

Clara Copley

(Season five of London's Night Stalkers)

Chapter 10 – The Djinn

“A spiral staircase, which made it feel worse for some reason. Round and round, with no idea how many steps were left. Daniel gave up counting steps after a hundred. All the time there was the thump, thump of the statue hitting walls and ceilings.”

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Samnuha knew that she was a match for most of the creatures and humans she fought. The statue though; that was an unknown threat, which made it very dangerous. After making sure Laura and her Gudara had taken her group to safety, the Djinn had headed straight for the statue of Artemis. The statue wasn't hard to find. There it was, at the centre of the destruction. It didn't need to breathe and it didn't seem bothered by being buried in the chaos it created. Having to dig itself out of a collapsed building, didn't seem to bother it at all, but it did slow its progress. Not a totally mindless thing of stone, the statue seemed to be working to a plan. It was destroying the old Armenian Church and the Psochic base below it. After that ? Laura had probably been right. The statue would begin destroying the entire Armenian Quarter of old Jerusalem. After that, it would probably carry on until the entire city was nothing but rubble. Samnuha saw Old Thomas all on his own, aiming dark magic at the statue.....

“Your magic can't harm it.” Said Samnuha. “Leave this place Thomas, or it'll be the last place you ever see.”

Thomas was known to her, though he was unaware that Djinns often watched human seers like him. The Silver Dawn in particular, had some very interesting seers on their payroll and a few powerful shamans.

“I'll stand my ground, for as long as I'm able.” Said Thomas.

“If you want to be useful, fight the Psochics.” Said Samnuha. “You won't even scratch the statue of Artemis.”

“What can destroy it ?” Asked Thomas.

“I believe.....My sorrow will remove it from this world.” Said Samnuha.

Thomas gave her a confused look, which wasn't surprising. She had an idea in her head, but it might not work. If it didn't there was always self destruction. The Djinn could bring about her own end in a huge explosion of power. No matter how tough the statue was, it would be destroyed by the explosion. Needless to say, that solution to the problem wasn't the one she favoured.

“Be careful, Thomas.” Said the Djinn.

Samnuha left Thomas and became less corporeal than the air around her. In that form she was invisible to most and able to move anywhere. Solid stone walls weren't a problem, as she moved closer to the statue. It appeared to be going crazy, bashing walls and sometimes bringing rubble down on itself. Occasionally it took a swipe at any Psochic getting too close, or one of the Silver Dawn fighters, Mostly though, it seemed intent on destroying the temple and everything surrounding it.

It had a purpose, even if that purpose would seem crazy to most. Its temple had been defiled, so it was going to destroy everything. How far and wide would that destruction spread ? The Djinn was

tempted to sit back, watch and, find out. She owed Laura though and Simon, especially Simon. He might now be in the world of the Medici, but she still owed him.

"You really are a very stupid statue." Yelled Samnuha.

Could eyes carved out of stone glare at her ? The eyes of the statue really did seem to emote something akin to hate. If there had been time to seek its maker, there might have been an easy way to stop it. As it was, the only solutions seemed to be her own self destruction, or her sorrow. Being honest with herself, her sorrow had only ever worked once and even then, it hadn't worked well. There was the head of the Brotherhood of course. He was reputed to see all and know all, though Samnuha thought that might be an exaggeration. Even if it was, he was sure to have an idea about turning the statue into a lifeless pile of stone.

"Don't go anywhere, statue." Yelled Samnuha. "I need to see Brother Alberti of the Brotherhood." Alberti tended to favour fifteenth century Italy, but he wasn't locked into any particular time. The head of the Brotherhood spent most of his time sitting in a power nexus. It gave him enormous power and the ability to see any and all times in the past and a few in the future. The Djinn moved around in front of his half asleep eyes, waiting for a reaction.

"Samnuha.....I wondered when you'd come to see me." Said Alberti.

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Daniel and Tim had gone to look for David Huynh and Amir, which had left Laura and Clara to carry out the plan. Laura was keeping her Gudara with her, just in case the entire Psochic base began to collapse. The plan was simple, the Psochics were finished and their base was unusable. The very simple plan was to get everyone to leave, even the servants of the Psochics. There was simply no point in every living soul being buried under rubble. Mainly though, they were trying to make sure that every Silver Dawn fighter, knew the battle was over.....

"There's a tunnel at the far south." Said Laura. "It leads into the old tunnels and will get you back to the Red Rose basement."

The half dozen Silver Dawn fighters nodded and headed in the right direction. It was awkward though, so many passages and tunnels had collapsed. Laura hated the idea of sending warriors to look for an entrance which might no longer be there. There was no option for most though, the ways up to the surface had mostly been blocked, or destroyed.

"Run.....Don't walk.....Run." Clara yelled at them.

They ran and even running was done in step with one another. The Silver Dawn trained their fighters well and far too many weren't likely to see another morning.

"I hope they make it." Said Laura.

"Come on, someone said Old Thomas was seen in the next chamber." Said Clara.

"Shouting obscenities at the Psochics I expect." Said Laura.

The statue was still thumping walls with its mighty fists. Laura heard its constant thumping and was prepared for the noise as part of the underground base collapsed. Not far from them, close enough to make her realise life and death were now a toss of the dice. Dust swirled around them, as they entered a fairly intact study of some kind.

"Thomas.....We've come to take you out of here." Yelled Clara.

The dust settled and Laura's flashlight rested on a body on the ground. She found it hard to believe, but Old Thomas wasn't going to get any older. All the rumours of him being a staggering age, yet there he was, lying on a very dusty Persian style rug. Clara examined him, while Laura and her Gudara watched the two entrances to the chamber.

"He's been shot.....About six times in the chest." Said Clara.

It sounded so mundane, for the cause of death of someone like Thomas. A Psochic cleric had obviously caught him unawares though and six bullets to the chest will get the job done.

"I'll get my Gudara to take him to the Red Rose basement." Said Laura. "We owe him that much."

"A lot, who are owed more, are being left here." Said Clara.

"I agree.....But I got to know Thomas." Said Laura.

Her Gudara took the body away and was back with them fairly quickly. It had been an unnecessary risk though, sending away their only sure way of escape from the Psochic base. As if reinforcing the point, there were several Psochic fighters in the hallway they entered next. Not that Laura and Clara had any trouble in dealing with them. Laura used her rarely used handgun, which brought back memories of many previous battles. As they entered yet another dusty, dark chamber, Clara had a coin in her hand; a shiny British fifty pence piece.

"North or south.....You can call it." Said Clara.

"Heads we go north." Said Laura. "Tails we go south."

Clara tossed the coin and caught it before it hit the floor. Opening her hand showed tails; an image of Britannia. Laura in front with her Gudara guarding the rear, they headed into a passage going south.

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Samnuha liked Brother Alberti's power nexus, it wasn't only comfortably furnished, the power leaked. Just a short time there and she'd be able to cast spells she wouldn't normally even attempt. It was like the sea washing onto a sandy beach. The power washed all over her, making her feel wonderful. She'd already helped herself to wine and sent one of his guards for food.

"Oh, Drefan.....You have a wonderful home." Said Samnuha.

Alberti claimed that only two living beings knew his first name and she was one of them. The other was Simon Atherton, the vampire.

"I have a wonderful mansion in Florence." Said Alberti. "I need the power from the Nexus, so I rarely spend more than a couple of nights a month, in my home."

Alberti looked physically quite old, but not that old. He'd been around for centuries, but a stranger would think he was no more than sixty. His various guards and servants had to have some idea of his colossal age, but many members of the Brotherhood, had no idea. The Brotherhood were the power behind the Medici and very few realised that either. It was Alberti who'd sent Simon Atherton on his quest; the search for the great secret, the true meaning of Festina Lente; Make haste slowly.

"Are you here to stay for a while?" Asked Alberti.

"I left when a significant part of Old Jerusalem was collapsing." Said Samnuha. "I need to return before it does collapse."

"Always so much drama." Said Alberti. "You remind me of Laura, the woman Simon turned into a vampire. I take it you need my help?"

Time wasn't a problem, they both knew that. Spend a year in the nexus and she could return to the moment she'd left the Psochic base. Sometimes though.....Alberti needed a nudge, or he'd never get around to doing what needed doing.

"I have a need to use the Djinn's gift of sorrow." Said Samnuha. "I've used it before, but it never achieved what I'd hoped. There is a statue of Artemis in Jerusalem. It seems intent on the destruction of the Old City, maybe much more than the Old City."

Alberti was clever and he'd studied various schools of magic and arcane law. Actually, he may well have studied every magical discipline and all the schools of arcane law. With just the information

she'd given him, he'd understand why she needed to master the gift of sorrow. Total sorrow, the kind of sorrow that even a stone statue could feel.

"Ahhhh the gift of sorrow.....Usually totally useless." Said Alberti. "Can you shed genuine tears, Samnuha?"

"Maybe not; which may be the problem." Said Samnuha.

"I can put you at the focal point of the nexus." Said Alberti. "It's where I usually sit. Once you're attuned, I can show you such sorrow.....You'll have no problem crying real tears. It may mean you being in the nexus for quite a while. Time has little meaning to the nexus. Being truthful, you will suffer my old friend..... If you wish it, I will give you access to the nexus. Do you wish it?"

An age of sorrow, multiplied and focused on her. Samnuha would have done just about anything to avoid it, but then a great many would die.

"Yes, Drefan.....I will go into the nexus." Said Samnuha.

It was strange to see Alberti leave his throne, to allow her to sit on it. He had his guards drag in a chair from outside the nexus. Once he was comfortable, he gave her one of his piercing looks.

"Are you ready Samnuha?" Asked Alberti.

"No, but do it anyway." She said.

The real world vanished, as she saw the lives of thousands, all in detail. Looked at in the minutiae, every life has pain, suffering and sorrow. Children lost at birth, husbands killed in the numerous and constant wars. Wives killed by strangers, often with little cause. It was all there, going past her closed eyes and into her mind. Grandparents riddled with disease. Poverty and oppression were there too, millions of people living day to day on scraps. The nexus showed her the evils and then showed her the sorrow it caused. In many ways, the sorrow was worse than the cause. For many, sorrow was without hope.

"Have you seen enough?" Asked Alberti

"No.....I need more, much more." She said.

The second wave didn't judge, there was no evil, there was no good. There was just endless suffering and the sorrow of those who'd been hurt by it. Some had been hurt themselves; while others had seen their friends suffer. It felt as though Samnuha had seen centuries of sorrow, caused by the suffering of millions. Then she noticed the girl.

"Show me this one, Drefan." She said. "Show me her life.....Every second of it."

"Some things are best left unseen.....This will change even you."

"I don't care, show me her life."

The girl had been very ill, with several childhood diseases. Each one of them could have killed her, but she'd survived. Through it all, her parents had looked after her as best they could, but there wasn't enough money for the right treatment, from the right doctors. The girl had survived it all, but not without suffering.....A lot of suffering.

"What she went through.....Her father did his best." Said Alberti.

The nexus didn't judge, the father could have been a good man, or a bad one. It didn't matter to the girl, who loved her father.

"Don't all girls love their father?" Asked Alberti.

When she'd been about seventeen, her father had upset a local crook. How it had come about was irrelevant to the nexus, it merely showed the consequences. They'd killed her father in front of her, hacked him to pieces with large knives. Bad or good, it was all the same to a young girl who'd watched her father being butchered.

"There.....This is what I needed." Said Samnuha.

Samnuha went into those few moments after the girl knew her father was dead. In those few seconds was such sorrow. It was a miracle the poor thing hadn't died herself, though they had left her with a few scars. Samnuha watched her sorrow for what felt like a lifetime. She only stopped when she felt salty tears rolling across her cheeks.

"Thank you, Drefan.....I'm now ready for what I must do."

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Daniel hadn't really intended to take Tim with him; it was just the way some things worked out. They had found an uninjured Amir, doing his best to get a wounded David Huynh out of the Psochic base, before it completely collapsed. The servants of the Psochics appeared to have switched sides, or they were scared of Amir. Several of them were helping, as David limped his way along the passage. Who was rescuing who was unclear. Amir had a far better map than Daniel, but neither Daniel, nor Tim, had been seriously wounded. Daniel still had a bullet in his shoulder, but such a wound was nothing to a vampire.....

"Damn, another blocked passage." Said Amir. "We need to go deeper and find the old tunnels. Most of them will still be open."

Everyone was dusty, tired and wondering if they'd ever see daylight again. The constant thumping of the statue wasn't helping their nerves. They all knew that every blocked passage, probably meant people had died in those passageways. Psochic dead or Silver Dawn dead, it was becoming almost irrelevant. Daniel's most immediate worry, was the lack of spare batteries for their flashlights. In a few hours they'd be in the dark. Even vampires couldn't see in total darkness. Tim was constantly examining a piece of paper Laura had scribbled on. A mixture of a map with a few hastily written hints.

"No.....The kitchens are nearby." Said Tim. "Laura has put that the kitchens are a good way out in an emergency. There are delivery stairs that go right up to the surface."

"Does it mention if Laura ever visited the kitchens?" Asked Amir. "Something that sounds a good idea.....They might be delivery shoots, which we won't be able to climb."

"Probably worth a look though." Said Daniel. "I hate the idea of going deeper into this place."

The servants were arguing about something. Amir also looked fairly scary at the best of times. Things could have ended up differently, if one of them hadn't had the courage to speak.

"The note on the map is right." Said a servant. "There are stairs to the outside from the kitchens.

There are strong doors to break open though, very strong doors."

It made sense to Daniel. If there were stairs up to the Armenian Quarter, burglars and enemies could use them to get into the Psochic base. It was the sort of place that would be protected by heavy doors.

"Let's give it a try." Said Daniel. "The more I hear, the more I like the feel of these.....Kitchens."

"You can't trust these servants." Said Amir. "They'll have served the Psochics for most of their lives."

Again, things could have gone very differently, if David hadn't still been able to speak. He looked dreadful and Daniel thought he might die before they could get out of the Psochic base. His voice was still strong though, and clear.

"This is my command, my orders will be obeyed." Said David. "No more arguing.....My decision is that we try to leave through the kitchens."

"Yes.....Of course, David." Said Amir.

David was pale, the kind of skin colour that meant he was still bleeding. External wounds had been dealt with, but internal bleeding.....Daniel gave him a couple of hours, maybe three at the most. Tim knew the way, or at least his scribbled map was showing him the way. The kitchens weren't far away

and they were fairly close to the surface. All that smoke and heat had to go somewhere. There were probably chimneys that took it all away. Quite quickly, they were stood in front of a very solid looking, heavy door.

"No one mentioned the metal banding." Said Daniel.

"Come on Daniel.....If we can't open this door, we deserve to die here." Said Amir.

A thick oak door, banded with metal; even the lock was reinforced. It took them longer to batter the door open, than it had to find the kitchens. Eventually Daniel gave the door a hefty kick and it flew open. Beyond it wasn't the expected darkness. There were several oil lamps, providing a decent amount of light.

"Careful.....Someone needs the light." Said Amir. "I suspect we're not alone."

When the huge man in kitchen scrubs came out of wherever he'd been, he was carrying a meat cleaver. He attacked fast and for some reason he'd decided to go for Tim Chance. Tim might not look that fierce, but Daniel knew he was good in a fight.

"Really scrappy is my Tim; loves a good fight." Laura had once said about him.

Tim avoided his head being cut in two by a step to his left. Tim then drew a short sword and stabbed the man several times in the chest. As his enemy lay choking and bleeding, Tim went through his pockets. He held up a huge bunch of keys.

"No more battering doors down." Said Tim.

"Well done." Said Amir. "Must be the head cook. He obviously decided to hide in here, until all the fighting was over."

"Grab some food and water.....It'll be a long climb to the surface." Said Daniel. "I want to look at David again, now we have some decent light. We may have missed a wound."

The kitchen was clean, the workbench spotless. Whoever the dead head cook was, he'd run a good set of kitchens. They put David on the bench and Daniel moved his clothing around, looking for a missed wound. It could happen after a battle, especially in the dark. There was no bloody wound on David, that hadn't been dealt with in some way.

"Here, his left side." Said Tim. "Just below his ribs."

"I see it.....What happened here, David ?" Asked Daniel.

"A Psochic with a club, a heavy club." Said David.

Internal bleeding produces what looks like bruising, black and very nasty looking bruising. It was bad, the worst Daniel had seen on a warrior, who was still breathing.

"You can help him, Amir." Said Daniel. "I know the magic will take a while, but I'm not leaving him here to die. Heal him enough so that I can carry him out on my back."

Daniel tried to put a 'please,' into his expression. Amir wanted to leave, everyone wanted to leave. Even David wasn't trying to order them to use magic to help him. It would take a while and they could all hear the statue of Artemis, as it thumped walls and ceilings.

"We might all die here." Said a servant.

"Do something, Amir.....Enough so he won't die on the way out." Said Daniel.

Again he tried to emote the 'please,' through his eyes and maybe it had worked.

"Alright, I'll do what I can." Said Amir.

Amir was a seer and a shaman, as were many who worked for the Silver Dawn. Healing spells to repair massive damage, could take a long time to create and they didn't have that much time to spare. The statue stopped thumping walls for a moment, which was followed by a rumble not that far away. Quite quickly, the thumping began again.

"That was close.....Very close." Muttered David. "Leave me if you have to.....I don't want you all to die with me."

"Shut up, Boss.....You're coming with us, when we leave." Said Daniel.

For an organisation that claimed to be of the light, the Silver Dawn employed a lot of dark magic users. Old Thomas had been an expert on the dark arts. Amir too, began to surround David in a cloud of darkness. The dark was often easier to manipulate than the light, quicker too. There might be a price to pay at some later date, but Daniel understood why Amir was invoking dark forces to heal David. When Amir began to mutter the name of Hecate, it had meaning to Daniel. Once invoked there was no exit from what might happen next, no escape if things went wrong. Amir was risking his own life to help David, maybe his immortal soul too.

"We need to leave." Said a servant.

"Go if you want to.....No one is forcing you to stay." Said Tim.

The servant didn't move, even though the stairs going up were there and the door open. It was one thing to mutter about leaving, but a different thing to actually do it, alone.

"Inish getara Isaken Hecate." Yelled Amir.

A language unknown to Daniel and he knew most. Someone understood it; the cloud of darkness seemed to be absorbed by David. The black bruise on his side faded, but didn't completely go away.

"Do you feel better, David?" Asked Amir.

"I do.....A lot better." Said David.

It was up to Daniel now, to put David over his shoulder and carry him up the stairs. It'd be uncomfortable for both of them and David might have trouble breathing. It was the only way though.

"You're going over my shoulder." Said Daniel. "The stair can't be that long; the servants had to carry all the supplies down them."

"More than enough stairs, when you're being carried like a sack of coal." Said David.

A spiral staircase, which made it feel worse for some reason. Round and round, with no idea how many steps were left. Daniel gave up counting steps after a hundred. All the time there was the thump, thump of the statue hitting walls and ceilings.

"I can see a light above us.....Daylight I think." Said Tim.

"About time, my ribs ache." Muttered David.

There was a small room at the top of the stairs and a wrought iron gate stopping them getting outside and into a garden of some kind. Daniel put David down and examined the gate.

"Good iron gate, crap lock." He said.

One good kick and Daniel had the gate open. David didn't need carrying the last few steps. He was outside first and looking around. From what Daniel could see, they were in the gardens of the old Armenian Church.

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When she returned, Samnuha had asked Alberti to return her to the moment she'd left the Psochic base. Manipulating time lines wasn't an exact science though. It didn't surprise her to see much of the underground complex, no longer existed. Time had obviously passed; time the statue of Artemis had used to create destruction, death and chaos. No returning to Alberti for another try, she was part of the timeline now. Whatever had happened while she was away, was now irreversible. She returned to where she'd last seen Old Thomas, only to find his blood on the tiled floor. A lot of blood and she couldn't sense his presence anywhere nearby. If she'd arrived when she'd wanted to arrive,

she could have saved him. As it was; Samnuha assumed Thomas had died. Not that Thomas was exactly a lifelong friend, but her gift of sorrow was still over sensitive to death and loss.

"He lived a very long and.....Interesting life." She muttered.

Anger and sorrow were kindred emotions, connected in ways most didn't understand. Samnuha was tempted to find the closest group of surviving Psochics and destroy them. There were other things for her to do though, before giving the statue her gift of sorrow.

"They'll need a way out into the tunnels." She muttered.

At least Laura and Clara were still alive; she could feel them deep below her. Humans were harder to sense and hard to identify. Vampires though, were like bright beacons in the darkness. Those down deep in the complex only had two realistic options. Find the exit into the old tunnels under the city, or wait to be crushed under tons of rubble. The Djinn made herself non-corporeal, her body less dense than air, less dense than just about anything. She moved through the tunnels still intact and through those reduced to rubble and dust. There were bodies among the rubble, a lot of bodies. They all fed her gift of sorrow.

"Ahhh.....The way to the old tunnels is blocked." Muttered Samnuha.

Djinns were expert seers, her mind had been fairly certain there was a problem. Humans had the same ability, but at a very low level and they called it a gut feeling. It wasn't hard for the Djinn to send the rubble to another place, another area of the complex that had already been destroyed. Once the tunnel was clear and open again, she strengthened the wall and ceiling by fusing the stones with extreme heat. Her repairs weren't good enough to survive the entire building coming down, but they'd give some a chance to escape.

"It should hold.....Just don't take all day to get here, Laura." She mumbled.

In her mind Samnuha could see Brother Alberti, sitting at the centre of the nexus. He was watching her, though he couldn't give her any real help. For some reason it was nice to know he was there, watching her.

"Now for the statue of Artemis." She muttered.

The statue was still thumping walls; people were still being crushed to death. There wasn't time to waste, but the Djinn needed a few moments to focus on her gift of sorrow. It had to work, or she'd have to destroy herself to deal with the statue. She briefly made her body solid again; as she remembered what the nexus had shown her. When the first tear left her right eye, Samnuha knew she was ready to face the statue.

"May my dust return to my ancestors, if I fail." She muttered.

The statue wasn't hard to find, it's steady thumping took her straight to it. There was no anger in the statue, no real emotions at all. Its temple had been defiled, so everything in the area was going to be reduced to rubble. That was the problem with being disrespectful to Artemis. The results were usually unpredictable and often violent. The statue had returned to what was left of its temple, much of it now open to the outside world. Still thumping, it seemed intent on breaking through the floor. Not good news, it might destroy the repairs Samnuha had made to the way out into the old tunnels. The Djinn made herself totally corporeal.

"Can you see me, creature of Artemis?" Samnuha shouted

No answer of course, it had no mouth, no voice to speak with. It looked at her though, with the holes carved into its face, as the sculptor's idea of eyes. As the Djinn moved, the stone eyes followed her. Good, she'd got its full attention. And on the plus side, the perpetual thumping had ceased, at least for a while.

"I know you understand sorrow." Said Samnuha.

The Djinn projected sorrow at the statue, a large invisible cloud of it. Samnuha could feel the statue react. Good, it was open to emotions, which meant her plan might work.

"You've been badly treated, I know that." Said the Djinn. "That isn't a reason to destroy everything and kill all those who live in the Armenian Quarter of Old Jerusalem."

It took two steps in her direction, large statue steps. Samnuha could almost touch the statue, by simply stretching out her arm.

"I know you're lonely, unbelievably lonely." Shouted the Djinn.

The statue stepped forward one more step and Samnuha could touch it. She put both her hands on its face and knew it was going to work. It was a semi-sentient statue, left on its own for several millennia. Of course it was lonely; of course it was full of anger. It should have at least been given a voice to scream with.

"I give you my Djinn's gift of sorrow." Said Samnuha.

She gave it all to the statue, every piece of sorrow the nexus had shown her. The sorrow of millions, for every terrible thing that had befallen them. The statue didn't move, or even react, but Samnuha knew what to do. As her tears ran down her face, she moved closer and actually kissed the cheek of the statue. Her tears ran down the face of the statue and became its tears.

"It is done.....I release you from your sorrow." Yelled Samnuha.

Only a handful of tears had fallen on the statue, barely enough to dampen its cheek. It was enough though, more than enough. The cheek began to disintegrate and then the rest of its face. Once started, the statue began to become dust at a faster and faster rate. It had been given her gift of sorrow and hadn't been able to cope with it. Quite quickly, the statue was just a large pile of lifeless dust on the temple floor.

"I just hope the ancient deities forgive me." Samnuha muttered.

It was an attack on Artemis, which might be forgiven, go unnoticed, or be answered by a reprisal of staggering power. For the rest of her hopefully very long life, the Djinn would need to keep looking over her shoulder. There was even a chance that she might be flung into the abyss. Samnuha didn't want to speak to Laura face to face; she'd had enough of the annoying vampires. She sent her a message, into the mind of her Gudara.

"It is done, Laura." She sent. "The statue is destroyed. Never summon me again."

It was the gift of course, she'd be affected by all the sorrow she'd witnessed, for a very long time; maybe forever.

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Clara had enjoyed fighting the Psochics; she'd even found a little privacy to feed on one or two of them. There was something about feasting on blood though; once she'd had enough, it became like trying to eat pudding after a heavy meal. Clara felt as though she never wanted to drain another human of their blood, ever. It would quickly pass though; in a few days she'd be hungry again. Laura was stood not that far away and like Clara, she was covered in blood. Luckily none of it was their blood. They'd both fought hard and looked as though they'd been through a major war. Torn clothing, blood in their hair, Clara had even lost the heel from one of her boots. The main emotion Clara felt was happiness though, with contentment a close second. There was something about a long hard fight for vampires.....

"I know we've lost a few people, but.....There is something about a battle with a worthy adversary." Said Laura.

"As long as our friends survived." Said Clara. "Yes.....I feel so tired, but contented."

"Oh yes.....Tim has to be alright." Said Laura. "I'm sure he is; tough as old boots is my Tim."

They were both at the exit from the Psochic base, where a passage entered the old tunnels. It was where Samnuha had created a few solid, but temporary repairs. They'd been there for a while, fighting any Psochic Clerics trying to leave by that route. The bodies of quite a few of them were scattered around the floor. They'd also seen quite a few Silver Dawn fighters, head into the tunnels; heading for the Red Rose.

"So, it's agreed." Said Clara. "If it looks like the Djinn has failed, we attack the statue."

"Yes, if nothing else we can keep it busy while our people escape." Said Laura.

They'd talked over how they'd know if Samnuha had failed. If the statue was still thumping walls in the next half an hour, they'd use the Gudara to get really close to it. They'd both probably die in the process, but that didn't terrify either of them. Vampires had a constant relationship with violent death, it was how they fed. There was an acceptance that the next death might be their own. Clara's flashlight flickered, so she put in a new battery.

"The last battery I have." Said Clara.

"Same here." Said Laura.

"They'll last long enough." Said Clara.

The endless thumping had stopped, though it had briefly stopped before. Laura's Gudara appeared and muttered something into her ear. When Laura smiled, Clara knew that Samnuha hadn't failed.

"It's over.....The Djinn destroyed the statue." Said Laura

"That just might be, the best news I've heard since finding out I was pregnant with Justin." Said Clara.

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