

## Clara Copley

(Season five of London's Night Stalkers)

### Chapter 2 – Luna Blue

**“Cyril will fuss, but see Rory today and then vanish for a while.” Said Noah. “Have your kid and don’t come back into the office until little Justin is on solid food.”**

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#### **~ Hornsey - In the room under the stairs ~**

A room had been given to Niña, a nice bedroom at the top of the Hornsey house. She’d slept there until falling in love with the room under the stairs. A very large cupboard really, but there was room for a single bed, a chair and the state of the art security system. It doubled as a dry goods store, which meant boxes full of bottled water and tinned chickpeas. Why chickpeas ? It seemed Simon had once, very briefly, had a thing about chickpea curry. Once it had been thoroughly cleaned and tidied, Niña thought it made the perfect bedroom. It felt safe being there, hidden away under the stairs. Cosy too, it reminded her of her room in Simon’s house near Florence. Best of all, the monitors above the security desk, showed her what was going on outside the house. Night and day, she could see everything, or nearly everything. One of the monitors had died, probably some time ago. Neglect had left the security system in a less than perfect condition, but Clara had known someone who could fix it.

“Let’s hope Hacker Jim knows his stuff.” Niña muttered.

Jim Weaver had been called by Clara, as it seemed he could be a bit paranoid about strangers. Normally a resident of Cleckheaton, Jim was now residing with Veronica Neophytou, known as Ronnie to just about everyone. Noah had been seeing Ronnie and things had become a little heavy, according to Laura.

“Jim might end up dumped in a ditch, but he knew the risks.” According to Patsy.

Hacker Jim was still alive, so he’d obviously avoided being dumped in a ditch by Noah. Niña had seen Ronnie a few times, but this would be her first time seeing Jim. He’d been keeping away from anywhere Noah might be. Niña didn’t really care about the potential crime of passion; she just wanted a peaceful coexistence between them, while Clara had her child. Luckily, Noah had recently been quite good tempered. There was a knock on the door of her room under the stairs.

“Are you there, Niña ?” Clara called out.

“Yes.”

A head came around the door. Clara was now in her eighth month and was huge. Not an insult, even Clara was calling herself huge. Not twins, she claimed to know if there were two babies waiting to be born. Still no scan for Clara, she was relying on her vampire intuition and some kind of vampiric sixth sense.

“Ronnie called.” Said Clara. “They’ll be here in half an hour.”

“Be nice to see where you park your car, again.” Said Niña. “It’s currently a worrying gap in what I can see.”

“I’ll leave you to agree a price with Jim.” Said Clara. “He’s always been reasonable in the past, but if it looks as though he’s being greedy....I’ll have a word with him.”

Clara was waddling a little, as she left the room under the stairs. Clara was one of the most poised women Niña had ever met. She seemed to glide across a room. Yet eight months pregnant and there was a definite waddle. Not that Niña would dare to have mentioned it. About forty minutes later, just as Niña was changing into better clothing, than the sweat pants and shirt she seemed to live in.....The doorbell rang.

"I'll get it, Clara." She yelled.

No one wanted Clara to do anything physical, even if it was just opening the door. She'd reached a size where she seemed to need a little pampering. Ronnie was at the door, with a skinny guy who was looking up at the guttering. He looked quite a bit older than Ronnie, but he was obviously Hacker Jim.

"She was right; Clara told me you can't see the cameras." Said Jim. "Who installed them for you?"

"At the right angle, you can just about see two of them." Said Niña. "On a sunny day of course.....Simon knew a military guy who put them in. Not cheap, but they've lasted through several North London winters. Only Simon had a number for the guy and, as Simon was last seen in Leptis Magna.....Hopefully, you'll get the update and maintenance contract."

"Leptis where?" Asked Jim.

"Northern Libya.....Right by the ocean." Said Niña.

"Ignore my Jim.....He just pretends to be brain dead." Said Ronnie.

Niña took them both into what was fast becoming her home, the large cupboard under the stairs. It might have smelled of grubby washing, if two large extractor fans hadn't been fitted to cool the file server.

"Wow, you weren't kidding." Said Jim. "Military grade kit.....The best I've seen."

"I made a list of what I noticed was wrong." Said Niña. "We're really relying on your expertise to make it perfect again."

"Lots of hanging off long ladders, to replace cameras." Said Jim. "I'll do a quick audit of the system today, but I'll say it upfront; it's not going to be cheap."

"The system needs to be perfect by the time Clara gives birth." Said Niña. "All being well; that will be in almost exactly a month from now."

"We can do that, I'm sure we can." Said Ronnie.

Ronnie was small and very pretty, with the dark beauty inherited from her Greek ancestry. Tough too, she'd helped Laura deal with a few dangerous situations. At the moment, she officially worked for Clara.

"Yes.....I can do it for you." Said Jim. "Leave me alone and I'll get some firm numbers for you. Not going to be cheap though, remember that.....Not cheap."

"Come on, Niña." Said Ronnie. "We'll leave him to mutter at the computers and do his tech stuff. You can show me around the house. I need to reacquaint myself with the layout of the place. Clara said no guns in the house, not with her baby. I'm going to have to set up a defence that's old school.....I was thinking; long swords, cross bows and spikey steel balls on chains."

"Oh, I like the sound of that." Said Niña.

"She's even bought an antique suit of chainmail armour." Said Hacker Jim.

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### ~ Looking over the combined maternity room and nursery ~

Mabina Gladitch had been around for a very long time. An age so long in years, that she suffered from what Daniel called a form of vampire dementia. Good old Daniel, only he could make living forever sound dreadful. Her memories of events several centuries before, were becoming harder to

pull out of her mind. But why shouldn't they be ?.....Her mind could hardly store every memory for the past few thousand years. Mabina remembered lovers quite well, though her imagination probably altered what she did remember. There had been quite a lot of good looking men in her life, and a few women. They couldn't all have been as good in bed as she remembered. Yes, her memory was a bit threadbare and moth eaten, but there was nothing wrong with her hearing. She heard Ronnie talking to Niña and avoided them. Clara had asked her to come to the house and Mabina knew where she'd be. Up the stairs and into the maternity room, with all the high tech machines.....  
"Wow, this all looks very impressive." Said Mabina.

"It should do for the amount I spent on it all." Said Clara. "Never set yourself a budget for such things, it's pointless. Patsy gave me a brochure from a medical equipment wholesaler and I was hooked. Daniel will love it all though; lots of machines that go ping. Foetus frightening, he called it over the phone.....I'm sure he's gone a little crazy."

"Always has been, Clara.....He always has been." Said Mabina.

Clara was big; she looked to be almost at full term. Most mums to be looked great by month eight. All rosy cheeked, with a glint in their eyes. Nature wanted new mums to have a certain glow and Mabina had seen a lot of new mums. Clara wasn't human though and her skin tone always looked a little pale. Dark eyes looking out of a pale, but attractive face. She looked as though she needed every dietary supplement in the book, but she'd be alright. Her body no longer seemed to be trying to reject the baby boy in her womb.

"Well.....This all seems a bit over the top, if it were a normal human childbirth. As it is.....Daniel was right; you might need everything he told you to buy. You might be able to sell some of it, once Justin Ned Atherton looks to be thriving. Love that old word.....An old midwife in Romania used to say that once a baby was christened, it began to thrive."

"No more talk of christening.....I doubt if my child would survive it." Said Clara.

"True.....Too many crucifixes in the church, too much holy water in the font. Besides, who could you ask to be godparents ? Even the humans we know are.....You could hardly call any of them normal."

"Normal.....Is vastly over rated." Said Clara.

"Is that it, have you given up going out to work for a while ?" Asked Mabina. "By the look of you, there isn't long to go now."

Mabina noticed an incubator in a corner of the room. That was new and definitely wasn't on any list sent by Daniel. It might be useful though, if the child was struggling after being born. Mabina was impressed with the quality of the equipment Clara had bought. It was just as good as in the best NHS maternity unit.

"Not quite finished, one more day in the office." Said Clara. "I have my office above the Luna Blue, the real gem in Cyril's night club empire. I have a few things for Rory to do while I'm away. He manages the place and is quite bright. I could telephone, but to be honest.....I quite like the vibe at the Luna Blue."

There were light footsteps on the stairs. Niña, Mabina knew the way everyone walked and even recognised the way individuals breathed. It was as individual as a fingerprint, if you were a vampire.

"I have a price from Jim." Said Niña. "I think Ronnie talked him into a really good price."

"Do you think it's reasonable ?" Asked Clara.

"Yes.....Actually, a third lower than I was expecting." Said Niña.

"Then accept Jim's quote.....I trust you." Said Clara.

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### ~ In Laura's van – Outside the Hornsey House ~

Laura had the idea, after watching Patsy deliver several van loads of medical supplies and equipment. A great many boxes arriving in daylight, yet no one would care. Even the worst busybody neighbour knew that everyone from Amazon to Deliveroo, delivered from early morning to late in the evening. She'd talked it over with Tim and decided that bringing blood for Clara, was probably better done during daylight hours. Her van parked outside the house, would look less sinister during the day. By blood, Laura and Tim meant kills; fresh blood straight out of an artery. Not that Clara was being over fussy. Once the heart stopped beating, human blood became unpalatable to vampires. In some extreme circumstances, it could even be toxic.....

"One month to go." Said Tim. "Being honest, I'll be glad when we go hunting for the last time."

"Don't get fixed on a date." Said Laura. "Clara might not be that mobile for a while. Hopefully less kills than now, but we might need to keep her supplied with fresh blood....Just for a while."

"Fine.....I've got used to it, in a horrible kind of way." Said Tim. "The disappearances were on the local news radio channel....I heard them mentioned several times today."

Laura knew it was the time to stop and move right across London to hunt, or even head out towards rural England. Clara needed fresh blood though and it was easier to keep those they hunted alive, if they were caught and sedated, relatively close to the house.

'Mystery series of disappearances in North London.' The local free paper had run with on about page four. No TV news had picked it up, but it had to be only a matter of time. No deaths confirmed, not yet. At the moment it looked like a weird series of unrelated disappearance. The problem was that Laura had decided to dispose of many of the victims, in the same place. An old paint factory on the road out to Dartford, they'd used it before to get rid of bodies. There was a flooded area, which never seemed to dry out in the hottest summer. With several bodies from Simon's kills and a few of Laura's early kills.....There had to close to seventy bodies rotting away in the flooded part of the disused paintworks. If they were found, the police would go into overdrive. It was a potentially dangerous situation. Laura had even started putting false plates on her van.

"Not long now, Tim." Said Laura. "Clara needs our help.....She's been there for us, when we needed help."

"I know and I'm not saying we shouldn't keep helping her." Said Tim. "I just don't fancy a diet of porridge for the rest of my life. My mum always said I'd end up in jail."

"We'll just be careful.....Even more careful than we are now." Said Laura. "Come on.....Unload these boxes and I'll treat us to whatever takeaway you fancy.....Wine too, something fancy."

"Champagne maybe ? Celebrate another day of not being caught." Said Tim.

"Alright.....Champagne."

None of the boxes were empty. Niña had given them a list of non-perishables she needed. The kitchen in the Hornsey House seemed to be feeding every friend Clara had ever had, and many of Laura's contacts. Four boxes of kitchen supplies and one huge box with a sedated female inside it. A pretty woman of around thirty five, or so. Laura had deliberately chosen her, to punish Tim for trying to never hunt women. Daniel had been the same once. In the end everyone who hunted for blood became aware of the one great truth of the hunt.....All blood was good blood.

"She's quite light." Said Tim. "Barely eight pints in her, I reckon."

"Easier for us to get down the cellar steps." Said Laura.

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### ~ The Luna Blue – In Shoreditch E1 ~

Clara couldn't have driven if she'd wanted to. If she could squeeze her belly behind the steering wheel, her legs didn't feel coordinated enough to use the pedals. Discombobulated Ronnie called her condition, but there was a cure. Be patient and once Justin was born, her body would stop being discombobulated, or at least that was the hope. For now, Noah was driving her everywhere, which was nice. It gave her a chance to look out of the window and actually see the parts of London they were travelling through. While driving, she never seemed to see anything other than traffic lights, speeding cameras and painted lines all over the road.

"I quite like Shoreditch." Said Clara. "Lots of expensive flats, next door to shops selling crap.....I quite like that."

"Cyril calls it a melting pot." Said Noah. "I lived here for a while, until I moved up to Southgate." Clara had mental files on everyone she knew, it was what vampires did. She already knew Noah's walk and even his personal scent; she could have quickly found him in a large room full of people. She added that he'd once lived in Shoreditch to her mental rolodex.

"Everything alright at the Luna Blue?" Asked Clara. "I get gossip from Rory, but you see the place a couple of times a week. Any problems I need to know about?"

"I was told to tell you everything was fine." Said Noah. "Cyril doesn't want you bothered with the kid on the way. In truth, things really are fairly quiet. We've done so much damage to the street gangs trying to deal drugs on our patch.....They barely register on the radar these days. Can I talk openly?"

"When haven't you, Noah? Go on; say whatever is on your mind." Said Clara.

"Cyril will fuss, but see Rory today and then vanish for a while." Said Noah. "Have your kid and don't come back into the office until little Justin is on solid food."

"I can see Cyril moaning if I tried that." Said Clara. "Tempting though, I will keep the idea in mind."

"Cyril might moan, but that's all he'll do." Said Noah. "He's always saying you're the best head of security he's ever had."

"As I said.....I'll think over spending some quality at home time with my son."

When did human kids go onto solid food? Clara remembered a woman at work having a baby girl and mentioning trying her on soft fruit at about four months. That would be a nice long break, though her baby might have its own dietary preferences. If Simon was still around he'd probably be trying to get Justin onto Thai takeaways at four months.

"Well.....The car park is fairly full. Always a good sign." Said Clara.

There had been trouble with a rival crime family at one point and Clara had been attacked in the car park at the back of the Luna Blue. Those had actually been the golden days for Clara, when she'd proven her worth to Cyril H Carter. There was no H in his name; he'd just thought it looked good on business cards.

"I'll get you as close to the doors as I can." Said Noah.

Clara knew she could still bench press Noah's weight, many times over. She'd gone through being insulted by overprotective behaviour. Now she tended to enjoy being pampered a little. Only in very small doses though, she wasn't incapable of looking after herself.

"Thanks, Noah."

A hand on the door frame and Clara was on her feet. She let Noah open the back doors of the Luna Blue; having doors opened for her was one of her secret pleasures of pregnancy. She felt Justin moving about in her belly. That had been happening quite a bit lately. Noah strode before her, like some medieval guard, clearing the way. No using the stairs of course, or the public lift to the top

floor. As always, Clara used the freight elevator, with its almost obligatory empty crates, piled up at the back.

“Home sweet home.....I will miss this place.” Said Clara.

“Bring the sprog in.....Everyone will want to see him.” Said Noah.

Out of the freight elevator and along a slightly grubby looking corridor. Rooms on either side; staff accommodation for the waiters and bar staff, who tended to work long, antisocial hours. Finally through a door into where she had her desk, and there was Rory.

“Clara.....Have a good break, but not too long.” Said Rory. “The fucking place will fall apart if you’re away for too long.”

Rory was the kind of square jawed, hunky looking guy who looked like a hero in an old movie, or the villain in a TV show about mobsters. Clara had been tempted once and Rory had seemed keen. That was all well before she discovered she was carrying an impossible child in her toxic womb. She hugged Rory, a long and genuine hug.

“You have to come round and hold the baby, Rory.” Said Clara. “Someone I know who had a kid, says holding the baby is an obligatory tradition.”

“Held a few in my time.....I’ll definitely be over when invited.” Said Rory.

More hugs for Rory and just about everyone she knew in the office. Despite Cyril’s reputation for being like a missing Kray brother, but slightly less violent; there were a surprising number of nice people working at the Luna Blue. After a while, it was look at the monthly reporting, or get Noah to drive her back home. Clara wasn’t in the mood, but a lot of trouble had gone into getting the monthly numbers ready.

“I will need lots of coffee, Rory.” Said Clara. “Otherwise I’ll fall asleep.....But let’s go through the key numbers and variances to the latest forecast.”

“Really ? We could talk about what’s on TV for a while.” Said Rory. “Then Noah can drive you back to Hornsey.”

“Please don’t tempt me.” Said Clara. “Item 1.....I noticed the use of our paid cloakroom service is down. Might be warm weather, or some sort of scam by the staff. It needs looking into.”

“Yeah, I noticed that.....I’ll have a word with some of the staff.” Said Rory.

Clara drank the best part of a cup of coffee in one gulp. It was going to be a long and tiring day.

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### ~ Daniel arrives in Hornsey ~

Daniel had been going to bring Gwen with him. They’d almost been married so many times, that he often referred to her as his wife. Did half a dozen intended trips to the registry office count as one proper wedding ? Daniel doubted if it did, but it should do. They ran two small holdings together, hers and his. Two neighbouring small holdings near Pitmedden in the Parish of Udney, who’d decided to pool their resources and become man and wife. Pooling resources had worked, but they still only had an E minus on the whole wedding thing. Pitmedden in the Parish of Udney was up north in Scotland, Aberdeenshire to be precise. Gwen had wanted to come, she quite liked London. It was exciting, even if she did refer to it as ‘that there London,’ and moan about the polluted air.

“I bring apologies from Gwen, we’ve got several sows determined to have their piglets now, right now.” Said Daniel. “You can’t argue with our pigs.....There’s no reasoning with them.”

“At least you’re here.” Said Clara. “Not a moment too soon either....I sense that my son is eager to come out into the world. He’s been moving about quite a lot.”

A dark haired woman had taken his bags; he seemed to remember someone calling her Ronnie. Not one of his kind, not a creature who needed to feed on blood. Daniel rarely got a chance to practise

the skill, but he could still recognise another vampire, within a few seconds of meeting them. There was a strange girl of a vampire looking at him. Daniel was used to strange looks; he was probably more Neanderthal than human, with a lot of vampire spread over the top. Pronounced brow ridges and a kind of resting monster expression on his face most of the time. Daniel knew he scared people, which was often very useful. How old was he ? Daniel had once been called Isaac Laquedem, the wandering Jew. The oldest memory he could pull intact out of his head, was of joining his tribe on the long migration from the rift valley in Africa to Europe. He estimated that he'd been born over half a million years ago.

"I know you, though I think we only met once." Daniel said to the strange girl child. "Niña isn't it.....I'm not good with names, but yes.....I'm sure you're Niña."

"I am Niña Copley." Said Niña. "I now even have a passport to prove it. I remember you Daniel. Are you staying in London after the child is born ?"

"I hope he is, at least for a while." Said Clara. "Gwen may need you, but I think she'll understand."

"I think Gwen is capable of looking after the pigs on her own." Said Daniel. "I will be here in London, until you're happy for me to return home."

Groups of vampire, who got on well, were rare. Daniel could only remember one other successful vampire coterie, and that had only lasted for three or four decades. Clara and Simon were the cause of their own success of course, even if they couldn't see it. Simon especially, was the rock in the stream, which they all went around. He was their strength, their rock. How would Clara cope now that Simon had resumed his great quest for the lost ultimate secret ? It worried Daniel and like most vampires, he wasn't prone to pointless anxiety. The house was like a visiting fair, another vampire had entered Clara's lounge.

"Daniel.....You're late." Yelled Laura.

A long hug for Laura Selway, who Daniel hadn't always liked. She'd committed the sin of actually killing a Van Helsing, as Simon called the police. A detective had been actively stalking her and Laura had ended his life. Someone else had been blamed for the death and eventually.....Everyone had forgiven Laura. The girl had a certain something, an enthusiasm and energy that was rare in a vampire.

"You promised Gwen you'd head north in the spring." Said Daniel. "She was looking forward to seeing you, Laura."

"My fault, Daniel.....I've been keeping her busy." Said Clara.

A quick hand shake for Tim, who was still a plain vanilla human. Daniel had told Laura that their weird relationship was doomed, unless she made Tim one of them, a feeder on human blood. But there was Tim, still human and Daniel wondered how he'd been wrong about them. Laura really had to be in love with Tim, which was.....Rare and strange.

"I'll drag her to Pitmedden once Clara has less need of us." Said Tim.

"So, you're scared of flying too, Daniel." Said Niña. "Simon told me he never gets on a plane unless there's no other option. He used to love the age of the horse and cart."

"You never hear of a horse and cart crashing in a ball of flames." Said Daniel. "How do you know I hate flying ?"

"I must have mentioned it." Said Clara.

"I'm the official cook of the house." Said Niña. "You must be hungry and thirsty, Daniel. I can't see you saying no to coffee and a bacon sandwich."

"Me too.....We've been out in the van all night." Said Tim.

"There's enough for everyone." Said Niña.

"I'm dehydrated from the flight from Aberdeen, and I'm hungry." Said Daniel. "First though, I just have to take a quick look at the nursery."

"Of course, but I may need to lean on you." Said Clara. "I've been up and down those stairs, a good half a dozen times today."

Clara really did lean on him, or more accurately, she held onto his arm. It was a long climb up the stairs to the nursery. A ground floor room would have been ideal, but Daniel remembered Clara mentioning that the ground floor could be quite noisy. Especially if everyone was eating pizza in the early hours of the morning and watching an old movie. Daniel slowed down a little, as he felt Clara pull a little harder on his arm. Of course the strange girl vampire was right behind them.

"Clara chose the colours, but I did all the painting." Said Niña.

"And Patsy came back one day with some beautiful baby toys." Said Clara.

Clara opened the nursery door and went inside first. A large room, it had once been used as a guest bedroom, with its own small bathroom and walk in wardrobe. Part of a plan to refurbish much of the house, but like many good ideas, life got in the way. As far as Daniel remembered, just the kitchen and the guest room, had received a full makeover.

"Wow, Clara.....It's beautiful." Said Daniel. "A good place for Justin to begin a very long life."

"It needed to be nice.....Everyone will be spending time in here." Said Clara. "I couldn't have done it all without my helpers. Niña especially, now runs the entire house."

"I'm a good cook too." Added Niña.

It really was the kind of nursery you'd see in a sales brochure for expectant mums. Not a speck of dust anywhere and even the sterile looking medical equipment, had been placed neatly against the walls. Daniel thought it looked how a really expensive private medical facility would look.

"Well, Daniel.....Do you approve?" Asked Clara.

"Very much so, it's clean, functional and actually looks like a nursery." Said Daniel. "I see you bought the incubator. Not essential and I know it must have been expensive. Useful though, if there is an emergency during the birth."

Everyone hoped Clara was going to give birth to a healthy, normal looking child. There might be problems though and Daniel saw himself as the only realist in the group. Clara never had given in to his nagging and used the ultrasound scanner she'd bought. There it was against a wall, still wrapped in the bubble wrap it had travelled in. Talk of vampire intuition was crap; she was scared of what might be growing inside her. Being honest, he was scared too, but hiding from it wasn't going to help anyone. There was a chance, which he hoped never happened. Daniel might end up burying Clara's vampire child by moonlight, somewhere on Ducketts Common. Maybe burying Clara too, if she didn't survive giving birth to whatever she'd been carrying for close to nine months.

"Mabina will be the midwife, I promised her." Said Clara. "No interfering, Daniel, unless there's a problem. It's become a respect thing with Mabina, she is NHS trained after all."

"I understand.....I'll keep over by the incubator and lean on wall." Said Daniel. "You won't know I'm there, unless there's a serious complication."

"Thank you.....I really do appreciate you flying down from Aberdeen." Said Clara.

"I'm curious; How old are you, Daniel?" Asked Niña.

"Give me one of your bacon sandwiches and I might tell you.....No promises though."

"Ignore her; she's at a funny age." Said Clara.

"Simon used to say that, quite a lot." Muttered Niña.

Down the stairs and Clara might have been acting a little on the way up. She definitely didn't need his support on the way down. Someone had already filled the coffee machine with water and turned



it on. There was the wonderful smell of fresh coffee in the kitchen, as the machine made gurgling noises.

"Sorry if it's still an open wound." Said Daniel. "Has anyone heard from Simon?"

"No.....Niña seems to have been the last to see him." Said Clara.

"That was in Leptis Magna in about.....Had to around the thirteenth century, maybe the fourteenth. He was going to wait to see some kind of dark deity." Said Niña.

"And the minions of the Gods you used to communicate with.....Are they still around?" Asked Daniel.

Everyone was looking at him as though he was being annoying, as though he was the only kid in the class who didn't understand something important. Laura was actually glaring at him.

"We killed.....Actually it was me, I destroyed a God." Said Laura. "The minions don't like that kind of thing. They cut off all communications with us. For better or worse, we seem to be on our own."

"We'll be alright, I'm sure of it." Said Clara.

"I seem to remember you having a direct way of talking to some of the old Egyptian Gods, Laura. Have they all cut you off?" Asked Daniel.

"Yes, even Horus refuses to engage with me." Said Laura.

"We still have a few enchanted weapons, the weapons of the fallen." Said Tim.

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### **~ The night of the storm ~**

Patsy Smart had been unable to sleep properly; it was the big night after all. Daniel had been examining Clara for a couple of days, with a worried frown on his face. Patsy had been sleeping at home most nights; in the flat she'd rented just a few stops along the train line from Hornsey station. She'd have been in her own bed that night, if Clara hadn't started yelling.....

"Did you hear?" Asked Niña. "Daniel said that Clara is close to going into labour. They've sent for Mabina, as it looks like the boy will be born tonight."

Of course Justin would be born at night, probably during the darkest hour of the night. Two vampires had mated and the impossible had happened. A child had been produced by their sexual intercourse, a son no less. Daniel had hinted at some very dark prophecies about such a child. Patsy was expecting to find hell hounds howling in the front garden. She pulled the lounge curtains to one side. "It's raining." Said Patsy.

Ronnie entered the lounge, looking quite upset. Ronnie was normally unflappable, so something major was going on upstairs. She had blood on her; Ronnie's blouse had quite a bit of blood on the front.

"I've been sent to get Noah, she listens to Noah." Said Ronnie. "Clara bit him, she bit Daniel.....A deep bite, but it will quickly heal.....Or he thinks it will heal. Luckily he's like her and immune to the toxin. Go up there, Patsy and help Daniel while I'm gone."

"What am I supposed to do up there?" Asked Patsy.

"Help Daniel of course.....Jeezzz use your initiative."

Ronnie was gone, out of the front door and into the rain. Poor Niña looked terrified, she'd probably never seen vampire on vampire violence before. Patsy had and it could be incredibly brutal.

"Stay here, Niña." Said Patsy. "If Laura arrives, send her up to help me."

"I will.....Be careful."

Tempting to run up the stairs, but she'd arrive out of breath for whatever might be happening. She'd never be able to fight off a vampire in a rage, but she still wanted to arrive with the ability to defend herself. Halfway up and just going past Laura's room, she heard Clara scream.

“Daniel did once say we might need to chain her to the bed.” Patsy muttered.

The scream hadn’t sounded like Clara, it hadn’t sounded like anything vaguely human. Patsy knew it was a female screaming though, so it hadn’t been Daniel crying out. The scream came again, like the yell of wild thing in agony.

“Oh.....Please, Clara.....Don’t suddenly remember I slept with Simon.” Patsy muttered.

Into the nursery, to find a scene that was nothing like the cosy maternity room she’d been hoping for. Clara had her feet in stirrups and she was as good as naked. There was the remains of what looked like a pyjama jacket across her chest, but it had been ripped apart. Blood everywhere, lots of blood. Some of it had pooled under Clara, who let out another long animal sounding scream. Actually less of a scream now and more of a deafening primal howl. Daniel had used chains on Clara’s ankles and wrists, to hold her onto the stirrups and bed frame. So far at least, the chains were holding.

“Hold her.....Stop her thrashing about.” Said Daniel. “Careful around her fangs, she caught me with those.”

Patsy knew all about Clara’s fangs, they’d been used on her once. Vampire fangs had a neurotoxin, which could make their victims fairly passive. At a large dose, their human prey could be put to sleep for hours. Patsy had woken up in a garden shed in Battersea and Clara had stripped her naked. That....Had been a very awkward and embarrassing trip home. Deep down Patsy knew she’d deserved it as punishment for having sex with Simon. It could have been worse; Clara could have killed her.

“Are you alright, Daniel ?” Asked Patsy. “You’re covered in blood.”

“A lot of it is hers.....Keep her from thrashing about.” Said Daniel. “If she breaks the chains, we’ll never get her back on the bed.”

Clara was bleeding again; it was coming out of her in a steady flow. It was coming from where Justin should arrive, when her body had decided it had inflicted enough hours of labour on poor Clara. Patsy held Clara down and received a massive look of hatred.

“It’s me.....It’s Patsy, Clara. We’re trying to help you.”

A fang came for Patsy’s face, but never penetrated her skin. It brushed lightly over her cheek, as though her feral vampire friend, was teasing her.

“I told you.....Keep away from her fangs.” Yelled Daniel.

“How do I do that and hold her down ?” Asked Patsy. “She’s bleeding.....Is the baby still alive.”

“Yes, I can still sense its heartbeat.” Said Daniel. “A strong one this child.....He really wants to live.....Hold her down Patsy.”

It was like trying to hold down a wild beast, but Patsy did her best. Clara must have known it was someone trying to help. The vampire’s fangs brushed across her face a few times, but never pierced her skin. The rain became an electrical storm, of course it did. There had to be a storm when Clara and Simon’s son was born. Ferocious winds and lightning which blinded Patsy briefly with every flash. Definitely not a natural storm. Patsy truly believed that the Devil’s greatest trick, was convincing mankind that he didn’t exist. She also believed, as did Simon, that vampires were the Devil’s favourite children. No wonder the entire world outside, was being illuminated by blinding bolts of lightning. Niña appeared at the door to the nursery. There was fear in her eyes as she saw Clara thrashing about.

“The storm.....The street outside is already flooded.” Said Niña. “Ronnie might not be able to bring Noah here.”

“Downstairs, Niña.” Shouted Daniel. “You need to be there to let in those that need to get in. We also need you to keep out those that need keeping out. Are you armed ?”

“I have my strength and my fangs.” Niña had to yell, to be heard over the storm.

“Not enough.....There are a few good blades in Laura’s room.” Yelled Daniel.

“Good luck.” Shouted Niña.

“You too.” Yelled Patsy, in reply.

Clara was putting in a fresh effort to break the chains holding her to the bed. Her eyes had taken on an angry yellow colour. She hadn’t uttered a single coherent word since Patsy had been holding her down.

“Can’t you give her something ? She needs sedating.” Shouted Patsy.

A tree branch hit the window, cracking the glass. The roaring sound of the storm seemed to be getting louder.

“Dig a needle into her arm and Clara might rip us both apart.” Shouted Daniel. “Just keep her held down.”

For how long ? Patsy had heard of labour taking hours and something was definitely building up outside. The lightning now had the look of fire in the sky. Did the Devil perform miracles ? If he did, his favourite children really needed one about then. Clara tried to use her fangs on Daniel again, but he had to be getting used to it. He bobbed out of her way like a professional boxer, before grabbing her again. From outside the house, came the sound of something howling, actually many things howling.

“Fuck.....Now what ?” Asked Patsy.

“Ignore it.....We’re just here tonight to look after Clara and her child.” Said Daniel.

It seemed quieter, but the flashes of lightning were still filling the sky outside the window. As Patsy tried to give Clara some water in plastic cup, the vampire screamed.

“It was just water.....Clean water.” Said Patsy.

“She’s doing it.....Have a look, Patsy.” Said Daniel. “I think Clara is about to give birth.”

Laura had actually bet Daniel that Justin would be born at two in the morning. It was long before then, but as Patsy looked at the blood dripping out of Clara, she saw something that made her smile.

“It’s his head.....I can see the top of his head.” She shouted.

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