

The Presence

Chapter 20 – St Dunstan’s

“When Adie looked up at the toilet ceiling, she just saw the wide and growing crack. There should have been people looking down at them, the regulars at the Brown Bear. Instead there was nothing up there, but blackness. No stars, no agitated locals, not even the glimmer of a light. It was just darkness and the crack was growing.”

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Nick Rees spoke the last word, of the last line in Latin. Nothing happened, though he had the feeling something was on its way. Like looking out on a cold, grey winter morning and knowing torrential rain would arrive soon.

“Is that it ?” Shouted Drew. “Did something happen in there ?”

“Of course it did.....Can’t you feel it ?” Asked Marwa.

Nick was still in the cubicle with the door closed and nothing had changed. There was the feeling though, a feeling of dread, a terrifying existential angst. It was like the panic attacks he’d had for a while as a student, but far, far worse.

“Something is coming.....I can feel it.” Shouted Nick.

He could have opened the cubicle door, but then whatever might be about to arrive, could get at the others. Summoning circles were usually capable of holding minor demons, but Baphomet ! Nick realised that nothing would stop Baphomet doing what he wanted, to whoever he pleased. Nick opened the cubicle door.

“I don’t feel anything.” Said Adie.

“I do.....It feels like the world is about to end.” Said James. “Hold the crucifix I gave you....Touch it, kiss it.....Believe that it can help you.”

Nick remembered the talisman on the chain around his neck. He touched it and silently called on Aiwass, to keep them all safe.

“We should be safe.” Said Nick. “It will appear in the real world, not this eternally grubby toilet.”

“Something powerful is heading our way.....I feel it and I’m rarely wrong.” Said Marsha.

Nick knew they might be in for a bad night, when James had said going to St Dunstan’s had to be left for a day or two. Using cabs to get home, also implied that driving might be beyond their ability for a while. Nick had read a lot about post summoning health issues, but James had lots of personal experience. The air around Nick began to buzz, as though an electrical current was passing through it.

“It’s here.” Yelled James.

The charge in the air began to hurt and there was a glowing mist down by his legs. There was pain, though Nick’s main thought was about how soon the eternally grubby toilet, would cease to be eternal. It would be a disaster if everyone was inside it, when it ceased to exist.

“Drew.....Get out of here.” Nick Yelled.

Only his voice was completely muffled by the glowing mist. The pain in his legs became worse and gradually, he was finding it harder and harder to breathe. The door to the cubicle fell away, just as Nick lost consciousness.

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Adalind Givens, Adie to just about everyone she knew; didn't remember passing out. Marwa was awake and wandering around, while using her hands to feel the walls. It was the glow that made it hard to see, the bright and constant glow.

"Marwa.....Are you alright ?" Asked Adie.

"Where's Nick ?.....Crap, he's covered in blood." Yelled James.

Actually, now she'd heard James say something, she did remember what had happened, just before something had caused her unconsciousness. James had yelled something about Baphomet being there, with them.

"Oh, his legs.....That looks really bad." Said Drew.

There was so much blood around Nick; it seemed a miracle that he wasn't dead. Nick was wide awake and looking up. When Adie looked up at the toilet ceiling, she just saw the wide and growing crack. There should have been people looking down at them, the regulars at the Brown Bear. Instead there was nothing up there, but blackness. No stars, no agitated locals, not even the glimmer of a light. It was just darkness and the crack was growing.

"Go.....Drag Nick if you have to." Shouted James. "Get out of here, before everything disintegrates."

Drew tried to hold Nick up, but she couldn't quite manage it. Nick began to yell, the instant he tried to put any weight on his legs.

"I'll help you, Drew.....Get him between us." Said Adie. "We'll be able to drag him out of here; he's not that heavy."

"Marwa.....Where is Marwa ?" Asked James.

"I'm here.....Stop fussing. I'll be right behind you."

James would never admit it, but Adie had noticed he had an overprotective urge towards young people. He'd once mentioned hating having to give bad news to the parents of young adults under his care. It seemed passing on bad news to relatives, had been his duty on quite a few occasions.

"The door is open.....Where is Marwa ?" Asked Drew.

"Stop it.....Find someone else to fuss over.....I'm fine."

Nick gave a scream of pain as they dragged him out of the toilets. It was the last sound before everything changed. They were all stood on thick grass, the type of grass usually associated with land left to go wild. Adie gave a quick spin about in the dark, but luckily, James had a small flashlight in a pocket. Everyone was there.....Including a moody looking Marwa.

"Where the fuck are we ?" Asked Drew.

"My phone just came to life." Said James. "Good news; by the look of it, we're still on the borders of London. Anyone heard of East Lodge Village ?"

"Yeah, my phone is giving the same." Said Adie "East Lodge Village.....Just a tad north of civilisation. I suppose cabs will come out this far, for a price."

"Before we do anything else." Said Drew. "Nick needs hospital care, or he'll bleed to death."

"I'll dial three nines." Said James. "We can come up with a plausible story later."

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Drew had gone in the ambulance with Nick. James had made sure everyone was either in an Uber, or a cab from a local minicab company. Marsha had been given Nick's keys and told to keep everyone in the Islington flat.

"Seriously.....Go out for a little shopping, but no wandering off." James had said. "We all need to be together to go to St Dunstan's."

Some had heard mutterings and rumours, but St Dunstan's needed more explanation. Not that they'd get it from James, at least not for a while. Adie had muttered about moving her car to

somewhere less likely to be clamped, while Marwa still looked generally fed up. When James had what they were calling 'the place of landing' to himself; he called for an Uber and directed it to go to the Lister Hospital's Accident and Emergency department. The trip to Stevenage was going to be expensive, but he had to talk to Nick. It was important that Nick knew what he'd seen, in the Gents' of the Brown Bear. Besides, Drew might not have the means to get Nick and her back to the flat. Assuming of course, that Nick could be quickly patched up and released.

"Oh, I hate A & E departments." Muttered James.

There was something about the smell, as James walked into the Lister Hospital. The odour of disinfectant and something else, which was the standard perfume of hospitals all over the globe. He'd gone to the wrong desk, but they told him where Nick Rees had ended up. Nick was still being treated, but James found Drew; as she bashed a vending machine.

"It took my money, but never delivered." Said Drew. "I found out that bashing a certain spot.....I now have a dozen bags of junk food."

Coffee was from a machine you could swipe with a card. It looked dreadful and tasted even worse, but the junk food and coffee was part of the ritual in hospital waiting rooms. By the time they were sat at a table in the waiting room, James was beginning to feel a little less anxious.

"Did they tell you.....How is Nick?" Asked James. "I hate to sound heartless, but we need him with us at St Dunstan's....Even if we have to smuggle him out of here."

"I saw Nick's legs, James." Said Drew. "He looked as though a wild creature had torn into him with its claws. Some of the wounds were so deep.....They might call in the police to ask about them. I can't see them letting him go home for a while. It was the Presence, wasn't it?"

"It was and I don't mind you being there, but I need to tell Nick what I saw in the Brown Bear. It changed everything, Drew. It altered how I see these.....Demons. Even if I have to wheel Nick out in a wheelchair, he has to get to St Dunstan's."

It was several hours before Drew was told she could see Nick. It seemed he was awake and very keen to see her. James went with her, risking being told he'd have to go back to the waiting room. No one told him off, so he dragged over two chairs and sat with Drew. It was a small area, given privacy purely by a few large curtains that could be stretched around the patient. Not that Drew was sat for long, the urge to hug the man in her life, was obviously too strong. James looked at his feet, while the couple hugged and uttered romantic offers of undying love. Had Nick nearly died from blood loss? It definitely sounded like it.

"I too, am very pleased you're still with us." Said James.

"You're just worried I might die before Baphomet is banished to hell." Said Nick.

"Partly, yes.....You're right, Nick." Said James. "You're also an old friend and I've.....Got used to having you around. I have to ask....Can you walk, even a little?"

"Oh James, you can't expect him to....." Began Drew.

"No, you'll need to use a wheelchair to get me out of the Lister." Said Nick.

"The two of you.....You're as bad as one another." Said Drew.

James refreshed his own memory of what he'd seen in the Brown Bear. He'd always thought demons were a lot like people. Bad and evil people, but still stamped out of the same basic mould as men and women. If many assumed Djinn were part of creation, then why not the demons? Then he'd seen Baphomet.

"I saw him, or it.....I will never believe there's anything female in it." Said James. "I imagined it'd be like the other demons I've seen; and I've seen quite a few. Baphomet was exactly like the etchings I'd seen of him, the images drawn by occultists in the eighteen hundreds. The wings, the horns and a

muscular male body, with the head of a goat. Every classic feature of every drawing, which I'd have once put down to over active imaginations and folklore. But I saw Baphomet, as close as we are. It was all true and there is something about his eyes.....Trust me, there is nothing of mankind about that monster."

"You're right, James.....I have to leave hospital and help you." Said Nick.

"If you try to discharge yourself, they'll find an excuse to keep you here." Said Drew.

"We're on the ground floor and I noticed a fire door they leave open." Said James.

"Yeah.....Everyone moans about the place being too hot." Said Nick.

"Sounds like a good way for us to liberate you from the Lister." Said James.

"When will you come for me ?" Asked Nick.

When indeed ? Baphomet left to his own devices in London, would hurt people. The monster would actually delight in causing pain and death, James had seen it in the brute's eyes. On the other hand, Nick had to survive being taken out of the Lister and a trip to St Dunstan's. Banishing the demon had to be carried out at night. Such matters involving denizens of the darkness, had to be carried out at night.

"See what the doctors say, but it seems a good idea to let you rest." Said James. "So, not tonight, definitely not tonight. Anyway, I have to arrange things with the others. Let's say leave you here tonight, but kidnap you the night after."

"Were any of the others hurt ?" Asked Nick. "I was so worried about myself....I should have asked."

"Adie might have a clamped car, but otherwise.....Everyone is fine." Said Drew.

"I'll get a wheelchair and hire a minibus.....Assume I'll be back for you when I said." Said James.

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"The problem is, they now think of us as the Mulder and Scully of the Met." Said Jennings.

"Anything slightly weird and they send for us." Said Barlow. "You have to admit.....As weird things go, this must be a full ten for weirdness."

There had been an increase in churches in the London suburbs, though not the usual vicar who held Boy Scout meetings and hosted jumbles sales for the local women's institute. Happy Clappy was the rather insulting title given to such places of worship. Not always in typical church buildings and many loathed them. A great many though, considered the new and more relaxed Christianity, as the way forward. Obviously whoever had killed four of the congregation and wounded many more, wasn't a fan of Happy Clappy churches.

"I'm glad you're here.....I keep getting questions I can't answer." Said Talbot

Talbot was a detective from the Dartford Police, as the murders had been on their patch. Barlow had been given the usual lecture on not stepping on any toes, but his superiors also expected quick results. The church being used by a large number of local people, was an old community centre, which they'd tidied up and repurposed. It was, or rather had been, a very popular church, with Sunday meetings going on well into the evening. It might take a while to be popular again.

"Who discovered what had occurred ?" Asked Barlow.

"The cleaner when she opened up." Said Talbot. "She was in such a state.....Two of the uniformed guys took her to the health centre, just two streets away. Could barely talk, or so I was told."

"We'll need to see her, but we'll be gentle." Said Jennings.

"Right.....Show us the scene of crime." Said Barlow.

"I've been on the force a while.....Never seen anything like this." Said Talbot.

The seriousness of a crime, really could be gauged by the number of officers at the scene, and of course, the number of vehicles jamming up the street. There were a lot of uninformed coppers in

the reception area and outside; Barlow had noticed a staggering number of emergency vehicles. Barlow put on rubber gloves, as did Jennings. It was essential when entering a scene of crime that serious. Talbot went first, opening doors.

“The Latin phrase.....This will be on every news broadcast.” Said Talbot.

It shouldn't, but someone would accept a backhander for a little information and maybe a picture of the wall in question. At one time pictures had been easy to control, but now everyone had a phone with a camera. There it was on the wall, a few words in Latin, with two English words right in the middle. Two words Barlow recognised, as would Jennings.

“Crap.....I knew it.” Said Jennings. “Even my girlfriend said I was getting paranoid. I knew that creepy bastard was no good.”

“Easy.....It might be a coincidence.” Said Barlow.

In between the Latin was a name.....Nick Rees. Quite clear, no mistaking the words written in what was probably the blood of one of the victims.

“I looked it up.....Unless one of you has a background in dead languages ?” Asked Talbot.

“No.....What does it say ?” Asked Barlow.

“Someone hates this Nick Rees.” Said Talbot. “It says Nick Rees must die, or it might be Nick Rees will not survive. Either way, it seems that whoever Nick Rees is, someone really hates him.”

To the left of the words on the wall, the killer had piled body parts against the wall. Barlow had seen a few messy crime scenes, but he'd never seen so much blood in one place. One of the forensic team lifted his mask a little to say something.

“Can't be certain until we get the bodies back to look at. But.....It looks like someone has taken a few bites out of one or two of the victims. Definite signs of cannibalism.”

“Check on the whereabouts of Nick Rees.” Barlow told Jennings. “If he's in the country, I want him in custody, first thing in the morning.”

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Marwa had appointed herself as group shopper for everyone in the Islington flat. For some reason everyone was fussing around her, treating her like a kid. Alright, she was probably the youngest, but that didn't make her stupid. If she'd remained in the flat for much longer, there would have been rows, serious rows. Far better to get out and do something useful. Not that Marwa knew the area, or any part of London. Adie said the supermarket was to the right at the end of the road and about five, maybe six shops down. How hard could it be to find it ? She had Adie's debit card and her pin number, just in case she went over the swipe limit.....

“Hello, I saw you going out.....Stocking up the fridge I see.”

An elderly lady in front of her. Marwa had been warned about Mary and being careful about what she said in front of her. Nick had told them all a few anecdotes about Mary, during several long nights in Libya. He'd talked about her as though he was a slightly dotty aunt. Marwa had one or two of those in her own family.

“Yes.....Making myself useful.” Said Marwa.

There was frozen food in one of the bags. And being truthful, she'd bought too much and the bags were heavy. Marwa had decided to give the conversation just two minutes, before finding a way to politely disengage.

“I'm Mary.....Nick must have mentioned me.” Said Mary.

Oh, that was the week's biggest understatement.

“My name is Marwa.....Drew and Nick have mentioned a few of their neighbours.”

Two of Marwa's fingers were already beginning to go numb from the carrier bag handles digging into them.

"Are you one of the students he sometimes teaches?" Asked Mary.

"Yes.....Look, I hate to be rude." Said Marwa. "I bought frozen food and if I don't get it in the freezer.....I'm sure you understand."

If Mary did understand, she wasn't saying. There was a look on her face though, as though Marwa had just kicked her favourite puppy. Marwa had to put the bags down to unlock the outer door to that end of the block. All the time Mary was there, giving her the world's most severe stink eye. Once inside, Marwa gave a huge sigh, once the door was closed behind her. Marwa had a friend who could claim to only speak two words of English; yet sound genuine as she said it.

"Next time.....It's no hablo ingles." She muttered.

There was Mary, like a shadow on the frosted glass in the centre of the door. Had she heard her? Marwa picked up the bags of shopping and ran up the stairs. She was still feeling anxious, as she put away the heavy bags of shopping.

"Good, you remembered the goats' milk." Said Marsha. "The usual stuff brings me out in hives."

"I saw Mary outside." Said Marwa. "She only said a few words.....But she terrified me."

"What did you say to her?"

"I just said I was a student.....I'm sure that was all I said." Said Marwa.

"That sounds fine.....Pretend your English is bad, if she corners you."

"Oh, I will.....I definitely will." Said Marwa.

"Ahhhh, you got the really nice coffee." Said Marsha. "James arrived while you were out. He wants to go through the plan to deal with....It, the one I still don't like naming. I can now make us all decent coffee for the meeting."

"I'll help."

"And there are biscuits.....Chocolate digestives." Said Marsha. "Ignore me.....After looking after Eric for years; I get a bit over enthusiastic about things like biscuits."

"Who is Eric?" Asked Marwa.

"That deserves a long and detailed answer." Said Marsha. "I will tell you.....After James has finished his briefing."

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Adie often moaned about her busy body mother and rather eccentric sister. There were advantages to an over protective mum though and even Bree with her dozen cats, had a heart of gold. One phone call and Bree had given her the news that Silas was fine and would be well looked after until Adie returned home. No trying to give her a guilt trip, no recriminations. That was why Adie preferred to talk to Bree. Her mum had that kind of manner; always able to make a drama out of the smallest crisis. Adie thought a long conversation with her mum, might genuinely cause PTSD, post-traumatic stress disorder. So, Bree could drift a little and go on about her cats, but Adie loved her elder sister.....

"Alright.....Has everyone got coffee and something to nibble." Said James.

Lots of nodding heads and Marsha mentioned Marwa going out for their essential supplies; like decent coffee and chocolate biscuits. There was always a feeling with any talk given by James. Deep down and below the sometimes necessary anger and aggression; James was really an ideal vicar, or maybe the Boy Scout leader everyone liked.

"As I think you all heard.....Nick is going to be fine." Said James. "A lot of damage to the muscles on his lower legs, but it will all heal."

“That is good news.....I missed hearing that.” Said Marwa.

“He will be joining us at St Dunstan’s.” Said James. “I’m hiring a minibus style of transport for all of us, one with a wheelchair lift at the rear. I have been putting a lot of thought into getting Nick to where we need him. An electric wheelchair is being delivered later today.”

“Sounds expensive.....Do we all need to put into the pot ?” Asked Adie.

“No...I’m not poor and thanks to Nick’s agent, I am being paid for the work I did on the movie of Nick’s book. I’m not going to starve, so you can put your cash away.” Said James.

Adie liked James, she liked him a lot. His no nonsense attitude to life reminded her of Travis. It was obscenely soon after the death of her husband to be even thinking about it, but.....James seemed interested and living on her own held no appeal at all. If they survived matters at St Dunstan’s, she was going to encourage his interest in her.

“I get it, the St Dunstan’s thing.” Said Adie. “Travis always had a bee in his bonnet about certain places. He always thought St Dunstan’s had been built over a spiritual fault line, a place where the divine meets the demonic.”

“I could give an hour’s talk on Ley lines.” Said Marsha. “Alright.....I’ll refrain from the urge, but they are thought to be just that.....Spiritual fault lines. I bet St Dunstan’s is a focal point for hundreds of lines.”

“It is.....I looked it up.” Said James.

“The details James.....What do we do when we get there ?” Asked Marwa. “I don’t even know this place where we’re going. Can we get a map printed from online.”

“Nick has a colour printer, somewhere in the flat.” Said Marsha.

“Yes.....I will make sure everyone has a map.” Said James. “The pathways are good; I’ve visited St Dunstan’s on numerous occasions. We can wheel Nick to where he needs to be, without shoving him through flower beds.”

There was a brief chuckle and Marsha had quickly gone into the master bedroom, to bring back one of Nick’s maps of the streets around the Brown Bear.

“A bit old and it must cost a fortune in cartridges.” Said Marsha. “But yes.....Nick has a printer attached to the PC in their bedroom.”

“I could have done with one of Nick’s maps last night.” Said Marwa.

“But moving on to St Dunstan’s.” Said James. “There will be a gateway there, I’m now sure of it. Baphomet is the gatekeeper and he can pull power through the gateway. The longer he’s in our world, the more damage he can do. There can be no delay.....We get Nick to the gateway and with a little luck, he can close the doorway to.....Let’s call it hell. Nick is the only one who can close the gateway, because he created it.”

“All those deaths.....Nick was responsible for all of them.” Said Adie.

“Yeah.....I mean....Does he get handed a get out of jail free card at the end of this ?” Asked Marwa.

“I’m sure Nick will suffer any punishment God sees fit.” Said James. “We must all face our own personal judgement day.”

“Bullshit.....We need to stop Baphomet, but after that; fuck Nick Rees.” Said Marwa.

“I do understand, but we need to fight together.” Said James. “I can assure you that once Baphomet has been banished to hell, you’ll all feel differently. It will all seem less black and white, but made up by far more areas of grey.”

“I never did like areas of grey.” Said Marwa.

Adie had confidence in those around her and knew they'd give the task a hundred percent. Not for Nick and probably not for poor dead Travis. They were likely to be doing it for James Lerner, the unlikely hero of the hour.

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It hadn't been a good day for Drew Benton, even before the police had arrived. They'd wanted to drag Nick away to interview him about several deaths in Dartford. The doctors saying Nick couldn't be moved, hadn't even slightly deterred them.

"He's badly injured and unable to walk." Drew had yelled. "How is he supposed to have hurt anyone in the last twenty four hours ? This is just madness."

The doctors had threatened to call more senior doctors and Drew had yelled, but it seemed there had been multiple murders, with Nick's name attached to them in some way. One of the police officers had asked if Drew had seen the TV news recently. She hadn't, but once she'd seen details of the gory deaths at the Happy Clappy church, she did the only sensible thing she could think of. Drew had called the one woman army that was Betsy Nagle.....

"I set Carl Wood from Holland Klein & Martin on them." Said Betsy. "I almost feel sorry for whoever sent the uniformed officers to pick Nick up. No shame these days, that the trouble with the police, incompetent and no shame."

"I bet Barlow and Jennings are at it again." Said Drew. "They seem to be obsessed with charging Nick with something. Me too, I seem to be on their hate list."

Heading towards dusk and Betsy was sat on a chair, while Drew sat on the edge of Nick's hospital bed. Florence was there too and she was currently looking along the corridor at the two coppers who were still there, muttering at one of the nurses.

"They haven't gone away yet, not all of them." Said Florence.

Drew liked Florence, though she hadn't talked to her in months. She'd already mentioned to Florence and Betsy, that there might be a friendly abduction of Nick Rees from the Lister Hospital. After looking a little concerned, both of them had agreed to turn a blind eye, when, or if it happened.

"If one more young copper sets foot within twenty feet of Nick." Said Betsy. "I'll get Carl to hit them with a cease and desist order for harassment."

"Both of them are talking to the red headed nurse." Said Florence. "They won't get anything out of her.....She's quite a fan of Nick's books."

"No respect for privacy these days.....No shame this new lot." Muttered Betsy.

The skirmishes with the boys in blue, had been going on all day. The doctors had shot Nick full of pain killers, so the police couldn't interview him anyway. Not that they hadn't tried. Now they seemed intent on getting hearsay nonsense from the nursing staff. Drew was tired, very tired. She almost missed spotting James. He looked like any other visitor to the hospital, standing fairly still, with his hands on a large electric wheelchair. He'd have stood out anywhere else other than a hospital. But in the Lister, he blended perfectly into the scenery. James caught her eye and grinned at her.

"Betsy." Said Drew. "The abduction.....It's on and happening right now."

"Can I help ?" Asked Florence. "I was touched by this thing too.....I want to help."

"Don't be silly, Florence." Said Betsy. "You might get killed."

James was there, as if he'd always been at the end of the bed.

"Drew, I'll need your help to get him in the chair." Said James.

Nick moaned a little as they got him into the wheelchair. Despite acting a little dazed and confused when the police were around, he now looked wide awake and alert.

"I want to.....I need to help." Said Florence. "Please.....Take me with you."

"Betsy is right, it's too dangerous.....You might be killed." Said Drew.

"No, I can feel it on her.....Let her come, if she wants to." Said James.

"I can feel it too.....She's one of us." Said Nick

No one seemed to notice them, as they went through the ever open door and down a short ramp. The minibus was there, with the tail platform already lowered. That too, had to be an everyday event at the Lister. Nick and his chair were quickly raised up into the minibus.

"Hi everyone." Said Drew. "This is Florence Glynn.....She too has been hurt by the Presence. She'll be joining us tonight."

James had been right about Florence being touched by the demon and being able to see it. As everyone welcomed Florence, Drew could see the touch of darkness in Florence. It was there in them all, like a permanent shadow.

"Someone give Florence a map of St Dunstan's." Said James. "We can tell her about the mission while we're on the way there."

Mission, the first time Drew could remember that word being used. There were military implication that came with the word mission. And why not ? They couldn't kill Baphomet, but they could send the fucker back to hell.

"Thank you for getting me out of there." Said Nick.

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St Dunstan's church, not that far from the Tower of London. Hard to give a ruin a denomination, but open air Catholic services were still held there. One of its architects had been Christopher Wren, which was probably why the ruined place of worship had never been demolished. There had been some minor rebuilding after the Second World War, but really.....It was still how the Luftwaffe had left it, after a bombing raid in nineteen forty one. Everything was now grade one listed. So whatever was left after the bombs had dropped, would now stand there forever.....

"At least parking was easy." Said Drew. "No half hour trudge away from our minibus."

"The last place the police will think of looking." Said Marsha. "A ruined church in London, EC3."

"So Florence, what did the Presence do to you ?" Asked Marwa.

Always so direct, James could see why Marwa was always falling out with her mother. No getting between her and Florence though; they were likely to trade a few bumps, before forming a lifelong friendship. Women still had James shaking his head, quite a lot. He'd seen enough though, to keep out of the way and let things take their course.

"I was looking after Nick's post while they were in Libya." Said Florence. "I was also, sort of, looking after Suki....Drew's cat. Just petting her really, to stop her feeling lonely."

"Thank you for that." Said Drew.

"I heard something and shouted for help." Said Florence. "That was when things became really nasty. A nice man came to help me and that thing pulled him apart.....Killed him, right in front of me. I needed hospital care and still use sedatives.....I want to see this thing sent back to hell."

"I'm sorry.....I had no idea." Said Marwa.

"The Presence is Baphomet.....He can be defeated." Said Nick.

"Anyone got a key ?.....The gates are locked." Said Adie.

“They lock the gates at dusk.....That in itself, seems so very apt.” Said James. “One skill I learned long ago, on an expedition to the Giza Plateau.....They locked the door to our supplies cabinet. So, I learned how to unlock it. This won’t take long.”

A Swiss army knife was the key thing and James always had one in his pocket. The thing to remove stones from horses’ hooves got the job done, though only on very simple locks. James had a leather pouch full of pics, for the less simple locks.

“Good Lord, James.....Weren’t you actually ordained as a minister ?” Asked Marsha.

“Briefly.....That was a very long time ago.”

A simple lock, the horses hoof cleaner opened it with just one and a half turns.

“Last one inside closes the gate.” Said James. “We don’t want an eager young copper, coming in to investigate an open gate.”

“I get the feeling; this isn’t your first breaking and entering.” Said Florence.

“Please.....If you get to meet my daughter; don’t mention anything illegal I might have done, or have yet to do.” Said James.

The pathways were dry; it hadn’t rained in London for a few nights. There had been mud when James had last visited St Dunstan’s, a lot of mud. It was almost a pleasure to push Nick along the tarmac paths. Nick admitted to not having a clue about driving the electric chair. James had decided that Nick hurtling off into the bushes was an unnecessary risk. One of them was going to push him everywhere he needed to go.

“There.....Please tell me you can all see the glow ?” Asked Nick.

“What glow ?” Asked James.

“I see it.....A red glow rising up into the night sky.” Said Adie.

No one else could see the glow and Adie could see it far better than Nick. It was the obviously the connection point between worlds, where the demonic could enter the world of mankind. Perhaps it worked in the other direction too, but James had no wish to visit the places of darkness.

“You lead.....Take us to this glow, Adie.” Said James. “Take it slowly; I’ve got Nick to push over any rough ground.”

Adie seemed so excited, yet James and most of the others could see nothing. It was frustrating and when Marwa claimed to be able to see something, but it was very faint.....James didn’t really believe her. It was becoming aspirational, with everyone wanting to see the glow.

“No.....No going through flower beds, Adie.” Said James. “Wherever you walk....Imagine me having to get Nick there.”

“Yes, bounce him around and it hurts.” Added Drew.

“Sorry.....This path should take us there.” Said Adie.

“I see it clearer now.....Like a fire that’s been burning forever.” Said Nick.

Even the descriptions were becoming competitive. James was feeling slightly angry, that he could see nothing, other than a lot of broken walls and grass. After all, he was the only professional exorcist in the group. Suddenly Adie stopped, only a few feet away from a fairly complete section of church wall. There were windows in the wall. Now devoid of glass, but still looking as they must have looked when Wren was putting the finishing touches to the famous steeple.

“Keep behind me.” Shouted Adie. “Any further and I’m sure it will suck you in.”

“What can you see ?” Asked Drew.

“Not a fire.....It’s power, swirling around something below ground.” Said Adie. “Nick can get to it.....Don’t ask me how I know, I just do. Get Nick close enough and he can clear the way.”

“Does that make sense to you, Nick ?” Asked Marwa.

"I said.....I don't know how I know." Said Adie. "Stop all the pointless questions and get Nick here.....Next to me."

"Push James.....I believe her." Said Nick.

The grass was thick and the ground felt like pushing the wheelchair over a ploughed field. Drew helped James push, until Nick was close enough to touch Adie.

"To her left.....Please James, get me right next to Adie." Said Nick.

Not easy, the chair's wheels had sunk into the thick grass. James managed it though, to get Nick right alongside Adie.

"I feel it, Adie.....They've arrived." Said Nick.

Everyone had flashlights, though they weren't much use when searching for red glows that only Nick and Adie could see. Suddenly it was as if they'd been surrounded by the minions of the dark world. Still no clearer to see, but there were lots of them, a truly huge number. Not moving, just hanging there in the night air, as if watching for something. All of them giving off a very faint yellow glow.

"They're not attacking us." Said James.

"What are they?" Asked Florence.

"Minions of the demons and other such beings." Said James. "Their unpaid skivvies really.....Not very bright, though they can be dangerous."

"I need to move forward.....About a foot, but no more." Said Nick.

As James pushed the wheelchair, they must have all seen what James had seen. Baphomet was there, right up against the church wall. Everyone gasped, or gave their own sound to show shock. James had aimed a flashlight at demons before.....He aimed his own straight at the goat like head of Baphomet.

"I must....." Said Nick.

James was about to move the wheelchair back a little, but it was too late. Something had been triggered, probably by the presence of Nick Rees, the original invoker of Baphomet. The ground began to collapse, taking Nick and his chair with it. Drew wasn't far enough back to escape the formation of the sink hole, and James went into it too. Head over heels he went, occasionally getting a glimpse of Nick. Adie was there too, of course she was. Adie had still been slightly in front of Nick, she'd probably been the first to be dragged down by the collapsing ground.

"Adie!" Yelled James.

No use, there was so much noise.....James could barely hear his own voice. It felt like dropping forever, but it couldn't have been for that long. When James came to a halt, striking solid ground winded him, but it wasn't that hard a fall. Nick was there, now lying away from the wheelchair. Drew was already with Nick, trying to help him. As for Adie, she was lying in front of a stone altar of some kind. No, not an altar it looked more like a very old, very heavy.....Church font. James decided to see if Adie was alright. Not being heartless, Nick had Drew fussing round him.

"Adie.....Wake up." Said James. "We're at the bottom of a sink hole."

A flashlight caught James right in the face, dazzling him just a little.

"Are you guys alright?" Shouted Marwa. "Do you want me to call the police, or anything?"

"No.....Definitely no cops." Yelled James. "We'll be alright.....There's something here."

"It's the shrine." Said Nick. "I saw it in one of my dreams about the Presence. It's what we needed to find. The shrine can open up the gateway."

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