

## Orders of Sister Harmony

**A short story for Halloween 2025 of about 9,000 words.**

**A tale of witchcraft, the occult and the pursuit of Luther the Hammer.**

**Emily and David Exeter are a married couple who should have been doing better than they were. There had been a lot of bad luck though and Sister Harmony never quite paid them as much as was promised. They'd killed for her and were totally loyal. After all Sister Harmony was the leader of their circle.....**

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### **One... First Blood in Detroit**

Home for David & Emily was a small cottage in rural England, in a village not that far from Winchester. They'd travelled to some places that were a long way from being as green and pleasant as their village; usually on the orders of Sister Harmony. Not a holy sister like a nun; oh no, there was nothing even slightly holy about Harmony. Detroit and a cheap motel had been the first stop on their agenda, but someone had been following them.

"Any idea who she is?" Asked Emily.

"No, but she had real power.....We were lucky." Said David. "Her bag will have some form of ID, even if it's only a debit card."

David wasn't squeamish, but he hated digging through people's belongings; dead people's belongings. He didn't mind the woman's blood and her ripped open flesh; he just didn't want to have to handle her personal belongings. Emily simply smiled at him, before digging through the dead woman's blood stained bag. There was a wallet in there, full of plastic. The disused factory had no lighting. His wife used a tiny light on her key ring to examine the cards.

"Everything's in the name of Miriam Keller." Said Emily. "We'll give Sister Harmony the details when she calls us tonight."

The disused factory was old and really did live up to the rust in rustbelt. David had already seen several large rats, who seemed to be moving about in groups. When the rats began to avoid going around on their own, you knew an area was pretty bad. They were there because of Sister Harmony and her seemingly omniscient contacts. She'd given them a list of places where the cops rarely risked going and the locals totally avoided. The wrecked factory had been the closest when they'd realised the SUV was following the car they'd hired at the airport.

"Hey, put your light on her again.....Her neck, I saw something." Said David.

David Exeter broke his own personal rule and touched the body of Miriam Keller. There was a chain around her neck, which came away easily when he pulled. There was an amulet on the chain, which most would have thought was her simply wearing something pretty. The crow carrying a twig in its mouth, had meaning for the couple.

"Ahhh.....We were sent to kill Luther the Hammer." Said Emily. "It's nice to have it confirmed that poor dead Miriam, was one of his circle."

"Two of us and one of her." Said Emily. "I'm still surprised that she began to build a battle spell."

David had felt the spell building and used something quick and dirty to take the woman out of the battle. His quick hand gesture spell had given him a heavy hardwood club in his hands. Ideally Miriam would have lived to be asked a few questions. As it was, his blow had broken open her head. The rats were going to feed very well that night.

“She definitely had no fear of us.” Said David. “My guess is that she’s too scared of Luther to risk disobeying his orders. She was probably told to follow us and kill us if the opportunity presented itself.”

“Her coat is expensive.” Said Emily. “It seems that Luther pays his people far better than our stipend from Harmony.”

It was a sore point, which David rarely commented on. If they were overheard moaning about their crap pay, it might be reported as being disloyal. No one wanted Sister Harmony to think they weren’t totally loyal to her. Being successful in carrying out orders was a huge plus, but Harmony was likely to dispose on them, if their loyalty was ever in question.

“Come on, we’ll go through her bag at our hotel.” Said David.

It was a motel really, one with just about zero services to keep its patrons happy. The awful accommodation on their trips was another sore point. Emily sometimes joked about taking bug spray with them to some of the cheaper places they stayed. Their car was where they’d left it, almost hidden between a wall and a very old and rusty dumpster.

“The Subaru must have been hers.” Said Emily. “Nice car.....I bet it gets stolen and stripped for parts before morning.”

“We could give it a look over.” Said David. “What do you think ?”

“Just the trunk and glovebox, we have her bag.” Said Emily. “I’m hungry and tired.....I will literally eat anything, but then I need eight hours sleep.”

There was a gun in the Subaru’s glovebox, but they left it there. Found guns tended to have a history. Steal it and get caught with it and you might inherit that history. No one wants life in an American prison, for several murders they didn’t commit. There was a sports bag full of clothing in the trunk and when Emily shifted the clothing around a bit; there was a carrier bag full of high value dollars bills. They kept the bag full of cash, of course they did.

“Looks like food tonight will be the best we can buy.” Said David.

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### **Two...First Phone Call From Home**

It’s actually hard to spend a lot of money in an all-night chicken joint. They came away with two carrier bags full of food and the notion that a little thought could have seen them arriving at the motel with something far nicer. They took it in turns to count the cash, before making any plans. They’d both agreed on that; no plans until they had a total for the used, high denomination dollar notes. Emily was counting, as she added the last note to several stacks on the motel room bed.

“One hundred and sixty five thousand dollars.....Exactly.” Said Emily.

It was a staggering amount to fall into their hands, seemingly by good luck. Emily knew their finances better than David; he tended to assume they’d get by and survive. It might have been a fee to pay a professional killer, with David and her as the targets ? Or it might have been money for something entirely different. Roughly a hundred and twenty five thousand pounds had fallen into their laps. It would help pay their bills for a very long time; there might even be enough left over to buy a few of life’s little comforts. There had been precious few of those recently.

“Can we keep it ?” Asked David. “It might be some kind of loyalty test by Harmony.”

There had been tests before, but nothing so huge and elaborate. Miriam had died....Which seemed a bit much to expect of her, if she’d been Harmony’s stooge.

“No, it doesn’t feel like a test.” Said Emily. “Someone died, someone on Luther’s side. Miriam was wearing one of his medallions. Then there’s Harmony’s attitude to money. She seems to consider

every penny as being sacred. I'm sure she has a shrine somewhere to worship her money. Leaving so much in the boot of a car.....No way."

"Supposing you're wrong.....She'll kill us." Said David.

Sister Harmony hadn't called yet, she sometimes called in the middle of the night when they were abroad. She either didn't understand time differences, or didn't give a crap about waking them up. Tempting to say they'd make a decision about the cash, after talking to Harmony. To Emily, that was just putting off a decision they should have the courage to make.

"I think that's a tiny risk, one I'm willing to take." Said Emily. "Do you agree ? We really do need this cash.....About time we had some good luck."

"We could talk to Harmony before deciding." Said David. "You're good at sensing her mood."

"No, we decide now, David.....And we keep to our decision."

It took him a few moments, but Emily knew he was going to say yes, when he nodded his head a couple of times.

"You're right.....We'll keep the money." Said David.

No sleeping until after Sister Harmony called; they'd once tried to talk to her while still half asleep. You needed to be wide awake for a conversation with her. Maybe not quite bright eyed and bushy tailed, but always wide awake.

"We haven't gone through her bag yet." Said David. "I'll do that while we wait for the call."

"I bet she has cherry chap stick in there. I noticed the smell of it on her."

Sure enough, the first thing David found was a large tube of the stuff, which he threw across the room at her. Emily was such a cherry chap stick addict, that she hadn't bought it for over a year. A found item was like the cash though, normal rules didn't apply. She almost purred as she ran the stick over her lips.

"You'll get hooked again." Said David.

"No.....These days I can take it, or leave it."

David found a pocket diary, which he was reading quite intently. Emily turned on the TV in the room, a grubby flat screen that was fixed to the wall. All the channels available seemed to be porno, apart from CNN. The colour was all wrong on the screen, far too shifted over to yellow.

"Crap.....Why do these places never have a decent TV ?" She asked.

David was with her, sitting on the arm of the chair she was trying to relax in.

"Look.....you have to read this." Said David.

Assuming the diary had belonged to Miriam Keller; she had hated Sister Harmony. There was a picture of Harmony between two pages of the diary, with 'she must die,' written on it in black marker pen.

"Crap.....Imagine if the cops had found this." Said Emily.

"They'd probably just stick it in an archive box and forget about it." Said David.

People who've never met Sister Harmony, imagine her to be tall and fierce, like some kind of warrior woman. The truth was that Harmony was an angry white woman, about five feet four tall. Slim with mousy shoulder length hair. Her main feature was the anger, she emoted it out of her eyes. It was as if there was a demon in there sharing her body. For all Emily knew, there really might be a demon possessing Harmony Roberts; to use her given name. There was writing in the two pages where her picture had been inserted, scribble really.

"Look at this.....Did you know about this ?" Asked Emily.

"No, I've never heard about any of this." Muttered David. "It explains why Luther hates her."

No one had a full given name for Luther, the name he'd been baptised with. If Harmony knew it, she'd never told anyone. The scribble talked about Harmony killing people in Detroit several years before; vengeance for the three was mentioned. Another scribble talked about various powerful artefacts being stolen by Harmony.

"Damn.....She was a one woman crime wave while she was in Detroit." Said Emily. "When she calls I'm going to tell her about the diary. We can hear how she reacts."

"Fine.....Just be careful what you say." Said David.

"I will.....I'm not a first timer."

"Sorry." Said David.

They sat for a while, watching a documentary about circuses in Eastern Europe. It was quite interesting, even if everyone had bright yellow faces. It was David who heard the noise outside. Emily could hear it too, once her husband had mentioned it. A rustling sound, like leaves being blown by the wind. David opened the curtains and there were the leaves, rushing past.

"There was no wind.....I wish we knew what was out there." Said David.

"There's something out there, something with real power." Said Emily. "This must be about the sixth time we've noticed it.....Always sends a wind to disturb the leaves."

"I make it about the eighth time." Said David.

Emily cringed as he opened the door to their room. Like most motels, the door opened straight onto the car park. Leaves rushed into their room, swirling around David like a horde of angry wasps. He wasn't hurt though, neither of them had ever been hurt by the leaves, or the wind.

"I can sense it.....Immense power." Said Emily.

"Maybe it's something that wants to help us." Said David.

"Well.....If it's a bringer of good luck, it's been doing a shit job lately." Said Emily.

"Maybe this kind of work no longer suits us, what do you think?" Asked David.

"No one leaves, no one retires; you know that." Said Emily.

"Yeah, we're Harmony's poorly paid skivvies, for life."

The wind stopped; instantly and they were left with several piles of leaves inside their room. David just shrugged, which was often his annoying way of dealing with the inexplicable. Just as David was scooping up armfuls of leaves, her phone rang. Just a burner, Harmony gave them a new one at the start of every assignment.

"Is it her?" Asked David.

"Of course it is, no one else has the number."

Harmony sounded angry, she always did. Emily thought that Harmony could sing happy birthday and make it sound like an order for an execution. She just had one of those voices.

"Hello Sister Harmony." Said Emily.

"Hello, Emily.....Is your motel comfortable?" Asked Harmony.

"It's perfectly adequate or our needs." Said Emily. "We were followed from the airport and attacked. The attacker has been dealt with. She had documents identifying her as Miriam Keller."

A name used on the phone, a full name for someone they'd dealt with. Harmony should have been ripping her a new one, but she wasn't. A genuine first, Sister Harmony seemed lost for words. It took a full two minutes for her to reply.

"I have heard of her, a colleague of Luther." Said Harmony. "Did she give a reason for following, and attacking you?"

"No, we never gave her the chance." Said Emily. "Miriam had a small diary she appeared to be using as a personal journal."

“Does it contain anything interesting ?” Asked Harmony.

It wasn't her imagination; Harmony actually sounded worried, maybe even slightly scared. Nothing usually scared her; nothing in this world, or any other.

“There are a few scribbles, mentioning you visiting Detroit.” Said Emily. “There's a line about vengeance for the three. Another scribble about stolen artefacts. Is any of this important to our assignment ?”

Poor David, he looked so scared; as if he expected Sister Harmony to come out of a wall, sword in hand, to cut off his head. There was another two minute gap before Harmony spoke again.

“We'll discuss this on your return to Britain.” Said Harmony. “I have your orders for tomorrow, Emily. Can David hear me ?”

“Yes I can, Sister Harmony.” Shouted David.

“This is based on information from a reliable source.” Said Harmony. “Obviously, if at any point, you get a chance to deal with Luther; take it. I'm told that Luther's occult circle are operating out of a fishing tackle shop on Lake Michigan. Freddie's Bait & Tackle in Benton Harbour. Find the shop and deal with whatever you find there. Call me if you need to.”

“Yes, Harmony.....We won't fail you.” Said David.

“There were problems when I visited Detroit.” Said Harmony. “Dreadful things happened.....I'm not proud of some of the actions I took. I hope I can still count on your loyalty ?”

“Yes, of course you can.” Said Emily.

“Always.” Added David.

For a moment there, Harmony hadn't sounded angry, she'd sounded a little scared. Emily had to ask David, before going to sleep.

“Did Harmony sound as though she was apologising for something ?” Asked Emily. “Or am I going crazy ?”

“You're not crazy, my dear.....We'll have to be very careful from now on.”

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### **Three...Freddie's Bait & Tackle**

It had been David's turn to drive the hired car. The crap motel with the squeaky bed and grubby floors, was now behind them. They were going to book a motel that was their choice, not one chosen by one of Harmony's contacts. If they were really lucky, they might get a room with a decent TV.

It was their first time in Benton Harbour and David liked the look of the place. A city with its own airport, the road in had been surrounded by green bushes and the occasional woodland. The streets of the city had, for the most part, been clean; the buildings tidy and pleasing to the eye. Not that David was usually into such things, but Freddie's Bait & Tackle was such a dreadful contrast with most of the rest of the city. Down by the lake, it was in a street that looked as though it belonged somewhere else, anywhere but nice clean and tidy Benton Harbour. David pulled up about fifty yards from the fishing tackle shop.

“Well.....This place looks a bit of a dump.” Said David.

It wasn't as if the street was full of litter, it wasn't. The shopfronts looked tatty though and one or two had been daubed with graffiti. It looked the kind of place that needed a few more cop patrols and a lot more love and attention to the shops.

“The rents are probably cheap.” Said Emily.

David was out of the car and heading for the closest sidewalk, but Emily was hanging back.

“Are you alright ?” Asked David.

"I can feel something.....Where possible, we should keep to the shadows." Said Emily.

He trusted his wife's senses; she'd kept them out of trouble quite a few times. On one occasion her sixth, or maybe seventh sense, had definitely saved their lives.

"You lead, my dear.....I'll follow you." Said David.

They used an occult and witchcraft kind of point and bash, which had served them well over the years. Emily felt something and pointed, then David bashed them, or whatever it was. Both of them then poured in spells and cantrips, until it was dead, or no longer a threat. David would admit to their style being a bit crude, but it worked.

"I can feel.....The wind is beginning." Said Emily.

There had been a cool breeze coming off Lake Michigan, but nothing like the wind which was suddenly whirling around him, picking at his clothes and pulling at his wife's hair. There were a few leaves by the lake, but nothing like the number swirling around them. David noticed something he should have noticed before. He had to yell so that Emily could hear him.

"The leaves.....They're all the same, every time." He yelled.

"Yes, they're all yew leaves." Shouted Emily. "The leaves of the churchyard and the cemetery."

Yew leaves, spikey green yew leaves. He should have recognised them before, but their lives often seemed full of the strange, deadly and inexplicable. A few leaves.....Are just a few leaves. Yew trees had a more than a symbolic meaning though, the ancient trees were sacred to the witches of the forest. Heavy leaves, they fell to the ground the instant the wind ceased.

"Crap.....We have to find out what that is all about." Said Emily. "It might be a warning, or it might be a threat."

"I know, it's driving me nuts." Said David.

David picked up one of the leaves and it had a freshness to it, a scent that meant it had come straight off a tree, somewhere. He was about to put it in his pocket, but Emily grabbed it and threw it on the ground.

"Trust me.....These yew leaves are best left alone." Said Emily.

Another of her feelings, or intuition, or that sixth sense of hers. He wasn't about to argue, she was usually right. They tried to keep to the shadows, which was easy in the poor street lighting. Emily went around the back of Freddie's Bait & Tackle, with him following her. The back door was locked, but looked flimsy and not that much of a challenge for two occultists proficient in witchcraft and the dark arts. Besides, David had a small jemmy in the inside pocket of his jacket.

"I'll get this piece of junk open in seconds." Said David.

"Quietly, my love.....Do it very quietly." Said Emily.

David looked at the lock and decided a simple cantrip would get it open. He'd been taught several pieces of hedge witch magic by his mother; which various aunts had improved with their own modifications. The base spell David used, had been popular in Britain before the Domesday Book was published. Two short whispered words and a single hand gesture. The door swung open.

"See.....You can't beat the old favourites." Said Emily.

Cantrips could fail, all magic could fail. Hedge witch spells could really hurt if they failed, but cantrips just failed.....No giving you a scar to remember when your spell had gone wrong. David used his own super senses, though they were nowhere as good as Emily's.

"Two people in the shop." David muttered. "Both male, I think."

"You're right.....Here we go." Said Emily.

It was definitely a bait shop, probably the grubbiest, stinkiest bait shop in the world, or at least in Benton Harbour. Emily was obviously relying on shock and awe, rather than stealth. She was making

a lot of noise, as she ran from the back of the shop to the front. David ran by her side, readying several battle spells. He liked fire.....Some might think fire spells a bit brutal, but David found them to be affective. People ran away screaming from a fire battle spell, yet freezing and paralysis rarely had the same effect.

“Stay where you are.....Behave and you won’t get hurt.” Shouted David.

“We have business with Freddie.....Where is Freddie ?” Asked Emily.

“I’m Freddie and I don’t know either of you.” Said Freddie.

They had no second name for Freddie; Harmony often seemed to view them as unnecessary. If your orders were to deal with someone, you dealt with them. Knowing their surname wasn’t necessary. David released a fire spell and set fire to part of the shop, almost at random.

“Nice business you’ve got Freddie.” Said David. “Be a pity if it all went up in flames.”

“We just need some information.” Said Emily.

David’s spell had hit a cupboard full of fishing rod reels; the cupboard was really beginning to burn. A few minutes and the fire would spread to the back of the shop. Some fire spells could be disappointing, but that one.....It had been a battle spell to be proud of. Freddie seemed to realise his livelihood was at risk, maybe his life too. Freddie was short and skinny, but skinny in the way his friends probably called wiry. His clothes looked ideally suited to being a bait man, but David couldn’t have easily said why.

“Fine.....What do you want to know ?” Asked Freddie.

“We need a location for Luther the Hammer.” Said David.

“Where can we find him, Freddie ?” Asked Emily.

They’d won; it should have all been over. David was even planning to stop the fire spreading, once they had a location for Luther. It was their dreadful bad luck again. They had been going through a truly terrible period of bad luck. Luck so bad, that they’d begun to suspect a curse of some kind. There was the sound of glass shattering, as the shop’s front door, burst inwards. Four people ran into Freddie’s bait shop and David could sense they were all magic users. One of them even had the aura of an adept who’d crossed the abyss. It was bad, it was very bad, but there was no chance of simply running away.

“Come on you fuckers.” Shouted David. “Which of you wants to die first ?”

The new arrivals hadn’t prepared spells to use, which gave David the opportunity to use battle spells, almost unopposed. Of course he used fire on the adept, it was the best way to try and survive for the next five minutes. The adept died, their weird luck occasionally did things like that. One moment things looked hopeless, the next a seemingly unbeatable adept was a pile of ash on the floor. Emily was swinging a hardwood club she must have used a cantrip to create. Sometimes the old simple spells were the best. She hit Freddie with the club, right across the left side of his face. Down went Freddie, though he wasn’t dead. Freddie was screaming out for protection, but not by anyone in particular.

“Demons of the Abyss, deities I have served.....Angels of the darkness.” Yelled Freddie. “Aid me now in my time of need. Help this faithful servant.”

Freddie had one ear hanging onto his head by a tiny bit of gristle. There was a lot of blood coming from his jaw too. He was in a bad way and shouting out to everyone for help, could cause problems. The demons, witches and deities of the dark could be a jealous crowd. They might well be offended by Freddie shouting out to everyone. Things weren’t exactly going their way, but Freddie might have decided to cooperate. He’d definitely need some healing expertise on his face.

“The offer still stands, Freddie.” Yelled Emily. “Tell us where we can find Luther and we’ll leave you alone.”

Luck flipped again and Emily had been stabbed by one of the new arrivals. A dagger in her side was unlikely to kill his wife, as long as it wasn’t coated in poison, or carried a dark enchantment. David had no way of telling and viewed getting Emily out of the burning shop; as the only sensible option. “Fuckers.....You can all die !” Yelled David.

One arm pulling at Emily, the other spreading fire across a good third on the shop. Things got a little confusing, after Emily fell unconscious at his feet. It looked as though the blade had been poisoned in some way. Alkaloids were the favourite, the same stuff that turned nightshade into deadly nightshade. There were advantages to watching his weight lately; he’d started actually using his gym subscription. David ignored the scorching heat on his face and lifted Emily up and over his shoulder. “This isn’t over.....I’ll be back to kill you all !” Yelled David.

No one answered him back, or said anything at all. There were two of theirs dead on the floor and Freddie wasn’t looking too good. Sadly though, it was David running away with Emily over his shoulder. Something struck the wall as he ran towards the back of the shop. David was out of magical spells, his power just about drained. He needed a while to rest and let his magical abilities recharge. It was a bait and tackle shop and someone had picked up a spear gun. A spear gun dart was stuck in the wall, not that far from his head.

“Bastards.” He muttered.

Not enough power left for a decent spell, but just enough for a very simple cantrip. As David went out of the back door, he turned and used an entangle cantrip on the doorway. If they weren’t careful, the next to leave that way would be tripped up and bound for a while, by invisible ropes. It was old school and not very exciting. It was nice though, to hear someone swearing, as they were caught in the entangle cantrip.

“They won’t run now.....They’ll be slow and careful, Emily.”

No reply and he wasn’t sure if his wife would still be alive in the morning. She might not even be alive when they got back to their motel. He put her in the passenger seat of their car and put the seat belt on her.

“Hang on Emily.....I have healing unguents in my bags.” Said David.

No answer, not even a twitch on her face. His wife was the worst he’d seen her after a battle and they’d been through a lot of fights. David had never expected her to die and he was still hoping the healing unguents would save her. Luck flipped again and there was no sign of anyone chasing them out to their car. The fire in the shop appeared to instantly cease.

“They’re trying to save the bait shop.” Said David, as he drove away.

There was still no response from Emily, not even a sign of pain.

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#### **Four...Return to Freddie’s Bait & Tackle**

Emily Exeter felt as though she was coming out of deep sedation. There was no clear recollection of how she’d been injured, but that would return; it always had in the past. Lying on a motel bed and dressed in only her underwear, there was a familiar smell in the room. David had been using his various unguents on her injured body. No that she minded the unsettling smell; his unguents had probably saved her life, or at least saved her from life changing injuries. As for her injuries ? There were several deep scratches she could see, but the really serious wound looked like a huge red boil just above her right hip. Probably a deep and potentially lethal knife wound; before those wonderful

magical unguents had begun to heal her. Who had they been fighting ? Her memory was still in hiding, as her mind refused to deal with the situation.

“David.....I need you, David.” She said, a bit louder than she’d intended.

“I’m here.....Don’t get up, not yet.” Said David. “Your body still has a lot of healing to do; the blade was coated with poison, probably alkaloids.”

“Oh crap, I remember now, or at least I recall Freddie and his bait shop.” Said Emily.

“Freddie might well be dead.” Said David. “You hit him pretty hard with a baseball bat you conjured up.”

It was coming back in dribs and drabs. The adept David had turned into a human torch, the fire which was growing out of control.....Then the stab with a blade that had penetrated deep into her side. Emily also remembered being incredibly angry. She’d wanted to grab Freddie and tear his eyes out of his skull.

“I can remember most of it.” Said Emily. “How much have you told Harmony ?”

“Nothing, she hasn’t called yet.” Muttered David.

“Oh.” Said Emily.

If you didn’t finish an assignment, there was no full pay and definitely no promised completion bonus. They’d never failed, but others had. After a failure it was as if Harmony considered all pay to be optional. She wasn’t one to forgive and forget, not Harmony.

“You can talk to her.....Say we’re sorry, but Luther won this one.” Said Emily.

“We can’t do that, Emily.....You know what she’s like.” Said David. “Fail her and you know what will happen.”

“Yeah, no proper pay ever again.” Said Emily. “The extra cash won’t last long and then destitution will be beckoning at us; from not that far away.”

They could pack up their life and move, to a new city in another country. There had once been a serious conversation about running; putting a lot of miles between them and Harmony. They weren’t on a normal career path though; those in their line of work were rarer than unicorn crap. If they left Harmony, no one else would employ them. They might end up working in a call centre, with destitution shouting through their letterbox.

“Talk to her, my dear.” Said David. “Tell her we’re going again tomorrow night. Fill harmony with confidence in our ultimate success. You can do it.....Make her believe we can do it.”

“We can do it !” Snapped Emily.

“That’s the spirit.....Now you need to convince Harmony.” Said David.

“Freddie might be dead.” Said Emily. “If I didn’t give him brain damage, he’s unlikely to be at his cinder of a bait shop.”

“If we find the place empty, we go through everything for clues.” Said David. “We’re looking for Luther after all; Freddie is just an asshole who got in the way. If we can’t find any clues.....We’ll need to discuss alternatives.”

“Like heading for somewhere we can survive very cheaply.” Said Emily.

“Yes, my angel.....We might have to do a runner.”

By the time Harmony did call, Emily was fairly relaxed. She’d decided to treat the debacle at Freddie’s shop as being almost expected. Harmony wouldn’t mind them going back to Freddie’s bait shop, as long as ultimately....Luther died. Emily was even willing to lie about how slow and painful Luther’s death was. When the call had ended, Harmony had expected a promise, Emily’s word that there would be no more delays.

“Yes, Harmony.....You have my word.” Emily said. “We destroyed Freddie’s business and left him penniless. Tonight we’ll go at him again.....He’ll be begging to tell us a location for Luther the Hammer.”

“Wonderful, Emily.” Said Harmony. “Make sure you don’t let me down.”

Emily felt better after a decent night’s sleep, but she was glad there wasn’t likely to be more rough stuff until that night. She ached and there was a constant feeling of fatigue. David was pretty good with his various unguents, potions and healing spells, but he wasn’t a miracle worker. She was alive and being tired all the time wasn’t something she was going to complain about. Despite having some disposable cash, they didn’t drive to a fancy restaurant for lunch. They ended up in a modest diner, where there was unlimited coffee refills and food ‘like momma used to make it,’ according to the words at the top of the menu. It was good food and Emily felt better when they got back to the motel.

“I can’t watch TV for hours.” Said David. “Even if the colour is alright on this flat screen.”

“There are other ways to get through the afternoon.” Said Emily.

Her initiating sex wasn’t rare, but probably unexpected with her body still healing. It was a need though and what the body needs.....Emily pushed David onto the bed and began kissing him, quite gently.

“I’d love to.....But are you alright ?” Asked David.

“Yes.....It’ll do me good.”

The sex was good, it nearly always was. Being honest, all sex was good sex; she couldn’t remember any sex being that bad; even with spotty Bobby Hendrix when they were both in the same secondary school class. Bobby hadn’t a clue, but nature wants people to enjoy sex. If it wasn’t immense fun, the human race would probably become extinct in a single generation. The sex that afternoon with David was at the lower end of the awesome scale, but it was still pretty damn good. There was a brief talk on tactics, before they left to visit Freddie’s shop again.

“Tonight is all about stealth, I’ll prepare a few spells while you drive.” Said Emily. “The idea is to get into the bait shop without anyone knowing we’re there.”

“Sounds great.....I’m hoping Freddie is there; cleaning up after the fire.” Said David.

“I’m still hoping I didn’t kill him.” Said Emily. “Not impossible to talk to the dead, but neither of us is an adept with that kind of expertise.”

“We’ll be fine.....Our luck is due to flip again.” Said David.

Emily created spells as she sat in the car; before storing them in her mind. David’s fire spells were more than enough battle magic, so she stored spells to make them invisible, hidden under a cloud of darkness. Tangle was good too, as a way of disabling without killing. If Freddie was alive and in what was left of his shop, they needed to capture him, not kill him.

“Here we are.....Looks about the same as last night.” Said David.

“They might recognise the car.” Said Emily. “Park behind one of the other shops.”

Emily used the cloud of darkness as soon as they left the car. Until she removed the spell, few would be able to see them, or hear them. Personal scent would still be there, but as Emily seemed to say a lot recently; nothing is perfect.

“We’re hidden.....But we should still speak quietly.” Emily muttered.

The bait and tackle shop looked quite badly burned. In fact, it looked as though demolition and a rebuild was the only viable option. The back door wasn’t even locked. Emily readied a tangle spell, just in case someone came at her with a knife, again. The hallway to the front of the shop, smelled of

fire and burning. Emily sensed someone who'd been a stranger the day before, but now sensed who they were. She leant in towards David and whispered.

"Freddie is alive and on his own at the front of the shop."

"Great.....Perfect." Whispered David.

"Don't kill him."

"I won't.....I promise."

A bit unfair of course, she'd been the one to hit Freddie with a hardwood club. David could get a bit out of control once the fighting began. The red mist, as he put it, had been known to descend over him. After that, he used battle spells without mercy. Freddie hadn't been aware of their presence in his shop. There he was boxing up what was left of his stock. The spear gun was there though, on top of a pile of boxes.

"We mean you no harm." Said David. "We need that location though.....Where is Luther?"

Emily dissipated her cloud of darkness spell. For Freddie, it must have been like them suddenly appearing out of nowhere. He'd obviously had enough and didn't even reach for the spear gun.

"You two again." Said Freddie. "My ears are still ringing."

"Just tell us where he is, Freddie." Said Emily. "You have my word that we'll never bother you again."

"You can't tell him I told you where he lives." Said Freddie. "No one is supposed to know, but I helped him move some boxes of crap there; when he'd just moved in."

"No one will know.....Anyway; Luther will soon be dead." Said David.

"Don't boast until it's done." Said Freddie. "You'll find that Luther is pretty hard to kill. The cemetery is full of those who've tried."

"Just give us the address." Said Emily.

"Luther has an old colonial mansion these days, cost him a small fortune." Said Freddie. "I'll give you his full name for free; no skin off my nose. Luther Schneider is his full name and his mother was called Elizabeth. No one has a name for his father, including Luther. Dumped on the church steps he was a foundling. His mother left a note, asking for him to be treated kindly. No wonder Luther never wants to talk about it."

It sounded phoney, but Emily was picking up nothing but sincerity. It still might be crap if Freddie was good at masking his emotions. Not that any of it mattered, if they managed to put Luther in the ground that night.

"You still haven't mentioned an address for Luther's colonial mansion." Said David.

"Wyandotte, Michigan.....A large white house down by the river." Said Freddie. "Near the junction of Biddle Avenue and Walnut Street. Massive old place, you really can't miss it."

David was looking at her; Emily knew the question was coming. Being honest though, her answer at such times was never absolutely certain. Magic wasn't like that and David should have long ago realised that.

"Well, my dear.....Does he speak the truth?" Asked David.

"As far as I can tell.....Freddie is being honest." Said Emily.

"What the hell are you saying?" Shrieked Freddie. "As far as you can tell.....I'm giving you information you couldn't get anywhere else. It's totally genuine."

There's was a business where no one was litigation crazy. Have a disagreement and there was no calling expensive lawyers and arranging a court date. There was only one way to settle disputes and Freddie was reaching for the wicked looking spear gun.

"No need for violence, Freddie." Said David. "We have the address.....We'll be going now."

"Oh, you'll be going alright." Yelled Freddie.

Freddie grabbed the spear gun and Emily grabbed Freddie. It happened by accident, as he tried to aim the spear gun at her. It fired too soon, or Emily might have pressed the trigger; it was all too quick and confusing to be certain. Freddie ended up on the ground with a spear going up and through his jaw and into his head. He was dead and in the centre of a growing pool of his own blood.

“Fuck, that was insane.” Said David. “He was over reacting like a crazy man.”

“Maybe giving us the full name of Luther triggered something.” Said Emily. “Key words and information can be trapped.....I did it once.”

“Remind me never to annoy you.” Said David.

Freddie was dead by his own hand, with his own weapon. To the cops who’d eventually trample through the shop, it might well look like suicide. Tempting to burn the place to the ground, but that might over complicate things. A brief discussion and a decision to leave well alone, led to them being back in their car and plugging Luther’s partial address into their personal, hand held SatNav.

“Here it is, Walnut Street in Wyandotte.” Said David. “It’s a good three hour drive, but we can be there before first light. Better than arriving in broad daylight; what do you think ?”

“Go for it.....Just don’t get us pulled over for speeding.” Said Emily.

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### **Five.....Wyandotte**

David pulled their car to the side of the road and looked at what had to be Luther’s old, but beautiful colonial mansion. The house had its own driveway, which had a few lights and there was some exterior lighting around the house itself. Not exactly lit up like day, but David could see the place pretty well. Painted white with blue window shutters and outside doors. A truly massive place, which went right down to the river. Luther probably had his own private jetty.

“Well.....Business must be going well for Luther the Hammer.” Said Emily.

“We should park somewhere dark and walk to the house.” Said David.

For the first time in quite a while, there was no warning from Emily to be careful. This was it, the time to make a success of the assignment, or end up dead, or looking for somewhere cheap to live in a country Harmony was unlikely to visit. David could use his beloved fire spells to the full. If the entire house burned down, that was fine. If Luther and his guards became nothing but ash, that was fine too. Harmony had told them she’d know when Luther died, even though he was living the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. They were crossing a dark and quite damp field, when the wind began again.

“Shit.....The wind is back.” Said Emily. “Once Luther is dead, our priority must be investigating this weird wind.”

“Might be nonsense, but I don’t think it means us any harm.” Said David.

“So why keep showering is with yew tree leaves ?” Asked Emily.

“I have no idea.” Said David.

They were behind a storage shed, about fifteen yards from the house, when his wife’s super senses must have kicked in.

“Just three in the house.” Said Emily. “One has a certain glow in my mind; that is likely to be Luther. The other two will be guards, or servants.”

“Not much in the way of staff, for such a huge place.” Said David.

“It’s the middle of the night.” Said Emily. “The domestic staff probably live elsewhere.”

Emily turned at the corner of the shed and he felt her gasp, as pain hit her. It was unexpected and worrying.

“You’re still not fully healed, are you ?” Asked David.

“No.....I can cover you in protection spells, but if there’s any running to do.....You’ll need to be the one doing it.”

That wasn’t ideal, but his wife had covered for him on several occasions. David created and stored two more fire battle spells. He had enough stored power to reduce the entire old colonial mansion to cinders.

“Fine.....But you need to protect yourself.” Said David. “Apply a cloud of darkness before we enter the house.”

“Ok.” Said Emily.

“Where exactly is Luther ?”

“First floor on the river side of the house.....He might be asleep.” Said Emily. “He hasn’t moved since I first sensed his presence.”

David didn’t care if Luther was asleep, it’d make him easier to kill. They entered the house and Emily almost vanished. Just a red(ish) glow remained, which only he could see. The first guard they came across was going up the main staircase to the first floor. He notice something, but it was far too late. David was strong, as has been mentioned; he was now a regular at the gym he’d been paying to use for several years. Having gym membership seemed to be the thing, but actually using the facilities.....He was now a regular at Sonya’s Gym and Massage. A genuine massage, not the iffy kind of massage. David grabbed the guard and put him in a choke hold. He carried on with the hold until it was certain the man would never wake up again. Emily leant towards him.

“Luther just moved a little.” She whispered.

The next guard was so close that David could sense him. He was on the first floor, not far from where the stairs were taking them. Rather un-sportingly, the guard had a large calibre hand gun. As soon as he saw David, he fired at him, three times. Unlike his wife, David could still move very fast when he needed to. A mixture of a jump and a slight reality shift to his right and the bullets hit a bookcase, instead of him. No one used guns in a magic fight, everyone knew that.

“Bastard.” Yelled Emily, from behind the guard.

The guard turned, probably intending to shoot at his wife. David used a fire spell to engulf the guard and any idea of stealth was gone. The guard screamed and any magic user worthy of the name, would have sensed the massive change in temperature in that part of the house. As the guard became a pile of hot ash, Emily confirmed what David had guessed.

“Luther has moved.....I have no idea where he is now.” Said Emily.

“We should still search this floor.” Said David. “He was on the first floor and may return.”

It was a dreadful longshot, but those were all they had left. David couldn’t sense a living soul in the house; apart from them. Luther had either gone outside, or he was using stealth spells of some kind.

“If we can’t find him, we she torch the place.” Said Emily. “That’ll flush the bastard out.”

It was drastic, but Emily had good intuition; gut feelings as some called them. David nodded his agreement and began crossing the building, to where Luther had probably been sleeping.

“Think you can catch me ?” Shouted a voice, probably Luther.

“Did you see where he is ?” Asked David.

“No.....He’s still invisible to me.” Said Emily.

“We’re going to burn your house down, Luther.” Yelled David. “All of it.....Right down to the ground.”

The next comment from Luther seemed closer, but from the opposite direction.

“Try that and I’ll seal you in here.” Yelled Luther. “You and Emily will both burn when my home burns.”

David was fed up with having to suck up to Harmony, or else. He definitely wasn't going to put up with threats from Luther the Hammer. Especially now he knew a few things about Luther Schneider. "Oh, shut up Luther Schneider." Shouted David. "You seem to think every shitty thing you do is fine; because your mummy dumped you on the church steps. We've all had to wade through crap at some point in our lives. It's never an excuse for being a total bastard."

A sound started, similar to when David dug out the rotary mower and began to cut their small, but very green lawn. It took him a while to realise it was someone shouting so loud, it was distorting their voice. The sound was Luther, yelling insults while running from the other side of the house. By the time David saw him, Luther's fists were too close to sidestep. Thwack.....David felt his nose break and then there was a blow to his groin, which made him want to vomit.

"Who told you my real name ?" Yelled Luther. "Tell me, or I'll cut off your balls and then skin you alive.....Very, very slowly. Tell me, who told you ?"

If you've got something that works, why bother changing it ? Emily had conjured up yet another hardwood club. Just as David was wondering how painful castration really was; his wife hit Luther across the back of his head with the club. Down went Luther and he hit the ground like a puppet who'd had its strings cut.

"Bind him with entangle." Said David. "Use mute on him and enough paralysis to render him harmless."

"But we're going to kill him.....One more blow and I can finish him off." Said Emily.

"This is Luther the Hammer, my dear." Said David. "We need to get him to somewhere secure, somewhere he can't use his magic. Then we can get all of his secrets out of him. Imagine how much money he has in various banks, right across the globe."

"Harmony will know he isn't dead." Said Emily.

"Fuck Harmony." Said David.

Emily looked at him as though he'd gone crazy. Then she began to smile.

"Yeah, fuck Harmony." Said Emily.

His broken nose was dripping blood on the floor and his balls were throbbing with pain, but David hadn't felt so happy in years. Their luck really had flipped in their favour.

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### **Six.....Home Again**

It seemed to be purely by chance, but magic users quickly learn that very little occurs simply by chance. Halloween night and those who tell you it has no real magical significance, are just trying to gas light you. To Emily, the entire world had a slight glow to it, which would vanish at sunrise.

"She was far easier to kill than I imagined." Said David.

"There was power within her." Said Emily. "A lot of bluster too and a good helping of bullshit. We just believed her to be invisible, because she scared the crap out of us."

Luther had been their prisoner and at some point they'd given him a pen and a pad, to write down his answers to their questions. Luther said he had something important to tell them. They could have simply killed him and collected their pay from Harmony. They read what Luther had to tell them. They removed his gag, so that he could tell them even more of his secrets. It had all been very interesting. They now worked for Luther; he was even going to provide a home for them in Detroit. They wouldn't currently call themselves immensely wealthy, but they were doing alright. They were doing far better than they ever had while working for Sister Harmony.

"Damn, that wind is starting up again." Said Emily.

"We have to agree to solving the wind problem.....By Christmas at the latest." Said David.

Once again, they were being engulfed in almost a tornado of yew tree leaves. The leaves did them no harm, but the situation couldn't be ignored. It might happen when they were in the middle of a fight, or talking to one of Luther's influential clients.

"I actually feel sorry for her." Said Emily.

"But I'm sure you agree.....She had it coming, right ?" Asked David.

"Oh yes, of course.....She definitely had it coming." Muttered Emily.

The body on the ground in front of them, was gradually being covered in yew leaves. The leaves were turning yellow, which was probably significant. Sister Harmony underneath a coating of yellow yew leaves. Silly really, but Emily used her phone to take a few pictures of their ex-employer. Murder wasn't a generally accepted way of resigning, but..... If Luther lived, it was Sister Harmony, or them. They'd attacked her together, but would probably argue for years over who had struck the fatal blow. The wind stopped, as suddenly as it had started.

"We need to dispose of her body." Said David.

"Yes, but not one of your fire spells." Said Emily. "We'll bury Sister Harmony in the woods up near Littleton."

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There will be a Christmas short story with Emily and David. A new adventure and they really do need to solve the issue of yew leaves being blown around by that strange wind.

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'Unless otherwise indicated, all the names, characters, businesses, places, events and incidents in this book are either the product of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.'

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