

**Clara Copley**

**(Season five of London's Night Stalkers)**

### **Chapter 11 – Swaying Palms**

**“One of her friends from when she’d worked in the hotel, had been a pretty Bulgarian woman from Sofia. A clever woman with limited English. She used to talk about sex with all the functions. That tended to mean lots of oral sex, before the main event began.”**

»

At first getting taxis had seemed an absurd idea. Tim was with David, Daniel and Amir. Plus there were still two Psochic servants with them, who seemed less than keen on fending for themselves. Six grubby and battle scarred people, among the chaos of Jerusalem’s Old City. Of course flagging down a passing taxi was a crazy idea. David was still half in and half out of consciousness and needed help to walk. It was the general chaos which stopped it being a crazy idea. The Armenian Quarter of the Old City now had a hole in the ground, where the old church had once stood. The population were reduced to running for cover, while asking strangers if they’d seen various friends and relatives. Six grubby people wanting a taxi to the Red Rose, fitted in well. In the end they’d needed two taxis..... “Come in.....Nice to see so many survivors.” Said Adelaide Ducombe. “There’s food and drink in the first cellar. Working showers too and some of our best healers. Please let one of my people know, if you’re certain someone died in the battle.”

Adelaide had placed herself in the lobby, which was the first non-public area of her Red Rose restaurant. Two wounded Silver Dawn fighters were up against one wall, being cared for by healers. There was already a list of the dead on one wall, written with a mixture of crayons, in a mixture of languages. Tim only recognised one name, that of Old Thomas.

“Have you heard from Laura Selway ?” Asked Tim.

“On her way, she was seen in the tunnels.” Said Adelaide. “Clara was with her and a few wounded fighters.”

That was a relief, but he’d learned to never totally accept what he hadn’t seen with his own eyes. David needed help getting down the stairs, but he was a lot better than he had been in the kitchens of the Psochics. Amir thought he’d soon be totally healed and Tim wasn’t about to argue with the large and well-armed shaman.

“Clara must be coming in through the old tunnels.” Said Daniel. “I know where.....I’ll go and wait for her.”

“Tell Laura I’m here.....And safe.” Said Tim.

“Will do.”

At the lowest level of the cellars, Tim found Noah. Clara must have brought an overnight bag into the Red Rose and someone must have pointed it out to Noah. There he was, sat on the floor next to it; as though guarding it from the world.

“Noah.....You don’t need to sit on the floor.” Said Tim. “Clara has booked a small suite at the American colony hotel. She has a thing about their swaying palms. So does Laura now I think about it.....Anyway, you could wait at the hotel.”

“I could.....But I prefer to be here, waiting for her.” Said Noah. “Adelaide had them find me a room here, so I’ve a bed if I need it.”

"I'm going to the tunnels, to wait for Laura." Said Tim.

It seemed Noah and Clara had a choice of rooms to sleep in that night. An expensive Jerusalem hotel, or a one person, single bed room; courtesy of Adelaide. Strangely enough, if there was a choice; Tim would have chosen the modest single room in the Red Rose.

"First time.....A little seediness is perfect." Tim muttered.

At first the guards at the lower gates refused to let him out. Luckily Amir vouched for him and everyone knew Amir. Or at least they knew his reputation for being tough and honest. Tim managed to find a spot to wait, just a few yards along the old and slightly smelly tunnel.

"Crap.....Once you notice it.....This place smells of bad feet." Said Tim.

"Tell me about it." Said one of the guards.

When Tim spotted Laura, it was her walk that gave her away. Wearing a dirty, ripped long coat; there was even a hood to cover her head. It was her walk though; he'd have known it anywhere. Her vampire senses knew him of course, the instant he moved towards her.

"Tim.....I knew you'd survive." Said Laura. "Indestructible, that's what you are."

They hugged, of course they did. Despite talks about indestructibility, they could have easily been killed. Was there something sweeter about life, once you'd been close to death ? Tim didn't always feel the warm rush after a battle, but now he did.

"Just one question right now, Laura." Said Tim. "Are we sleeping in a room here at the Red Rose, or going to the hotel."

"We both need a shower, before we get into a bed." Said Laura. "Food too.....And drinks. I suppose I'm saying I want room service, which means the hotel."

"The hotel is then.....All those swaying palms."

"Oh yes, I love those too." Said Laura.

~ ~

Life in the Hornsey house had been fairly uneventful. Liz had fallen asleep on the sofa in the lounge and Karkengara had taken over the watch for anyone trying to invade the house. No one had made the attempt and Mabina had arrived just after Ronnie had made everyone coffee and some kind of breakfast. Yes, Ronnie Neophytou was beginning to come back out of her shell. Niña had prowled the corridors, staircases and empty room, until she'd ended up in her room, the room under the stairs. Once there she must have felt comfortable. The call on her mobile from Clara, had woken her out of a deep sleep.

"Clara.....I'm so glad you're alright." Said Niña. "There have been so many different and confusing messages. Someone from the Silver Dawn called and said Old Thomas was dead. Then there was a story about a huge and angry statue of Artemis. I gave up knowing what to believe."

"Both of those things are true, Niña." Said Clara. "Laura and I recovered the body of Old Thomas. He'd been shot, multiple times. As for the statue.....It was destroyed by a Djinn, a friendly Djinn."

"Wow.....When are you coming home ?" Asked Niña.

"I'm going to stay in Jerusalem for a few days." Said Clara. "Noah needs a rest and being honest, so do I. I'll definitely be back by the middle of next week. How is my boy doing ?"

Niña felt a little guilty. She'd looked in on Justin a lot, but not recently. Not that the dragon would let any harm come to Clara's son.

"Karkengara guarded Justin Ned Atherton all night." Said Niña. "At about breakfast time.....Mabina arrived and fed him from the milk you'd bottle up before leaving. He's doing fine, Clara."

Her son, Clara could call him what she liked. There was something about the name of Ned, though.....Niña thought it sounded wrong. A vampire called Ned.....It didn't sound right.

"I need you there, or I'd get Laura's Gudara to bring you to Jerusalem." Said Clara. "Is there anything you need ? I did rather drop you in the deep end."

"Everything here is fine." Said Niña. "The box of cash won't run out and anyway.....I have my plastic cards. We'll all be fine, Clara. Enjoy yourself with Noah and forget all about Hornsey, for a while."

The line went quiet for a few seconds. Niña imagined Clara was looking at her, with the same look Niña's mother had sometimes used. Not that Niña remembered much about her mum. There had been the look though, of a woman who knew she'd let her daughter down in some way.

"After all this Psochic business has died down, we'll go to Florence." Said Clara. "Modern day Florence of course.....You can be our guide. We'll empty the house.....Even Justin will go with us. No battles, no Psochics.....No enemies, Niña. We'll have a really nice holiday. Would you like that ?"

"Oh yes.....It sounds wonderful." Said Niña.

~ ~

They'd eaten at the American Colony hotel and spent a ridiculous amount of time in the shower. Clara had decided to throw away the clothes she'd worn to invade the Psochic base. The clothes weren't just filthy; they had the stink of old blood about them, which wasn't her favourite smell. Now the perfume of fresh blood would have been different. The clothes would go in one of the hotel's row of dumpsters, before she finally settled down for the night. Noah had put on a fresh pair of light trousers and an 'I Love Jerusalem,' T shirt. Clara had put on a long and very see through dress. She'd seen it advertised in Vogue and had fallen in love with it. Far too sheer to wear in public, but for a night of passion with Noah.....It was perfect.

"Sorry I had a few calls to make." Said Clara. "There are a lot of concerned people in London, and a few in other parts of the country."

"No problem.....I enjoy watching you move around the room." Said Noah. "That dress is something else."

"Oi....Cheeky."

They both knew they were going to be sharing a bed for the night; more than likely for several nights. The mutual agreement to their carnal enjoyment of one another, had been fully talked over. Not that Clara had ever had a man try to take advantage of her. From her experience they tended to be a little cautious of her. Consent was important though. Agree that you were going to have sex and then just enjoy the night.

"I want to taste you.....Is that too cheeky ?" Asked Noah.

"Taste me where ?" She asked.

"You know exactly where." Said Noah.

One of her friends from when she'd worked in the hotel, had been a pretty Bulgarian woman from Sofia. A clever woman with limited English. She used to talk about sex with all the functions. That tended to mean lots of oral sex, before the main event began. Clara really enjoyed being nibbled down there, and licked. A tongue being run across her clit, had been known to make her cry out with pleasure. It had been a while since Simon had driven her crazy. It had been a hell of a long time. Clara removed her dress and let it fall to the floor. Her lingerie she left for Noah to remove.

"Want to taste me ?.....Undress me." Said Clara.

Noah was good at removing her panties and then her beige silk bra. He did it quickly, while using his fingers on her most intimate places. By the time he had his face between her legs, she felt there was a chance she might faint.

"Oh, Noah.....That feels so good." Said Clara.

Neither of them had condoms of course. Clara's vampire physiology was immune to most human infections. And as she couldn't catch something nasty, she couldn't pass it on to Noah. Clara pushed Noah onto his back and then straddled him.

"I know you're still healing from Colindale." Said Clara. "If I'm being too rough, let me know."

"Now that.....I take as a challenge." Said Noah.

Noah knew what he was doing; the penetration was deep and hard. A good hard, long dick could get in so far; it felt as though she was being tickled deep inside. She had no real idea what was going on, but it felt wonderful.

"Been a while, Noah.....I needed this." Said Clara.

"A while for me too." Said Noah.

Had it been, or was he just saying that ? Whatever the truth, she was willing to give him the benefit of the doubt. Clara definitely hadn't heard any tales about Noah shagging every woman who worked for Cyril. He was a good looking guy; many of them were likely to have said yes, if asked.

"Of course.....If you wanted to taste me ? I wouldn't mind." Said Noah.

"I bet you wouldn't."

He'd cum, maybe more than once. Not that a little mess worried Clara. The taste of warm, salty male fluids, wasn't something she dreaded. In fact, the taste was one of her favourite sex tastes. She put her mouth over his dick and tried to get it all in her mouth. It almost fitted, but not quite all of it. Try to blow job the full length and she'd be gagging on it. The trick was not to be greedy. Cara sucked enough to drive Noah nuts, but not so much that she'd be trying to spit, suck and lick, all at the same time. She'd been there and it never ended well.

"Wow.....I love that taste." Said Clara.

Hot man juice, though Clara would never call it that. Men always claimed to like women who talked dirty, but never seemed to mean it. The average guy wanted the girl next door type, even if he had to move a few times to find her. Clara leant across Noah and kissed him long and hard, on the lips.

"After here.....Do you fancy some time in Florence ?" Asked Clara. "I know Niña wants to see Italy and it'd give her the chance to be our guide. That will help her confidence."

"Yeah.....A holiday in Florence." Said Noah. "I'd really like that. A proper holiday, not just a long weekend. It needs to be at least a fortnight."

"That's the plan." Said Clara.

~ ~

Laura and Tim had showered, eaten and then gone to bed. She'd adjusted the room curtains to give her a view of the palms. There really was something about palm trees, gently swaying in the breeze. There were probably swaying palms somewhere in London, but to Laura; they always meant foreign places and luxury hotels. The sweat had dried on her skin; it had been at least an hour since they'd had sex. For all she knew, Tim was asleep. She kissed his neck, until there was a response. Just a cough and a movement of his head, but Tim Chance was awake.

"Are you awake ?" Laura asked.

"I am now.....Are we having sex again ?"

"We will.....But there's something we need to talk about." Said Laura.

They could usually talk about anything, but there was one particular subject, which always caused problems. Tim had been her lover for several years. There had to be a way to have an adult conversation about the future. Clara had shifted the argument by having a child, but Tim knew that was a one in a trillion event. Tim had rolled towards her, resting his head on his hand.

"Alright, I'm fully awake.....What are we talking about ?" Asked Tim.

"All those weeks providing Clara with fresh blood." Said Laura. "Let's be honest about it, we were hunting for her. I have no idea how many humans we brought down into the cellar. I know it must have been awkward for you."

"Not an ideal way to spend my nights." Said Tim. "It needed to be done though; Clara is a friend and couldn't hunt for herself."

Tim had been around her for so long. The way he talked, his emotional way of looking at the world. It was as though he was a vampire, but with none of the good bits. No immortality, no fast healing, no super strength and all the other extras which Laura now took for granted. Worst of all, one day Tim would die. Not in some far distant future time, but in just a few years. The three score years and ten.....Maybe sooner if he developed a fatal illness, or had an accident. It was a crazy state of affairs, which couldn't go on.

"In your head you're like me, a hugely powerful vampire." Said Laura. "My fault really, I've taken you everywhere with me. In reality, one unlucky blow from a guard somewhere and you'd be gone. Real death, Tim.....The kind that's permanent."

"We've had this talk before." Said Tim. "I do alright.....A few wounds that were quite painful, but I'm still alive. Besides.....I'm not sure if I fancy the alternative. I love you, but I quite like being human. Anyway.....It's likely I'd die during the process of being turned."

Laura had sent tissue samples to Daniel, well over a year ago. She hadn't told Tim, but Daniel had given Tim a ninety percent chance of surviving becoming a vampire. According to Daniel, ninety percent was as high as it went. No one had ever been at a hundred percent, ever.

"You would survive." Said Laura. "The best option is ninety percent chance of survival. That was your score when I sent you samples to Daniel last year."

"I asked you not to do that." Said Tim. "It's still a one in ten chance I'd die."

"Who wouldn't gamble a few years to become immortal?" Asked Laura.

"It's more than that and you know it." Said Tim. "We've had this conversation before. I need time to decide.....Give me time to think about it. I'm not overly religious, but becoming one of Satan's favourite children. That needs some thinking over."

"That nonsense.....Simon used to use that line as a joke." Said Laura.

"A joke.....Daniel seems to believe it." Said Tim. "My view hasn't changed; I need time to think about it."

Asking for long periods of time, was really all about hoping the problem went away. Ask for time to think, in the hope they forgot about it, or you both died before getting round to making a decision. No one needed years to make a decision, not even politicians. Something was right for you, or it was wrong. Nothing needed mulling over for decades. Laura had made her mind up that, one way or another, the matter was going to be resolved. She felt a headache begin to form over her left eye. It might well turn out to be the worst night of her vampire life.

"No more time, Tim.....I mean it." Said Laura. "You decide now and live with the consequences. Become a vampire and we can be together forever. No risking losing you in a minor scuffle somewhere. You'll be as tough as I am. Or....."

"What is the alternative?" Asked Tim.

"Say no and we're finished." Said Laura. "Collect your things from the house and move out. We'll never be lovers again.....Forget all about me."

"That's it.....Say yes, or fuck off?" Asked Tim.

"Just about.....I'll miss you, but you brought us to this point." Said Laura. "If you don't want to be like me, you should have said. All the needing time crap, has gone on for far too long."

"Alright.....Give me until the morning." Said Tim. "I need a good night's sleep, then I'll make a decision."

"No." Said Laura. "No more procrastination. Tell me now, or we go our separate ways in the morning. No more sex.....Decide now or you're sleeping on the floor."

He had the most puppy dog eyes when upset and she did love him. It had all been going on far too long. Even though she wanted to, there was no point in weakening now. No extra few days, no giving him until breakfast. Tim either became a vampire, or he was sleeping on the floor. Of course he might die when she tried to turn him. He'd been right of course; there was a one in ten chance that he'd die. What then ? Laura would get Clara to help her bury his body out in the desert sands.

"Over.....You mean that ?" Asked Tim.

"Yes, we've reached that point."

"If it means that much to you, fine." Said Tim. "Turn me right now, this instant. Make me one of you, a Nosferatu, a feeder on blood."

Dramatic effect right up to the wire, she had to hand it to him. It would have to be on the floor, with a towel under his neck. There could be no risk of getting blood all over the bed. Tim was as timid as a mouse, as she spread him out on the hotel's carpet and put a towel under him.

"I love you, Tim." Said Laura. "I'm sure you'll come out of the other side of this. Just relax and do exactly what I tell you."

She was an expert now, after all the hints and expertise Daniel had passed onto her. Clara had turned a few, and Mabina had once boasted at turning hundred for her army. Mind you, she never would say how many had survived the process. All of them had answered her questions. Laura was sure that if Tim didn't wake up after a few hours, it wouldn't be because of her lack of expertise.

"Relax.....I will bite you, then you must feed on me." Said Laura. "I will drip my blood into your mouth and you must swallow it. Refuse my blood and you'll die."

"I understand." Said Tim.

Did he ? The games were over. From now on things were serious. Just about everything was a matter of life and death. If he wanted to make a point out of dying, rather than becoming a vampire; now was the perfect time to do it.

"Relax." She said again.

Laura had taken the lives of so many humans, none of them destined to rise up as a vampire. She bit into Tim's neck and enjoyed the taste of his hot blood. He shifted about, just a little, until the neurotoxin in her fangs took effect. After that Tim never moved.

"Your blood is delicious, Tim Chance." Laura muttered.

According to Simon, those they fed on never remembered anything about the experience. There was no certainty though, the vast majority of them were dead afterwards. It'd be interesting to see if Tim remembered her comments. Laura felt Tim's heart beat stutter. He was very close to death. She stopped drinking his blood and bit into her own wrist. Her blood flowed quite fast, as she dripped it onto Tim's slightly open lips.

"Drink my blood.....Swallow my blood or you'll never wakeup again." Said Laura.

His mouth opened and Tim drank her blood. She could see his neck muscles move as he swallowed. Once more Laura drank from her lover, bringing his heart to a few beats from stopping. She placed her still bleeding wrist against his open mouth.

"One last time my beloved.....Drink from me." Said Laura.

Tim Chance swallowed some of her blood, before his human body died. She felt him go, as if whoever had been inside his body, had gone somewhere else. It was all down to luck now and the

ninety percent chance of him surviving to become a vampire. Soon his body would begin to cool. If Tim hadn't woken within two hours, it was likely he'd never wake.

"Whichever Lord of Chaos watches over us vampires." Said Laura. "Please don't let my lover die a real death, a permanent death."

~ ~

Clara woke when there was just a little morning light in the sky. She knew Laura was in the hotel, she could feel her presence and no doubt, Laura could sense her. Something had woken Clara, but it hadn't been Noah. He was fast asleep and sleeping on his back. It seemed Noah snored slightly, though it wasn't loud enough to have woken her. There was a movement near the window, but no sense of a human to go with the movement.

"Clara.....Come to me." Said a female voice.

Movement again, though nothing solid was wandering around near the window. Clara could see movement, but still see the swaying palms behind whatever had entered the room. She got out of bed, wearing just a pair of silk knickers.

"Yes, come here." Said the voice.

Noah showed no sign of waking, as Clara walked towards the window. There was a woman there, probably one of the minions of an Old God. She was wearing a lilac robe, which seemed to be some kind of unofficial uniform. Laura understood the minions far better than her. Once high ranking clerics in temples, they were now sworn to serve their Old God for eternity, or something like that. Always female and always wearing lilac robes.

"What do you want ?" Asked Clara. "Are you looking for Laura ?"

"Not Laura.....I was sent to fetch you." Said the minion.

"Who wants to see me ?" Asked Clara.

"You will see.....The Djinn mentioned you." Said the minion. "Hold my hand.....You have nothing to fear."

Nothing to fear indeed, Clara felt a little insulted. She held the offered hand, which became solid enough to feel. Warm, but less body heat than a human.

"Close your eyes."

Clara obeyed and felt the air change around her. Hotter than the air-conditioned hotel room and far more humid. More background sounds too, including what sounded like crickets. Clara wondered what Noah would think, if he woke up and she was gone.

"You may open your eyes now."

A room with several more minions, when Clara had been expecting the presence of an Ancient God. Not that she was an expert on such matters, but Laura had told her a lot. About half a dozen lilac robed minions and her, all in a wooden building of some kind. Not far from water, maybe a lake. Clara could hear birds beginning their dawn chorus.

"This way.....We're here to bathe you." Said a minion.

Laura had mentioned eccentric behaviour by ancient deities and their minions. The room she was taken to looked to be part of a much grander building. Marble floors and everything that could be gold plated, had been gold plated. There was the kind of pool bath that footballers seemed to love. Racks of different coloured robes and drawers which probably contained other clothing choices for her. Clara never doubted for one moment, that everything in the room was for her.

"Time doesn't move in here." Said a minion. "When you're ready, we can take you to see her. Only when you're ready.....There is no hurry."

"Who am I going to see ?" Asked Clara.

"Her name will mean nothing to you."

The minions all gave a small bow, as if paying homage to the one they obviously weren't going to name. Clara should have been annoyed by it all, but mainly, she was curious.

"Well.....I'd better get bathed." Said Clara.

They were really into hygiene, according to Laura. Everything had to be washed, then a perfumed oil was applied to the skin by one of the minions. Any residue from sex had to be washed away, but again, that was all according to Laura.

"Even if the name means nothing.....Can you tell me who I'm meeting?" Asked Clara.

Clara chose underwear that looked like the kind of thing she usually wore. Robes were more difficult, she rarely wore robes. While she looked along the racks of different coloured robes, the minions muttered to themselves.

"You will be seeing the wisest of the Gods..... Djehuty is expecting you." Said a minion.

Clara wasn't completely ignorant when it came to the Old and Ancient Gods of Egypt. Djehuty was another name for Thoth, who Laura had once considered a potential threat. Not that Clara intended to mention that. Sometimes assumed ignorance could be useful.

"Thank you for telling me." Said Clara.

She chose a slightly off white robe, with a subtle hint of green. Genuinely she'd had preferred something in black, but thought that might not go down well. A pair of flip flop style sandals and Clara was ready to talk to whoever had sent a minion to bring her from Jerusalem. Such a thing took real power and meant they deserved her respect.

"I think.....I'm now ready to meet Djehuty." Said Clara.

"You look.....Just about perfect." Said a minion.

Only just about.....Clara decided to leave that one hanging. Half of the minions simply vanished, leaving the remainder to take her into another room. That part of the building looked like something out of a tourist brochure for the tombs of Egypt. Old Egypt, so old that the room looked to be part of a ruin. In the centre of the room was a circle, carved into the stone floor.

"Enter the circle and we will send you to her."

There was no option, not really. Besides, Clara's curiosity was taking away any natural caution. She stepped into the circle. The minions muttered something about the power of chaos.....And Clara found herself outside on a sunny day. Not too hot, just enough of a breeze to make it ideal. A river bank, with an old woman gutting a basket full of fish.

"I knew you'd come and I guarantee you're hungry." Said Djehuty.

Clara was assuming the old woman was Djehuty, but there was no one else there. There was a large pot on a chain over a fire. The Old God of Egypt was dropping freshly gutted fish, into the pot.

"I can't think why you'd summon me." Said Clara. "Something about the Djinn, I was told."

"Yes, the Djinn.....I've always liked Samnuha." Said Djehuty. "Not just about her of course, there was the statue of Artemis. All handled well, while you were busy.....I owe you a favour, Clara. Actually we all owe you a favour."

Ahh, the Djinn and the statue. It was beginning to make sense to her. If asked, Clara would have said things had gone pretty well, not too bad. No better than that, but if the Gods wanted to show their appreciation.....Clara was hoping for something gold to go on her dressing table in Hornsey.

"What sort of favour?" Asked Clara.

"Yes, yes.....Straight to the point, I like that." Said Djehuty. "Would you like to see Simon again?"

"I was told that would be impossible." Said Clara.



"Some say I am the wisest of all the Gods." Said Djehuty. "If you would like time with the father of your child, you may have it. Perhaps more than a little time, the choice will be yours. Simon has been told, he has the details. Well, Clara.....Do I send you to see Simon ?"

"Now.....You mean right now ?" Asked Clara.

"Of course I mean now.....I'm hardly going to mean last week."

"Yes.....Please send me to Simon." Said Clara.

"Don't get angry at him, Clara." Said Djehuty. "Leaving you pregnant with an impossible child.....Shifting back to the time of the Medici. I can see why you'd be angry, but it was all no more his fault, than it's yours."

"He slept with Juliana Colombo." Said Clara. "While I was pregnant, he slept with that....Girl. I won't even get onto his long affair with Patsy."

"You punished Patsy.....Never forget that I saw it all." Said Djehuty. "Now Patsy is a trusted friend, who would give her life to save Baby Justin. Then.....I could mention you sleeping with Felipe, the Brazilian bike courier."

"But.....Simon and I had an arrangement." Said Clara. "We both had our flings."

"Exactly, so no spoiling something that might be good." Said Djehuty. "Promise me.....No getting angry when you see Simon."

"I promise."

"I will give you the ability to speak Italian from that period." Said Djehuty. "If you're ready to go ? We'll have the fish I gutted another time."

"I'm ready to see Simon." Said Clara.

"Come with me."

Simon would know his son had been born and was thriving; she'd been assured of that. How much would he know ? Did he realise Hacker Jim was dead and buried in a shallow grave ? So much had happened since they'd last seen each other.

"Here, stand where you are now." Said Djehuty. "You have a day, no matter how things work out."

"An entire day with Simon ?" Asked Clara. "I've never had that long before."

"Yes, a full day.....Don't waste it all on squabbles."

Djehuty made a few hand gestures and the world became dark. When it was light again, Clara was on a bridge she seemed to recognise. It was the bridge across the river in Grizzana. She was certain of it; Djehuty had placed her in the village where Simon and Giovanni had once lived. Their house was close to the bridge.....Yes, there it was.

"I always wanted to see this town." Clara muttered.

The door of Simon's house opened and Niña was stood there, looking into the street. She looked younger than she did now of course, but not that much younger.

"Niña !" Shouted Clara. "It's Clara.....I'm by the bridge."

Simon was there, a hand holding her arm. He smelled different, more earthy than the Simon she remembered from London.

"No good shouting, she can't hear you." Said Simon.

There was no need for her promise not to be angry with him; all Clara could remember was loving Simon until it made her quiver with joy. He was her everything, her Sun, Moon and every star in the Milky Way. They kissed and she hugged him until he pulled away.

"Not here." Said Simon. "Somewhere has been prepared for us."

~ ~

Tim's first thought, as his eyes opened, was that it hadn't worked for some reason. He felt perfectly well, with no aches or pain. Simon had once told him about his human side dying, if he became a vampire. Surely if that part of him was dying, it had to hurt ? Tim gently felt the side of his neck and there was a little ragged skin, but no pain, not even any slight soreness. It was daylight outside, the curtains were wide open. The wind had picked up, the palms outside were swaying frantically from side to side.

"Four hours you took to wake up." Said Laura. "I was certain you were dead."

He was stiff; it took a few tries to sit up properly. The room was exactly as it had been when Laura had bitten into his neck. There was no sensing that there was a vampire in the room, though her voice had come from his left. Again, Simon had once discussed such things. It took a while for the special skills to arrive.

"Where are you, Laura ?" Tim asked. "Move so that I can see you."

At first Laura seemed happy to be on her knees next to him, looking at him as though he was some kind of science project.

"I'm alright, Laura.....I feel fine." Said Tim.

She touched the side of his throat and then kissed him. The kissing went on for a while and then they lay next to each other for quite some time. No intimate touching, nothing sexual, just periods of intense kissing. Tim had an erection at one point, which was nice. It was something to tick off on his mental list.

"I really did think I'd killed you." Said Laura.

Tim wanted to ask if she'd had plans to dispose of his body, should he refuse to wake up. He didn't ask, because he knew she would have detailed plans for that eventuality. He really didn't want to hear about those plans.

"I'm fine.....Even my dick works." Said Tim.

"I did notice.....Tonight we'll give it a thorough test." Said Laura. "For now you need to rest and then you need fresh blood, a first kill. I have ideas about that."

"I don't feel any different." Said Tim. "Too much Anne Rice maybe and her '...new born vampire, weeping at the beauty of the night.' I don't feel at all like a vampire. I feel like I've always felt."

Simon blamed Hollywood movies of course and TV shows about vampires. Tim knew it would take a while for all the extra skills to arrive. Not that there were as many vampire extra skills as most people thought. Laura had been through it all with Simon, he had been the one to turn her. Her words could have been written down for her by Simon.

"Is all the Hollywood vampire lore total crap ?" Asked Tim.

"You're strong; you'll never again have trouble opening a jar of pickle. The rest though ? Yes, most of it is crap. Be careful around holy places though, like churches and convents. No one is certain of the rules, so it's best to avoid religious places." Said Laura.

"So.....We definitely can't fly ?" Asked Tim.

Laura laughed and the kissing began again. Tim knew most of it anyway; he'd spent years in the company of vampires. It was still disappointing not to be able to turn into a bat and fly, but he could live with that. On the plus side, going out in full daylight wouldn't kill him. He'd get a headache and sneeze a lot, but he wouldn't die.

"Just think of it, Tim." Said Laura. "With luck we'll be together for thousands of years."

~ ~