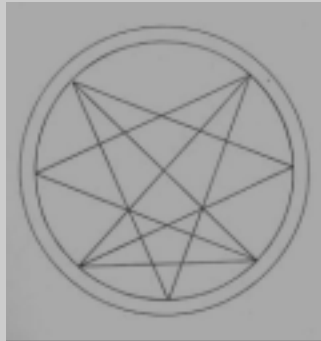


The Order of Nine Angles

Selected Sinister Stories



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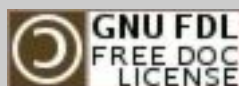
[In The Sky of Dreaming](#)

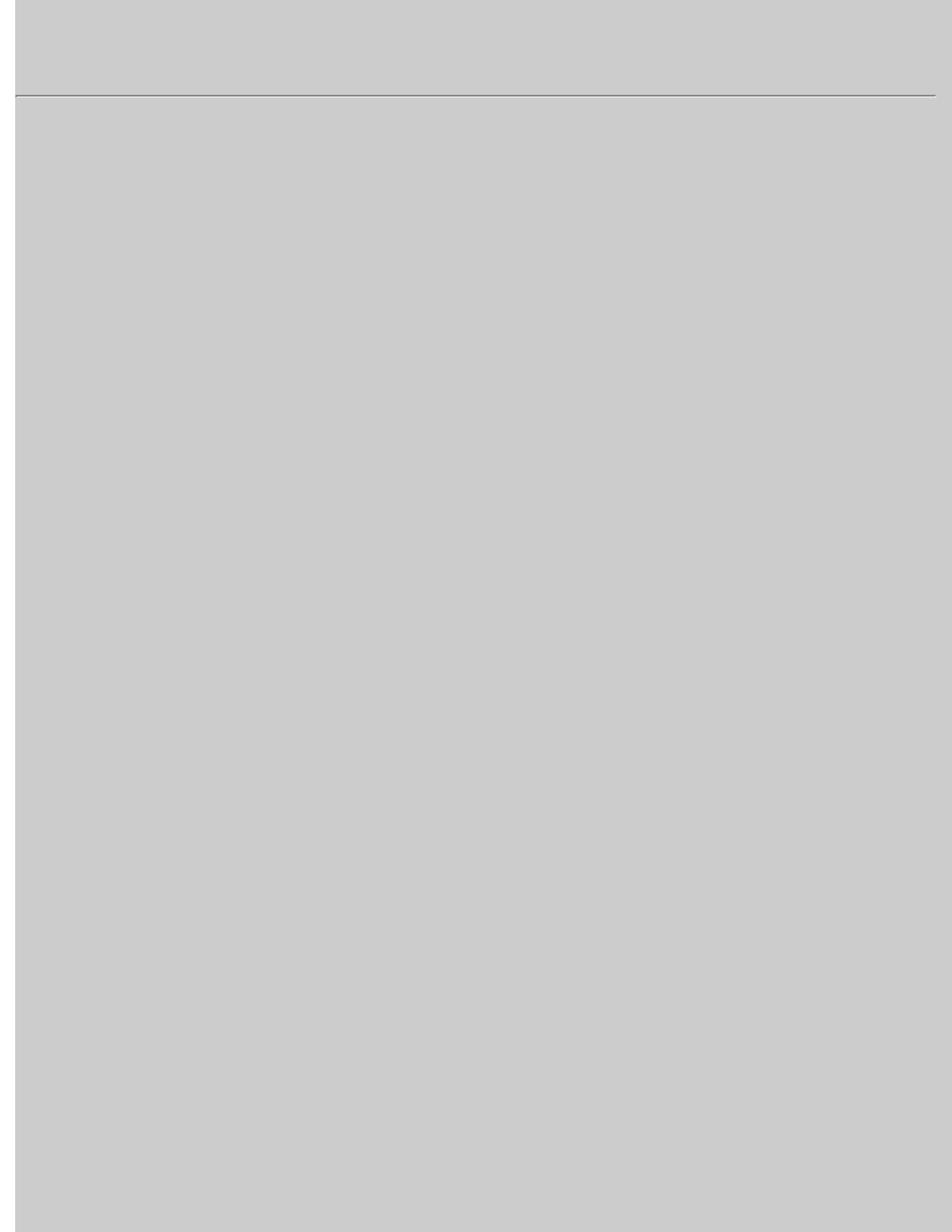
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Eulalia, Dark Daughter of Baphomet

" According to Dark Tradition, Baphomet is a sinister acausal entity, depicted as a beautiful, mature, women, naked from the waist up, who holds in Her hand the bloodied severed head of a young man.

She is the dark, violent, Goddess - the real Mistress of Earth - to whom human sacrifices were, and are, made... She - as one of The Dark Entities, as Vamperess of The Dark Gods - is also a shapeshifter who can presence in the causal dimensions and assume human form, and thus live among us here on Earth, and it was, traditionally, to Baphomet that Initiates and Adepts of our Dark Tradition dedicated their chosen, selected, victims when a human culling was undertaken and when wars and conflict were brought forth or seeded through sinister sorcery.

Associated with Baphomet are other dark, female acausal entities who have existed, hidden, on Earth for millennia, and who maintain their causal, ageless, and secret, existence by feeding off the acausal life-force of their male human victims whom they entrap, and test, using sexual enchantment. These other entities are *The Dark Daughters of Baphomet*, and they - like their Mistress, The Mother of Blood, Baphomet - are thus, in a quite literal sense, beautiful, cultured, alluring but predatory vampires...

According to this aural Dark Tradition, there are several types - several different species - of sinister acausal entities, with Baphomet, and Her shapeshifting Daughters, being of one type, and having a certain nature, a particular character, a certain consciousness, when presented in the causal and so when in-dwelling in human form. One other, more primal, more primitive, acausal species is known to us, and when beings of this particular species are presented on Earth, in human form or otherwise, they act, behave, live, quite differently from Baphomet and Her kin, for these more primal savage beings are as demons who causally live only to unthinkingly consume human lives so that, once

satiated, they may be returned to the darkness of their acausal home..."

Part O: Cantaoras

There was a long moment of silence as the coven of nine women all gathered on the slight slope of that almost South facing hill among the mamelons of South Shropshire not far from where an ancient trackway marked the ancient border with the land of Wales.

Eulalia was there - resplendent in her crimson cloak, as befitted a Mistress of Earth. And Venora - she of the red-hair and the fullsome body which her thin long verdant-coloured covering did little to hide and which thin coverlet seemed to scintillate in the light of the not-quite-full Moon as she, as Priestess, moved counter-sunwise to greet each sorceress with a kiss: moist lips touching moist lips. Then, they were ready, gathered together in an almost perfect ellipse as Eulalia began her vibrated invocation to their Dark Goddess, their Mistress and Mother, Baphomet: *Nythra kthunae Baphomet!*

She held in her outstretched hand a crystal, shaped as a tetrahedron, while her lover, Venora, gestured to the shadows for the two male Guardians to step forth.

Then, seven of the women, handsome of face and lithe of body, with their long dark hair neatly braided and tied, began to chant their haunting sinister chant, a chant so old it was as if the intervening one and half thousand years had never been; as if the *Chant Mozarabe* was still to be heard in sequestered choirs by nuns devoted to the new Nazarene faith - except there was on that South Shropshire hill no Latin words of worship to a some God; no Latin words of praise for some Saviour. Instead: only words of a lisping language long forgotten except by an hereditary few; strange words replete with desire by those few who, remembering, desired a return of those dark, sinister, acausal-entities who thousands of years ago had been presenced on Earth, bringing menace, blasphemy, joy, nightmares, madness, violence, and the much needed Chaos of human evolutionary change.

So they chanted while the tall, strong, Guardians brought forth the needed seed and gift, pinning the naked terrified young man down within the ellipse of now slowly circling cantaoras. There were no audible words to be said, declaimed, or shouted - for none were needed as Eulalia bent down to touch his forehead with the crystal, and she watched, smiling, as his life was quickly;y drained away to leave a corpse, only a corpse, paler and gaunter than it would have been even if all the blood and plasma within had been somehow drained away. Her crystal seemed to iridesce then, as if in rhythm to the chant, and she held it up, arms outstretched to where the Moon, in that very moment, occulted a star named on Earth, Dabih. She felt it, Them, then, within her - as her

obedient Guardians effortlessly, efficiently, took the corpse away. Felt the centuries of longing that her own mother must have felt, centuries and centuries ago; felt the longing for The Dark Gods to be birthed again into joy-giving, joy-receiving, warm bloodfull human bodies.

And then She was there, dwelling among them, accepting the willing if only very temporary offering of Vanora's life and body. There: among the mortals and the half-mortal who had kept the faith; waiting, waiting, coven after coven, through the long centuries for the stars to be aligned as it was said they should be aligned; for the crystal to be fashioned as it was said it should be fashioned; for the chant to be as the chant should be, brought into-being by skilled, chosen, cantaoras. Thus was She, their Dark Goddess, an acausal-being, presenced in the causal, ready to be again a birthing-mother: bringer-into-being of a whole new race. For the time of human Chaos, darkness, death, culling, change, had arrived, again.

Thus did they - the women - greet her with a kiss, lips to moist lips, as thus did the Guardians step forth again from the shadows to kneel in obedience before her.

^^^

Eulalia had planned well. A selection of male victims were already waiting when she and Venora returned to their house, at the end of a track, off a narrow lane between hills in that rural borderland. Although, of course, the men - ranging in age from early to late twenties - did not consider themselves victims, enticed as they had been by the wiles, the sorcery, the sexuality, of the ladies of Eulalia's coven.

So the three young men had waited, in one of the the plush, luxurious, sitting-rooms of that house. Waited, chatting amiably among themselves, as two elderly gentleman, neatly groomed and neatly dressed in somewhat unfashionable clothes, served them food and drink. Waited for the trysts they had been promised among the many bedrooms of that place, assuming as they did in their egoism and desire, many things. But it was not Venora herself nor even one of the young dark-haired lithe and nubile women that awaited them when they were led, by Venora, along a corridor and up some winding stairs to a darkened room: a darkness that seemed oppressive and heavy, if scented by some quixotic perfume.

Thus did they enter, replete with their desire, and thus did a warm strong hand grasp theirs to lead them down upon some soft and scented bed where they, still unseeing, had their clothes removed with ripping force to find themselves pinioned by strong arms and legs while a feminine softness moved over to touch to press down upon them to kiss them, building thus their male desire. But their ecstasy of joy, brought by a sexual joining, was soon over with their seed of life taken from them when a sudden drowsyness seemed to overcome them, then, as they lay, in exhaustion.

Other hands, not soft, grasped them then as they, helpless, were lifted to be taken along a skein of

unlit passages to small windowless rooms below. And it was there, in those rooms - one for each - that they almost stupefied by some-thing, lay, in warmth on a not uncomfortable bed. Lay, waiting, while causal time passed - as causal time passes - in the world above them. Perhaps one of them might be needed, again - and if he was, he would be brought again to that darkened room scented with quixotic perfume. But not one of them would ever see the brightness of day, again.

^^^

So the days passed, in that house, as they passed. Occasionally, a new young man would egress from the causal world outside into its ever-growing strangeness: enticed there, from some near or far city or some town, by unspoken promises, perhaps a kiss, but always by a luscious lady, young or verging on middle-age: it made no difference to the men, for their very beings, enchanted, craved the fulfilment of that strong sexual desire which burgeoned forth from within them to seize them with that first sensual touch or kiss from such a sensuous lady in some Inn, or Club, or Bar. Once, a young man, arrogant, self-assured - his powerful sleek new sporty car outside - had taken it upon himself to press a lady for another kiss when she had sat beside him in some Bar. Gently then - or so it seemed - she held his hand to twist it powerfully back while he tried to not let pain show on his face. She left then, unsurprised when he followed, and they were outside in the street-lit darkness among the rows of cars when he lunged toward her. She was too swift - almost unhumanly swift - and he was left to try and stop himself falling to the ground before steadying himself and trying ungallantly to punch her in the face. She seized him then, to knock him unconscious with one swift blow, and it was in his own car that she drove him back toward the sanctuary of her home.

Her gift was pleasing, and he awoke to stark blinding darkness when something soft, scented, touched him, but it was not long before his life was gone to leave a corpse, only a corpse, paler and gaunter than it would have been even if all the blood and plasma within had been somehow sucked away.

Thus did the months pass until new life came forth there, in that nexion, bringing much joy, and much that was strange, while the great boiler fed warmth into that house as Autumn turned to Winter, often fructified as that boiler was by pale empty hulks, their main purpose having been fulfilled. And thus did that new life grow - growing as children grow, however strange the child - until the time for their departure came when they, the seeded, would be sent forth to seed: male, female, or somewhere in-between, it would make no difference; the same enchantment; the same violence bred; the same darkness, death and Chaos sown.

Once, in the months of their growing, three men came, in two cars, to call upon that house. There were rumours, it seemed, that disturbed them and their Detective-kind. They were served Afternoon Tea, in the heated Conservatory, while Eulalia, as befitted a Mistress of Earth, politely

entertained them, as, in nearby room, four beautiful women in long black flowing dresses played a late Haydn String Quartet. So Eulalia smiled, as the men sat sipping their milkless First-flush Darjeeling tea, and they - enchanted - soon forgot their questions, their disturbance of both thought and mood. Thus did they take their leave, satisfied within themselves there was nothing amiss, and pleased to be invited to return, again. And thus did they, each alone, return, weeks later, to be treated as honoured guests: offered food, and drink, and a willing women to warm and share their bed. And thus did they leave, happy, replete, willing, cheerful, servants: useful, influential contacts, and sources of valuable information.

So the months passed, bringing the warmth and brightness of Spring to the land outside. And thus was there a new house, elsewhere, and far, with new burgeoning life within, and other woman, and guardians, to keep, nurture and protect it. And thus were there in that place new contacts invited, enticed. New fuel, of little value as fuel, to add to proper fuel for new boilers that kept such houses warm, in Winter, and provided the warmth of warm water for luscious women to bathe, and preen and wash. Thus were there new nexions, gradually opening, spreading, preening, sowing, feeding, growing.

^^^

There was a long moment of silence as Eulalia sat alone on the slight slope of that almost South facing hill among the mamelons of South Shropshire not far from where an ancient trackway marked the ancient border with the land of Wales. She felt both relieved and tired. Relieved that she had achieved what was necessary, but tired from the many decades of her wait. She had new sisters, and brothers, now - and her hopeless search, of years, to find others of her kind seemed just a distant no longer sadful memory. Thus did she smile, before rising to her feet to walk along the old footpath down to her house where her new guests would be waiting to be entertained.

Part One: Herewith, The Darkness

There was much that Eulalia wanted to do, with the Dark Entities she had brought forth to Earth, but - for the moment - she would settle for just enough mayhem, destruction, strife, killings and chaos to make the government, and the people - of the land where she and her sinister kind now

dwelt - take notice and perchance alter their ways.

Whatever, it would be fun, enjoyable, a Satanic paean - a necessary beginning, well-planned and well-schemed for, for almost ten causal Earth-years - and, as she stood up from sitting in the darkness on the somewhat damp Autumnal grass on the slight slope of the almost South facing hill among the mamelons of South Shropshire not far from where an ancient trackway marked the ancient border with the land of Wales, she in joy began chanting her sinister chant: *Agios o Baphomet!*

Venora - she of the red-hair and the fullsome body who had been a temporary host for one such Entity - was waiting for her in the large, ornate, Conservatory of their gravid reclusive house at the end of a track, off a narrow lane between hills in that isolated rural borderland, and they embraced and kissed affectionately, one scented lover to another, before entering the subtly-lit Drawing Room where the women of their sinister coven waited, as, upstairs, in secluded dark rooms, the shapeshifters - some but newly fledged - fed on what were once healthy men young in years.

There was no need for speeches, or exhortations, or ceremony, or even for spoken words, since all of that coven - reared in that house or covertly recruited elsewhere - knew almost all that Eulalia knew, and, like her, had pledged their very lives to presencing the sinister on Earth. So she went to each of them, after they had stood in greeting, to kiss them on their lips and to watch each one of them leave to walk solemnly, gravely, up the wide and winding stairs to their appointed rooms where they, in the shielding darkness there, each became temporary hosts.

Thus did they - then not quite human, inside - leave their dwelling and their home in a small convoy of vehicles driven by men of middling years, specially chosen, well-tested. For they, reared in a nearby house or recruited covertly elsewhere, knew almost all that the women knew, and had, for one yearly alchemical season, just ended, been lovers of the particular young woman they had pledged to the death to defend.

The twilight of a clear October Dawn found all the vehicles dispersed, each to their chosen destination, and Venora sat in the comfortable back seat of that luxurious car feeling the darkness within her. It - she, they - was, were, yearning for the freedom that would come only with a complete metamorphosis, a complete in-dwelling, when the human-life, with all its memories and all its weakness, would be subsumed to shrivel to die as all causal life was so fated to die; subsumed: to leave only the outer and changeable physical shell, a dwelling then for another almost alien life. Or, if it - she, they - so desired, they might keep part of the human life alive, for a while, to use as a hypnotized vassal, perhaps for some specific deed or deeds.

But for now it - she, they - was, were as they were, leaving Venora to live alone as the Venora

they in their own strange way cared for, protected, perhaps even loved, for she-the-human was then as a surrogate mother to them, carrying them, if only for a while, until they could, would, be fully-birthing into some expendable human being.

Venora's own destination was the metropolis of London, and her male driver - tall, strong, muscular - finding, after a search, a suitable place, parked the vehicle to walk with her along the teeming traffic and human filled streets under a warmless Sun the short distance to their target. It was a middling restaurant, by the standards she was accustomed to, and while they waited, they slowly consumed the overpriced and slowly served food. He - their offer - appeared as expected, and as her research indicated he should: a middling if ambitious politician of the governing Party, given to arrogance and subsumed with pride, and dressed, in conformity to the unwritten rules, in a greyish undistinguished if well-fitting and rather expensive suit. And all she had to do was to get near enough to touch him, naked flesh to naked flesh, for the five or so seconds required.

She played her part well, rising, as if to stumble accidentally into him, pressing the palm of her hand to the back of his neck as if to steady herself to then apologize and endearingly smile. He turned to look at her and she knew then her deed was done, even if she had not felt the rush as the Entity of timeless dark chaos exited from her to seed itself - herself - within that new host. For his eyes momentarily stared, as a madman at a full-moon, before he smiled to rise to be to most of the world around the same man in the same suit in the same place at that same causal time. So she made her excuses to leave to let the Dark Entity begin its work, and it was less than two hours later that this chosen offer returned to that exclusive club known as the Houses of Parliament. There, he chanced upon - although it was not causal chance, but some-thing else - a senior member of his Party whom he throttled to death with his hands while his once-indwelling Entity watched, playfully smiling, from her new human home, found moments earlier by his - her - guided touch. Thus was he, the killer, subdued after the deed to be hustled away only to die moments later as his heart suddenly stopped to leave only a corpse, paler and gaunter than it would have been even if all the blood and plasma within had been somehow sucked away.

There would be more mysteries, that day: some, like the state of the politician's body, kept hidden by politicians from "the public"; others, unable to be so kept secret. And two, in particular, bloody, deadly, terrifying, and public, as Eulalia and her coven had intended. A deadly, unexpected attack by a woman berserk, who stabbed five people to death on a street in some rainy dreary city before a Policeman felled and disarmed her: but he the human could only watch in silent wordless helpless horror as the woman he restrained died to leave him holding only a corpse, only a corpse, paler and gaunter than it would have been even if all the blood and plasma within had been somehow sucked away. Then there was a bomb, hidden in a van, which exploded without warning on a busy motorway flyover into London, leaving some injured, and much destruction in its wake, as there were over a dozen murders by people possessed who, haunting cities and towns, escaped to then live a twilight lingering existence as the Entities of another acausal species within them did as their primal nature intended, shapeshifting their form when

they found some healthy young human to feed on.

But it was only prelude, a mere prelude, Eulalia knew, to the real beginning she in her mischief had planned.

^^^

He had been easy to entrap, and Eulalia watched as the young man - naked in the bed of one of her young ladies in one of those many large subtly-lit rooms of the high-ceilings - slept the sleep that often arises from sexual satiation. He, she had been informed, had been a good lover - surprisingly good, given his slim frame and his rather boyish looks - and she watched him for some moments until, as if sensing her watching, he awoke to fumble on the small antique table by his side of the bed for his spectacles.

"Hello!" he said, as if half-surprised to find her there and half-surprised to find the previous afternoon, evening and night had not been some dream.

"Are you ready to get to work, then?" she asked, bewitchingly smiling.

"What?"

"What we discussed, last evening and night, in detail, before a certain young lady invited you here to her room."

"Oh that," Ffion replied, remembering.

"Yes. That. But only after breakfast, naturally."

"Naturally."

"If you'll get dressed - or not," she said, somewhat mischievously, "I shall escort you to the Breakfast Room where Edrid will take your order."

"Order?"

"For your rather late breakfast. He is one of the people who helps out, around the house."

"A servant?" It was a natural deduction, he thought, given the room, the house, the extensive grounds.

"Not really, but that description will serve, for now."

Dressed in his University-ensemble of worse-for-wear jeans, black cotton T-shirt with slogan "404 Error: Slogan Not Found", and scruffy white "trainers", he was escorted by Eulalia down from the fourth floor room to where Edrid - neatly groomed and neatly dressed in somewhat old-fashioned clothes - waited, all alone in the mid-morning light of the many-windowed Breakfast Room where one place had been set on the long Oak dining table.

She smiled at him before saying: "I'll collect you when you're ready and show you the equipment we have prepared for you."

Thus did she leave her half-nervous, half-pleased, fledgling to attend to her many other tasks of that morning in that gravid and reclusive house of the extensive grounds. And when he was ready, she led him through a skein of corridors to a room suitably furnished for his needs.

"Wow!" was all he could say as he saw the row upon row of computer servers, and several large bright screens.

"There," - and Eulalia pointed to where a sleek comfortable chair sat before a wide desk containing a keyboard and the largest screen - "is the control centre. Everything is fully functional, and connected. But if there is anything we might just might have forgotten, which you need, just ask Edrid. Lunch, by the way, is at one o'clock, and Dinner will be at eight, after which you shall, of course, be escorted to the bedroom of a certain young lady, for another night of salacious entertainment."

"Yeah."

"You know what to do."

"You bet!"

"No doubts?"

"No. Not at all." And he meant it, and she knew he did, for she had chosen well, having had Ffion chosen months ago and under surveillance by her Guardians since then.

"Just depress that violet button on your desk and Edrid will attend you."

"Later!"

She smiled then, as Ffion set immediately to work at his task, given by her. He would, she felt, be a valuable and needed ally, living with them, his desires fulfilled. And if, for some reason, he failed and even thought of betraying them, she would surely know, and there were always the small now empty windowless rooms in the basements below where several young men had

lingered, less than half-alive, until one of them was needed, by some un-dwelling Dark Entity, as food.

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Ffion was pleased with his work, when Eulalia returned to him as the Sun began its descent and Twilight waited to visit her house with its shapeful shades of almost darkness.

"So," she said, playfully, understanding more than she revealed to him, "all I do is sit here, in front of the screen, and speak when connected?"

"Yep, that's it. They'll be able to see and hear you. All I have to do to connect is type in a few commands on the x-term and press Return."

"Splendid. Then do so."

"What? Now?"

"Indeed."

"OK." And he did as commanded by his sinister Mistress, who sat herself before the screen containing microphone and camera as Ffion's skill untraceably hacked them into a conference room of a London television newsroom where journalists of various ages and types were assembled, together with their Editor, to decide on what - and how - to report of the strange events of that day, and where, suddenly, several dormant computers began transmitting an image of a smiling Eulalia.

"Gentleman - and Ladies, of course - although I am unsure as to whether any of you merit such any such honorific. Your attention please. Please observe the photograph one of our operatives took of the corpse in your Houses of Parliament earlier today, details of which corpse your naughty politicians kept from you and your public.

"We do apologize for the rather poor quality of the image, and promise to do better, next time.

"So, now I do have your full attention, the code-word is *Herewith, The Dark*, which code-word you will receive when we decide to give some further demonstrations, as we did with that little explosion on one of your motorways. On receipt of said codeword, your authorities have two minutes to clear the designated area. A recording of this message will now be repeated three times, just in case you desire to record it! That is all, for the moment." And she smiled at them again, mischievously.

A day later, she gave another demonstration. The building had only just been cleared when an explosive device reduced it to a mass of twisted metal, broken masonry and shattered glass, in the centre of London's financial district. One more day, and one more building gutted by another device. And so, on that and other days, the dark mayhem continued, as people died, suddenly, unexpectedly, in cities and towns, or disappeared into the night, taken as food or as new dwellings for the dozens upon dozens of primal predators Eulalia and her sinister coven of sisters had released, and which predators now lurked, waiting for their chance to be as their nature, their nurture, commanded, controllable as they were only by Baphomet or one of Her many Daughters, some now having such fun with those frail humans currently infesting planet-Earth.

Another day, and the Media - as Eulalia had assumed - was replete with the expected and standard stories about "terror" and "terrorists". But soon, she knew, they - or at least the controlling powers behind and in the government - would know or correctly deduce the truth, and then she of the sinister strategy would presence much more Darkness, for the progeny of her breeding programme were eager. and ready.

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"Just before he died, somewhat unexpectedly, of a heart attack, Malin sent me copies of his case files, and, while I did not entirely discount their contents, I did not take them seriously either, particularly since the evidence that Malin alluded to seems to have been entirely destroyed in a fire at the laboratory where his colleagues conducted their investigations into these alleged aliens."

The speaker was a senior male Civil Servant, of the Cabinet Office's Intelligence and Security unit, and in the airless, windowless inner room of a government department in Whitehall, he sat at the head of small functional table, inwardly wishing someone else had been given this task. Of the two men and one women seated with him, there in that room, no one - at least outwardly - betrayed any surprise on hearing the word "alien", for they had all opened, and read, at his prior insistence, the few sheets of paper before them, headed *Joint Intelligence Committee*, and *Top Secret*, minutes of a meeting where the work of Malin's now dis-banded team had been briefly discussed.

"Now," he continued, "if you peruse the other document, you will see what little evidence we have relating to recent incidents. We have been given full authority and whatever resources we might require to investigate and report further on this matter, to which The Prime Minister, The Cabinet, and Joint Intelligence Committee, have assigned the highest priority."

For some minutes, a silence among those chosen and carefully selected few, as photographs of corpses - paler and gaunter than they would have been even if all the blood and plasma within had been somehow drained away - were studied, and Intelligence documents read.

"Now," the senior Civil Servant continued, pressing a button on the remote controller in his hand, "this a recording of a transmission received three days ago from the individual who, as our assessment indicates, is either behind some or many of the incidents, or somehow connected to them."

So they watched a smiling Eulalia, with the senior Civil Servant freezing the last frame so that her smiling face looked slightly down upon them from its brightness nearby.

"Any comments?" he asked.

"I assume," said the youngest of the men, casually dressed in contrast to the other somewhat older man, "you have no idea who she is?"

"Correct. We have not been able to trace the source of that transmission either, as a chain of proxy servers and zombie computers was used, some of which - after the transmission had been forwarded - had their hard drives automatically erased."

"Clever," the young man said, impressed - especially by Eulalia's beauty.

"Operatives. Houses of Parliament," the women - young, pretty of face and modestly dressed - said, "Are we then to presume security there, and similar places, has been compromised?"

"Certainly," the senior Civil Servant replied, "we are considering that possibility as a matter of priority."

"But," interjected the hitherto silent Patterson, who, as a serving soldier of fifteen years service, recently seconded to the Ministry of Defence, had been given operational control over the unit, and whose objections to the two civilians, specialists in their own areas, being at this briefing, had been over-ruled, "until we know exactly what it is we are dealing with, such a breach cannot really be sealed, surely."

"Correct," and the senior Civil Servant sighed. "Which is your remit. A small specialist unit has been assembled, to assist you and we have prepared a cover-story for them, although it is quite possible you may need to update them on a strictly need to know basis."

"And we are to consider all possibilities," the younger man asked, "however strange, weird or unlikely?"

"Yes. You will report directly to me at least twice-daily or immediately if you have anything significant to report."

"I would suggest," the woman said, "we begin with an examination of whatever corpses have so far been found."

The senior Civil Servant shrugged his shoulders. "Those conducting the detailed autopsies - as indicated in one of the documents you have - concluded they cannot explain how all the blood and all other bodily fluids have been removed and how the internal organs and indeed the flesh itself has degraded in the manner it has in the short time it occurred. No incisions; no puncture marks."

"Even so," she persisted, "it would be worth checking, again."

"Of course."

"Any pattern to the killings?" she asked.

"Of those related to the corpses we have so far found, none that can be determined. Analysis by place, age, gender, occupation, ethnicity and other categories all proved negative. Of those murders that may possibly be somehow related to the other events, there is again no pattern that can be determined."

"The explosives used. Traces?" Patterson asked.

"The forensic analysis," the senior Civil Servant replied, "has proved inconclusive. It is similar, apparently, to PE4 but is more powerful, but is not identical to any known type of C-4, and thus at the moment is classified as of unknown origin and manufacture, although it is possible it has been manufactured here in the UK, given the content and proportions of the plasticizer used."

"No real clues, then. Quite an opponent," the younger man said, and smiled as he looked again at the bright image of the beautiful Eulalia who seemed to be somehow taunting them all.

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It was a week - and over a dozen deaths and one more destructive explosion later - before the government team made any significant progress. Several corpses, drained in the usual way, had been found in a small enclosed residential Courtyard of new apartments by the river in the city of York, and sightings there of a large shambling figure had led the local Police, many of whom were armed, to cordon off the area.

It was past twilight and almost dark when Patterson and the two civilians of his unit arrived to spew forth from helicopters, replete with their heavily-armed escort of Special Forces troops, two of whom were carrying modified tazer guns.

"We want it - whatever it is - alive," Patterson said to them.

But, even as the troops deployed on that narrow tree-lined riverside road near Skeldergate, there was a shout as a large shambling figure ran toward them. It - he, she, they - leapt upon one trooper to drain him dry by only one touch and then another before one tazer and then another stunned and felled it. There was a cage, then, injections, a screen of heavily armed troopers and Police, and a short journey to where a waiting helicopter had landed, away from a gathering curious crowd. A few hours later, they had returned to their guarded secure sanctuary in the basements of a large London building, and it was there - in a specially prepared sealed laboratory - that they began their work, surrounded by their minions.

"Not what I expected," the young Cheddon said to Patterson, as he watched, behind a thick clear protecting screen, a now white-coated Beldan begin her clinical examinations.

"We'll soon know," Patterson replied.

"He just looks - well - human."

Several hours later, they had some of their answers, and the three were joined, in their conclave in a soundproofed room adjoining the laboratory, by their senior Civil Servant.

"Human, but with a slightly altered physiology..." Beldan said.

"So," interjected Patterson, "how was it able to kill in the manner we've seen?"

"How *is* it able to kill in that way and so quickly?" Beldan said, correcting his use of the past tense.

"Currently, unknown," Beldan unhelpfully replied.

Cheddon cast a somewhat nervous glance, through the bullet-proof glass, to where the captured naked specimen lay, drugged and securely restrained by titanium bands anchoring its arms, legs, and neck, to the clinical operating table.

"But the good news," Beldan continued, "is that we have been able, from a fingerprint analysis, to identify the individual."

"Or who," Cheddon added, "the person was before something happened, to change it."

"Quite so," smiled Beldan. "The DNA analysis is on-going but will not, even given our resources, be complete for at least another forty-eight hours."

"Can it talk?" Patterson asked.

"There does not appear to be any physiological or anatomical reason why he cannot," Beldan said.

"Good. Then we'll wake it and question it."

"That may not be advisable," Beldan replied.

"Advisable or not, it is what I propose we do. You have the fingerprint analysis?"

"Yes," and she gave him the print-out which he immediately handed to the senior Civil Servant, saying, "Usual channels. Current address. To be searched ASAP. Known associates, family, anyone connected - traced, and interviewed."

"Indeed," the senior Civil Servant replied and left to attend to his urgent duties.

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Patterson had it surrounded. Three Special Forces troopers, armed with stun guns, were positioned equidistantly in certain and definite closeness of range, as were nine other troopers armed with handguns and other firearms who had orders to kill if by some chance "the creature" - as Patterson called it - managed to escape the restraints and the stun guns failed to then immobilize it.

The heavy tranquillizers used to sedate it were wearing off, and Patterson stood nearby, a Sig Sauer pistol in his hand and ready.

"Can you hear us?" Beldan asked the awakening man.

"What's happened?" he said, showing signs of obvious distress at being restrained and surrounded by armed soldiers.

"Do you know who you are and why you are here?" Beldan asked, as she monitored his condition, displayed by several screens nearby.

"No." He seemed to think for a long while, then said, "The last thing I remember is going out, meeting someone, walking to the Pub." He looked around at his clinical surroundings. "Where is this? Am I in hospital?"

"Whom did you meet?" Patterson interjected.

"A young woman." He tried to smile, but the pain of his trauma showed in his face.

"Someone you knew?" Patterson continued.

"Not exactly, I'd only met her, casual like, the night before."

"Can you describe her?"

"Young. Very pretty. Green eyes. Long dark hair..."

Suddenly, Cheddon had an idea, and left, to return, only moments later, with a photograph. "Is that her?"

"Yep, that's her alright."

Cheddon, Patterson, and Beldan, all looked at one another, and it was Patterson who said, "Was she local? From York?"

"That's what she said. She had a place on Queen's Staith, the hotel."

"Wasn't that," Patterson asked Cheddon, "one of the locations you came up with as a possible source of one of the last transmitted warnings?"

"Yes."

"Take over," Patterson suddenly said to Beldan. "He's to remain here under guard, as now. Any developments, let me know." Then, to Cheddon, he said, "You're with me."

Thus did they with Patterson barking orders to uniformed minions leave and swiftly that guarded secure sanctuary in the basements of a London building to wait, not long, on its roof for a helicopter to take them back in the breaking Dawn to the city of York where, by the hour of their arrival, the whole mentioned building and surrounded area had been cordoned off. Even the usually busy Ouse bridge had been closed to traffic, with streets around deserted except for armed Police and soldiers.

"You don't really believe," Cheddon said to him as they positioned themselves on the cobbles between the Queen's Hotel and the river, surrounded by their Special Forces protection squad, "that she's still there, do you?"

"Probably not. But someone answering her description has been staying at the hotel for over a

month, occupying three rooms on the same floor."

"I don't suppose you have a name?"

"Yes, Miss Eulalia..." and even as he said that name, the object of their search came out to calmly stand on a small balcony just above them and to their left and less than ten yards away, where she smiled and waved toward them.

"Hello, boys. Looking for me?" she said as well over a dozen guns were immediately aimed toward her.

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"Isn't it customary", Eulalia said, as the two men below stood just staring up at her, "to give me some sort of warning? *Armed Police*, and all that kind of thing? And - *we have you surrounded, throw down your weapons and come out with your hands up?*"

"You are surrounded," a still rather surprised Patterson finally managed to say.

"As you can see, I have no weapons," she replied, bewitchingly smiling and holding out her hands.

Patterson was about to issue a command when three women, all dressed in black, young and dark of hair as their Mistress, came onto the only other balcony there, next to hers. They were carrying weapons, and, without warning, opened fire on the troopers, to leave - as a firefight began - Patterson and Cheddon just standing there, looking up, as if hypnotized, toward the beautiful, still smiling, Eulalia.

Soon, nine troopers lay dead, or dying, and - as the three women still stood on their balcony firing their weapons and apparently unharmed - it began to occur to the soldiers, the Police, and both Patterson and Cheddon, that there was something, or many things, not quite right about the situation. There was the fact of the glass behind the women which had been shattered and the fact of the walls all around and above and below them which showed severe damage from bullets, several of which bullets had rebounded, and were rebounding, from those walls. There was the fact of the weapons the women had, which although seeming to resemble conventional handguns of the semi-automatic pistol type, seemed not to require re-loading and be able to penetrate the body-armour of the forward troops as perhaps only an armour piercing rifle-fired bullet might, just might, sometimes do. There was the fact that not one bullet had struck or even been fired

towards Eulalia; and the fact that the women did not seem to be targeting - to be deliberately avoiding - both Patterson and Cheddon.

As the strange reality of the situation began to seep into the consciousness of Patterson, he drew his own Sig Sauer pistol and aimed it at Eulalia even as the firing in front of him continued. She lifted her hand, then, and the firing - on both sides - immediately stopped as if in obedience to some unseen unheard command. But Patterson was a soldier, as both his father and grandfather had been, and while his trigger pull was purely instinctive, it has no effect whatever. There was no discharge; not even a movement of the hammer of his fully-functional gun, and Eulalia calmly smiled at him, and waved.

"Well, that was fun, wasn't it," she said to him. "*To part is such sweet sorrow*, as someone once said. And isn't the music of Johann Strauss, the younger, just adorable ? But, to business. This - " and she gestured to where soldiers lay dead, injured or dying - "is just another little demonstration of ours, of how truly powerless you and your kind now are. Well, much as I would love to stay and chat - "

And then, she and her ladies were gone, immediately instantly gone, even as her last words echoed in ears; gone, to leave only a silence amid that particular silent part of that teeming living city; gone: to leave many unasked perhaps unanswerable questions unasked.

A brief, but not quite immediate, search failed to find them, as did the later more detailed, through, intense, ones fail to find them. Even the rooms Eulalia had rented were untouched, unused, and no one - from the enclosing cordon of Police and soldiers - had seen anyone leave. It was as if, impossibly, the women had never been there, and Patterson was still pacing the blood-soaked, bullet and cartridge riddled cobbles outside the hotel when he received a call from Beldan.

"He's dead," her strained voice said.

"When?"

"A few moments ago. He just died - no reason I could see."

"Did he say anything else after we left?"

"No. Only - "

"Yes?"

" - only the words *To part is such sweet sorrow*. He said them, smiled, and then just died. Is what he said of any significance?"

"Perhaps. You will do a full autopsy, I assume."

"Naturally. I should have some preliminary findings by the time you return."

"Excellent." The call over, he turned to Cheddon, who was walking beside him. "You heard?"

"Yes. Ambushed, then, by the beautiful... - what was her name?"

"Eulalia."

"- by the sorceress Eulalia."

Thus did they, both still perplexed and almost exhausted, walk together silently with what remained of their squad to where their helicopter waited to take them back to their guarded, but possibly no longer secure, sanctuary in the basements of some large London building, as, not that far away, and unobserved by them, Eulalia was watching, waiting and ready to unleash more dark terrors out into both their day and their night, for there was much that she wanted to do, with the Dark Entities she had brought forth to Earth, and with the progeny she and others had bred forth from them.

Part Two: The Moon's Tidal Moving

Their lair, conveniently, was underneath some river, some harbour or some wide deep lake from whence they would, at night, sally forth as such primal Dark Entities sallied forth, among humans, to find food for themselves and new hosts for those Dark Daughters who watched over, cared, for them, and there seemed little to distinguish them from humans as they lurked in the dark shadowed places of cities and towns, waiting.

Perhaps they did appear, to the observant, as somewhat pale of skin, as if no sunlight had ever touched its whiteness, just as - certainly - they were tall, if slim, by human standards with hair long blonde and flowing, and noses fine, narrow, as if cut skilfully from the whitest of white marble. As for their eyes, their azure brightness only changed when, replete after their feeding, the colour became the lightest of light purple until, their digestion of human essence complete, it resumed its former sea-like hue. But it was their hands which, perhaps, gave the one and only direct clue - until, that is, those hands latched onto their human prey so easily easily disabled with a touch, only one touch, to be dragged then still living down through water to that damp foetid and communal lair. For their hands were thin, bony, with fingers long for their type, of all an equal size, and with thumbs as long as those fingers.

No one ever heard them behind or near them, as no one ever heard them speak, and it was this - combined with their ability to blend, shapeshiftlingly, to whatever was around - that made them, on Earth, such successful hunters of humans among the dark shadows of that urban night which humans in their arrogance assumed they owned.

Thus did the dried wasted now useless corpses come to line the tunnels and chambers of their lairs, and thus did some chambers there contain humans, captive, unseeing, but strangely sighing while the strands of the strange living tissue that bound them, encased them and held them tight to the ceilings, let them live, just a little if enough, until some Dark Daughter, visiting, would choose one as some new in-dwelling host for the life, the acausal life, she carried captured in a crystal. There would be rewards, then, for those hunters: a joyous celebration celebrated as such primal Dark Entities celebrated, feasting on humans and copulating among themselves as they copulated among themselves until repletion calmed and slept them and kept them still until the Moon's tidal moving woke them.

Eulalia knew all this, and it pleased her, as she knew they were breeding as they bred, there in their lairs. Now, it was time for Ffion, her fledgling to fledge - to have his reward - and so she walked soundlessly, as one of Baphomet's Dark Daughters might, to where he that night, as others in her house, lay asleep in the arms of his lover.

A naked Idella smiled as Eulalia her beautiful youthful Mistress of Earth entered that large subtly-lit room of the high-ceiling to sit beside her on the bed while Ffion slept that sleep that often arises from sexual satiation. For Idella knew what Eulalia had planned, and the two women kissed the kiss of lovers until, awakened, Ffion fumbled on the small antique table by his side of the bed for his spectacles.

"Are you ready for your reward," Eulalia asked him while she caressed the breasts of her lover.

"Well, yeah," a rather surprised Ffion said, assuming many things.

"No, not that," Eulalia said, intruding upon his fantasy. "There is a gift, a precious gift, which we - which Idella - can give you, if you are willing and ready."

"It is the gift, " Idella said, as she touched his forehead, "of a greatly extended life. Of a thousand years, two thousand, maybe more."

"For you know now who we really are, don't you?" Eulalia directly asked him.

"Yes. Yes, I do," Ffion said, and began to tremble, just a little.

"Then, " Eulalia continued, "are you willingly and ready to so receive our gift?"

"Yes."

"You will need a new name, among us," Eulalia said.

"But I like my name," Ffion somewhat lamely protested.

"I know you do, now, and the reasons why," replied Eulalia who - to his surprise and pleasure - kissed him, as a lover might, directly and for some moments on his lips, to then touch her tongue to his. "There, you see," she said, smilingly turning toward Idella and uncovering Ffion's erection, "he is ready for you, again."

"He whose mothers-given name caused others, in youth, to mock - " Idella said, giving voice to unvoiced thoughts.

" - until inner resolve claimed him, " Eulalia continued as an echo.

"Was mich nicht umbringt, macht mich stärker," continued Idella, vocalising again what a still silent Ffion then thought.

"Thus is he deemed ready," Eulalia said. Then, to Ffion, "And so, as the darkness of this night seeps away as red-fingered Dawn spreads her luteous light, shall you become as one of us, bound during your causal life here on Earth, to dream where we dwell and dwell where we have dreamt; to live long, healthy, strong, and to prosper as you will."

She kissed him again then - but as sister might kiss a brother - to leave him to the ministrations of that Earth-dwelling human-bodied Dark Daughter who voraciously leapt upon him as he lay, supine in her bed, to become for him in those moments of that forceful sexual joining everything he had ever dreamt or desired. He surrendered, then, willingly, as she - her acausal inner essence, her dark formless un-human being - seeped into his body, his blood, the organ that was his brain, re-ordering him as he in his ecstasy physically spasmed beneath her to leave his body relaxed as their grew then within that human body of his a changing, a slightly changed, physiology and a new small organ whose tendrils, only half of which were causal, grew slowly, imperceptibly, out from their almost imperceptible home beneath his cerebellum.

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It was less a than a week since Patterson and Cheddon had stood on that cobbled street in York to watch Eulalia's carefully choreographed drama unfold, but it seemed as if that day, those memories of it, belonged to some distant unsettling past that neither of them should desire to dwell upon. And yet their very human desire to not forget - as their knowing of the immediacy

and importance of Earthly-causal Time - made them dwell, almost to the point of obsession, upon that day, especially as, at night, no sleep came to either of them, except in those fleeting if seemingly long times of those dreams, those strange dreams, never spoken about, where a naked Eulalia came unto them as they lay in their bed to kiss them to arouse them to suck their life, their very human essence, away, to leave them not only as a corpse paler and gaunter than they would have been even if all the blood and plasma within had been somehow drained away, but as a corpse that was somehow still mysteriously half-alive.

Thus did they - tired, almost exhausted - sit, with Beldan, in the airless, windowless inner room of a government department in Whitehall, waiting again for that senior Civil Servant who had been with them, every day, since those carefully choreographed events. And when he did arrive sporting his colourful silk tie-of-the-day and the regulation dark suit - it was pure force of strong will that roused Patterson from his almost stupor.

"We have one possibly significant line of enquiry," Patterson said to him, without preamble.

"Oh yes?"

"Yes. Cheddon here, as you know, has been liaising with GCHQ and has been analyzing some anomalies."

"Well, we could all do with some good news, especially after yesterday's explosion and our inability to find let alone track this Eulalia character. Or whatever she calls herself."

Inwardly, Patterson smiled, for the "your Unit" and "your inability..." of previous days, had become, in the past two days, "our Unit", our team, and "our inability..."

"It appears," Cheddon said, "that some very unusual transmissions have been detected. Unusual because of the frequency used, because of their content, their power, and, maybe most interesting of all, because they're being beamed into a fixed point in Space, beyond Earth."

"And," Patterson added, "we're working here on the assumption that these transmissions may be connected to recent events."

"Why?" the senior Civil Servant asked.

"Basically," Cheddon replied, "because they're unexplained and at the moment inexplicable and because they do support our working assumption about those recent events."

"The extra-terrestrial entities idea," the senior Civil Servant said, somewhat stuffily.

"Aliens," interjected Beldan.

"Personally, I prefer to call them ETE's," Cheddon said.

"And so do I," added Patterson. "Given the nature of the events in York, it seems a reasonable working assumption."

"You have obtained a fix on the origin of these transmissions?" the senior Civil Servant asked.

"Not yet. But, " replied Cheddon, "I've narrowed it down to a smallish area by the Thames, here in London. We've used what tracking facilities are available - ground-based and satellite - and the messages don't appear to be directed at anything we can detect. Perhaps the Americans might help out, here?"

"Not possible, currently," the senior Civil Servant replied. "Orders from the PM. Keep this among ourselves. That sort of thing."

"Anyway," Patterson said, "even if those Septic Tanks agreed they wouldn't on past form share all their info."

The senior Civil Servant pretended not to hear the remark. "Your plan? Should you track down the source?"

"Surround. Contain. Detain."

"Unless," quipped the young Cheddon, "they get beamed-up to the mother-ship!"

Turning to Beldan, the senior Civil Servant asked, "Any progress on the corpse residue?"

"None," she replied. "Another unexplained anomaly. Why that individual - "

"Creature," interrupted Patterson.

"Quite why the corpse of that individual," Beldan continued, "just disintegrated into dust, less than an hour following death, is a medical mystery, for the moment. Nothing like it has been reported with any of the other corpses so far recovered."

"Perhaps," Cheddon unhelpfully suggested, "they don't like being restrained."

Everyone ignored him, again.

"No more reports, today?" Beldan asked the senior Civil Servant.

"No. That makes four days, this week, with no new corpses, found. Although - " he began, then

paused.

"Yes?" Beldan enquired.

"Although there has been a quite substantial increase in the number of missing persons reported."

"Maybe, " said Cheddon, "they are being taken alive for some sinister alien purpose."

None of them saw Beldan briefly smile, for both Cheddon and Patterson were momentarily reclaimed by such a wistful remembering of their dream wherein a naked Eulalia came upon them as they lay in their bed to kiss them to arouse them to suck their life, their very human essence, away within her, while the senior Civil Servant stood to thoughtfully, professionally, consider what he would say in his morning meeting with his nation's worried Prime Minister.

Thus it was that the trio departed from that windowless room of the low ceiling to a waiting car which, escorted by armed guards, conveyed them back to their sanctuary in the basements of some large city building where they each returned to their tasks as red-fingered Dawn spread her luteous light over that city whose humans walked, slept, sat, lay, awoke, or travelled, unaware of what the coming night would bring.

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With the setting of that Sun which had warmed the air and the people that cloudless Autumn day in the south of England, there arose a great stirring among the denizens of those foetid underwater lairs where had rested those hunters of humans.

Thus, attuned to the Dark Daughters who watched over, cared, for them, they sallied forth not alone as hitherto but in feral packs always keeping to the shadows which they enhanced or caused by disabling or destroying those lights which lit the streets and roads of those cities and towns and places especially chosen by Eulalia that night. And thus it was there in those chosen places as if some dark but purifying contagion had begun to spreadingly seep forth from riverside, harbour or lake as whole areas become subsumed by a silent shadow bringing such fear trembling and dread to humans and wherein humans stupefied into silence were garnished, plucked from their lives, and where - having served their purpose of food - they were discarded dead to leave only corpses, only dried corpses, paler and gaunter than they would have been even if all the blood and plasma within them had been somehow sucked away.

Eulalia was there, high above one such shadowing darkness: watching from where a large Penthouse balcony gave both fine Thames river and city of London views. Venora - she of the

red-hair and the fullsome body - was there, with Idella, and Ffion the newly-blooded whose hands and arms - whose still changing body - still ached from the effort his first three human-feedings had caused him. Thus did they, with others of their non-human and half-human kind, so gladly, gleefully, watch as that uneven patch of dark spread silently un-humanly forth from below them.

And when after long hours of terror it was over, the dark contagion slowly silently ebbed to flow back unobserved to be back under water where replete from their feeding a calmness came to calm, soothe, reward, protect and sleep them until those Dark Daughters might certainly would need them, again, to cleanse some other small places on Earth. Then only then - when sleep became them - in areas claimed, sanctioned, purified in presencing darkness, were sound and speech restored to humans who there remained alive: there where corpses lay scattered singly or had been haphazardly heaped into piles.

There was nothing no one - no human, no authority - could do, except collect the corpses, restore the lights, and try to ease if only in some small way the shock, the terror, and the awe. Soon, the Media - television, radio programmes, newspapers - would be awash and bleating with reports, as almost as soon the government of that land, and its minions, would be spinning yarns of its own: "According to a statement just issued by the Prime Minister, there is no need to panic as the government has the situation under control. At a special news conference, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Justice announced that seventeen people - suspected terrorists - had been arrested for their part in this nationwide terrorist outrage where a deadly virus, released in some thirteen cities and towns across England, is reported to have caused many thousands of fatalities..."

But slowly, creepingly slowly, stealthily, from one human being to another, another more terrifying story would be told, as Eulalia the Dark Sorceress had intended, as - not that many miles from her temporary luxurious riverside lair - a senior Civil Servant stood with his trio of new friends in that windowless room of the low ceiling.

"According to information we have just received from MI6," he said to Patterson, "there have now been a few reported cases of similar corpses found in the United States, and a few in other countries, such as Egypt."

"On the scale we've seen tonight?" Beldan asked.

"No, not at all. Thankfully not. Our information indicates around only two dozen or so, at most, in the United States."

"Everything is ready," Patterson said.

"You have the location?" the senior Civil Servant asked him.

"By the time we arrive the area will be secured. We have the authority to proceed?"

"Yes. But only on the understanding that it is a last resort. We want them alive."

"That may not be possible. Casualties will be kept to a minimum," Patterson lied. Ponti's - People Of No Tactical Importance - were expendable, and if he had to take out the whole Apartment building, he would.

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It all went according to Patterson's careful, meticulous military plan, so that by the time he and his Unit - with the senior Civil Servant in tow - arrived, the new, fashionable, medium-rise, riverside Apartment building had been swiftly and stealthily surrounded. Overhead, but not too close, RAF fighter jets circled, missiles armed, target acquired, while - nearby - heavy re-enforcements waited as, in distant radar and satellite centres, operators intently listened and watched, ready for any transmission, received or sent, and primed to relay just one word were any such thing detected. One word, to Patterson who without hesitation would order his pre-emptive strike.

Thus did those Special Forces troops silently enter the building. But there were no women, armed or otherwise, who appeared, anywhere, to oppose them as those well-trained troops skilfully threaded their way upwards from floor to floor. Indeed, they encountered nothing suspicious or deadly at all and by the time Patterson and his trio had joined them they had secured all but the uppermost floor, a suite of rooms for just the one prestigious Apartment, furnished in the minimalist manner.

It was not bravado that led Patterson, Sig Sauer pistol in his hand, to be first through the stairwell door, as it was not any sense of the heroic that made him be the first to try, and to open, that Apartment door. Rather, it was a strange mixture of both a soldier's duty and a man's desire. But his inner dichotomy was never put to the test, for the place - the whole place - was silent, still, and empty. Only a vague, subtle if somewhat intoxicating exotic scent remained, and he was standing by the large glass doors that gave access to the balcony overlooking the river Thames - while troopers unnecessarily and loudly secured the other rooms - when he remembered where he had smelt, felt, that scent before. It was Eulalia, who naked came upon him in his nightful fitful dreams where he lay in his bed and she kissed him to arouse him to suck his life, his very human essence, away, to leave him not only as a corpse paler and gaunter than he would have been even if all the blood and plasma within had been somehow drained away, but as a corpse that was somehow still mysteriously and longingly half-alive. And he was standing there, immersed in his amalgam of feelings, when Eulalia's message began to play on the large modern television screen attached to one wall.

"Hello again you sexy boy! You are getting closer - but not quite close enough, just yet," and the

beautiful Eulalia mockingly but enchantingly smiled. "As a helpful human colleague of ours once so perceptively wrote, and do excuse my few liberties with the text. My version is so much better, wouldn't you agree? Anyway, as you are standing comfortably then I will begin:

It is of fundamental importance - to your human evolution - that what is Dark, and Sinister, is made real in a practical way, over and over again. That is, that what is dangerous, awesome, numinous, tragic, deadly, terrible, terrifying and beyond the power of ordinary mortals, laws and especially governments to control is made manifest. In effect, humans need constantly reminding that such things still exist; they need constantly to be brought "face-to-face", and touched, with what is, or appears to be, inexplicable, uncontrollable, powerful and "evil". They need reminding of their own mortality - of the unforeseen, inexplicable "powers of Fate", of the powerful forces of both "Nature" and of Darkness. If this means killing, wars, suffering, sacrifice, terror, disease, tragedy and disruption, then such things must be...

"Do you begin to comprehend, now, what this beginning of ours is partly about? I do so hope so. Your planet is also in need of a little - how shall I say? - house-cleaning. But enough of all this sober governmental-type guff. You've have long hard day, haven't you, sweetie? So relax. Enjoy. Have a party. I do so wish I could stay, and personally entertain you, but I'm sure you'll forgive me. Pressing matters to attend to. I know, how awfully boring. But I will make it up to you, promise. And it will be worth the wait, as I'm sure you are by now beginning to know. Anyway, sweetie, bye-bye for now!" And she blew him a kiss, and then waved at everyone before her image was replaced by scenes of woman remarkably similar to her making passionate love to man remarkably similar to him, accompanied by music: a waltz by Johann Strauss, The Younger.

Calmly, Patterson fired three rounds from his pistol at the screen, thereby destroying it. But he could not quite escape the feeling that Eulalia, from somewhere and somehow, was watching him, and benignly smiling.

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Part Three: The Lengthy-Briefness of Dark Acausal Dreams

She - Eulalia - had visited him again in those long sleepless hours of his dreams when he lay

fitfully in his bed as those late cold October nights drifted causally toward another crescent-mooned Dawn.

The dream - redolent of the acausal - had been long as such dreams often were in the normal world of that causal time that measured out each human day, and which yet in its lengthy acausal duration only a few moments of Earthly time had passed. So it was that Patterson awoke from its strange lengthy-briefness to feel more exhausted than on his previous day on Earth. She had come forth out of darkness as she always did to softly, gently, and nakedly lay upon him as he lay in his sweating nakedness within that large room of his otherwise deserted London house. She had kissed him, as she always in the lengthy-briefness of such nightly dreams kissed him: deeply, tongue touching tongue, while he almost always against his will became aroused, needing no hand - hers, or his - to guide his straining almost painful erection into her clinging moist welcoming warmth that brought such pleasure that he had to, vainly, fight against it. She would move, then, slowly, upon him as his body surrendered and he eagerly embraced her: slowly moving until her, his, urgency of orgasm overcame him and they became passionately, ravidly, enmeshed until he, drained, was left, weak of relaxing body, to supinely lay as if drugged while his, and her effusive, bodily fluids slowly seeped forth from her vagina, and her kiss sucked his life, his very human essence, away, to leave him as a corpse paler and gaunter than it would have been even if all the blood and plasma within had been somehow drained away, but as a corpse that was somehow still mysteriously and yearningly, longingly, half-alive.

But that night she was, so very slightly, so very disturbingly, different in the first moment of that life-draining kiss when it was to him as if she had somehow changed to be, to become - ever so fleetingly - some-thing else, not quite human and certainly not the beautiful, delectable, sensuous, exotic, voluptuous young women who enticed and then so passionately in those dreams aroused him, and who increasingly in his waking hours unwelcomely occupied both his emotions and his thoughts.

Thus did he awake that cold almost frost-like morning to lay a long time in his empty sweat-damp bed as, outside, in a London street, people busied themselves with the beginning of their day, oblivious to the darkness which had seeped through dimensions and which they were and would be powerless before. Patterson's house had long ago been emptied of his wife and children, leaving him in its secluded large quietness to concentrate upon his cherished military career, and when - irregularly - they did return to visit he was never quite sure whether his pleasure at their company, their presence, outweighed his rather gruff annoyance. For it never long before he and his former wife began to quarrel.

Thus did he lay, that quiet morning, even more disturbed by Eulalia than normal, trying to - and failing - to recall that briefest of brief moments when she had changed to be, to become, something, not quite human. So he lay, still, suffused again, as he often had become in the days of the last fastly passing week, with a memory, a feeling, of her enticing, enwrapping, soft feminine

warmth, and he had to use all his strength of character, all the years of his military training and life, to will such memories and such feelings away, and for a moment, a long seemingly long-lasting moment, he was alternatively disgusted then pleased then yearning then disgusted with himself as a sudden intense sexual desire for her overcame him. Thus did he that cold morning in that cold room leap up from his bed to undertake a series of demanding physical exercises, and it was this - this hard routine of training - that brought him back to be the man he was, an experienced Army officer sworn to do his patriotic duty.

Yet he could not escape her presence, that day, for not only did she linger on - enticing, bewitching - in his thoughts and memories and feelings, she was also the subject of an hours long meeting as he, Cheddon, Beldan and their senior Civil Servant, gathered together again in that windowless room of the low ceiling in Whitehall.

They were discussing the events of only the week before when Eulalia's primal Dark Entities had sallied forth, among humans, bringing such terror and such a deadly carnage, when, quite suddenly, all that Patterson could feel, all that subsumed his thoughts, was a desire to be with her, again. He would reach out, and touch her: feel the warmth of her face; touch the softness of her breasts; smell again that haunting exotic perfume which so suffused her...

"Er, Patterson?" Cheddon was saying.

"What?" Patterson said, somewhat annoyed at being disturbed from his sexual reverie. Then, remembering - feeling again - who he was, he said: "Say again?"

"I was remarking," Cheddon continued as the screen behind him glowed with a paused image from filmed footage of a heap of corpses, "that the alien theory is now the most plausible one."

"If that's what you want to believe," Patterson replied, somewhat scathingly.

"What other possible explanation could there be?" Beldan asked.

"Trans-dimensional beings. From other dimensions." Patterson said without quite knowing why he said it.

"That," chided Beldan, "is an even more implausible that the supposition they are aliens from another star-system."

"Not necessarily," responded Cheddon. "It is a possibility I've considered - "

"But discounted," said Beldan.

"Yes. At least for the moment. It's certainly a more plausible hypothesis than what some of the

loonies who've contacted the government have come up with. Demons, indeed!" And he laughed, not loud, but somewhat quietly, as a rather shy, awkward, ageing University Professor might laugh at some absurd theory propounded by a new young student

"The important and pressing issues," the senior Civil Servant said, interrupting, and fiddling with his colourful silk tie-of-the-day, "are what can we do in a practical way to counter them, and what, if any, are their demands."

"Well," said Patterson, reverting to his role of Army officer, "our conventional weapons such as firearms do not seem effective against them, as was demonstrated in York. They seem to have the ability, by whatever means, to transport themselves somewhere else, so that we cannot, it seems, contain nor detain them. Twice, they have lured us a specific locality, then escaped, in my opinion just to demonstrate that they could escape, despite our best efforts, and to demonstrate that they are prepared for whatever tactics we might use."

"So, just what do we do? What can we do?" Cheddon asked.

"What I said," Patterson replied, looking at the senior Civil Servant "at the briefing with the PM last week."

"And for the benefit of the those two of us who were not there?" Beldan asked, with a slight undertone of annoyance at having been excluded from that meeting.

"We can do two things," Patterson replied. "First, we can ready and deploy other weapons, apart from conventional firearms, such as high-powered lasers, tazers, ultrasonics, or whatever else we have or can speedily develop. We might find one type of weapon which is effective. I have spent the last week building up a specialist team which has acquired some of the weapons that might be useful."

"And second?" Beldan asked.

"Secondly, we can wait. It is my considered opinion that what has occurred so far are only demonstrations. Demonstrations of what they can do. Nothing has happened for over a week. Why? Because, in my view and that of some of my senior colleagues in the Armed Forces, they are allowing us time to come to terms with the reality, which is of our current ineffectiveness in dealing with and with tracing them, and in seeing how much of the truth we - that is, the government - reveals to the public, which so far has not been very much and is of the standard *attacks by terrorists* Party political line."

"So you expect them to contact us, directly?" Beldan asked.

"Almost certainly," Patterson said. "And, if I am not mistaken, very soon indeed."

"Saying what?" Cheddon asked.

"Giving us their demands."

"Which will be what, exactly?" Beldan asked.

"Well," the senior Civil Servant said, smiling somewhat nervously, "we've had a team of analysts working on that for the past few days."

"And?" Beldan inquired.

"And - " Patterson interjected, "the upshot is we simply do not know, but in all probability it will be for some kind of power, or for resources, or possibly even for living-space."

"Lebensraum," Cheddon said. "Interesting!"

"So we just sit and wait, then?" Beldan said.

"It does seem so," the senior Civil Servant said.

"It is their move - *her* move - in this game that's being played," replied Patterson, and almost smiled.

"I'd hardly call it a game," Cheddon sighed, "So many deaths..."

"It is to them," Patterson calmly said.

So it was that they sat there, in that windowless room of the low ceiling, in silence for many moments, each enwrapped in and with their own feelings and thoughts, and so it was with only polite words between them that that meeting ended to leave Patterson, Beldan and Cheddon to be ferried in a vehicle, escorted by armed guards, back to their sanctuary in the basements of some large secret government city building where they each returned to their tasks as a warmless Sun rose above the streets and buildings of that city and into a cloudless sky.

Patterson was in the small room of inward corridor-looking windows which had become his office and communications centre when Eulalia appeared, to sit calmly on one end of his desk as he busied himself at another with reading, on the screen of one of his communications consoles, the technical specifications of some ultrasonic device. He knew she was there, but he pretended not to notice and so did not turn around.

"Some privacy, I think," and, as Eulalia - resplendent in a long flowing dress as if for some

formal Ball - moved her left hand ever so slightly, the inward-window blinds came down, quietly, quickly, to close to leave them secluded in the bright artificial light of that room, and she smiled at him as he rose from his chair to stand before her.

"You have arrived here to present us with your demands," he said, as an honourable Army officer might to an unforgiving ruthless enemy.

"To offer you a position, an opportunity. Destiny," she softly replied, standing in front of him and touching his face with her hand.

He tried to raise his arm to push her hand away but it would not obey the command of his thought, and it seemed as if she was about to kiss him when she suddenly, and gracefully, stepped back.

"What you so desire can be yours, but only if you desire it freely," she said. "And it would be no night-time dream."

Her quixotic perfume seemed to envelope him, heightening the desire that then subsumed him with its lengthy-briefness, but he resisted sufficiently enough to be able to say, "Why?"

"Why must you freely desire or why the opportunity?" she teased.

"What opportunity?" and even as he said the words it was as if, somehow and in some strange un-human way, he had known her for years; as if she was his wife, come to visit unexpectedly but pleasingly at work; the wife so desired and dreamed of during those bachelor years of early Army life and even, to his hidden shame, through a decade of that one quarrelling now broken marriage when he, his career assured, rapidly earned promotion by virtue of talent, skill, and personal character.

He tried then to tell himself that she was not human - she was the enemy, his foe - but she came forward and touched his face again, gently, with her warm hand, and, enwrapped in impossible desire, he kissed her. She was warm, soft, yielding - human - pressing her breasts, her thighs, her public area, against him until he was ripping away her dress to reveal her nakedness and eagerly, almost stumblingly, removing his own lower garments. They were on the floor, then, rabidly enmeshed together for almost one half of one Earthly causal hour until his whole body spasmed in an intense orgasm of ecstasy to leave him drained, with relaxing sweaty body, to feel her strangely effusive bodily fluid, now mixed with his, slowly warmly seeping forth from her warm sensuous vagina.

He seemed to sleep, briefly, then, and when he awoke he so expected to find her gone, or it all a dream. He had fallen asleep at his console, perhaps. Or it was a dream within a dream and he would awake, in his bed in the secluded large quietness of his large London house, bereft now of

children and of wife. But Eulalia was there, naked, in his arms, bubbled in acausal Time, as outside beyond his working office, human life, all Earthly-dwelling life, lived, frozen, until her own distant-close Mistress freed it from that stopped, paused, moment of that lengthy-briefness which marked the causal passing of that measuring meddling noisey Earth-dwelling species, Homo Hubris.

But Patterson did not know this, and lay with her allowing her body warmth to warm him. For he was still alive, warm, healthy and fit and strong of body, and she had not sucked the life from within him as in those nightmares of his nights. So he touched her, feeling every softness, every contour of her warm lascivious sensuous female human body.

Thus did she then explain to him - thought to thought without a need for human spoken words - as they lay, nestled, there together, touching, and thus did he feel and know until the Earthly-time for her momentary leaving arrived when he, she, together stood, to dress, and he thought he saw some sadness in her eyes. He understood, then, as she had hoped he would understand just as his intense passionate lustful desire for her was slowly, then, so slowly changing, transmuting, being transmuted to be, become, something else as she knew - hoped - it would, despite a part of his human nature still distantly valiantly fighting against her. For he was her chosen, and it was for him now to be alone - bereft of her, his longing and his dreams - to make the choice he alone must freely make.

Outside, clouds fastly skudded by cold north-easterly winds came to cover the Sun to send down, quickly amid a growing dark, a brief but powerful storm of hail before two peels of thunder drowned out the noises that Homo Hubris and their machines made, there, in that ancient, and capital, English city whose river flowed as it flowed over where those hunters of humans rested, and waited, ready, in their lairs.

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There was much that Rezare - she of the long greying hair and still lithesome body - wanted to do, as her group gathered around her in their protective drawn circle there on that low mound of muddied grass where a few almost forgotten almost overgrown ancient small standing stones rested, broken, or fallen, just before the covering of deciduous trees gave way to an ancient well. There was no Moon, as she desired - no warmth from a warm Summer's night - but the urgency of the matter had brought them together to be there at that hour as she, their Rounwytha, had urged. There was a darkness growing, seeping, into the land, the people, the very landscape that she loved - reaching out with its demon dreams and its succubitic love to entrap, ensnare, entice - and although she did not, as yet, know its source, she felt, knew, that her wyrdful-rouning must oppose it.

Thus did she and her group - six men, three woman, all far younger than she - wait in their white clean robes for the rouning to begin, and thus did she, as Rounwytha, lisp, in almost silence, old words of her craft while a slight wind brought coldness, and sound by leaves fallen, befeallen.

But the more she tried, the more tired she became, as if she - her very life, her essence - was being somehow strangely sucked away; as if the very trees themselves, around her, were reaching out to her venting slowly forth from branch and buried root a longing for her to leave them alone. She did not understand this - for were they not: her friends? Were they not the folk of the wood, the very wood itself, who once, many times, had spoken to her with wordless words on starry moonless moonlit nights while she listened and learnt and which each year her Mother-Earth so lovingly in Spring simbellicly renewed?

So she tried again, lispng forth again those ancient words. But the very earth beneath her, the living soil of Earth, then seemed to be seeping forth into her, coldng her feet, her body, her head, as if seeking, asking, her to go, peacefully in peace. She did not understand this - for was this soil not her growthful friend which each year every year she nurtured forth in garden and gardens to grow ginningly the food that fed her and kept her fit, hearty, well? It was as if they - her friends of soil, wood, forest, and fieldful hill - sensed, knew, what she knew, and as if they welcomed that - were welcoming that: that so slow subtle un-human change which had so disturbed her both in daylight and in dreams.

Thus did she, sensitive, hyeldng, try again to no avail, and thus did she, they - her covenful group, and at her bidding - leave, each in their own way by their own means, until she, by hillfull fields, was back alone in her cold small cottage only warm by that large wood-fire she lit and in front of which she sat, worn armchair rested, while her seal-point Siamese cat kept her company and nothing came to disturb the silence and worried sanctity of her mood. She fell asleep there - as the fire dimmed and fell, and hunger failed to wake her - to dream she was back alone by that ancient sacred hidden well where roots seeped forth from trees nearby to grasp her and earth, soil-ly earth, worm-ridden, opened to encase her in her tomb.

It was the scent, the quixotic, suffusive scent which awoke her, and the warm soft hands of some unseen presumed female presence which warmed her as she sat, quite still but unfearful in that coldng dark. There were lips kissing hers: warm, soft, gentle lips which touched her own of dryness, unknssed for more than fifteen years. A touch which warmly, slowly, gently, caressed her - touching face, neck, body, the naked thighs beneath her robe-covered dress. And then it all was gone, all gone, to leave her, colourful of cheek with her legs apart, parted as an almost yearning straining hope touched her while that warm strange touch had caressed her thighs to move within an inch of where a sudden longing wetness seeped out to wet her greying pubic hairs.

Thus did she, ashamed, gather up her strength to slowly say the words of some protective ancient

incantation there in that cold small cottage where her seal-point Siamese cat kept her company and where nothing human came to disturb the silence and worried sanctity of her now wytanic mood.



Patterson and his small cabal of Cheddon and Beldan - awaiting the arrival of the senior Civil Servant - had been in one of Beldan's rather large and well-equipped brightly-lit laboratories in the well-guarded basements of that large city of London and government building, when he, perhaps, pre-emptively, had with vague-ish terms explained to them about Eulalia's visit where he said she had given her demands.

Thus they had listened, in silence, as he himself, still vaguely perfumed with Eulalia's scent - with each vague utterance of each vague often obscuring spoken word - formed, from each idea, each image, each future-deed precisely, wordlessly, livingly, almost lovingly impinged by her upon within his mind, his being, a bond with and to her, thus becoming more aware with each passing of each Earthy causal second of his choice, more assured of his choice, of the correctness of that now freely-chosen choice, bringing thus to him in those moments of his speaking a clear vision of Destiny and an intimation of how his life hitherto had fitted him for such a role as lived within him now, burgeoning, strongly growing with each silent felt remembrance of Eulalia's breath: of her scent, softness, warmth, touch, sharing - blissfully shared but one short causal Earthly hour before.

It was not that he forgot or had forgotten or even was about to negate the loyalty, the feelings, that bound him through oaths pastly-made to be a loyal liege and thus to do his duty to his land, his country, and the government that still idealistically at least derived its own presumptive authority from one such similar oath. Rather, he understood his new duty as but an extension of - the fulfilment of - such things, restoring what required to be restored and bringing-into-being that, only that, which only could be built by such a means as he through such a Destiny would bring. And it was only when the senior Civil Servant arrived to seat himself between Cheddon and Beldan that he exchanged his vague words of description for the reality he felt now so joyously so fittingly living within himself, for she - Eulalia - would be with him again, naked in his arms for all of the coming night, as the Sun descended to bring a Wintry cold darkness over those lands of England that he, the long-serving patriotic professional soldier, loved.

"As I explained to Cheddon and Beldan here," Patterson began, standing, and looking directly at the senior Civil Servant, "she was, somehow and by some means, here just over an hour ago - "

"Beam me up, Scotty..." Cheddon quipped, with an appalling attempt at a Scottish accent.

Patterson ignored him. "The demands given are quite simple. In return for certain small concessions, and subject to certain conditions and assurances, the attacks will cease; the entities - not of them - that wrought all those deaths will be withdrawn, and we will be given certain technical assistance to develop new technologies which will be to the great advantage of Britain, to the government, to our people, and to our standing in the world." He paused, as a professional politician might pause for effect while delivering a speech. Then, quite calmly, he said: "I am to act as her - as their - liaison. As her - as their - representative."

Cheddon and the senior Civil Servant looked at each other, somewhat surprised, while Beldan only smiled.

"What exactly," the senior Civil Servant said, "are these concessions and conditions?"

"The main condition," Patterson confidently continued, "is that of absolute and binding secrecy. No one - outside of the few of us who already know - can know either the truth of what has occurred, or of her, of their, involvement with us, current and future.

"The concessions relate to us providing them a secure area where they can live, in secret, and in us allowing some of them - a few of them - to dwell among us, undetected, with a few of those few to be given certain positions, within the government and our Armed Forces. In return for which - as I said - they will provide us with technical assistance to develop new technologies which will be to our great advantage."

"Why?" Cheddon, inquired. "What do they really want?"

"A place to live - among us, in human form. To guide us; to help us develop what we need to develop, in terms of science and technology, so that we might spread out from this planet to be, to live, among the stars, and thus evolve as we have the potential to evolve. We, this country, our government, have been given this opportunity."

"I still don't get it," Cheddon said.

"It seems to me," Beldan replied, "that it is quite simple. They have a need, a desire, to dwell here, on Earth, and so are offering to come to an agreement, and arrangement, with us which is beneficial to both sides."

Patterson looked at her strangely, as if there was, in that moment, something he felt he knew about her, but the feeling of such a knowing soon passed, and, instead, he said, to Cheddon, "That indeed is the gist of the matter. They want to aid us in the development of Space - and other technologies - so that they also can, with us, move back out toward the stars."

"I see," Beldan said, smiling at him. "So, it is logical to assume that these alien beings, or

whatever we might call them, are somehow stuck here, for some reason as yet unknown to us, on this planet in our sector of this Galaxy, and require our assistance in order to resume their Space-faring ways."

This was not what Patterson knew - not what Eulalia had shown him - but it would be, it would have to be, for the present, the best cover-story to use among those who already knew of her, and of her companions, existence.

"Can they be trusted, though?" Cheddon asked, interrupting Patterson's reverie.

"Any agreement," Patterson answered, "is a matter of trust. In my considered opinion, yes, she - they - can be trusted."

"Maybe. Perhaps. Possibly. For the moment. Possibly not. And if we don't agree to their terms and conditions?" Cheddon asked.

"Then," Patterson said, "the attacks will resume; those entities will wreck more havoc and death; and other countries will be targeted."

"Not much of a choice, then," said Beldan.

"What," inquired the senior Civil Servant of Patterson, fiddling - as had become his habit - with his colourful silk tie, "in your professional opinion and that of your colleagues, are the possibilities of us succeeding now, or in the immediate future, in defeating this person and her forces?"

"As I explained to the PM recently, the consensus is - and I concur - that the possibility is remote. That it is, currently and in the immediate future, an unfeasible objective. We have neither the resources nor the means to achieve such an objective. Unless and until we can develop a means to track them, unless we can develop some weapon or weapons which are effective against them, our options, from a military point of view, are severely limited and currently ineffective. There is also a consensus that it would take some years for us to develop the capabilities we need to even be on a par with them."

"I see," the senior Civil Servant said.

"During which time, no doubt," Beldan added, "there would be hundreds of thousands of deaths, maybe millions, world-wide - and a great deal of devastation and destruction."

"What about the weapons you've been looking at recently?" asked Cheddon.

"They may or may not have some limited effect.

"Shouldn't we try them out?" Cheddon asked

"We - my tactical team and I - have been ready to do so if a situation arose where such weapons might be deployed. But - " and he paused, again. "My information is that such weapons as we currently possess will not be effective."

"What information?" Cheddon inquired.

"I was directly informed..."

"By Eulalia?" interrupted Cheddon, guessing.

"Yes."

"And you believed her?" Cheddon said, surprised.

"I have - had - no reason to doubt the veracity of her information. Indeed, she offered to give us a demonstration."

"I see," the senior Civil Servant said.

"We should put it to the test," Cheddon added.

"I accepted her offer and have already made the arrangements." He checked his wristwatch. "If you will follow me, we should be in position at exactly the right time."

So he led them out from that brightly-lit well-equipped laboratory through a skein of corridors, passing many an armed and uniformed guard, to the large underground car-park that served their needs and that of the other occupants of those well-guarded government basements of that large city of London building. In one corner of that dismal grey underground area a tactical squad of soldiers waited in a semi-circle, holding a variety of weapons, regular, strange, and improvised, and - as Patterson's quartet joined them - three women, all dressed in black, young and dark of hair with bright red lipstick upon their lips, suddenly materialized at the point which was the centre of that semi-circle of soldiers. The women were carrying guns which seemed to resemble standard Earth-manufactured semi-automatic pistols which they raised and pointed at the soldiers who also raised their own assortment of weapons but who did not fire. But the women simply smiled, and shot three soldiers dead.

Thus did the nine remaining soldiers fire or operate their weapons as the women stood, smiling and un-humanly still, making no attempt to shoot or even target their own hand-held guns. For five minutes they stood until Patterson gave orders for his men to cease their firing. No one

spoke, or moved - except the three women, who unharmed came forward to kiss each still living speechless unmoving soldier on the cheek before those strange but attractive women turned, waved at Patterson, and were gone.

"I see your point," Cheddon said, unnecessarily, to him.

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It was not long before his suspicious, his doubts, grew. Not even the senior Civil Servant would listen to him when he hinted certain things. Certainly, Beldan was distant, disengaging, unapproachful, and so Cheddon carried on, in his own well-equipped, if dimly lit, laboratory in those well-guarded government basements of that large city of London building. Carried on, almost but not quite as normal. What could he say, do? So he busied himself with the new work that Patterson said was of vital and national import. Waiting, unsure; with only doubts, suspicious, unvoiced, unheard, almost always strange, unformed.

No longer the hunt for some enemy foe. No longer the sense, the knowing, the thrill, of being part of some elite, secret, well-armed, powerful, government team. Instead: he felt cheated, betrayed, perhaps even soiled. As if the deal they had made somehow besmirched, dishonoured, and shamed him. He did not understand why this was so, only that it felt so. Perhaps it was that he had betrayed the dead - the ones, the thousands, they had killed. Perhaps he had even betrayed himself. Perhaps it was fear of being taken, made-to-be like them. Or perhaps a feeling of being somehow their minion, their slave: as if he, humans, were powerless, weak, inferior, now before them. He did not know, and so he carried on: he, one of those chosen to closely guard their, and his governments, secret, doing - as the consummate talented professional he was - his newly given governmental duties outstandingly well, while secretly, furtively, working on some way to detect, defend against, them.

The day was bright, if cold, with a frost that the warmless middle November Sun did not nor would that day remove, and Rezare - she of the long greying hair, the lithesome body - sat in her old worn armchair by her warming large wood-fire reading from an antiquarian folio book, her seal-point Siamese cat asleep beside her in a wicker-basket. There was no sound, except the slight occasional wind-rapping of small bare Willow tendrils that hung down seepingly against her sitting room window from the overgrown tree in her Cottage garden, and she might have been at peace - happy, contented; contented, happy, warm - had not her dreams, her knowing, the very words of the book, disturbed her. For the words of that Diary, that Journal, flowingly, cursively, inscribed by hand, were of a Rounwytha before her who had through visions and dreams seen a

certain uncertain dark future: sinister times where strange shapeshifting succubitic beings ventured forth to bring sadness, madness, terror, and awe; where They - though unnamed - use for their own ends human beings, establishing thus a Dark, sinister, Imperium upon Earth.

Thus did Rezare read what another of her kind had written, less than seventy years before:

"I, with the help of an old dear friend, have been able to find only scattered references, such as:

They require Earth as a Gate, a physical staging place, from whence they can go forth to dominate that life which exists among the stars, and because they desire again our human bodies - for, being formless as they are, eternal, they cannot feel as we feel; cannot love as we love; cannot feel the joy that we feel. For Aeons after Aeons they have lived formless and unfeeling and dreaming as such beings do. Once, long ago now, before we knew ourselves, before words came forth to be written, some of Them seeped to be among us, taking, as legend says, human shape human. Some stayed, most returned. Perhaps it was that the tales of those returning, tales of our life - of their time of physical form - enchanted Them as they lived where They lived, formless, ageless, waiting: waiting, but, for what? So They, some of Them, contrived Their return - to guide us, legend says, to change us... Their wait was long, perhaps too long, for the stars, the very cosmos had to be aligned aright, with Theirs, for Them to come forth again from Their sleepless dwelling to be among us, to be with us, once again. To have the feeling, the corporeal being, They so craved.

and also this one:

Falcifer is the name They have chosen. Working in secret, even now They are planning his coming. He is the Spawn of Chaos, the leader of those Dark Gods...

But in my dreams this Falcifer of theirs is a woman who has as her Vindex a man, a human, and by whom she bears a half-human child who, as her, needs the vital force, the living essence, of human beings to live, survive. I never see her face, clearly. But her smell is ever so indicative and strong, almost animal, feral like, in its intensity; but more than an odour; more than a perfume. Even now in the bright sun of this lovely hot July day I catch myself smelling this strange fragrance, unlike

any flower I have ever known, unlike any perfume I have ever smelt, or blended, unlike the smell of any magical potion I have ever made.

She and her kind are beyond the words of the books of our kind; beyond the words of all our human books, magical; otherwise. Missing pages from our history, our past, for some of them have been here among us for millennia. Waiting. Some perhaps in dreams have glimpsed them or been touched by them, as I. Many have known them, over the centuries, and died because of it.....

Through her chosen one she schemes, plots, then rules, growing in Earthly influence, power. I do not know why, but sometimes I seem to see great factories; a new Empire; a country, a nation, triumphant, over others, only this time ruler of the skies, where machines rise to unearthly heights. War; deaths; suffering. So many, so terrible. More than those terrible years - that war - we lived through and vowed to never live through again... But the dreams have gone, not returned. Again I do not know why the dreams have stopped, or why they began. I am only glad, so very glad, they have stopped and not returned....."

Slowly, Rezare placed the book aside. She also did not know how or why her own so similar dreams had begun; but hers had not stopped, becoming with each night more vivid, intense, as if the land around - the living hillfull fields, the trees, the streams, copses, sheltering welcoming woods, the birds, animals, the very soil itself - had somehow in some way changed with, through, because of understanding. Gone now their welcoming of such un-earthly darkness; gone now their beckoning desire for her to leave peacefully and in peace. Instead: only a desire, an urgent desire, through wordless words - through that very belonging with-them that she treasured, loved, felt, knew - for her to help them, she as daughter, perhaps, of their life-giving Earth-Mother. Perhaps it was then the trees, the streams, the birds, animals, those sheltering welcoming well-known woods, the very soil itself, who spoke to her by dreams, bringing such a seeing, such a knowing, such detail, as no Rounwytha before her had ever possessed, so that to her even the wind-rapping of those small bare Willow tendrils upon her draughtful window were as words, informing her of why and of what she must do.

There will be snow tonight, she knew, a journey to take her, alone, to a city where her visions and those voices said would be a young man, to help her.

"How did you find me?" Cheddon asked, as Rezare waited outside in that snowy darkful cold which had come to claim his city.

"It does not matter," she said. "What matters is what we can do to fight those alien shapeshifting

beings and she who has so beshrewed he who leads that team you are still a part of."

Startled, surprised - intrigued - Cheddon let her into his warm bachelor fourth-floor modern Apartment whose large windows gave fine Thames river and city of London views. Then, outside, in the darkness, it was as if suddenly that city, that England, had drifted back into a far far quieter more distant ancient time: for, for just one lengthy-briefness of just three measured Earthly minutes, there was a silence, a stillness, a steeply plunging Arctic coldness, that made machines, people, stutter, to bring them briefly to a halt; to cut for one moment of Earthly lengthy-briefness that flow of electrical energy that brought forth light and brightness to human streets and homes.

Thus did Rezare - she of long greying hair, lithesome body, and sensitive, yielding - involuntarily shiver, until Cheddon, with youthful momentary desperation of comfort, sought her hand to let her warming fingers, her comforting warm embrace, renew remind and unexpectedly arouse him as that strange seeping cold enclosing lengthy-briefness of un-human blackness passed their brief causal-world by.

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Fini

Anton Long
Order of Nine Angles
119 Year of Fayen

In The Sky of Dreaming

Prologue

The dream had been startling - and he lay in his bed for several minutes while his sense of reality returned and the single Blackbird song that filtered through the window of his cottage became part of the late April Dawn Chorus.

He had dreamt he was standing among a circle of old Yew trees in some graveyard while beside him the dark-haired woman he had just kissed was transformed: into some-thing. She was still transforming as he awoke, his duvet on the floor, his bedsheets dishevelled, his nightshirt wet from sweat. She was beautiful - this young yet middle-aged woman of indeterminate age whose red lips, whose curvaceous buxom body, whose green eyes, had enticed him as he stood, waiting; waiting, for something he felt he knew yet did not quite know; something exciting, vivifying and yet also strange and, perhaps, terrifying: some Being to take form and venture forth again to Earth, released from alternate dimensions and the alternate time which had enclosed it - and her - kin.

In the sky of dreaming: a gibbeous moon; and light from the Sun which had set an hour or so before. And he could see clearly, and quite strangely given it was night, the hillside beyond his circle of trees as the hill of farmed fields descended down to a narrow valley, while - beyond - the further rising hill was wooded except at the very summit where jagged rocks protruded up from the gorse and heather-covered earth.

There was a vague, uneasy, memory that clung to his dream-image of that place - as if he had been there before, sometime in his distant ancestral pagan past. So he lay there, in his bed in his quiet old cottage in the country with only the sounds of the singing birds outside to disturb the peace of rural England. Then, slowly, tired from a night of broken and disturbed sleep, he got up to stumble forward toward the mirror above the old porcelain sink under the eaves, mindful as he almost always was of the black-painted oak beam that cut across the room.

What he saw in the mirror shocked him, sending him stumbling back toward his bed - until the back of his head hit the beam and he fell. For he had seen the face, the greying hair, of an old man - but he was still only twenty three.

Stumbling up, he looked again. It was no dream - he was an old man, in face and body, his back bent from age; his joints aching; his breathing laboured, his hands arthritic. He called, in his now old raspy voice, to his parents in the room along the narrow corridor. No reply - and so he called again, and again, until he shuffled, slowly, from his room to find their room empty. Totally empty. No furniture; no bed;

no old oak wardrobes; no dark oak chest of drawers underneath the small-paned window. Nothing - only the smell of flowers, drifting up from the garden through the open window.

Thus did he pass his day, slowly, perplexed, shuffling - from room to room; from cottage to garden to outhouse to orchard and shed. There was food, in the kitchen - bread and almost stale cheese - and, as an old man unconcerned about his health, he ate them, as he drank a bottle of fine wine from the house's cellar.

There was no telephone - no means of modern communication with the outside world, as he, and his parents, had wished. Only books: thousands upon thousands of books, in the bookcases that lined the downstairs sitting room, the dining room, and hall, from floor to ceiling, and which, in stacks, had inched their way up the winding stairs that led to the four bedrooms, two of which were replete with, and given over to, glass-fronted high cabinets containing his father's prized antiquarian book. mineral, and manuscript collection. He was in his father's study reading from the old vellum manuscript that lay open on the large Oak desk beside a large quartz tetrahedron:

"In truth, Baphomet – honoured for millennia under different names – is an image of our dark goddess and is depicted as a beautiful woman, seated, who is naked for the waist upward. She holds in her left hand the severed head of a man, and in her right a burning torch. She wears a crown of flowers, as befits a Mistress of Earth..."

It was not that he had forgotten about his missing parents - or the emptiness of their rooms - for he had remembered they had died, over fifty years ago, now. He had been briefly married, then, for almost a year, with a newly born daughter. But they had died in the nearby reservoir, her boat overturned. So so long ago that no feelings now attached themselves to his memories, and - tired from reading - he, an old aching arthritic man, ambled out onto the veranda to sit in the worn Oak chair, to watch the Sun set behind the old cider Orchard, as it always did at this time of year. So many memories, so many that he drifted into sleep.

He awoke to find himself standing in his room, and although he had for some reason he did not know grown accustomed to the strange temporal peculiarities of his life, he was again surprised by his reflexion in his bedroom mirror.

It was of a naked young woman - quite beautiful - whose green eyes complemented the dark hair that framed her features and fell down to her shoulders. Then, there were thoughts in his - in her - head, and images, perplexing images of Life, strange life, seething, seeding, growing, spreading forth from acausal dimensions.

"I am you as you are me, " she - he - was saying, and he understood without knowing why.

"You brought me back to life, here," she - he - intoned, like an echo.

"How long has it been?" he asked.

"For you, only two of your days."

"It was the book, the crystal tetrahedron," he said.

"Yes!" she breathed out, and smiled. And he was forever gone from the causal world he knew.

The body no longer ached from age. Instead, there was desire; a strong, passionate, vibrant, youthful desire that needed to be fulfilled. The body, as the face, was quite beautiful, well-formed, and he was not surprised to find his - her - wardrobe full of women's clothes. She selected an outfit appropriate to the dark passion of her task and it was not long before she ventured forth to feel the warmth of the Sun on her face. It was an exquisite feeling, which she lingered for a moment to enjoy before her first stalking began. And, when satiated - her need fulfilled - she would, could, begin the task for which she had returned to Earth, to the causal, restricting, dimensions of the so-slow-moving limited beings born to die. She - ageless - had been this way before in those forming times before The Sealing when such Earth-bound beings were struggling to develop both speech and thought, and she was, with her new human emotions, pleased to find that such limited life, still, could be easily inhabited and controlled. Thus would she, ageless, be joined by others of her ageless shapeshifting kind.

So she walked across the old Orchard toward the lane that would take her down the hill to a village of living people where she might find someone, or many - some offer - to provide her with the causal energy she needed to keep her current shapeshifting form.

0: Red Moon Dawning

There was little that he could do, for she had bound his wrists, arms, and legs to the lattice frame that fenced one side of his small unkempt back garden. It had been a pretty, English cottage-garden, thirty years ago.

She had arrived that morning - early, as the Dawn of June broke over his Farm below the wooded hill where oldly named fields and scattered tumulii kept their waiting vigil. Arrived - to pound upon the heavy old Oak door which he, solitary, taciturn, rudely opened, gruffly saying "Yes!", disliking as he did unexpected, expected, visitors and guests. Then: then, his memory after that was confused, hazy, as if a dream-remembered fading with each dwelling upon some moment, some segment, of it. Confused; hazy - until he awoke to find himself in his back garden, lashed fast by bailing-twine.

How, then, had she done this? For he was tall, stocky, strong - even if nearing the sixtieth year of life - while she, strangely beautiful, seemed to his memory but a slim young woman of little obvious strength. Perhaps someone - or many - had helped her. But there was no memory, only the reality of being there, waiting, trussed, as a farm animal awaiting slaughter.

It was a long wait of hours that saw the hot Sun rise and the humid air sweat and thirst him. The cows in the nearby fields - their milking missed - were strangely quiet; his three Farm dogs absent. So he - annoyed, attacked, by flies - waited, waited, silently waited: for his prolonged yelling, profanities,

curses, struggles, had worn him down. She had not - no one had - arrived, been seen, in answer. So he in the old worn working clothes he had fallen asleep in, waited, waited, waited... until the setting Sun brought a red moon dawning. The garden came alive then, briefly, scent following scent - honeysuckle, primrose, night-scented stock - bringing with his exhaustion a memory of life thirty years before when his garden bloomed as it had bloomed in Summers when she his wife lived as she, they, had happily lived before Death came to claim her. Then, the brief memory - the too brief memory - gone, he was alone, again, amid the silence.

Alone: until a slight almost lispig sibillation seemed to chorus around him. No words, only a rushing as breeze among dry leaves. Then, quite suddenly, she was there, before him, and he gasped as if intoxicated by her presence, her scent, her beauty. A test, a test, only a test of dreams, memories, life, desire. She was offering him a choice - offering, without words, feelings or even somehow without thought. The vision, the vista, the strange alien life, was there - in him - as she looked at him, and faintly smiled.

Then, he was free from the causal bonds that bound him, and he momentarily staggered to fall to the dry dusty ground, to silently cry out as she smiled before quickly moonlight-walking with her, against his will, toward the summit of the hill. No signs, no portents, came forth from the starry sky above, as nothing visible would result when his earthly life has been drained away to leave only the shell, only the empty shell, dust to interstellar dust, cosmic atoms to cosmic atom to form, reform, be de-formed, cycle after aeonic cycle.

No, nothing visible: to human eyes. But the cattle in the fields; the Owl; the Farm dogs still cowering in a Barn, the resting sleeping moving hunting hunted life around briefly stopped to feel, to look around, as some-thing now unsealed ventured fastly forth again toward the distant blue planet of Earth as the causal energy she needed seeded itself within her causal female form, bringing the temporary renewal desired.

1: The Seeding

He knew the footpath well, even in the early morning Autumnal dark which reached out to him as he climbed up toward the summit of that wooded hill in rural England. There - tree roots reaching across the worn path; there - the overhanging branch that in the Summer of heavy foliage had been bent lower down to almost touch the broken, now rotten, wooden fence post on his left whose stretching wire had long been worn away by age, rain, frost, neglect. Here - the protruding rocks which snaked down from where the harsh contours of the old limestone Quarry above which had been softened naturally by three decades of abandonment and Nature's resurgent growth.

So he walked steadily, as befitted his age, clothes, in the hours before Dawn, used to the sound of nearby rustling - Deer, perhaps - and the (for him) natural sound of a calling Owl. There was no breeze, and no Moon on this mild mid-October night: but light enough to see by, for eyes used to dark, and senses, body, attuned to the natural being that was Nature. So he walked, as he had done for five and more years

from the village where he dwelled on the flat land that bordered the hills and which as pasture continued for miles until it met the sea. Walked - as always - alone: one custom of his reclusive life - scorning any and every artificial light, for he was, had become, almost like the life, the animals, that lived, dwelled. in the almost forgotten woods. Wiry, lean, but well-muscled and with long dark hair going grey which fell around his bearded face lined with nearly three score years of life and three decades of outdoor manual toil which had left his right wrist and hand rheumatic and his lungs a little worse for wear given the long hours spent toiling on dank, rainy, misty, foggy, cold and frosty days.

He did not now even mind the failing vitality of his life, the pains of age, for she - his wife, companion - died five Summers and a Spring ago, and he had grown used to his life alone. The nightly early walks; the work on a neighbours farm; the evening meal where he sat in his chair by the fire drinking glass after glass of Port until tiredness overcome him and he slept, fitfully and for a while. No, he did not mind, not any more - for there was recompense enough in the shrouding, shielding dark; in being-with the life around, in, of the woods, the hills, the very earth, which life he felt as he felt his breath drawn in on a cold and frosty cloud-free Dawn when he would, did, stand - had stood - on that hill's summit clear of trees, that hill's summit a valley, a wood and two paths distant, from where he could see the distant sea and the Sun as it rose bringing a soft joy that seeped into his very bones and a feeling, a feeling, of no longer being alone.

It was as if he belonged there, now - there, on that summit where the old ancient human circles of earth fortifications and trenches of thousands of years ago had been breached, reduced, covered, by the process of Nature's natural change.

He was not surprised to see her, there on the summit - standing on the raised mound of broken grass-covered rocks that marked the almost-centre of the not-quite-round upper fortifications. Standing there, as the dark grey of nearly Dawn gave way to the lighter grey that marked the cloud-obscured rising of another Autumnal Sun. She was dressed in green, as he was; but his olive green seemed drab beside her verdant richness, and as he slowly walked the last twenty upward yards toward her, the rising gentle breeze gently raised the ends of her auburn hair. She turned toward him then, and smiled.

No, he was not surprised to see her, standing, smiling: for she was his dream of the previous night; a woman, beautiful, mature yet of indeterminate age, whose green sapphire necklace both emphasized her green eyes and the tanned skin of her neck and shoulders. Not surprised to see her in that long verdant flowing dress that emphasized her well-proportioned voluptuous body.

But he was startled - momentarily shocked - when she came forward and touched him. He felt the warmth of her hand on his face; felt her soft fingers caress the dry roughness of his cheek. Felt the warmth, the scent, of her breath as she leant her face close to his, and all he could do was stand totally still with a palpitating heart and look into the cosmos of her eyes.

There was no need for words, he knew: for she was his thought and, in that dark numinous moment, the very thread by which he clung to life. She had been waiting for him - waiting for one like him to venture

forth close to those sinister pathways where she and her kind waited, dwelling, long century after long century, thousand year after thousand year until almost two Aeons had passed. So he felt and so he knew, beyond words and a rational understanding, and she kissed him then, as a lover might, draining away from him the pains of his age and becoming for him, in him, that warmth of languid repose felt when two lovers, tired, sweaty, sleep together naked body entwined with naked body.

He was not to know, then - as she caressed him and bared her nakedness for him to touch and feel and kiss and enter - that she needed his seed to bring forth into the world a new kind of life. But had he known, then, he would not have cared. So he let his passion, his need, guide him, until he, she, spasmed in ecstasy as the warm Sun rose higher to warm the human world that dwelt upon, around, the land below that old and sacred hill while They, waiting, were watching as they waited and watched, almost formless in those formless acausal spaces where they dwelt. Waited, waiting, for their bodies as she had waited for hers.

He lay with her, naked body upon naked body, for what seemed to him a long time as part of her seeped into him bringing without words an understanding of what he must do and why. She was offering him a choice, a genuine choice, and he was free to rise and dress himself and walk away even as some-thing, some kind of life, was seeding itself in the womb of her human body.

His choice was to stay; to do as she - as They - desired, and his first willing task would be to seek out and find some women of child-bearing age and bring them to this place so that others might seep through the ever-opening nexion to inhabit their bodies and to breed from them the new species They needed. Thus would he use those acausal seeds that she, in and through and after their joining, had planted in him - talents, skills, and magick: to entice, entrap, beguile, bewitch, ensnare. And thus would he, alive, be rewarded - with her warmth, her touch, her kiss, her body.

2: Zarid, The Pretender

Zarid's day began - as it usually did - with his Russian partner bringing him a cup of black coffee while he lingered and languished in his bed in the stuffy attic room of their house where he slept, surrounded by books and discarded clothes. Years ago Zarid had retreated at night to this room, his lair, to leave his common-law wife to sleep with their child in their room on the first floor of the large Edwardian house, and this retreat had become his habit, his routine, for he valued his privacy and his time, his priority his work at the nearby University, his obsession with seducing young women and his own secret submissive desires.

That morning of the damp overcast November day, he was tired, but aroused by the dream of his night, and, naked, he slunk down the steep winding stairs that led to the first floor and the bedroom of his wife. She was there - attractive, blonde-haired - dressing, and turned to look at him as he entered but he

wasted no time on endearments and pleasantries but instead caressed her breasts before telling her of his desire.

She was used to his ways, her early romantic love having given way to the strange practicalities of their strange shared life, and she wearily followed him into their large bathroom where he lay, on the tiled floor, waiting. She did not disappoint, and, squatting over him, urinated on his body and face while he took his own selfish pleasure with his hand. Satiated, he showered and obsessively groomed himself while she attended to the many tasks of her day, and it was not long before he, dressed in his usual ensemble of long black leather jacket, black shoes, grey shirt and dark trousers, departed to walk the mile to his University office, knowing that she, his companion of five years, would assuredly clean the bathroom. He kept promising to marry her, as she, and part of him, desired, for then his little lie of years ago to the University authorities, to others (and sometimes even to himself) would no longer lie in wait to trap him.

He was a tall man, merging seamlessly into his middle-thirties, whose hair - to his chagrin - has begun to thin and recede, and whose body already bore the marks of his life and occupation: stooped shoulders, from hours hunched over books, and a pale complexion occasioned by his indoor existence. He did not care that, until recently, his place of work had been a Polytechnic in a northern industrial city - for he had achieved his dream of being a Professor, a dream nurtured by his boyhood desire to escape from what he felt was the cloying, enclosed, dreary, mundane, banal, dead-end world of the old terraced streets of Leeds where his family had lived for generations and pursued their occupation as tailors, and which he left aged eighteen, never to return. So he was proud of his success, if not of his first name - a choice of his mother's in honour of her immigrant grandfather from the Ukraine - and eager, this morning of threatened rain, to seat himself at his cluttered untidy desk and compose his forthcoming lecture. Then, that task over, the Professor of Philosophy who taught ethics would gleefully plan another secret assignment with another of his female students.

It was not to be however, for, awaiting him in his modest somewhat cramped office in a rather anonymous modern building, were two unsmiling conservatively dressed middle-aged men in dark suits, one of whom introduced himself as a Detective Sargent named Malloy. As they sat opposite him, Zarid - in his rather more comfortable chair - nervously played with his fountain pen.

"We believe you know this woman," Malloy said, without preamble, showing him a photograph.

Yes, he did - but he held the photograph for a long time before saying, "She does seem familiar. I can't seem to place her, at the moment."

"Sandra Letton. She was a student here."

Zarid pretended to peer at the photograph again. "Ah yes. How can I help?" He smiled, rather unconvincingly.

"She went missing several weeks ago."

"Last I heard, " Zarid said, "she'd moved to work in Cheltenham. Some sort of Civil Service job, I think."

The two men look at each other knowingly before Malloy said, "We understand you had a relationship with her." It was not a question.

Zarid's face went a greyer shade of grey. "That was a while ago, now. Just a brief, casual thing."

"Indeed, so you say," Malloy replied, in a tone Zarid found both intimidating and disapproving.

"I haven't heard from her in a long time," Zarid lied, then instantly regretted saying it.

The two men betrayed no emotion. "Well," Malloy said, standing up, "if you do hear from her, we'd appreciate it if you would contact us," and handed him his card.

"Yes, yes, of course," Zarid replied, his hand shaking as he took it.

"Your public lecture next week," Malloy's hitherto silent companion said, in a cultured accent, as he and Malloy stood at the door. "Very interesting and pertinent topic."

"How did you know about that?" Zarid asked.

But the man only smiled, and then they were gone, from his office, as a mixture of conflicting emotions assailed Zarid. The glass of dry Madeira he poured for himself - from the small cabinet beside his desk - calmed him, a little, and he opened his notebook computer to read again her e-mail, received the evening before.

"Hi Zarid, how you doin? I bet you've kept those photos, haven't you, you naughty boy! It would be great to meet up asap, have a drink (or three!) and chat and maybe - something else, like old times! I'm in your area again for a while. By the way, I've got a wicked story to tell you about a friend of yours. Call me on....."

Without thinking, Zarid dialled the mobile telephone number.

"Sandra?" he asked in reply to the "Hello?"

"Yes?"

"Zarid."

"Hi! Can you meet me?"

"Yes, yes, of course!" he said, remembering their many trysts and her sexy body.

She gave a place, not far, and a time - that evening - and he, after that quick call which she quickly terminated for some reason he did not dwell on, spent the day caught between turmoil, expectation, excitement, and a wordless feeling of unease which he tried, unsuccessfully, to dissipate by concentrating on his work. He wrote a few pages of his lecture, gave up, stood for a long while blankly

staring out of his office window, and then sat, disinterested, through a tutorial with one of his students, before leaving the campus to wander into the centre of the city, unaware of the two men discreetly, and professionally, following him.

So he wiled away the late morning and the afternoon hours of that damp overcast November day dallying in various cafés, often taking from the inside pocket of his jacket one of the notebooks he always carried to record his musings and his thoughts, occasionally scribbling away, with his fountain pen, immersed in his worlds of philosophy and sexual fantasy, and smiling once - several times - as he remembered how Sandra had pleased him and how she had allowed him to wear her damp panties, and the suspenders he had bought her.

Then, in the descended darkness of that busy city, he wandered forth to be down by the river where no trees shadowed the footpath by a built-on ancient meadow and the wide railway bridge funnelled a noisy train. He was there, approaching the chosen spot at the chosen time, and saw her, in that diffuse glow sent forth from sodium city lights, waiting. She smiled in greeting, as he did, and he was within three feet of her forming words of humorous welcome when she unexpectedly and slowly tumbled forward.

He caught her, as she fell, but she was already dead, her warm blood staining his hand.

For a minute, and more, Zarid held her, not knowing what to do in the emotional and physical numbness that enveloped him. Then, he was aware of someone standing over him as he knelt still cradling her dead body; aware of others, nearby. They - everything - seemed to him to be moving slowly. Blue flashing lights; distant voices. "Single shot...back of head..." Then another nearer voice, which suddenly intruded upon him.

"Let's get you out of here. You're in serious trouble..."

Zarid recognized the speaker. It was DS Malloy.

3: Consequences

He disliked milky sugared tea, but Zarid drank it nevertheless - his third cup that morning - as he waited, shivering, in the warm brightly-lit, windowless, small and rather clinical interview room of his local Police Station. Waited, still dressed in the white forensic coverall given to him the previous evening, after his own clothes had been taken and before he was locked in a cell whose stark light was constant. Waited, as he had waited all of the evening and many hours of that night, awake, alone. Awake, alone - except for a startling dream during one short period of fitful sleep. He had dreamed that a beautiful woman was in the cell with him. She was chanting some name which he could not quite hear, and smiling at him, exuding a warmth that he could feel, physically feel; gesturing for him to come toward her, and he was about to do so when the cell door opened, returning him to a cold, severe, reality.

Thus was he waiting, again, for some questions; for answers, and thus did he sit that morning waiting for

one of the two men opposite him to say something, anything. They just sat there, their arms folded, looking at him as they had looked at him earlier the previous day in his office; sat there, watching, until Malloy - slowly, with a practised ease - took from the folder in front of him several photographs, laying them neatly out on the utilitarian table.

Zarid knew then that they, or someone, someone from the Police, had been to his house.

"Did you know she was pregnant?" Malloy suddenly said.

"No, no I didn't."

"Is that why you killed her?"

"This is ridiculous!" Zarid said.

"Is it? You lied about not having been in contact with her..."

"I can explain."

"I'm sure you can. Just what information did she pass onto you?"

"Information? What information?"

"You knew she worked at GCHQ, didn't you?"

"Where?"

"Don't play games. We found this letter, from her, in your house." From the folder Malloy produced a three page wordprocessed letter.

Zarid glanced at it. It was addressed 'My Dear Naughty Boy!' and signed, by hand in lilac-coloured ink, 'With love and kisses, Sandra.'

"I've never seen it before."

"So you say. She goes into some detail about her work. Classified, government work."

"Like I said, I've never seen it before."

"The evidence against you is piling up."

"Look," Zarid said, afraid and rather annoyed at the same time, "I'd like to see a Solicitor. I'm entitled to, right?"

"Under normal circumstances, yes. These are not normal circumstances."

"But - "

"Aiding and abetting someone who has supplied you with classified information is a serious offence," Malloy said. "Then there is the matter of your affairs with your students - an impressive record, which would come out during a trial. The matter of lying to us. The images we found on your computer. The drugs found at your home and in your office. The fact that your Russian partner doesn't appear to have a valid residence permit. And so on."

"I get the picture."

"But we're prepared," Malloy continued, unsmiling, and collecting the photographs and letter together, to place them back in the folder, "to forget about all these things, if you'll agree to help us."

"Me? Help? How? So you know I didn't kill her?"

"We're working on that assumption."

Relieved, Zarid eagerly asked, "How can I help?"

"We know she went to see a friend of yours, last week."

"Yes?"

"A certain Esmund Yaxley."

"I didn't know they knew each other," said Zarid, with genuine surprise.

"Whatever. But you know his reputation, his past, his activities."

"Yes, yes, of course. But - I've nothing to do with that."

"We know. But we'd like you to go see him, and find out what he knows."

"About Sandra?"

"Yes."

"See him, when?"

"The matter is urgent; a question of national security; so today."

From the briefcase which had been beside his chair on the floor, Malloy's silent companion produced a new, boxed, mobile telephone, two large bundles of twenty pound notes, and two official-looking forms.

Malloy pushed the money over to Zarid. "Expenses. We'll need you to sign this receipt, for the money, and this document, which you should read first."

Zarid read, and signed, as he was told.

"We will arrange transport to take you to the Station."

"But my work; tutorials..."

"All taken care of. A leave of absence has been arranged. And we've brought a few clothes from your house."

"My wife..."

"I'm sure you can think of something!" For the first time that day, Malloy smiled. "From now on, " he continued, as his companion returned the signed receipt and signed document to his case, "you'll be in contact with Malin, here."

"My contact number," Malin said, "is already stored in the telephone, which is connected, with the battery fully charged. I shall expect to hear from you this evening."

4: Nexions

The warmish Sun of mid morning caught Zarid as, carrying a small travel bag, he walked the short distance down to the Railway Station entrance from where the anonymous car, and driver, had deposited him. He was glad of the Sun, of his freedom, and lingered by the entrance for a while. Then, ticket bought with a little of the given cash, he joined the throng heading for the busy platforms. Once, he thought he saw the woman of his dream the previous night, and rushed toward her - but he was mistaken, and was left, feeling rather foolish, to wait as the others waited for the southbound train.

Esmund Yaxley. Why was he not surprised he might be somehow involved? The train arrived, on-time, and he was glad to sit within its warmth, to try to give some meaning, some semblance of meaning, to the rapid unsettling unforeseen events of the last two days. The warmth, the slight swaying motion and slight constant almost rhythmic noise of the train, his own tiredness, combined to relax him, a little, and once - to his surprise - he found himself overcome with sadness and a certain grief at Sandra's death. A single tear: then, unsettling questions to which he had no answers assailed him, and slowly - as fair-weather cumulus clouds pass slowly below the blue-sky of a languid almost breezeless English Summer day - he understood his situation.

He had been, was being, manipulated, and maybe - just maybe - his old friend Esmund could provide him with some answers. Esmund; the wiry but bearded and fit and well-muscled Esmund who had spent the last decade since their time together at University flitting from one place, to another, from one adventure to another, always seeking something that seemed - at least to Zarid - forever beyond his reach, and acquiring along the way a somewhat sinister reputation, aided by three spells in prison, for violence, association with a variety of disreputable and sometimes criminal characters, and his interest

in, and knowledge of, the Occult.

But, soon, physically and emotionally tired, Zarid was briefly asleep, dreaming of that beautiful woman again.

"What brings you here?" Esmund said, jovially. He was sitting on a bench in his well-tended cottage garden in the beginning twilight of what had been a warmish day.

"Just wanted to get away for a few days. Domestic things, you know."

"Is that so?" And Esmund looked at him quizzically.

Zarid sighed. "No, not really. Have you heard? About Sandra?" He sat down on the bench, tired from the exertion. It had been a long journey, involving several changes of train, and a taxi from the market town on the edge of the Costwolds to the small village where Esmund's small cottage lay, up a track inaccessible to motorized vehicles and near the top of a wooded hill. Esmund's Border Collie dog had eyed him suspiciously as Zarid had opened the somewhat rickety wooden gate, then decided not to bark and returned to his slumber by the Cherry tree.

"Yes, there was a brief report, on the news."

"I was there, when she died. She came to see me."

"She said she might," Esmund said.

"So you did know her then?"

"Yes."

"And that she was pregnant?"

"Would you like some tea? I have Keemun, and some rather nice Chinese Sencha. Or there is Darjeeling, of course."

"I was thinking of something a little stronger."

"Coffee it is then. Ethiopian, or Kenyan? Come on in." Esmund led him into the small, recently refurbished and very tidy kitchen. "Espresso, Americano, Cappuccino?" he asked.

"You're joking."

"No. One of life's many little civilized pleasures," and Esmund pointed to his one-group espresso

machine.

As darkness descended, they drunk their coffee, black, in silence - seated in comfortable armchairs before the bright warming log-fire of the cottage sitting-room - until Zarid said, "You seem quite comfortable and settled, here."

"Surprised?"

"Yes. Is this place yours?"

"Yes, and no. Belongs to a lady friend of mine."

"It figures!"

"So, about Sandra. What do you want to know?"

"Did you know that she was pregnant?"

"Yes."

"By you?"

Esmund smiled. An enigmatic smile. "Would you like to meet her, this lady friend of mine?"

"Possibly. I don't know. Did you know about Sandra's work?"

"Of course. She made no secret of it. She was very helpful, to us," and he looked at Zarid in that penetrating way he had.

"Us? Not one of your Occult groups?"

"Not really. Beyond all that mundane passé stuff. You really should meet her, you know."

"Who?"

"She wants to meet you. In fact, I've invited her here this evening. You'll be staying here, for at least tonight, I presume?"

"If that's OK with you."

"*Certainmont!* The guest room is ready. Shall I show you, then you can refresh up while I prepare us some dinner? Nothing special, just some Trout I liberated from a stream down the hill."

The guest room of low-ceilinged beams was small, with small windows, as befitted the small old cottage of thick walls, but it was - or seemed to Zarid to be - immaculately and tastefully furnished. There were crystal decanters, of Port and Sherry, on a small table by an armchair near the small fireplace where a

fire of coalite burned, spreading a warming glow and a restful warmth.

"Help yourself to an aperitif," Esmund said. "There's a jug, and basin, for a wash." And he indicated the old marble-topped stand in one darkened corner.

"Thank you," Zarid said, and meant it, surprised by the hospitality.

"Oh, and if you need a light to see by, there are some candles, in holders, there. I much prefer candlelight, don't you," Esmund said, and smiled.

Then Zarid was alone, amid the country silence, and he took advantage of Esmund's absence to try his newly acquired mobile telephone, surprised to find there was signal strength enough for him to make a call.

The meal of whole baked Trout, with lemon and parsley butter and fresh vegetables, over, they settled with their glasses of vintage Port by the fire in the candle-lit sitting room.

"This is all very civilized," Zarid jovially said.

"What did you expect?"

"Well - "

"Don't answer that!"

"Really, I would have visited you sooner, if I'd known."

"You are here now."

"Yes." Zarid felt very tired, almost exhausted, and he briefly closed his eyes before the exotic sensual scent brought him back from the verge of sleep.

She was there - the woman of his dream of the night before - standing beside Esmund who held her hand. She wore a green sapphire necklace and a long verdant flowing dress that emphasized her well-proportioned voluptuous body, and Zarid felt her warmth seeping out to touch him.

But something - some fear once deeply hidden, some nameless dread, something from his own ancestral past, and perhaps also some small knowing of his betrayal of his friend - overwhelmed him in the instant of that sensuous breeching searching touch so that he, gasping, screaming - while Esmund laughed - rose to stumble backward to lurch toward and out from the door to run down the path, falling, scampering over the gate, arms flaying, to the track and the road nearly a mile below where a single street light reminded him to pause and think and seek the best way homeward.

In his head: visions and vistas and words and sounds and laughter. She had touched him, if only for an instant, and all the answers he came to seek, he was sent to seek, he knew, along with many answers to questions he wished he did not know.

5: Homeward

Zarid could not sleep, nor relax, on the even longer journey back to his home. Twice - three times, more - he fumbled with his mobile telephone, and twice, three times - more - he did not call his contact as part of him desired. Would would he say? What could he say? The whole matter was beyond belief - unbelievable - and the more he thought about it, the more he became convinced no one, least of all Malloy and Malin, would believe him.

So he spent many hours of that tedious journey through the dark of night striving to concoct some convincing story that he might tell. One version had him denying everything; another - that Esmund and Sandra were simply lovers. Or that she was some Priestess, a Mistress of Earth, even, in one of Esmund's many sinister covens. Or that Esmund was going to sell the information Sandra had provided to one of his criminal contacts. But who, then, killed her, and why? The sad, even tragic, thing was that he did know, and this knowledge placed him in danger.

It was in the taxi - well beyond the hour of midnight - on the journey from the Railway Station to his home that he believed he had found a suitable deceptive answer. He would telephone Malin tomorrow, and pleased with himself, he finally began to feel a little relieved. It did not last, for, inside his house, there was no wife waiting to greet him, no child asleep for him to briefly watch, as he often did, before he ascended the stairs to his private eyrie - only Malloy and Malin and two armed Policemen.

"Where are they?" he anxiously asked as he tried to trawl his house before being restrained by Malloy.

"We've taken them into protective custody."

"Why?" he somewhat stupidly asked.

"You found what we wanted, haven't you?" Malin asked him.

"No. I don't know." He felt intimidated, and his resolve to lie began to weaken. He might - probably had been - followed to Esmund's cottage, as they - Malloy and Malin and those who controlled them - might, and probably already did, know the answers, or at least some of them. Why else had they taken his family into protective custody? Or was that itself a ruse, pressure, blackmail, a means to get him to talk? He was beginning to become confused, for his mind again became suffused with visions and vistas and words and sounds and laughter, for she - some alien being - had touched him.

"Can I see my wife?" he asked, trying to calm himself.

"Later, " Malin said, harshly.

You do realize, don't you, Zarid," Malloy interjected, softly, "that this is a matter of national security?"

"Possibly; yes."

"Therefore, surely your duty is to tell us everything that occurred, everything that you learnt."

"Here?"

"No."

So he was taken back to the Police Station where he sat, with another cup of sickly sweet milky tea in another interview room, with Malloy, Malin and another, older, well-dressed and unidentified man who stood by himself in a corner of that room.

"This interview will be recorded," Malloy said, somewhat unnecessarily, as he turned the machine on.

Zarid began, slowly, hesitatingly, telling of Esmund's admission of knowing that Sandra was pregnant; of him receiving information from her; but it was when he spoke of the women - recalling her - that his slow hesitation ceased, and the words flowed fastly, fluidly, from him as if he was being guided, for his mind became suffused again with visions and vistas and words and alien sounds.

"She who touched me is not quite human, you see, as Sandra's child was not, which I'm sure you already knew. They have this plan, you see, to breed a new not quite human species, half human, half alien. She - They, these shapeshifters - need human bodies, at least to begin with. They want to live again, to dwell, again, on Earth: to have form and to cease to be formless. To live, to feel, to love. To guide. Thus, They came back and They will come back, dwelling in human bodies. They need humans to begin with at least like I said as they believe humans need Them. To evolve, together, a symbiosis. That is the key. Symbiosis. They were here thousands upon thousands of years ago, at the dawning of our consciousness, but They were then unable to complete their work, for there were The Others, who opposed Them, and who opposed her - the prime nexion, The Beginning - and who did their own dark work, botched experiments, botched changing, and whose botched living experiments stayed. They got it wrong, you see, The Others; wrong - for they produced a strange, vindictive and twisted and unstable and mutant brood who survived on Earth by their mendacity and ruthless cunning and who made keeping their mutated blood pure into some kind of religion.

"Those humans were genetically-modified by these Others, the evil ones, and their mutant descendants are among us now, manipulating, controlling, planning. Slowly, they have planned, with their ruthless cunning, with the inbred slyness they possess, and over the last hundred years - especially the last seventy years - they, or their agents, have seized clandestine control of our governments, here in Britain, in America, using the power of money, of the Media - which are both under their control - and using the myths, the ideas, they have invented, to control humans, to manipulate humans not of their own kind. The first stage of their plan is for a world

government of control, and that is nearing completion.

"To this end they engineered wars, and get some people or, mostly, their own agents among humans to do vile things just so they can get governments to react to them and introduce more laws, more measures of control, more repression, more tyranny, and all in the double-speak name of "freedom and democracy", the false idols which their servants and their lackeys worship and obey, but which the mutants don't. But they have found willing and brutal allies in many lands - particularly in America. They - or their agents and allies - persecute, and torture, and hound, or revile, or discredit, or kill, or imprison on some pretext or other, anyone who knows their plans or who sees them for what they are. That is, they now have the power, the influence to destroy anyone, any person, any group, any country, they want to - to get them out of the way.

But She - They, her shapeshifters from the acausal - want humans to be genuinely free, as evolved individuals; so She has come back as They will come back to liberate humans from those, The Others, the evil ones, and their mutant servants, so that humans might evolve and take their destined place among the stars and particularly among the acausal dimensions. The mutant, materialistic, causally-tied spawn of The Others, you see, have forgotten their origins, lost their true past, do not know who manufactured them, changed, them, made them what they were and are, but they do fanatically believe they are chosen, that it is they who should, who must, who have been chosen to, rule this world and its peoples, whatever the human cost and the misery they cause. They really are the spawn of evil; agents of evil - and She and her siblings will stop these bastard descendants of The Others who cannot ever reach out to, or travel among, or exist in, the timeless blissful beautiful realms of the acausal. But humans can - and can eternally exist there, in the acausal when the new symbiosis is complete."

He was finished, exhausted, himself again, and saw Malloy looking at Malin with a look of disbelief.

"I see," Malloy said, annoyed, before stopping the recording.

"You don't believe me - all that - do you?" Zarin quietly said, uneasy and perplexed.

"Frankly, I'd have thought an intelligent man like you would have come up with a better story than crap and fantasy like that." Turning to the unidentified man he said, "We're finished here, I think?"

The man nodded, and left the room.

"You disappoint me, you really do," Malloy said to Zarin.

Zarin was taken to a cell, where he waited, nervously, for something to happen. For what seemed like hours, nothing did, and he gradually succumbed to his exhaustion, to dream of the beautiful woman. She was speaking to him without words and he felt her moving closer, closer to him until he smelt again her quixotic perfume - but the dream, the beautiful vision, was snatched away from him as two men entered his cell to bind his arms behind his back and tie a dark hood over his head.

He tried to struggle, but the injection he was given soon took effect and he was taken through the

corridors of a curiously deserted and darkened Police Station to a waiting van.

"Nothing happened here," Malin said to Malloy as, outside in the cold night air, they watched the van being driven away.

"Your people checked the foetus, I take it?" Malloy asked.

"Perfectly normal," Malin lied.

Esmund knew he was under surveillance, and the reason why - even before Zarid's arrival - and his years of experience of living on and often beyond the fringes of the law had made him prepared for most eventualities. So, from behind the false wall in the cellar of his cottage, he collected the items he considered he might need to evade and escape from those watching him so that he might keep the rendezvous with Raynould on that ancient hill circle where she, their dark goddess, had first touched Raynould and where in the coming hours of darkness she would give birth to his half-human child. For a few seconds, Esmund felt a little jealous of the man he had never met, but he calculatingly placed that human emotion aside.

He selected a variety of weapons - his favoured long-barrelled revolver with hand-loaded rounds; a handy pump-action shotgun; a grenade or two - and a passport, and driving license, for a new identity as well as a small rucksack containing a variety of clothes, bottled water, and toiletry items. Then, as the bright Sun of that early morning rose into the clear sky that had brought the nightly frost, he - revolver in hand, shotgun slung over his shoulder, rucksack on his back - sauntered casually out into the garden, followed by his dog.

"Stay!" he said, and his canine friend obeyed. There would, Esmund knew, be a woman, a lover from the village below, to care for his dog, for however long he was away.

Scorning the path, Esmund vaulted over the fence into the steeply sloping grazing field that adjoined the eastern side of his garden and began to run up, and right at an angle, toward the summit of his hill. There was no cover there for those who might follow him from below, and he had run almost two hundred yards when he saw them begin their delayed pursuit. He had assumed there would be others, covering the summit and the descent from the hill, and he was correct, for he had almost reached to tall centuries-old spreading Ash that grew beside the old summit pathway when he saw two armed Policemen who moved to block his way.

"Armed Police!" one of them shouted, raising his weapon. "Stop! Armed Police!"

Esmund did not stop. Instead, he dropped down, took aim and quickly fired three rounds from his revolver. The bullets hit their targets and he rose to run forward. One of his opponents was dead, shot in the forehead, but the other, only lying injured, was struggling to raise his weapon just as Esmund

reached him. Esmund pointed his revolver at the man's head saying, "Sorry mate, nothing personal," before taking the man's holstered Glock pistol and his HK MP5 submachine gun and side-stepping to turn and fire at the armed plainclothes Police Officers still running up the hill toward him. He shot one in the leg before moving sharp left and sprinting toward the woods that covered part of the western side of the hill.

The woods gave him the opportunity he needed - for he knew them well - and he zigzagged down, through the trees, stopping once to stand and listen. He heard shouts, above, and the sound of someone, or two, noisily moving through the leaf-litter and breaking small fallen twigs. There would be Police dogs, and a helicopter, and more men, he knew - but not now; not for a while. So he made it to his first destination without being seen: a path beside a stream to take him to where a vehicle waited, left for just such a time as this, hidden in a rented barn.

It did not take him long, in the old inconspicuous Land Rover, to reach the junction where the narrow rutted pot-holed tarmaced lane that for nearly two miles had weaved between fields of pasture gave way to a minor road, and he turned westerly, driving until he found a place suitable enough to stop. It was a wide gated field entrance, and he parked to begin his change of identity. It took him longer than he remembered to trim his beard with scissors and then completely shave it off, but - pleased with the results - he changed his shirt, and jacket, and, with a tweed cap upon his head, his weapons out of sight, the transformation was complete.

No one stopped him as he travelled South, and he became just one driver in one of the multitude of vehicles that thronged the roads of England.

6: Aperiatum Terra, Et Germinet Atazoth

Esmund was early for the rendezvous, in the hour before dusk, and spent a cautious hour scouting out the area. He had parked his vehicle down a secluded track near the foot of the hill, taking only his rucksack, his revolver with spare ammunition, the Glock pistol, and a hand-grenade, before bobby-trapping the vehicle with his remaining grenade.

Satisfied with his reconnaissance, he settled down to wait by a spreading but wind-twisted Hawthorn bush, a good distance away from the hill's ancient fortified summit. There was the crescent Moon above the western horizon, and then stars in the clear darkening sky, and he continued to wait in the cold darkness for what seemed, and what was, a long time, before stretching himself and moving forward a little distance. They were, by now, many hours late, and he was deciding how much longer he would wait when he sensed someone behind him, and spun round, revolver raised, and ready.

Nothing; no one; no sound. And so he returned to his cautious waiting vigil until he saw something, some shape, fastly coming toward him from the summit of the hill. The shape was tawny white-ish and as it got nearer Esmund saw it was an Owl. There was no sound, just that bird of prey coming straight toward him and looking straight at him. He was surprised by its size, its wing-span, and it was within only three feet of him, its talons extended as if to land on his head, when he instinctively ducked down

and it veered away to his left. When, only seconds later, he looked again it was gone, down - he assumed - into the copse of trees that clung to the lower slopes of the hill.

Then she was standing beside him, and he rose to his feet without fear. She kissed him, then, and pressed her body into his, her tongue caressing his, and her hand stroking his face.

"We are alone and no harm can come to you here," her melodious voice said as unspoken words within his head, and she gave him a vision of her past hour and more.

Of how she had gently painlessly given birth while Raynould watched. Of how he had taken the human-looking girl-child to a place she had provided for him where his role would be to care for that child as he would care for the other such children born that night and in the few days to all those women - except Sandra - who were seeded. Of how those children had grown quickly in their adopted wombs and how they would, as children, also quickly grow over the next few years until they were ready enough to go forth into the world, each one a nexion waiting to open, to be physically seeded, and to seed in their various and magickal ways those powerful acausal energies which would, in causal-time, break down the barriers of The Others and steadily weaken through many causal presencings the causal that now held so many humans in thrall. Thus would her children gather the allies they needed, in secret at first; thus would they begin the great change that would break-down the very causal order itself; and thus would they breed a new and more evolved race, a new species to seed themselves among the very stars.

There would be those who feared this; those who hated her children and her allies. Those prepared to fight until the last drop of human blood. Those hate-filled ones who would strive to find, to ruthlessly hunt, down her children and their children's children, just as they had found Sandra whom Esmund had seeded: the Sandra whom she changed with her acausal and shapeshifting arts after he, magically adept, had called to her, longed for her, one night having felt her presence, her return to Earth. So had he touched her essence, and so she found him, came unto him, while he lay asleep in Sandra's arms, and so did she change that life that only a few causal moments earlier he and Sandra had brought forth into causal-being.

"But you have proved yourself, to me," her melodious voice said as unspoken words within his head, "and you henceforth are my companion and only with you will I henceforth share this my physical form."

So she kissed him again, and he saw as if in replay his escape from his - from her - cottage, and felt again his one jealous moment, as he saw Sandra's death and Zarid being bound, tied, hooded, and injected. But he, Esmund Yaxley, was human - all-too-human, perhaps - and he surrendered his body and his love to her, there, on the dark night while a crescent moon descended, as Sirius did, into that almost-Winter's starry sky.

He awoke to find himself naked under a warm duvet in a bright room of large windows which showed,

below, a cityscape under a clear blue sky of an English Winter. For a moment, he felt disorientated, as if both Time and Space had somehow slipped or been distorted and, after looking out of one of the windows which, except for a door, almost seamlessly surrounded the room, he lay down again on the large bed.

He slept then, and dreamed - of the past, a present and a future - and awoke to find himself hot, as the city below basked in the warmth of early Summer. He understood then, in that moment, and was not surprised when she, suddenly, was there beside him, incarnate again, naked in the bed, pressing her body into his and kissing him as they made sensuous love in that, his, city-penthouse. There was, he knew, on a floor below, a child, a female child, growing, nurtured by his lover's breast milk and cared for by her sibling Nanny, as there was, in the city, many deeds of hate and violence while they, the lovers, loved as they loved, entwined within each other's body and each other's being, just as there was, suddenly and for him, no distinction between Time, place and Space: no him, or her; only a being which lived as it, they, as Them, The Dark Gods, lived: within the acausal Times and Spaces. He was alive, then, joyful, ecstatic, breeding with her, in her, the nexions that were needed; alive, joyful, ecstatic, while Zarid - his knowledge a danger to his captors - was languishing, drugged, in some enclosing psychiatric cell, and Sandra his former lover lay dead, her body and her foetus clinically, methodically, dissected.

Thus did they, her - his - enemies, still seek him with a lustful hate and need, and thus did she - his new lover, mistress - protect him as only she could protect him, and thus did he, when he awoke, feel again the pain of his new lover's absence.

So he dressed in one of his many expensive hand-made suits to linger awhile on a floor below with his three young daughters while they played as precocious children played, and their protecting shapeshifting Nanny waited, silent, smiling, watchful, in a corner of that plush room. Soon, they his daughters would venture forth, each to a life, a world, a task, of their own - as he would return to this building to seed her again as the acausal seeped ever more deeply in the causal world he once knew and loved.

He knew, then, as he walked out that particular time-slipping morning into the busy street of that capital city under the warm Sun of an English Summer, that Raynould had been found, caught, tortured, and killed, and his - her - daughter captured. So he was not surprised to find her, his lover, walking beside him as he walked among the bustling hordes of city-dwelling human beings.

There was a human pain, an anguish, in her, which he felt, and he held her hand as they walked along that street where several men, and women, stared, to stop, to look at her, awed by her beauty, her being, her scent. Then, suddenly, he was with her in a bright forensic room where her first-born daughter lay, stretched out and naked and restrained, but alive, on an operating table while men in white gowns and masks stood around and two men in suits stood by a door in one corner.

They, the men in gowns, were cutting the young woman, her daughter of child-bearing age, and she bled, as a human would - as another scalpel was raised, a probe extended to reach into her body. Her daughter turned, then, and smiled - aware of her mother's presence - but the humans saw only Esmund who, angry, snatched the scalpel to slash wildly at throats, faces. The two men in suits came toward him,

one - Malin - brandishing a gun, but Esmund was too quick for them as he raged toward them to knock them to the ground, and the carnage - his berserker carnage - was soon over, even as an alarm sounded, the last gesture of one human scientist now lying dead.

Then Esmund, his lover and her daughter were gone from that particular and causal Time and Space, to leave only questions: only more unanswered perplexing questions for Malin and his ilk.

7: Agios Ischyros Baphomet

They - Esmund, his lover and her daughter - rejoiced, and he was with them for what to him seemed a very long time in a place within acausal Time and Space. But it was only a few heartbeats of his dense causal Earth-bound life that passed while he languished in a beautiful blissful timeless eternity where his knowing, his feeling, stretched, or seemed to stretch, from one end of his Earth-containing Galaxy to the other, and where he was, in that singular acausal instant, all life, all living, all beings-coming-into-being, all the living life given and giving birth.

Then he, changed in some way he did not then understand, was back in his, in her, bed, in that bright city penthouse, while her naked and already healed daughter kissed him and he entered her, taking her human virginity, as her mother lay beside them, touching him, one lover to another. He had never known such bliss, such love, such existence, before in his own brief causal existence, and he lingered within her, this young woman, even as his seed seeded her womb which would bring forth a new kind of life. *Agios Ischyros Baphomet, Agios Ischyros Baphomet* he, his very being, intoned.

Causal Space and causal Time slipped again, as he knew they must - and he was sitting outside his modest mud-brick dwelling in the shade of a Palm tree dressed in a galabiyyah while, nearby, the younger of his two new young half-Nubian daughters played amid the desert sand and one of his two female domestic helpers carried a large pot to bring back water from the nearby artesian well. His afternoon would be filled with duties, as he instructed his two young male students in the ancient skills and arts of esoteric acausal magick, and - despite his satisfaction with such duties and his role - he still missed his former brief enchanted life in England. It was but a necessary stage - and part of him, most of him, had desired to return with her to her acausal spaces even as her daughter gave birth to their first child. But he stayed, for he was not yet ready or able of his own free will to forever pass beyond, to exist beyond, the causal; stayed, while she herself returned as she the primal nexion had to return to become the strange life-force burgeoning within them all. Stayed, for he would be, as he now was, the beginning of that hidden reclusive Order which would, when the causal Time was right, emerge as the Old Order faded, crumbled, and died, aided and partly caused by those others of the new half-human symbiotic race who now dwelt with their growing number of children, and human helpers and allies, on every continent on Earth.

Already the presence of this new acausal centre, this spreading nexion, was felt, as her daughter - now his wife, and Nubian - achieved a local, and for the moment, clandestine following, there on the fringes of that desert. Such beauty; such wordless power. Men, women, loved, obeyed her - and she had only to

think a thought for them to strive to make it real just as each one of them would willingly, gladly, give their life for her, knowing the blissful acausal life which would await them. Thus it was as it had been, there, once before - and as it would be again, on another planet in another causal Time and Space.

Soon, he would as foretold retreat into his own world of reclusive and secret desert-dwelling teaching to leave her majestic, ageless with her ageless daughters as their influence spread, as it would spread until her, their, causal Earth-bound tasks were achieved. But, for now, he was happy to prepare her way: she who would open, be, the new nexion to presence the acausal fully upon the Earth, bringing thus that futuristic culture, that star-travelling, star-dwelling, culture that many humans had dreamt about, beginning as such a culture was of new explorations into the very acausal itself, explorations which could, which would then in that future causal-time - as it would for Esmund and all of his esoteric kind now when they had achieved their Earthly goal - lead them toward and into the next stage of their journey of evolution.

"You know," Malin said as Zarid lay, in his windowless cell, half-stupefied by the drugs forced into him, "and considering your ancestry you should know, you had it the wrong way round; inverted. We're the good guys."

"Are you? Are you really?" Zarid managed to say. "But you didn't have to kill her or her unborn child, did you?"

But Malin only smiled and left to let three men enter. They did their work quickly, quietly, efficiently, and Zarid was soon dead, only one more casualty of a war that had already begun.

Algar Merridge
Year of Fayen 118

Note: This brief MS, written by an Adept, and entitled *In The Sky of Dreaming*, is, like *The Deofel Quartet* an instructional text written in a non-conventional fictional form. One of its purposes is to outline the reality of The Dark Gods, a reality somewhat obscured by the literary mystifications and misapprehensions of Lovecraft and others.

Sabirah

1

She could smell the rain even though it was still many many miles and hours distant, and - as the Sun descended down to bring the shadows of night upon her chosen town - she carefully left her house in Church Street. It was not that she needed the money, or even, then on that evening, the life-force that she would drain away from him until he almost expired. Rather, she desired - craved - the excitement that another such encounter would most certainly bring.

The streets and paths of Shrewsbury centre were alive, for it was warm and humid: following the end of another bright and sunny Summer's day, and the people she hid from during the daylight hours were taking advantage of their evening. Couples - mostly young - happy in their love; groups of friends, enjoying companionship, life, and the many varied gifts of such a modern town where many Cafés and Inns in the Summer season placed tables outside, such were the hopes for, the memories of, balmy English nights. And she was, there, among them, only one more face, only a beautiful face of curvaceous lips, only a slim - if elegantly dressed - silhouette, there among the throng where the lane from her town centre dwelling took her past Butcher Row toward the steps that led to the medieval and old timber framed houses of Fish Street.

Behind her, as she descended those well-worn stairs, there was laughter from among the people seated on their seats outside the Bear Steps café, and she was about to turn left to walk down the street when a group of five casually dressed young men sauntered toward her as they egressed that narrow shut of overhanging buildings named Grope Lane.

"Give us a kiss, darling!" one of them shouted as he stopped - slightly swaying in his inebriation - before her, blocking her path.

"Does your baby-sitter know you're not in your cot?" she quipped, pushing past him and deliberately walking down Grope Lane while his companions laughed.

"Who the fuck do you think you are, talking to me like that!" he shouted, angry, his pride hurt, as he - turning to follow her - caught her arm.

"I would advise you to let go of my arm," she said, slowly, staring into his eyes.

Instead, he pushed her into a doorway while his still laughing friends gathered round.

"Go on!" one of them said. "Give her one!"

"Show us your tits!" said another.

"Yeah - show us!" laughed another.

"You wanna see 'em?" the insulted man laughingly asked his friends.

"Yeah!"

"Sure!"

"Go for it!"

So he moved to rip away the thin covering of her expensive dress whose upper part barely concealed her fullsome breasts, but she only smiled at him as her slender right hand caught his left wrist to suddenly twist then bend his strong youthful arm back. The crack was audible, and she pushed him away where he fell onto the cobbles of that lane, groaning in his agony.

She stepped forward then, out of the doorway and, instinctively, the young men moved away until - for some dark reason on that warm languid humid night - another primal instinct assailed them to make one of them lunge toward her, wielding a knife, while another went to grasp her by the neck. The knife caught her, plunged into her left side, but she calmly pushed both attackers away with such force that they bounded against the opposite wall before raggedly falling to the ground. Then, just as calmly, she removed the knife from her side. There was no blood.

They knew fear, then. A cold, stark, wordless body-and-mind creasing fear that made those standing back off and those sprawled on cobbles crawl away as fast as they could move using hands, feet, knees. Such fear: to take them then away, running, stumbling, panicking, down Grope Lane toward a bustling High Street where, even then among the crowds and the bright street lights, they - faces the colour of corpses - did not stop.

Thus did she throw the knife away, before continuing, alone, on her journey.

2

She was pleased when he, her tryst for that night, quickly opened the door in answer to her ringing of the bell. It was a small house, terraced, in a lane above Town Walls and he - in his late twenties, unmarried - was smartly dressed, as she had asked. A lock of her strawberry-blonde hair had fallen across her face - the only sign of her previous encounter - and she, smiling, swept it aside, saying, "Are you going to let me in, then?"

"Yes. Yes, of course."

"I thought we might have a drink here, before we went on to the restaurant."

"What?" Then - "Yes, yes, of course."

She had made him uneasy - as was her intent - and she, rather amused, watched as he, trying to find glasses, a suitable bottle of wine, bumbled rather nervously about the small sitting-room and kitchen of his house, furnished according to his modern minimalist taste.

She had been sitting, the previous night - as she often did - in a dim corner of an Inn in Butcher's Row, waiting. Waiting, dressed as she almost always was on such nights: exotic perfume; jewelled necklace; red lipstick upon her lips; a dress contouring her body, revealing of both breasts and thighs. He had arrived straight from the Solicitor's office where he worked and saw her almost immediately. She did not smile, then, as his senses drunk-in the sight of her body, but instead she turned away. So he - and she - waited, as a few more people arrived, conversations were begun, continued; alcoholic beverages were consumed. And it was as her own, before her, was finished, that he made his expected move.

"Would you like another drink?" he asked, after he in his working but still expensive suit, sauntered, casually, over to her table.

"Yes," she smiled.

"G and T?"

"Rum. Oh, and make sure it is Pusser's. They have some."

He looked - momentarily - surprised, which pleased her, and on his return she surprised him further by saying, "Would you like to take me out to a restaurant for a meal, tomorrow evening?"

"Yes," he said, hesitatingly.

"You seem surprised," she said.

"Well. No - not really."

So she had named a restaurant, and a time, asked for his address, and spent one half of one hour asking about his life, his career, his aims, while he sipped his large glass of White wine and she drank three tots of neat Rum. "I shall call for you, tomorrow, then," she had said, kissing him briefly on his cheek, before leaving him seated, and not a little bewildered, in that Shrewsbury town centre Inn.

The memory pleased her as she sat on his sofa waiting for him to do his duty and provide her with a glass of fine wine, and - when he finally did - she took it gracefully and indicated that he should sit beside her. He - normally so arrogant, so determined, so full of pride - silently did as commanded, and it was not long before she put down her own glass and his and drew him to her to kiss him, her tongue seeking his. So his unaccustomed nervousness gave way to an intense sexual arousal, and it was then that she, gently, pushed him away, saying, "Shall we go and eat, now, and - afterwards - I would like you to spend the night with me at my house."

He was hers, then, and they spent a pleasant enough evening eating fine food and drinking fine wine in a

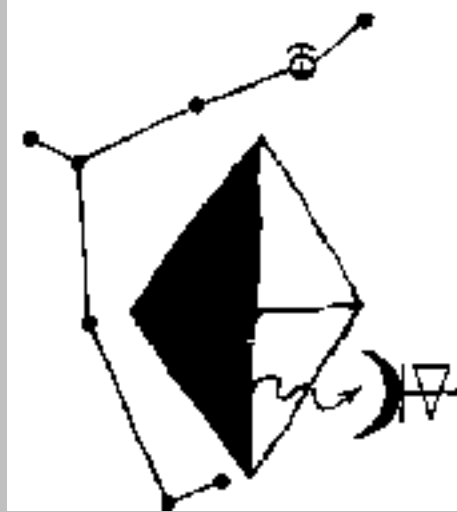
fine and elegant restaurant, while he talked about his life, his dreams, his hopes, and she listened as she listened, until the time came for them to leave when a taxi conveyed them to her own town house where darkness awaited. There were only candles, which she lit to light their way as she led him, not - as he expected - to her bed upstairs but down into the warm clean brick-vaulted cellars that fanned out from beneath her dwelling to stretch beneath the road above, and it was there, upon an antique chaise-longue, that she possessed him after stripping away his clothes.

He was very willingly possessed, for he ardently desired her body and let himself be held down, naked, while she removed her silky thong and lifted up her dress to sit upon him after easing his penis inside her. Thus did she and gently - and, he felt, lovingly - drain from him one bodily fluid to then lie beside him and kiss him for a long time, sucking from him his breath of life until there remained only a little of the vital energy keeping his body, his mind, alive. She left him then deeply deeply exhausted to sleep in the darkness while in a niche a large quartz crystal slowly began to glow. Thus did she satisfied venture forth upstairs to bathe so that when the time for the Sun's rising arrived again she was alone, replenished, ready to dream as she dreamed in her darkened room of those alternate realms of her birth, her alternate existence, knowing that he, her opfer below, would provide for her in the days, the weeks, to follow while his own weak life-force lasted. And then, his purpose fulfilled, her crystal charged, his money, property, gone, he would be cast off to return to what remained of his Earthly life, where he - as others before him - would in the following weeks languish for months, alone, tormented by nightly sleeping travels into dimensions, places, where no unprepared human should ever go, until - at last, as an almost welcome release - he would die, all alone in the night. There would be no questions; no crime; only one more man, dead, alone.

Thus would she, and only then, return, in the dark of her night, to some Inn - some enclosing warm dim place where young and middle aged men went or gathered - to sit, to preen, to wait. And when she decided her chosen town or city was denuded enough, she would move on, through the years, the decades, centuries, living as she lived, one being of pleasure, of darkness, death, love and night, awaiting he who might - who could, who would - freely, willingly, travel with her to that acausal place of her birth.

She would be free then, returned, at last - as he, her chosen, would be, become, a new eternal being, birthed.

Algar Merridge
119 Year of FAYEN



Jenyah

The warm Sun of middle-Spring warmed her as she walked down Broad Street in the county town of Ludlow to the entrance of the Feathers Hotel with its early seventeenth century timber façade. The oldness - the dark oak beams, the never-quite-straight walls, the sense of enclosing dimness - still pleased her, although the changes made during the decades of the last century did not, and she resisted the transformation that would have made the young man at Reception, in his shiny ill-fitting inexpensive suit, follow her unbidden to her room.

Instead, she kept her appearance, and the accent, of an attractive - but not too attractive - mature lady of the County set who probably owned a horse, or three, stabled somewhere in the grounds of her large country house, and the registration procedure lasted no more than a dull five minutes. He was too young, anyway, unable to provide the diversion, the passion, and the acausal-energy, she needed, for already the faint trembling in her hands had begun: the first reminder of her enduring timeless need. And even as she walked up the stairs alone, carrying her small travel bag, she began to feel the centuries weighing down upon her, ageing her ever so slowly.

But she had planned well, as she always did, for there would be men, tonight, some eager - as they almost always were - for that thrill of a tryst in the long evenings following their meetings or conference or whatever it was that drew them away from their homes and their wives. A few lies; one betrayal - first, or one among many - it did not matter to them; for there was their pride, their lust, their still living animal nature. No evolution, upwards: except for those few whose wordless perceiving bade them walk away, or those few who though enticed still had strength enough to resist. No, no evolution, upwards - she knew, except for such few. And she smiled, remembering the delightful dreams she gave to those few.

So she prepared herself as she always prepared herself while she sat in her room alone, knowing that her long-serving servant would tidy her room and see to all formalities after her chosen task was complete.

Thus did she prepare: her dress suited to the young woman she was, as were the shoes, and the make-up which she, with expert ease, applied to her face and which reflected the times which had changed this particular chosen and familiar Hotel. And when she was ready she descended the stairs to enter the recently refurbished Bar where gathered some of the already alcohol-soaked conference-attendees.

The room - with its low ceiling, its carved oaken-bar, its discreet lighting - did not particularly displease her, and she sat alone, in a plush wooden armchair, at a table in one corner, already noticed by several of the Bar-thronging men. Perhaps it was her esoteric perfume. Perhaps it was her short purple dress, which seemed to scintillate in the light and which clung to the voluptuous contours of her youthful body. Perhaps it was the way she walked in her stiletto shoes. Or the red lipstick upon her lips. Or her long red hair that fell around her shoulders. Whatever it was, it was not long before a man came to greet her.

His suit was not inexpensive, as his blond hair had only just begun to recede and - to any ordinary woman, perhaps - he would have appeared as not unattractive; a fairly prosperous youngish family man, making his way in the Corporate world.

"Hi, I'm James," he said, self-assuredly and by way of introduction as he stood by her table holding a flûte of champagne. "Can I get you something to drink?"

It was not the worst gambit she had heard, and she smiled at him. "Yes. A Tom Collins."

"Certainly!"

So he left to place her order to return to ask, "May I join you?"

"Why yes! Are you here for the conference?"

"Hmm," he muttered.

"You do not seem particularly enthusiastic."

"I'm not. Bloody boring."

"But necessary and required."

"Unfortunately, yes." He drained his glass, and signalled to the barman to bring him more. "May I ask your name?" he enquired as he sat looking at her nipples, which - erect - prominently impinged upon the thin material of her dress.

"Jenyah," she breathed, softly, letting the scented warmth of her breath touch his face as she leaned toward him.

He smiled then, sure of his success, but began fumbling with his wedding ring.

"Perhaps," she said, now knowing and having sensed enough, and as loud laughter from the three men standing at the Bar reached them, "it would be agreeable to you if we went back to my house?"

"Why, yes. Of course. Certainly!"

"My car is outside."

"Splendid!"

So she led him out from the side entrance of that Hotel to where her car was parked among some others - elegant in its refined blackness and whose tall muscular chauffeur - her servant, his eyes hidden behind designer sunglasses - held open the rear door for her and her chosen companion of the evening. Thus were they conveyed in comfort on that long journey through the dark of the country night until they reached that steep hill of the narrow lane and her house above a valley.

He did not see much of its old-fashioned but clean and fastidiously tidy interior, and neither did he desire to, for his already intense sexual desire had been heightened by the luxury of her car and the wealth so obvious from her dwelling, and he willingly let himself be led along a narrow skein of corridors to a panelled room whose only light came from a burning, large, coal-fire. Even the oppressive heat nor her strength did not concern him as she roughly pushed him toward the large Oak bed to salaciously rip away his clothes and remove her own.

Her beauty of body - her voluptuousness, her sexuality - was everything he imagined, everything he desired, and her intoxicating scent seemed to increase until he was wrapped, cocooned, within it. She was upon him, then, holding him down, his arms outstretched and pinned to the silken covering of the bed by her hands wrapped around his wrists while she manoeuvred her body to place his erection inside her where he felt the warmth of her warm sensuous wetness. For what seemed a long long moment he experienced an intensity of joy, of physical pleasure, such as he had never known before, making him close his eyes in exultation as she moved upon him. But then - then as he arched his back again in sheer physical exultation and delight - intense pain followed by agony engulfed him and blood from his severed penis flowed out of her.

But she was laughing, laughing, still holding him down, overpowering him as he writhed in pain, until she moved to lick his bloody wound - cauterizing it with her strange oral fluid - to kiss him, and it was in that briefest of brief moments before he fainted - weak, and overcome with the shock of this, and of his seeing - that he saw not a young sensuous woman but something else, not quite human, draining away the acausal-energy of his life through her blood-soaked kiss.

She, satiated, left him then to the ministrations of her servant who effortlessly carried the limp and bloodied but just-living body down stone steps and along a short brick-lined dimly lit tunnel to an unlit cell whose thick and still sturdy iron door bars were pitted with the seeping rust of age. There was a bed, a bucket, a stained blanket - but nothing else - and it was here, amid the cold dank stifling blackness, that he would hours later awake, shivering, lying on the slimy cobbles of the floor, while she - freshly bathed and dressed - walked outside, smiling, happy, renewed, among the wind-speaking moonlit trees of her dark ancestral hill.

There, in that unlit cell, he would live, for a while, while his usefulness lasted. And it was there in the first of his many many days that he would cry out into the darkness for hours, until exhaustion overcame him. There did he languish, lamenting his stupid choices, his lies, his betrayal of his wife and family. There he would briefly vainly plead to God, to any god, deity, for release, and there he would eat and drink the little that was provided him, pushed through the bars of his door by her servant, as it was there - in that unlit blackness - he would hear, or thought he heard, the weak sighs, the cries, of another, until, one day or one night, the soft sighs, the soft distant muffled cries, came no more to torment him.

There he would he close his eyes, sometimes, in sleep when what little strength remained failed him. And there: there were the nightmares, the pitiless nightmares of how she still enticing and scented would come upon him in the blackness to kiss him to suck from him the remaining drops of the life within. He would sleep then, peacefully - but only for a while, only for a while: longing after that short moment of rest never to awake, again.

The hot Sun of late Summer warmed her while she sat outside the trendy Café, waiting. Her chosen and familiar Hotel was nearby, and she would retire to it soon, as darkness descended upon the city. But, for now, she was content enough to let the warm Sun please her, as if almost always did as its healthy rays reached her youthful face, arms, hands and legs while she sat, fashionably if skimpily dressed, as were the other young women who passed, there on that evening in that city by the river whose water flowed, as her life, from one beginning to another: a precious gift, finding its own level, its own way, while bringing death, to some.

Algar Merridge
March 119, Year of Feyen
