you know anyone ?”

“Funny enough I do, a lady from Genoa who as luck would have it...Owes me a favour. The favour will be keeping quiet....She won’t be cheap Laura.”

“It has to be done...No blood, no DNA, no signs of a struggle. We’ll leave the world a clean and tidy building to be at the centre of a mystery. Where did Mr Khatib and his minions vanish to ?”

“But.... You’re not going to tell me how you intend to abduct him are you ?” He asked.

“No, I’m not....Not yet....Call my plan a work in progress.”

“Are we ever going to have sex Laura ?”

It was her turn, a little revenge by laughing at something he’d said.

“No....It’s not just that I’m with Tim. Even if I wasn’t, it would be a mistake. A pleasurable mistake probably, but it isn’t going to happen.”

“So.... What are we going to do tonight ?” Asked Akiva.

“We’re going to clamber up Yosef’s building until we set off an alarm. Then we’ll vanish into the night. I want to rattle him Akiva, I want him to know I’m coming for him.”

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