

## Quid Pro Quo

(Season three of London's Night Stalkers)

### Chapter 21 – Yosef Khatib

**“Yosef is a bit famous with the older clerics, a bit of museum piece. He is definitely the last surviving Ancient Vampire and to our curators and clerics....Think of David Attenborough finding a living Dodo and you’ll understand their attitude.”**

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Simon managed to get his battered old Fiat van right outside Patsy's house. It was a visit of duty; Evie had begun to mutter at Patsy about her using the place as a hotel, rather than her home. Not that Simon minded, he was quite fond of Evangeline Smart. Patsy had two bags to carry, one containing a Chinese meal they were going to share with Evie, and another full of food her mum liked. There were even some tins of tuna in there for Zeus. Simon had a huge bunch of flowers and a laundry bag containing a large amount of Patsy's clothes, which had ended up strewn around his bedroom in Hornsey.

“I can't believe you bought my mum flowers.” Said Patsy.

“I have monopolised her daughter a bit lately.”

“She thinks you're the best thing since sliced bread already.”

By the time Patsy was using her key to get in, they must have looked as though they'd arrived for a long weekend, rather than just for a meal.

“Mum..... We're here.”

Zeus greeted them first, rubbing up against Patsy's legs.

“Yes....I've missed you too.”

Simon felt the snake under his skin move about a little. It had obviously sensed something about Zeus. A kindred spirit, or potential enemy ? Simon was quite relieved when the creature became still again. Evie's face lit up when she saw the flowers, Patsy had helped him pick a bunch of her mum's favourites.

“Oh, I do feel spoiled.” Said Evie.

“Zeus has grown.” Said Simon.

“He has....I don't know what I'd do without him. Are you sure you two want to share your meal with me ?”

“Of course we do Evie.”

“We even brought some treats for Zeus.” Said Patsy.

The meal was a huge success, Simon had never doubted it would be. Evie had lots of tales from a fairly wild youth, some of which made her daughter blush. A Chinese meal with a bottle of wine and there was even a film on DVD to watch afterwards. It was a normal night, the kind of get together that was probably happening in thousands of London homes that night. By the time Simon was on the Smart's family sofa, watching a horror film Patsy had chosen, the irony of the situation hit him. He was the only man in Patsy's life that Evie had ever taken to and he was a vampire. As for Zeus.....The cat sat on Evie's lap looked like an ordinary everyday feline, yet deep inside that cute looking beast, was something....Simon had no idea what it was, but it definitely wasn't cat.

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Liz sprinkled a little salt on the road of the pharaohs. The creatures who looked to be half smoke and half human, were already keeping their distance.

"Don't use too much salt Clara; what we brought will have to last all the way to the twenty first gate." She said.

"How exactly are these things dangerous?" Asked Clara.

"Well.....They're not likely to attack us." Said Liz. "The problem is the number of them who will follow us unless deterred by the salt. They could easily block access to the gates."

"Couldn't we kill them?" Asked Mabina.

"They're already dead Mabina.....They've been dead for a very long time."

"So we use the salt sparingly." Said Clara.

"Exactly."

Liz was understanding more with each mile they travelled, though she didn't understand how. She also had full control of the three surviving Hounds of Anubis, though once again, she had no idea exactly where or how that had come about. It had to be a mental link, but she'd been yelling at them for so long that they now understood what STAY meant.

"Stay!" She yelled.

The hounds had wanted to hurtle at the dark shapes near the 16<sup>th</sup> gate. Liz liked their enthusiasm for a fight, but was going to hold them back, for now.

"What do think wants to attack us now?" Asked Mabina.

"No idea, we need to get closer." Said Liz.

Her hounds weren't happy at being kept away from an enemy. They began to make a sound between a whimper and a growl. The dark shapes were no more distinct at about ten metres away than they had been at a thirty. Liz dropped her pack on the ground and lovingly fondled the mighty Viking war axe.

"These ones are standing their ground." She said. "I'll release the hounds first, just to give us an idea about how these things fight."

As plans went, it had served them well in the past. Liz let the hounds run at the enemy, and when the hounds were close enough to bite.....The shadowy creatures vanished.

"They're playing games with us again." Said Liz.

"Who is?" Asked Clara. "Which of the Ancient Gods is against us?"

"I have my suspicions, but remember where we are Clara. We're not supposed to be here in the underworld and walking along the road of the pharaohs will have really caused us to be noticed. Think of us as being centre stage for the Gods. Many will be watching and listening to everything we do or say."

"She's saying a false accusation could be dangerous." Said Mabina.

"And a correct one would be even worse." Said Liz. "Not just the Gods will be watching us.....We have to be very careful with our words. Come on.....I'll activate the gateway."

Another pointed archway set forward a little from the cavern wall. Liz allowed her fingers to become tentacles and instantly the archway became a glowing doorway to allow access to the next gate.

"Ready?"

"No." Said Clara.

Like all things that become part of a routine, Liz was actually comforted by Clara's feigned unhappiness at entering the gateway. On the other side the road continued, but there were people there, waiting. They'd been there long enough to set up camp in the centre of the road of the pharaohs.

“They’re here.....They’ve arrived.” Someone shouted.

Liz knew the voice, even though she knew it was impossible for him to be there. The underworld leading to the seventeenth gate couldn’t be reached by mortal man, Just being there was an affront to Osiris....Unless a God had.....

“Liz..... It’s me. Stop gawping at me as though I’m a ghost.” Yelled Brendan.

Laura hadn’t seen David Huynh since meeting him in London, she’d assumed he’d been abroad on business. Nathalie Aurigny had sent her to see her assistant, when she’d asked about the Silver Dawn’s file on Yosef Khatib. There didn’t seem to be one, which was impossible.

“Ask David, he’ll point you in the right direction.” Nathalie had told her.

Laura hadn’t felt awkward about asking for favours since becoming a vampire. Before that the idea of asking a favour of someone she barely knew, would have filled her with dread. So far she’d already had a few favours from the Silver Dawn before even starting work for them. She found David in the deep cellars of the Silver Dawn chateau, supervising what looked to be an interrogation.

“Laura, the very person. Would you mind doing me a favour ?” He asked.

Not what she had in mind, but she could work with it.

“I came to ask you for some information.” She said. “How about a little quid pro quo ?”

“Fine, I’ve nothing against that.”

“Alright David, what do you want me to do ?”

“Look in Cell 5.....Hey Vachon.....Show Laura our problem.”

Vachon had a bruise on his cheek and the huge bull of a man in Cell 5 began yelling at her as soon as she looked through the inspection flap.

“You’ll do no better than them little girl, I’ll snap you in two.”

Laura didn’t really need to be told what the favour was, but she asked anyway.

“You want me to make him more.....Cooperative, don’t you ?” She asked.

“He’s already put one guard in hospital Laura. Just get him strapped to the chair in the middle of the room and Vachon can take it from there.”

Laura had never met Vachon before, but the look on his face made her almost pity the unnamed man she was about to strap into a heavy wooden chair in the centre of the room.

“Does it matter if I damage him ?” She asked.

“No, beat the crap out of him if you like, just don’t kill him.”

She returned to Cell 5 and opened the flap. The man inside was pretty big, though far from being the largest she’d ever been up against. Not killing him did limit her choices a little of course.

“Hey..... Are you going to come quietly, or do I have to hurt you ?” She yelled.

“Fuck off.”

How had they got him in there in the first place ? Laura was rarely curious for the sake of being curious, though sometimes she just had to know something.

“How did you capture him ?” She asked Vachon.

“He was drunk and unconscious when we arrived at his apartment.”

“Ok, open the door. Let’s get this done.”

Vachon looked at her as if she was mad. He even looked across at David for confirmation. David merely nodded at him. As the cell door was unlocked Laura entered the small space and pushed the door closed behind. The cell was probably only ten feet by ten feet, barely large enough for the brute of a man to move around comfortably. He came at her without warning, open right hand going for her throat.

"Sorry, this has to be over quickly.....I have places to go today." She said.

She grabbed his arm and twisted, though not hard enough to snap his elbow joint. Trading blows at a distance looks cool on TV, but unless you've got a little weight behind the blows, it doesn't work in real life. Laura didn't have the weight, just lots of strength. She hugged the guy to get inside the range of his dangerous looking fists. As he let out a blood curdling yell, she ran her fangs over his right cheek. Not that deep, it probably wouldn't leave a scar. He was out of the game though, as he fell to the ground. Laura dragged him to the chair outside, before lifting him into it.

"Fast acting neurotoxin." She said. "Only a little, a full bite and he'd be out for several hours. Give him half an hour and you'll be able to talk to him."

David Huynh actually applauded her and Vachon looked quite pleased.

"I can see having a vampire on the payroll will be useful." Said David.

She strapped the man into the chair, pulling at the straps until they were tight enough to keep the brute from moving.

"That's my favour done." She said.

"You're not curious about who he is, or why he's here?" Asked David. "Most would have asked."

"I'm never curious unless there's a point to being curious."

"But you asked Vachon about how he was captured."

"I asked hoping that I might learn something."

"I see, I think.....Alright Laura, you've earned a favour in return. What information are you looking for?"

"I'm looking for anything you can tell me about a rug trader called Yosef Khatib."

"For that we need to visit the third level archive. Your entry swipe card will get you in there, but the index system is a nightmare. I'll show you how to find the right files.....Vachon...Begin softening him up, I'll be back in less than an hour."

Some of the lower levels of the chateau were old and some parts looked quite new. The third level archive was in an old section, the walls looked really ancient in places. Lots of men in robes were scurrying about in the archive room, most reading books from an age when most books were actually written on scrolls.

"Don't worry, the index is on computer." Said David. "All the scrolls are on the computer too, though just about everyone likes to hold the real thing. Do you read ancient Greek?"

"No."

"Then you'll love the computer, it has a full translation into English."

He showed her how to use the system, which was fairly complex, though not a nightmare. There were eight separate documents relating to the rug dealer, who was also an Ancient Vampire.

"Everything is in the third level archive, the most secure." Said David. "The main reason is because Yosef is a bit famous with the older clerics, a bit of museum piece. He is definitely the last surviving Ancient Vampire and to our curators and clerics....Think of David Attenborough finding a living Dodo and you'll understand their attitude."

"So anyone killing him would be pretty unpopular." She said.

"Oh yes, not that anyone could kill Yosef. His skin is believed to be fairly impenetrable, even to gunfire."

"Can I print the archive files?" She asked.

"Sorry, everything has to be read in this room, though you can take notes."

Laura decided to do just that, enough notes so that she had the every essential detail. She not only had to find out the real name of Samnuha from Yosef, before killing him. It was obvious now that

everything had to be done in secret. She didn't want every cleric in the Silver Dawn coming after her for killing the last Dodo.

"Of course, you know someone who actually once shared their life with Yosef. A long time ago in the part of the world we now call The Balkans, but I'm sure she'll remember him." Said David.

"Who is that?"

Of course she had an inkling somewhere in her unconscious mind. It was the natural cussedness of the universe, the way it slapped coincidences on people that weren't really coincidences at all. At least she managed to avoid looking shocked when David told her.

"You know her as Mabina Gladitch. She and Yosef were lovers for well over a century."

"Yes, I know Mabina very well. I was planning on a trip to see her quite soon."

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Ronnie Neophytou was quite surprised at how well they'd taken a one day job becoming at least a two day job. She'd driven Alex and Noah to the railway arches in E1, though she hadn't gone inside with them.

"Good idea, stay with the car." Alex had told her. "We might have to stop messing about with Raoul and get serious with him."

Get serious ! They'd already knocked out most of his top set of teeth. Alex had been ready to slice open his nostrils until he'd given her an address. Not a deliberately wrong address, but an out of date address for the infamous Imran. Ronnie was sure that morning's interrogation was likely to start with the knife up the nostrils and move on from there. She was definitely no longer in her good place. She was no longer feeling totally happy with her recent career change. Her phone rang, the cheap pay as you go Tom had given her.

"Hi."

"This is Noah.... He talked. We need to clean up, be out in ten minutes."

Nothing was going to puncture her feeling of wellbeing, nothing. Only that wasn't working anymore. They'd been in there for nearly an hour, plus there was the whole cleaning up thing. What if one day they thought she knew a name, or an address they needed ? Simon would protect her she was sure of it, but Simon wasn't always around. It was fifteen minutes before Alex got in the passenger seat and Noah got in the back.

"We got the right address this time, I'm sure of it." Said Alex.

"Yeah, it felt right this time. Head towards Ealing Broadway Tube Ronnie. No postcode I'm afraid, but I can direct you from there." Said Noah.

She so wanted to ask if Raoul had been alive when they'd left him. There were the rules for surviving in Tom's world though, rules for keeping her sanity. She obeyed orders, did as she was told and never asked too many questions. In return, Tom paid her truly huge amounts of cash.

"Keep to the speed limits." Said Alex. "We don't need a pull by the cops today."

"We're both carrying. This Imran won't be alone and things could get a bit nasty. Stay with the car Ronnie.....Keep it locked."

Guns, they were carrying guns. Now he'd told her it was impossible not to keep looking for tell-tale bulges under their jackets. Not that Ronnie was exactly a virgin when it came to firearms. She had run with a pretty iffy crowd as a teenager.

"Bloody traffic." Commented Alex.

They had a conversation about football and seemed to have no worry at all about the likelihood of violence before the day ended. Ronnie joined in, though mainly because she was trying hard to

behave normally, whatever normal was now. They were still half a mile from Ealing Broadway Station, when Noah began to tell her where to go.

"Archie used to live out this way." He said. "You must remember Archie?"

"Yeah....Pity, him with a nice wife and too young kiddies." Said Alex.

"Still..... He should be out in five if he behaves himself."

It was a relief to find out that whoever Archie might be, he was in jail rather than being dead. Ronnie wasn't lost, there was always the SatNav, but Noah had directed her down so many side streets.....

"Stop as soon as you can park on the left." He said.

"Wasn't this the place where those Latvian kids were making fake vodka?" Asked Alex.

"The very same place." Said Noah. "Lucky it's still standing, they managed to burn their next pop-up factory down to the ground."

Ronnie saw Alex's gun as she adjusted her clothing before getting out of the car. Nothing massive, no desert eagle, but a gun is gun and on the streets of London, still a rare thing to see. Noah leant over the seat before getting out of the BMW.

"Do you see the chain link fence down the street?" He asked. "The one with the gate half open?"

"Yes, I see it."

"We're going in there Ronnie. Any trouble or if we don't come back fairly quickly, call Tom. No getting out of the car for anything..... Alright?"

She obeyed orders, did as she was told and never asked too many questions. It was all coming back to her. Sit in the car and call Tom if anything crazy happened. She could do that, no problem.

"I've got it Noah, you can rely on me."

He actually patted her on the shoulder.

"Great....After this is over, do you fancy going for a drink?"

"That'd be great."

She meant it. Noah was never going to win Mastermind, but he pressed a lot of her buttons in just the right way. Ronnie watched them cross the street and walk into the factory yard, which was about fifty yards up the street. The next question was how long is fairly quickly? She looked at the car's clock and added on fifteen minutes. What then though? She knew the most likely outcome was to give them another fifteen minutes. Ronnie mentally marked the thirty minute point on the clock. If they hadn't returned by then, she'd call Tom. The gunshot came after just five minutes, with another two shots shortly after.

"Fuck!"

She had no problem with completely ignoring instructions and getting out of the car. Alex and Noah were her people, on her side in the gang war currently occurring, or whatever the hell was going on. She had no intention of leaving them to their fate, though first she grabbed her hoody jacket out of the boot. Another gunshot came as she was locking the car.

"This is your fault Simon Atherton." She muttered. "I was quite happy selling phone systems until you came along."

She'd imagined that gunfire caused crowds to appear, or at least dozens of people looking out of windows. Someone was probably thinking about calling the cops, but the street was still calm and relatively empty. A woman walking her dog looked in the direction of the factory yard, though she took no notice of Ronnie as they passed each other. Ronnie pulled her hoody up nice and tight around her face as she entered the yard.

"Jeeezz, what a shit hole." She mumbled.

A 'To Let,' sign that was so worn with age that the agent's telephone number was no longer readable. The ubiquitous broken glass everywhere, which quickly seems to carpet all abandoned premises. A row of untended and overgrown bushes hid the front of the building from the street, along with the old Volvo parked in front of it. She knew the body on the ground near the Volvo wasn't Alex or Noah, it was wearing jeans and anyway, the body was too skinny. Ronnie had to get close to see the face of the young guy, close enough to see the bullet wound in his chest. Fresh blood was so red, she would never get used to that, redder than tomato ketchup and far more runny.

"Shit !"

Another gunshot coming from inside the factory building, how many was that ? It had definitely been a lot, probably six or seven. A war was going on, though Ronnie still had no intention of abandoning her people. The dead guy had dropped a gun, a large heavy looking one made of grey metal. Ronnie picked it up and instantly felt better. During a summer holiday in Cyprus one of the Georges in her life had taught her to shoot. She wasn't an expert, but she could hit what she aimed at most of the time, if they were stood still and if they weren't too far away.

"Fuck !"

She muttered, again, before walking into the factory building.

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Laura quite liked getting the bags organised in her apartment at the Chateau in Brittany, there was more space than in her room in Hornsey. More room meant having Tim tapping away on a laptop just a few feet away, which she liked.

"Nathalie gave me my access card while you were shopping, I can get almost everywhere." He said.

"That's good of her, I wasn't expecting that."

"I'm on the payroll of one of their British companies too, as your assistant. Quite a generous salary, a lot more than I earned at the hotel." Said Tim.

"Wow, I definitely wasn't expecting that. I must thank her when I see her."

He was earning his wages, booking them both into a decent hotel in Amman. He'd already booked airline tickets for them and Akiva. Tim had drawn the line at Akiva using the same hotel though.

"I'll book it for him, somewhere decent. A different hotel from us though."

Boys being boys, with Tim thumping his chest to mark his territory. Once she'd have found it amusing or annoying. Now she quite liked the idea of Tim getting a bit of testosterone rush because of her.

"There's a Four Seasons in Amman." Said Tim. "Five stars with all the extras."

"David Huynh said the St Regis is the best and he travels a lot."

There was quite a bit of keyboard tapping and a few sighs. If Tim did a job he liked to be thorough and do it properly.

"Looks good, fantastic pool..... How about booking Akiva into the Four Seasons and us into the St Regis ?"

It was going to be a life or death struggle of a trip, but she quite liked the idea of a really good hotel with all the extras.

"Go on, book it.....We can stay on for a few days if we like the place." She said.

No aliases on the Amman trip, no iffy passports or bogus ID. They were going as themselves, which actually made a nice change. There could be no crime scene when she killed Yosef Khatib, no body left for the police forensics people to examine. Yosef had to be taken out very cleanly, or there'd be consequences, she understood that now. The Jordanian rug dealer and pillar of the local community,

had to vanish without a trace. The young English couple staying at the St Regis wouldn't even register on anyone's radar.

"Oh, and Tech had the flashlights you wanted." Said Tim. "They let me have two, both with an extra fully charged battery pack."

"Full military spec?" She asked.

"Oh yes, the Silver Dawn don't mess about.... Full Tempest Shielding."

"Good, it appears the underworld can do weird stuff to unshielded tech. I bet they'll appreciate a couple of decent flashlights by now."

"Can they carry all that stuff?"

"Yeah, we're pack horses us vampire and I bet Liz could bench press a double-decker bus."

She packed everything, wondering if she had overdone things a little. They could always drop anything they didn't need though, or she could bring it back with her.

"Better to take something they don't need, than forget something they do." She muttered.

"A good philosophy." Added Tim.

Packing done, for better or worse, everything was packed into two large canvas bags. She picked them up to test the weight.

"You know I'd take you if I could Tim." She said. "Simon really messed up my plans, I had no idea he'd want to go."

"I understand, he's not seen Clara for ages and there are limits to how many people you can drag off into the ether.....I do understand Laura, honest."

Simon had been playing house with Patsy ever since Clara had left. Then all of a sudden he had a guilt attack or something. Laura could hardly say no though, it was Simon.

"I need to talk to Mabina, so no idea how long I'll be."

"I'll be fine.....The guys in Tech are having a booze and porn night."

She kissed Tim and told him she loved him, before picking up the bags and pressing the metal disk under her skin.

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Ronnie held the gun in both hands and tried to ignore the thumping of her heart. She was breathing too fast too, though the circumstances did justify a little stress. There were no lights on in the building. Some parts of the corridor were quite well lit from windows, while it was dark in others. By the laws of general cussedness that seem to rule everything, the half open door was in an area of dark shadows. Announce her presence, or keep quiet? She decided to stay quiet. Of course the door creaked quite loudly as she used her foot to push it open.

"There's a smell I recognise." She muttered.

Weed, marijuana, known by a hundred other names as well. Ronnie enjoyed the drug herself; the smell brought back memories of parties and some memorable individuals. There wasn't the same profit in selling weed as there was in the harder drugs, but the police made less fuss about it. It seemed that Imran and his friends were into the West London weed trade in a big way. The room was full of the stuff, some bagged up and some in large plastic bins. She knew her weed, the smell alone told her it was good quality stuff and there was enough of it to give half of London the munchies. There was another gunshot, the first since she'd left the car. Ronnie heard Noah shouting something, though she couldn't make out the words. Time to make herself known.

"Noah!" She yelled. "It's me, I'm in the weed room."

Silly really, for all she knew there might be another dozen rooms full of the stuff. There was no reply, just the sound of running feet heading in her direction. Ronnie put her back against the wall



opposite the door, a spot where several trays of half bagged weed gave a little cover. The worse thing was the echo in the old building, it made it impossible to work out a direction for the running feet.

“Noah, as that you ?” She shouted.

Ronnie didn't recognise the big man as he came through the doorway, just that he definitely wasn't Noah. Short dark hair and big, tall and broad enough to just about fill the doorway. There was enough light in the room to see him, but not enough to see if he was likely to be called Imran. By the time she realised he had a gun, he was raising it to fire at her. Her gun was up and ready though, aimed at the centre of his chest. No shouting out for him to drop his gun, there simply wasn't time. Ronnie fired three times in quick succession and as far as she could tell, every bullet hit where she was aiming.

“Fuck.”

She said for what had to be the tenth time that day. For some reason the thought of her mum being horrified by her foul language, worried her more than just killing a man. She didn't do it like the cop shows, no keeping her gun on him as she moved towards him. He was dead, no one survives three bullets in the centre of their chest. She did pick up his gun though. She still didn't know if the huge dead guy was Imran, or just one of his guys.

“Ronnie.....It's me.”

Noah, coming from a direction where she hadn't realised there was another door. Were all gunfights like that, chaos and hoping you survived your mistakes ? Sadly she thought they probably were.

Noah looked fine, though Alex wasn't with him.

“Where's Alex ?” She asked.

“Back there.” He said, pointing with his head. “Wounded pretty badly, but she should live. We need to get out of here before the cops arrive. I'll get her..... You need to take a picture of Imran. They wanted him alive, but dead will probably keep them happy.”

“That's him.....I killed Imran ?”

“Yes you did.....Take a few pictures and use the flash.”

The cheap phone Tom had given her was crap, so she used her own. Ronnie found her hand was shaking, it took both hands to get half a dozen fairly clear pictures of the dead gang boss. Evidence of course if they were stopped, but Noah seemed to think proving the guy dead was important. By the time she was happy with her photographic skills, Noah was back with Alex. She didn't look good and couldn't have walked without his arm around her.

“Do you need my help ?”

“No Ronnie, just get the rear car door open so I can get her onto the back seat.”

There was a lot of blood, far too much blood. Even allowing for every wound looking worse than it really was, there was a hell of a lot of blood on Alex. It was dripping onto the ground, forming a trail as Noah half carried her out of the building.

“Get that door open.” Said Noah. “Then call Tom and tell him it's bad.”

“I will.”

“She was shot twice in the guts.....Make sure he knows that.”

“I will.”

She tried to help get Alex comfortable on the rear seat, though Noah was obviously experienced in dealing with wounded colleagues. No sound of sirens yet, which didn't surprise her. By the time someone decided the gunfire wasn't a firework, they'd probably decided not to get involved. Then the police might not react as quickly as the public might expect. Ronnie got behind the wheel and

knew she had the time to drive normally and carefully. As for keeping Alex alive ? That was down to Noah and whatever Tom decided to do. She used the cheap phone to call Tom.

"It's bad Tom, things went crazy. Alex has two bullets in her guts."

"And the target ?"

"Dead."

Was it sensible to be so detailed on a mobile phone ? Tom was the expert of course and they were throw away phones.

"Did you get a picture ?"

"Yes."

"Where are you ?"

"Near Ealing Broadway."

"I'll call you back in five minutes."

Alex began to yell, which she seemed to remember was a good sign. Someone had once told her, probably one of the Georges she'd dated, that it was the quiet wounded who were most likely to die.

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All those teens hiding under the blankets so that God couldn't see them masturbate, weren't being paranoid after all. Horus had helped her with far more enthusiasm than she'd expected, even telling her where Simon was and putting her right in his path. Not that the Gods spent all day watching humans, but they could if they wanted to. Once she had Simon, Brendan was easy. He was waiting for her in his apartment with yet more bags of food. If Liz, Clara and Mabina weren't hungry, there'd be a lot of disappointed people.

"You've done well Laura, I'm willing to help your reunion." Horus had told her. "Bring me the true name of Samnuha and I'll even answer a few of the questions I know you're desperate to ask me." He'd dropped them and their bags of supplies into a place in complete darkness. Laura unpacked a bag listening to water dripping ominously in the distance. It was a relief to turn on the military grade flashlights. They'd arrived in a cavern, a fairly damp cavern judging by the humidity and the sound of running water not too far away.

"What now ?" Simon had asked her.

"We eat a little of the food we brought and wait." She replied.

"How long for ?" Brendan had asked.

"Difficult to say with the Gods....Last time I had to wait for a day and a half."

Simon went to sleep, he had the ability to sleep just about anywhere. She nodded off a few times too, until.....

"Liz..... It's me. Stop gawping at me as though I'm a ghost." Yelled Brendan.

A wait of about six hours, almost exactly on time for Horus. It was the sort of reunion Laura had expected, lots of cuddles for the couples, while she and Mabina put together an impromptu banquet.

"We have to have a bit of a feast. It's traditional." Laura told them.

Eventually Brendan asked the question Laura hadn't felt comfortable asking.

"Why have you all got such short hair ?"

"This place is so gritty...I could never get it clean." Said Liz.

"That's a relief, I was worried you might all have nits." Said Laura.

The three adventurers were thrilled with the new supplies and of course the food. There were tales to be told over the meal. The village with the ghosts who beat off the attack by vargouilles. The

police trying to arrest them in the Greek Isles. Laura thought there was more to the gift of a diamond by Osiris than met the eye. Her friends weren't stupid though, they'd probably worked that out for themselves. After the meal Simon and Clara wandered off, as did Brendan and Liz. They were going to find somewhere private to screw of course. If Tim was with her, she'd have been doing the same thing. It left her sitting with Mabina, still not knowing how to approach the question of Yosef Khatib. For all she knew Mabina might still be in love with the vampire she needed to kill. To her he might be the great love of her life, the one that got away.

"A name came up the other day Mabina. I believe you know a Jordanian called Yosef Khatib?"

"Oh yes, I know Yosef. Not really a Jordanian even though he has lived there for years. Yosef's origins are so obscure that I doubt if even he knows the place of his birth."

"What can you tell me about him?"

Mabina looked around, as if looking for someone listening.

"If ever there was a case of walls have ears Laura. I love those old war time sayings, careless talk costs lives is my favourite.....Come....."

Mabina led her to a waterfall, the one they'd been listening to since arriving in the underworld.

Mabina took her close to the roaring water, close enough to get them drenched. She leant in close, actually holding her like a lover, before whispering in her ear.

"Tell me the truth Laura, do you mean to harm Yosef?"

"Yes, I do."

"How much harm?"

"I'm going to kill him."

"Good, make him suffer. I'll tell you everything I know about Yosef Khatib."

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