

Glade Hall

Chapter 18 – Long Weekend

“Ginie had a bad feeling about Glade Hall last night.” She said. “Then she dreamt of fire Gerry, the whole house burning down !”

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~Now~

Alice Hooper woke up on what should have been an idyllic morning in Paris. It was romantic, the hotel staff had been just the right level of attentive and Jerry had been charming. It felt like being a teenager again, running away for a dirty weekend. Only they had enough money to make the dirty weekend luxurious and carefree. She wasn't feeling carefree though, far from it.

“I just know something awful is going to happen Jerry.”

Jerry was deliberately pretending to be half asleep, yawning at her as he turned over.

“Jerry ! Listen to me. I want to go home !”

“Oh crap ! It's sixty thirty. Can't we have this conversation in another two hours ?”

They'd both had a lot to drink the previous evening. Her own head was pounding and Jerry had drunk more than her, he always did. Alice got out of bed and began to pull her clothes out of the wardrobe, scattering them over the bed.

“I know we need to go home Jerry. I just know it ! Call around and get us on an early flight to London.”

He was just lying there, watching her drag a suitcase across the room and begin to fill it.

“You're behaving like a crazy person.” He said. “It's all the stress at Glade Hall, exactly what we came here to get away from.”

“Don't do that ! Don't talk to me as though I'm five years old. I know Jerry, I can feel our son and daughter might die today.”

“The same way you were certain about Belgrade ?”

“That is so unfair..... I.....”

She found herself crying, really crying. Jerry came over and lifted her up, sitting her back on the bed. “I'm sorry dear.” He said. “But it's early and I really think you're just wound up by the death of that young archaeologist friend of Emma's.”

“So unfair Jerry ! I was eight months pregnant with our son, when you went to Belgrade.”

“I didn't go dear, that's the point. You were certain the plane was going to crash. Said you saw the wreckage and me, dead ! I made all sorts of excuses to cancel the meeting and nothing happened to that plane.”

“You can be such a bastard Jerry ! I had all sorts of hormones going crazy in my body then. This is different.”

“But you were so certain then, even describing the wreckage.”

They were sat on her pile of clothes. When she began to worry about creasing them, she knew her resolve to get the first flight home, was faltering.

“I'll call her, in about an hour.” She said.

“You'll just wind each other up and Emma doesn't need that and neither do you. I'm not completely useless, I asked Nick Goodwood to check on things each night we're away.”

“You did ?”

“Yes, nothing that Emma can feel is an intrusion. I just asked him to look over the outside of the house, check that everything looks ok. Everything will feel so different, once we’ve had breakfast.” Stress made her horny, always had. It was going to ruin a few of her best dresses, but Alice wanted early morning sex, more than she wanted breakfast.

“Too early for breakfast.” She said.

Not bad considering he had a hangover. Jerry managed an impressive erection, the instant her hand began to fondle his balls.

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Emma Hooper had been up and showered at first light, they all had. There was a lot of preparation to be done and it had to be done right. Dean was crawling between two of the oil tanks, while she handed him an adjustable wrench.

“You’d think this would all be electronic.” Said Dean.

“This looks about right.”

She’d ordered tools with the pumps, including several sizes of adjustable wrench. Dean clamped the wrench over the bypass valve and it turned. He had to move the wrench a few times as he kept opening the valve.

“Six turns, must be fully open.” He said.

“Good, now all three tanks will feed into each other.”

She took the wrench off him and helped him climb out of the narrow crawlspace. She’d bought workmen’s gloves, but they’d all found it impossible to do anything fiddly while wearing them. She already had several nasty bruises on the back of her hand and Dean had a few minor cuts.

“We’re softies.” Dean had said. “Nick’s guys do this sort of thing every day.”

“Next the pipes down to the basement.” She said. “I volunteered us to do that run.”

“All the way into the cellar?”

“No, we’ll curl it up by the door and run it down into the cellar at the last possible moment.”

Neither of them really wanted to go into the cellar more than once. It was where he was, the spectral form of James Maynard and one or two of the demons he’d summoned. Emma led, across the area near the pool and into the kitchens.

“What are we going to do with the cookie fiend?” Asked Dean.

He meant her little brother of course. He’d been locked in his room for the day, with a TV showing cartoons and a large selection of sweets. She hated doing it, but hoped he’d be safe in Glade Hall, during daylight hours.

“I’ve thought through about a dozen ways to keep Jerry safe tonight and all of them have problems.”

She replied. “I decided to lock him in the old stables, where Tommy had the sheep.”

Dean was giving her a look of surprise, which she’d expected.

“I know it sounds awful.” She added. “But Tommy had the rat people go over it regularly and he made sure it was secure. I have a padlock to go on the door.”

“Jeez Emma, he’s only three. You can’t lock him in there. He’ll go crazy trying to get out.”

“Where else Dean? I’ve been through it so often that my head hurts. We don’t have anyone spare to look after him. I’ll give him something to make sure he sleeps until the next morning.”

“You’re going to drug your little brother?”

“Just half a sleeping tablet, stop giving me a hard time. They’re the ones the doctor gave me and half of one should do the trick. There’s even a bed down there. I think Tommy and Lysette used it to, well you know.”

“Urgghhhh.”

"I swear Dean, if you keep giving me that look....."

"Fine, fine, he's your little brother, you know best."

"I don't ! I hate doing it to him, but there is no other option. Here, the lads left the coils of pipe in just the right spot."

Alex and Leonard were now officially 'the lads,' a term that had started as a bit of a joke and sort of stuck. The lads had been out at dawn, collecting piping from the crates and using their old Volvo Estate, to deliver it to various parts of the grounds. They'd already connected up most of the piping to Emma's expensive pumps.

"The pump people got one pipe length wrong." Said Emma. "Eighteen metres instead of fifteen. We can live with it though; use that piece to go through the cellar."

Dean connected one end of pipe to the junction Alex had already run into the kitchen. They took it in turns to drill holes about every five feet or so, as they straightened the pipe and ran it down to the first basement.

"Lucky we're both reasonably fit." Said Dean. "This is harder work than I thought."

"Think how the lads are suffering." She replied.

Most of the piping was in fifteen metres lengths. Medium bore pipe, but reinforced and quite heavy to shift about and straighten out. Dean fixed another length and they both tightened the four bolts that held the pipes together.

"I'll stop drilling holes now." She said, as they entered the second basement.

Another fifteen metre length of piping and they were within feet of the cellar door. About five bolts, two padlocks and a deadlock held the door firmly closed.

"Welcome to the Hellmouth." Said Dean.

"We could definitely do with Buffy right now." She said. "Come on, we need a standard length and the long pipe."

They headed back up the kitchen and then outside, to where the coils of pipe had been left. Even lifting and tugging together, it was tiring to get the pipe down to the cellar door. Emma fixed the flanges together, expecting Dean to help her.

"You do that." He said. "I'll go and get the long pipe."

"Are you sure ? It's heavier than this one."

"I'll roll it down the stairs, it'll be fine. Back before you know it."

She almost told him not to damage anything in the kitchen, before remembering it would soon all be just a pile of ash. Emma fixed the bolts in place and tightened them, before noticing a slight draft on the back of her neck. She turned and the cellar door was wide open.

"That's not possible." She muttered.

She could feel a cold breeze from below, see the top of the stairs. Impossible or not, the door was open. It was no good trying to ignore the darkness beyond the door, her eyes were trying to make out something that was moving about. A face, but not a human face.....

A crash from behind her and Dean is fighting to keep control of an enormous coil of pipe.

"Sorry I was so long." He said. "Alex needed your dad's car keys and then I knocked over some shelving in the kitchen. Started to tidy it up, before realising it didn't really matter."

He was looking at her, sweat and dust covering his face.

"Are you ok Emma ? I was gone ages and thought you might be worried."

"The door, it's....."

The cellar door was closed, locked and bolted. They didn't even have a key and were going to use a sledgehammer on it when the time came.

"It was open..... I saw something."

"You're tired. You must have nodded off and had a dream."

"It wasn't a dream. How long were you gone?"

"Half an hour or so. They finished everything needing the Volvo and Leonard is parking it somewhere in Enstone, a pub car park I think. Alex needed your dad's car to drive them back here in. Then I had the argument with some shelving."

She looked herself over, feeling her neck and lifting her T shirt up to look at her stomach.

"Am I alright Dean? Have they done anything to me?"

"You're fine Emma. Come on help me connect up this pipe."

"No really!" She yelled. "I can't remember anything since you went upstairs. Just a face I think, but nothing else about the last half an hour."

"Ok, let's check you over."

He looked at places she couldn't see, as she moved her clothing about, looking for any wounds that might have been left on her body.

"Well, unless you're a doppelganger." Said Dean. "You look fine to me."

"Don't joke. Oliver's awful disease started with just a tiny scratch."

He took it more seriously, helping her check just about every inch of skin. Nothing, not the slightest mark or blemish.

"Ok, I guess they didn't do anything awful to me." She said. "Come on let's get the final length of pipe connected up."

She tried her best to forget the missing part of her memory, but there was a vague recollection of a face, talking to her. It helped to be physically active, placing the coiled up pipe next to the cellar door and connecting it up.

"It'll be fun trying to get two lengths of pipe down the stairs." Said Dean.

"It's designed to be hard wearing and low maintenance." She replied. "We'll just throw it over the side of the stairs and unroll it once we get down there."

"While the ghosts are doing their best to kill us!"

Having Dean examine her bare flesh had left an effect, even if she'd been scared at the time. She grabbed his shirt, pulling him towards her, kissing him hard on the lips.

"Don't fail me now Fearless Dean Jenkins." She said.

It was too dusty and gritty for things to go beyond a bit of gentle mutual fondling. Emma straightened her clothes and bolted the final flange together.

"There." She said. "Now just another four or five pipe runs to do in the rest of the house."

They passed through the kitchen, everything was a mess. A whole section of shelving was now a mass of broken wood and crushed tins.

"Oh, Mrs Hargreaves would cry if she saw this." Said Emma.

"Good job she won't see it all burn then." Said Dean. "Hopefully we won't go up with it."

"It's all about timing Fearless Dean." She said. "Just pray that I got it right."

She was joking with him, but part of her mind still tried to make sense of the missing half hour.

Emma had the feeling she'd promised something to someone, but couldn't recall the details.

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Hilda Hargreaves had her own encounter with the ghosts of Glade Hall, or maybe a waking dream. It wasn't an unpleasant experience. Her niece had a nice house in Dorset, her husband designed things for a profession and made a decent living from it. Mid-morning and Hilda had wandered into the

garden, taking a nap in a comfortable swinging chair. Not that the nap was intended, but it was a warm morning and the garden was so beautiful.

"I'm glad you're safe."

The silly Branca girl in the dress two sizes too small. Hilda believed in the phantoms of Glade Hall, but it had to be a dream. How would a ghost know where she was ? It was a long way from Oxfordshire to Dorset. She'd heard the girl this time too.

"What do you want ?" Asked Hilda.

"There is no going back !"

The girl vanished as suddenly as she's appeared. No proper explanation, talking in riddles. Hilda found herself becoming angry.

"Stupid girl !"

"What was that Aunty Hilda ? Come inside and I'll make us some lunch."

Her niece, doting on her and spoiling her something rotten. Hilda pretended to hate being fussed over, but really loved every minute of it.

"I had a weird dream." Said Hilda. "Gone now though. Isn't it my turn to make lunch ?"

"No working while you're here. You'll be cooking again next week."

"Yes, I just hope they haven't made a mess of my kitchen.

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Mid-afternoon and they'd finally drilled, connected and checked the various pipe runs, intended to soak the entire house in fuel oil and flood the tunnels under the cellar. The pumps were started by a strong pull cord, something like starting a lawnmower, but with a far stronger cord.

"We shouldn't run them dry." Said Alex. "We know they'll start when we need them."

Emma hit the stop button and the pump instantly stopped whirring. They'd already tested the pump that fed oil to the cellar.

"Might be fun getting them running in the dark." Said Dean.

"Especially if the shadows turn hostile." Said Leonard. "I'm just amazed they haven't attacked us already."

"So am I." Said Emma. "I think we'll have to be careful after it gets dark tonight."

"I think we've done all the preparation we can." Said Alex. "Do you need a hand packing the things you want to save ?"

Crap ! It hadn't even occurred to her, but there were a lot of precious things that needed boxing up and putting somewhere safe.

"I hadn't even thought about it." She said. "Dad's computer with his work stuff on it, the family photo albums and lots of other things. It all needs boxing up."

"Too much on your mind." Said Leonard. "We'll have a look in the kitchen and make something to eat. If Dean hasn't destroyed everything."

"No takeaway tonight." Added Alex. "We'll cook a decent meal, while you collect together your 'must keep' list."

She hugged Alex and then Leonard, they'd quickly become part of the group she thought of as family. Dean followed her, as she headed for her dad's study and his computer. They released Jerry Jr on the way, freeing him from his temporary prison. She picked him up and carried him.

"Did you like the cartoons ?" She asked.

"Bored ! Missed Emma."

She felt guilty and dreaded locking him up again, but there really was no other option. Jerry hadn't even eaten all his sweets, a sure sign he wasn't happy. She sat him on a chair in her dad's study and helped Dean to unplug the cables from the desktop computer.

"It will all be backed up on the cloud somewhere, but we should take it anyway." She said.

"Where are we going to put it all?"

Where indeed? Emma had a place she'd thought of putting Jerry Jr, before the stables seemed a better option.

"There are two vans in the car park." She said. "Nick's people use them to shuttle building materials about. They always leave the keys on the shelf just inside the kitchen door. We'll fill one up and park it well away from the house."

Emma felt better now, a plan meant being in control of the situation and a plan was forming in her head.

"Sentimental value over financial." She added. "We might fill both vans. Bags! We'll need bags Dean. There's a whole pile of Nick Goodwood's sacks near to where Sean was working. They're easy to carry and strong, everything can go in them."

Dean was grinning at her.

"On my way." He said. "I'll grab as many as I can carry."

"I'll begin in here." She replied. "We'll do it room by room."

Dean was gone, rushing out to obtain piles of Nick Goodwood's strong plastic sacks. Emma was planning it in her head, what to come from which room. The study first and then her parent's bedroom. Her mother's jewellery box had to go. Not only did most of the contents come with fond memories, they were also worth a small fortune. Then her little brother's room and lastly.....

Emma felt someone behind her, in the far corner of the room. One of the phantoms of Glade Hall, but not a particularly unpleasant one. She turned, expecting to see Hermione.

"Some will help you."

It was the ghost of Lydia Maynard, the phantom who'd killed Mel purely by an unintended touch.

Emma's first thought was for her brother, he seemed to view all the ghosts of Glade Hall as harmless. She picked him up and held onto him.

"What do you want?" She asked Lydia.

Full daylight and Lydia was avoiding the brightest parts of the room. She hovered, causing the carpet below her to turn to a grey ash.

"He knows your plans girl. Fire will hurt friend and foe, those that might have helped will scatter."

"I needed something to buy time." Replied Emma. "Destroying the altar requires explosives and the time to place them."

"Pretty Lady!" Yelled Jerry Jr.

He was actually struggling to be free, wanting to run towards the hideous wraith that had once been Lydia Maynard. Emma held him tight, ignoring his struggles.

"I see, I see." Said Lydia. "I will do what I can, but the fire will weaken me too. Hermione will also do what she can, though she talks to me less than she once did."

"Thank you, any help is appreciated."

Appearing in the day seemed too much for the ghost, her outline began to fade, until just a face remained.

"It was a mistake to agree Emma, they will expect something in return."

Lydia was gone, leaving just a circle of decay about four feet across. What agreement though and with who? Emma had no idea, but assumed it had something to do with her blackout in the

basement. There had also been her nocturnal visits to The Glade. All done while asleep, her actions there still a mystery.

"Pretty lady gone !" Shouted Jerry Jr.

She put him down, letting him sit on her dad's computer chair.

"What pretty lady ?"

Dean, back with a pile of sacks bigger than himself. He dropped them all near where Lydia had appeared, obviously noticing the decaying carpet.

"Lydia decided to come visiting." She said.

"During the day ! What did she want ?"

How much to tell him ? There was no use worrying him with things she didn't understand herself.

"Lydia can be a little vague." She said. "But I think she will help us tonight. Just remember to keep some distance from her."

Dean was kicking the carpet, watching the grey dust and bits of ruined fibres fly up.

"Fine, my enemy's enemy is my friend and all that." He said. "Just remember the lads saw what happened to Mel. They might need some persuading that Lydia is on our side."

"I'll tell them over dinner."

Dean held a large plastic sack open, while she placed her dad's computer in it. Base unit first, then monitor, keyboard and mouse. It wasn't packed that well, nothing to stop things scratching against each other. It would have to do though, there were a lot of thing to pack.

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Three hours later, as the group of friends at Glade Hall, sat and enjoyed a lasagne that Leonard had cooked, Alice Hooper received a message that seemed to reignited her anxiety.

"This message is two hours old. This is intolerable !" She yelled.

The hotel clerk looked awkward and consulted a computer screen.

"You were paged when the call came in." He said. "Several times. As you seemed to have gone out, a message was taken. That is our normal procedure."

"Out ! I was in the hotel restaurant !"

"I am truly sorry, we did....."

Jerome Hooper thought it best to intervene, before his wife emotionally and verbally mauled the clerk into a bloody mess.

"We were laughing a lot." He said. "We must have missed being paged. No harm done, I'm sure whoever called will understand. We are on holiday after all."

The anger went out of his wife's eye, as he led her away from the hotel reception area.

"I just haven't heard from her in ages Jerry. I'm sure it must be something urgent."

"Who ? I haven't seen the message."

She handed him the slip of paper, the message written in neat block capitals.

'Angela Maynard, Ginie, requested you call her back.

She is on the New York number that you know.'

The number was written there anyway, Ginie was obviously a bit of a belt and braces kind of woman. As far as he was aware, there had been no contact with the New York Maynards since Nathaniel Maynard had died or disappeared, or both.

"Maybe they found Nathaniel." He said.

Alice dialled the New York number as soon as they were in their suite, leaving him to try and make sense out of just one side of the conversation.

"Ginie, sorry the useless hotel people lost your message or something."

He saw Alice's face change, saw panic begin to form in her eyes.

"I had the same feeling this morning. Are you sure?"

The phone wasn't cordless, she was trying to drag the phone across the room to the drawer that held their passports.

"We'll be getting the next flight to London Ginie. I'll call you as soon as we get home."

His wife was actually crying and he had no idea why. No use asking, he knew from past experience, that she'd ignore him until the call ended. There was nothing rude or callous about it, just the way his wife handled stressful phone calls.

"Yes, I hope it's nothing too. Thank you for calling Ginie."

The call ended and Alice was looking at him, tears streaming down her cheeks.

"I heard that we're going home." He said.

There was a complimentary box of tissues next to the fruit bowl. He handed them to her and waited for his wife to tell him about the call.

"Ginie had a bad feeling about Glade Hall last night." She said. "Then she dreamt of fire Gerry, the whole house burning down!"

Alice gripped his arm, so hard that it made him wince.

"She saw Emma running from the flames Jerry!"

He knew when he was beaten and besides, he'd had his own worries about leaving the house that weekend.

"You pack our things." He said. "I'll go to reception and explain that we have a family emergency. I'll ask them to arrange a taxi to Charles de Gaulle Airport. We'll get on the next available plane back to London."

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Emma had hoped the stables would look cosy, with just the dim lighting that Tommy had put in for the sheep. She'd brought clean sheets for the bed and his Finding Nemo nightlight to make the place look homely. In reality it looked what it was, a creepy barn with a grubby old bed against one wall. Jerry Jr sat on the bed as she hugged him.

"I am so sorry Jerry." She said. "But you know that Dean and I have serious things to do tonight."

"Big fire with pretty lady."

"Yes, I knew you were clever."

Emma couldn't stop kissing his cheek, making his face damp. She'd felt guilty about quite a few things in her life, that was part of growing up. Losing her virginity after drinking too much at a friend's house, taking drugs a couple of times, going on the pill at college. It all faded away at the guilt she was currently feeling.

"You will be safe here." She said. "But I have to lock you in."

There was a mountain of junk food for him to eat and several bottles of assorted drinks. The bucket renewed and multiplied her guilt though, the bucket with the packet of toilet rolls next to it. Jerry was looking about, peering nervously into the shadows.

"Don't like it here." He muttered.

"I love you Jerry, you'll be safe here."

He didn't look convinced. She wanted to be honest with him, not simply mixing a sleeping tablet in with his dinner. She brought out the box of sleeping the pills she'd been prescribed, breaking one out of its aluminium foil bubble.

'Not suitable for children under five.' It said on the box.

He was three, almost and big for his age. Emma broke the pill in two and handed half to her little brother.

"This will make you sleep until morning." She said. "By the time you wake up I'll be here again, waiting to take you with me."

"You promise."

"I promise Jerry. I love you more than..... Flapjacks."

He was chuckling as she handed him a bottle of water, watching him swallow the pill. Dean had said nothing, trying to distance himself from a decision he didn't agree with.

"We'll wait here until you go to sleep." Said Dean.

"Yes and it'll be morning before you know it." Said Emma.

She leant in close, whispering in her brother's ear.

"If you need to pee, go next to the bed..... it'll be our secret."

Just a few minutes and Jerry was asleep in her arms. She found herself crying as she pulled a blanket over him and turned on his nightlight. It was hard to leave him and even harder to lock the padlock on the door. She glared at Dean.

"I know ! I'm a total bitch."

"Sheila would have looked after him, if you'd asked."

"Then half the village would have known something was going on."

He was holding her hand, something they hadn't done for a while.

"I'm sure Jerry will be fine." He said. "You need to forget about him now though, we're a bit late for joining the other half of our army, the lads."

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Alex felt daft in his homemade armour, with its untested phantom repellents. Cricket pads were just too bulky, so they'd bought a mixture of various pads and protectors from a variety of sports stores. A box to protect their unmentionables had come from a shop that sold Rugby kit. The shin pads had come from the same shop, but the shoulder protection and helmets were pure American football. The whole ensemble was finished off with gasmasks, which currently dangled around their necks.

"To be honest I feel a little ridiculous." Said Leonard.

"You won't if that Natalie tries to kick you in the nuts." He replied. "Anyway, your shotgun and ammo belt look serious warfare. All I got was this !"

Alex waved the aluminium baseball bat about. It felt too light to do any serious damage to anything. It did make him feel braver though, which made it worth carrying.

"They're late." Said Leonard.

"Emma was taking her brother to somewhere safe." He replied. "I'm sure they'll be here soon."

He felt it too, the stress that made him want to get on with it. Waiting was awful, it gave you time to think. Alex fingered the silver crucifix that he wore over his jacket.

"Do you think this will work ?" He asked.

"No idea, think it falls into the 'it can't hurt,' category. The silver is likely to be the thing rather than it being a cross. Silver has been used as a spiritual antibiotic for centuries."

Emma and Dean arrived ten minutes later, looking just as daft as them. Dean had gone to a BMX shop to get their protective clothing, which was all in hideously bright colours. Dean had the Hunter's bow though and a quiver full of arrows. Emma had no large obvious weapons, but he noticed a hunting knife on her belt.

"Oh wow, do we look as weird as you guys ?" Emma asked.

"Your pink dayglow knee pads top anything we've got." Said Alex.

They spent several minutes, insulting each other's kit, teasing mercilessly. It was necessary, part of the bonding for what was to come.

"Love the shotgun." Said Emma. "Be careful though, we don't want to prematurely ignite the oil in the cellar."

They were actually going to do it ! With that one phrase Emma had made it real, turned a joke about their crazy clothing, into a matter of life and death.

"We've gone through the plan so often, you must all be sick of hearing it." Emma said. "I'm no good at speeches, just know that I'm grateful that you're all here."

"Glad we could help." Said Leonard.

"Come on, let's get it done !" She said.

Emma led, taking them to the nearest of the pumps, the one that was going to flood half the house with heating oil. She opened the valve on the tank, while Dean pulled the cord to start it up. The pump seemed to purr as it ran, hardly any noise at all. Emma felt the pipes happy that oil was running through them.

"Now we wait." She said.

Fifteen minutes they waited for the thick oil to ooze out of the holes in the pipes and spread itself over the wooden floors of Glade Hall. They could all smell the oil after ten minutes, its strong odour arriving with each breath of breeze.

"Still no sign of the shadows." Said Dean.

"They'll be waiting for us." Replied Emma. "In the cellar with James Maynard."

The second pump was the one to empty the largest oil tank into the cellar, after covering the floors in that half of the house in heating oil. They'd left the explosives in a crate near the pump, Emma hadn't wanted them in the house.

"No explosives in the building until Jerry Jr is safely away from Glade Hall."

The holdalls were hidden under a few layers of bubble wrap. The bags seemed heavier than Alex remembered. They were tired though, it had already been a long weekend. Emma opened the valve to feed oil to the pump.

"We go as soon as it starts." She said. "Before the oil spreads too far."

Dean pulled on the starting cord and nothing happened.

"Started first time when we tested it." Said Alex.

Second and third attempt produced no results.

"Crap !" Yelled Dean.

"Don't panic, it worked earlier today." Said Emma. "Check everything."

Using flashlights they went over the pump, making sure the fuel tank was full and the valve turned on. It was Leonard who noticed the loose ignition cable.

"Must have been jolted loose during shipment." He said. "Try it now."

Dean seemed to be their official pump starter. He pulled on the cord and the pump came to life.

Emma felt the pipes, obviously satisfied oil was being pushed through them.

"Pick up the bags." She said. "We're already a little behind schedule."

The stink of fuel oil grew stronger as they approached the house. One of the accommodation blocks had been picked as the place to start the fire, the one that linked to the Maynard Family Chapel.

Burning the chapel was seen as essential, it seemed to be a hot spot for some of the unholy events at Glade Hall. Emma was in front, opening a set of side doors to the old college dorm.

"The oil has certainly oozed well." Said Dean.

Their flashlights showed a corridor soaked in heating oil, the surface giving back a rainbow effect from their lights. The stench was the main thing to hit their senses, the stink of thousands of gallons of heavy oil.

“Stand back everyone.” Said Emma. “It’s my home, I should be the one to do this.”

Dean rummaged in his pocket and handed her a canister of some kind. She held the device in her right hand and it looked like a grenade, but larger than any he’d ever seen.

“A present from Bo.” Said Emma. “Banned in forty seven countries. You all need to get further back.”

She pulled at something and threw the canister through the door. They all ran back a few yards and waited. A few seconds later a bright white light filled the inside of the old accommodation block.

“Phosphorus I think.” Said Emma. “But I’m no expert. It gets the job done from a safe distance.”

“Wow, it definitely gets the job done.” Said Alex.

The heating oil was on fire, they moved a little closer, watching as the flames spread from corridor to corridor, following the pipes.

“I thought it would smoke more.” Said Dean.

“Best quality heating oil, designed not to.” Replied Emma.

The flames were mesmerising, they all simply stood for a few moments, as the fire became an inferno. It was Emma who broke the spell, picking up one of the holdalls.

“We need to move.” She said. “Time to go to the cellar.”

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