

## **Clara Copley**

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

### **Chapter 7 – Old Jerusalem**

**"I thank you for your blood." Said Clara.**

**She'd overheard Laura thanking those she fed on and picked up the habit. It seemed polite, to thank those who gave their lives, so that she might feed.**

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It was as if the elderly Citroen Laura had been loaned by the Silver Dawn; had been waiting to get away from old Thomas's mansion. No massively exceeding the speed limits, that was sure to get them noticed. It was the sudden smoothness of the engine, the crisp and fast throttle response. If ever a car could be seen as pleased to leave somewhere, it was their elderly Citroen.

"I have enemies.....They need to think I'm dead." Said Thomas.

Tim gave Thomas a look, which said that if he'd had his way, Thomas would be dead. Laura had seen a mafia movie once, where the capo had told off one of the characters for questioning his judgement, in front of outsiders. She had no idea now what the movie was called, probably one of the Godfather films. That was the way she was with Tim. Don't like an idea the other had come up with ?.....Never row about it in front of strangers. The argument about Thomas still being among the living, would come when they were alone.

"The police will find a houseful of dead guards." Said Laura. "No one knows what you look like, Thomas. Dressing one of the dead in your clothes, will fool the police, maybe forever."

"Your DNA won't be on record, or the guard's." Said Tim. "He was about the same age and build as you. I guarantee, the local cops will love a simple and easy to close case. You're officially dead buddy, or you soon will be."

"Supposing they're not convinced I'm dead ?" Asked Thomas.

"Then we think of another plan." Said Laura. "For a quick and dirty way to keep you alive, I think my plan is fairly good."

Again, Tim was giving Thomas a look, which was wishing him dead. Thomas was going back to Brittany with them. His estate and all the artefacts he loved, would be left to a relative in his will. The relative was him under another name. It seemed that old Thomas had died, officially, several times. A neat trick, but there was one huge potential problem. Nathalie wanted her scroll back and she hated Thomas. She might get someone to put a bullet in his head, the instant she had the scroll. Laura quite liked the old guy, but his death wouldn't unduly trouble her. He had agreed though, to help her in old Jerusalem, in return for not being a bloody corpse on the floor of his mansion.

"My cooperation in Jerusalem, depends on your plan working." Said Thomas.

"Mess me around and my Gudara will find you." Said Laura. "He can find you anywhere, even on a few other worlds. He's tasted you Thomas and knows your soul. If I send him for you.....Your death will be slow and very unpleasant."

"Burned alive if I have anything to do with it." Said Tim.

Why did Tim hate old Thomas with such ferocity ? Laura wasn't sure, but Tim was usually quite mild mannered. If he hated the occultist, there was going to be a good reason.

"Fair enough, I did promise to help you." Said old Thomas. "I will help you in any way I can for one year, or until you release me from your service. I know where the Psochics are in Old Jerusalem and I will help you fight them."

Just so long as Nathalie hadn't killed him, as soon as she'd seen him. Betrayal brought something out in Nathalie, something dark and merciless. And by stealing the scroll, Thomas had betrayed her.

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It was that night, when Clara was going to Colindale to wipe out a competitor. Being a vampire, Niña was both excited by the thought of so much violence and a little worried. While Clara was away, it was up to her and the others remaining behind, to keep Justin safe. Niña opened the door to the nursery, to find Ronnie aiming a double barrelled shotgun at her.

"No need to ask if you're awake." Said Niña.

"I'm just the final backup." Said Ronnie. "Karkengara will deal with anyone silly enough to break into this house tonight. Imagine what the bringer of fire will do to any occultist coming through a window."

Niña knew Liz Grant was in the lounge, watching something on the TV. How tough was Liz ? There were rumours about how easily she could destroy an enemy. Her entire body could change into the gatekeeper of the underworld. In that form, nothing was safe from her deadly tentacles.

"And Liz is downstairs." Said Niña. "I must admit to feeling a little.....Like a spare wheel."

"Nonsense, you're the only vampire in the house tonight." Said Ronnie. "That makes you special and.....I know you had an awful disease, but Simon turned you. Disease or not, he wouldn't have done that unless you were.....That word again, a bit special."

"You really think that ?" Asked Niña.

"Oh yes.....I might be a humble human, but I keep my eyes and ears open." Said Ronnie.

No leaving the nursery without seeing the baby. Niña thought of him as a bit plump now for a vampire, but he looked healthy. He was thriving according to Mabina, who seemed to love that word. Clara's son had pink healthy looking skin, which again, wasn't what Niña had expected in a vampire child. She gently prodded his tummy, making him smile.

"Justin Ned Atherton.....You seem to get bigger every day." Muttered Niña.

"He's getting tubby." Said Ronnie.

Downstairs and Niña used her vampire hearing on the stairs. Ronnie was right, she was special. On a quiet night, with no battle sounds from a streamed movie in the lounge; Niña's hearing was better than that of any other night time predator. Wolves and big cats could hear well, but vampire hearing was even better than theirs.

"Nothing stirring.....Just as I like it." She muttered.

A head seemed to emerge from a wall, a huge head. Karkengara wasn't pretty, but there was a lot of gravitas in that head, coupled with a lot of dignity. The head of a dragon, though the bringer of fire, always said he wasn't actually a dragon. He was something else, an ancient deity who merely resembled the human idea of a dragon. He could exhale fire and had scally skin, so to Niña, he was a dragon. There was the whole horned scally head thing too.

"Karkengara.....I'm really pleased you're patrolling the house tonight." Said Niña.

"I'm not expecting trouble." Said the dragon. "The Psochics lost a lot of people when they attacked this house, and some of them were very senior in their order. They'll have gone to ground somewhere in the Middle East. They'll be healing up and regrouping for a while."

"But you think they'll be back ?" Asked Niña.

"Oh yes.....They need to be found and destroyed."

Niña ended up back where she slept most nights, the room underneath the stairs. By any definition the room was her home. Even the boxes of dry food against the walls, seemed to add a friendly vibe. She moved her swivel chair so that she could see all the monitors. There was a creature fussing about near Liz's car. A mouse probably, though it might well be one of a dozen other night scavengers. Harmless though, so Niña ignored it. She set the system to record any movement by creatures that might be of interest. Generally that meant something about the size of a human.

"Alright.....Now I watch and wait." Niña muttered.

She was good at remaining alert, while sitting motionless for hours, all vampires had the gift. Niña had once sat watching the front door at Simon's house in Italy, for close to four days. She'd had an axe in her hands and was quite prepared to use it. No sleep, no food, no water.....And no blood. Vampires really were the apex predator, top hunter and killer.....Yet the majority of human's didn't know they existed.

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Clara had her Yemeni Janbiya as her favourite weapon. Mabina too had a blade that was very special to her, though it didn't have a special name. It was just a seven inch assassin's blade, which she'd owned and carried, for over five hundred years. A blue steel blade that had come very close to giving Simon a permanent death. She'd clipped his heart with it, but on the whole, Mabina was glad he hadn't died. The big problem with using weapons on such a night, was humans bleeding out before she'd had a chance to feed on them. It took care and precision to wound them just enough, to make them passive and harmless. Noah was lifting up the cover to a drain.

"Someone never even put the lock back." Said Noah.

"They're arrogant.....And arrogance is a killer." Muttered Daniel.

Clara had already opened the loading hatch, where shoe making materials must have once arrived. That had been locked, though the padlock had been easy to break open. Mabina looked into the drain and there was the smell of mustiness, mixed with a little human excrement. She wished Clara had chosen her to go in through the loading hatch.

"Daniel and Mabina into the drains.....Noah with me." Muttered Clara.

Unlikely that the Kosovan gang would hear voices out on the street, but everyone was keeping their speech low and to a minimum. Clara and Noah went down the loading hatch and into the bowels of the old shoe factory.

"Crap.....It smells bad down there." Said Daniel.

"Yep, sure does." Muttered Mabina.

Mabina dropped into the drain and bent her knees slightly after about a ten foot drop. She stepped forward, so that Daniel could land behind her. The smell was worse, much worse. They'd all seen the maps and floor plans, but add the smell of bad drains and grubby water; Mabina had to concentrate for a moment.

"Straight on for five yards, then a left." She muttered.

They had flashlights and yes; vampires might have really good eyesight, but even they couldn't see in total darkness. The shoe factory must have used prodigious amounts of water somewhere in the process. The huge inbound pipes were now empty, but the large outgoing drain was still there. Mabina clambered over it, into a room that smelt worse than a cesspit. Daniel actually grunted in disgust, as he followed her. Through a door and they were in a corridor. Not well lit, but having electric lights at all; proved they were in the right place. It was whispering time now. Mabina leant right in towards Daniel's right ear.

"Third door on the left.....I sense four human heartbeats." She whispered.

There were others a little further away, but Mabina was a firm believer in dealing with the most immediate threat. She drew her blade, smiled at Daniel and then entered the room.

"Boo !" She shouted.

Three men and one woman in the room, all with drinks in their hands. The way the woman was dressed, suggested she wasn't one of their gang. The kind of fancy frock, which suggested she was on the way somewhere nice for the night, maybe a decent restaurant. As it was, she was going to die with the men, it was unavoidable. The three men looked like the typical drug cartel guys you see in late night TV shows. They even had guns, which were lying on a table not that far away. Mabina had no idea what had been going on, but all four in the room, would soon be dead.

"Get them.....Kill them both." Someone yelled.

To them, she and Daniel must have looked like two idiots, who'd brought blades to a gun fight.

"The girl.....I claim her sweet tasting blood." Said Mabina.

"She's yours." Said Daniel.

There was the sound of gunfire somewhere; Clara must have reached the rooms where drugs were packed for the large customers. Gunfire seemed to focus the cartel guys, they ran for their guns.

"Too slow.....Far too slow." Said Mabina.

Daniel moved fast and he had all the preternatural strength from his ancestry. Was he really descended from Neanderthals ? Mabina was never going to insult him by asking. Daniel slammed one man's head into the wall, damaging the wall and splitting his skull like a bad egg. Daniel looked at the brain matter on his hand, as if wondering where it had come from. The well-dressed woman began to scream.

"You'll never be fast enough to reach a gun." Mabina told one of the men.

He struck her and there was a ring on his hand. A large fancy ring, with a gold coin at its centre. Mabina knew the ring had cut her cheek, she could feel her own blood, dripping down her face. He couldn't be allowed to get away with that, not even for the time it might take Daniel to feed on him. She drove her blade up through his lower jaw and into his skull. He was probably dead, by the time the tip of her blade, came out of the top of his head.

"Hey, you've got the girl's blood." Said Daniel. "Don't kill all the men, Mabina."

"Here.....Take this one, he's still breathing." Said Mabina.

Daniel grabbed the surviving male and used his fangs. It seemed that Daniel sometimes liked to feed standing up. He pushed the man against the wall, before biting deep into his throat. For Daniel it became the game Mabina had played so often; trying to drink more blood than went over her clothing and the floor. For some reason, Mabina wanted her feed, to be calm and unhurried, or as unhurried as it could be with more cartel members to find and kill.

"Don't fight and it won't hurt.....I promise." Mabina told the woman.

"I'm not one of them.....I just know Andi."

Mabina had no idea who Andi was; Clara was the one who had the list of who was who. There could be no leaving a witness behind and Mabina was hungry. She'd promised herself at least one large blood meal, during the attack on the old shoe factory. The woman did smell nice, the perfume that smelt of candy floss, though she had no idea what it was called.

"Sorry.....You're in the wrong place, at the wrong time." Said Mabina.

The woman did gasp, as Mabina sunk her fangs into the spot just behind her jaw. Not zero pain, but the vampire toxin worked fast. Mabina lowered the woman to the floor and very carefully, opened up an artery. The flow of hot blood into her mouth, was intoxicating. More gunfire in another part of the building, caused Mabina to rush something she hadn't wanted to rush.

“Crap.....Gunfire in sleepy Colindale.” Said Daniel. “The police will arrive fairly soon.”

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Cyril H Carter didn't just own a fake meat business; he had his fingers in a lot of different pies. Most were useful to his criminal empire, including the car breakers in Erith. Tom Ives who'd run the breakers had retired, leaving a guy called Beetle Bailey to run it. The guy was named after an old cartoon character, but Patsy had never worked out why. Beetle Bailey was known simply as Beetle, to everyone. Maybe not the sharpest knife in the drawer, but Beetle had forgotten more about motor vehicles, than most in the trade would ever know.

“I've given you three sets of fake plates for it.” Beetle had told her. “Looks fairly grotty, but the van won't let you down, I promise. If at all possible, I'd like it back.”

No money had changed hands, they were working for Cyril. The van was a long wheelbase Transit, almost a dinosaur of the van world. Big though, plenty of room for everyone, and whatever equipment they needed. Patsy knew someone who operated a mobile DJ business, out of the back of an old Ford Transit. Some memory foam on the floor and it had brought everyone to Colindale, in reasonable comfort. Once the van had been white, but it was now a mixture of white and red filler. Patsy Smart had already begun to fall in love with the van.

“Oh.....I don't like the look of you guys.” Patsy muttered.

A fairly dark back street, there were a few anonymous looking vans parked up. As long as Patsy kept the van dark and her head down, no one would know she was there. She'd seen the first man a while back, as he'd fiddled with a side door to the derelict shoe factory. He'd stood around for a while, as if confused by something. It was the sound of gunfire which had agitated him; he'd gone away and come back with a friend. What did cartel guys look like ? The two of them were a bit broad around the waste and scruffy.....Maybe that was the accepted look for drug cartels in Colindale ? Almost amusing, to watch them argue in front of the back door. They were armed though, which stopped it being amusing. As they moved around, Patsy caught quick glimpses of guns pushed down trouser belts.

“Bad habit guys.....One day you'll shoot your own nuts off.” She mumbled.

Why didn't they simply unlock the door ? What were they arguing about ? Patsy had no idea, but they were in a position to hurt her friends, as they left the building. The two armed men were a problem, which needed dealing with. Patsy was armed, seriously armed. Noah had given her an Uzi to use, with a bag full of spare ammunition clips.

“In the Middle East they call the Uzi a room clearer.” Noah had told her. “One perfectly aimed burst and you can leave only the dead in the room.”

Patsy had practised a little, but she had left the house with no intention of using the wicked looking weapon. Even the noise it made was terrifying. On the other hand, two armed guys were waiting to hurt her friends. Patsy was small and compact, though she preferred short and slender. Leaving the van without making a noise was easy. Uzi up under her jacket, she approached the two men. Still arguing, they only seemed aware of her when she was close enough to clearly see their faces. Nothing evil in those faces, but Patsy was prepared to kill both of them.

“Put your guns on the ground, or I will kill you.” Said Patsy.

She let them see the Uzi, which seemed to make them quite anxious. They weren't going to drop their guns on the floor for her though, she hadn't thought they would.

“Shoot us and we have friends who will find you.” Said one of the men.

“They'll kill everyone you ever loved, all your family and friends.” Said the other.

One was a little taller than the other, but only by a little. Like two mates coming back from the pub, the way they looked probably delayed her firing the Uzi. Not an easy thing to take the lives of two strangers, who don't look particularly hostile. The taller one managed to get his gun out of his belt and shoot her. The bullet cut a groove in her left upper arm and Patsy fired a burst which almost cut the two cartel guys in half. They were definitely no longer a threat to her friends.

"Damn.....Last time it was my left arm." Muttered Patsy.

That had been in a fight with a Korean drug cartel. That had been a serious wound, but this time the gash in her arm didn't hurt enough to be that worrying. Anyway, she had a decent medical kit in the van. There was bleeding, her jacket now had a red patch. The arm could be used though, which was the main thing.

"Never leave weapons behind." Patsy mumbled.

She hated TV shows where the hero leaves perfectly good weapons in the hands of dead enemies. It was crazy; another enemy could pick them up and use them. Plus, no gun had unlimited ammunition.....One of the dropped guns might well contain that round.....The bullet that saves your life. Patsy picked up both handguns, but left the men where they'd fallen.

"Not as if I could drag you anywhere." She muttered.

It was quite dark near the door and, so far at least, no one had come to see what the gunfire was all about. Her instructions from Clara had been clear, she was to stay with the van and be ready to drive them away, at speed. Patsy returned to the van and dug out the medical kit. She dressed the bullet gouge in her arm, while she waited for the others to return.

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Clara liked Noah; she was beginning to like him a lot. Not as a replacement in her bed for Simon, but as a really good male friend. She could talk to Noah about anything. Being a vampire, there were very few people she could talk to about, anything. Not that she was going to fuss about, making sure he survived the night without a scratch. There was a job to be done and like her, Noah was being paid well to risk his life, while doing that job. Noah wasn't a child; he was an adult who understood the risks. All those thoughts went through her head, yet she still worried if anyone shot at Noah. He had the best there was in battlefield technology. Enhanced hearing through his helmet. The best image intensifying goggles that money could buy. The body armour he was wearing, was said to be able to stop high velocity rounds. Add on an HK416 assault rifle and Noah really was like a walking tank. All of it had been supplied by Cyril and it had all been legally acquired. Cyril had contacts in the military, who seemed happy to supply him with just about anything. All that wonderful technology, yet Clara still cringed at every gunshot. It was baby brain of course, or at least that was her way of rationalising her feelings. All that anxiety about her son, was overflowing onto Noah. Of course she was aware, that Laura was sure Noah would end up in Clara's bed.

".....And soon too.....It's inevitable, you have needs." Laura had said. "He's a nice guy.....Stop fighting it. You're not cut out to live the life of a nun."

Clara had just injured a huge guy; he'd have made two of Noah. Her Janbiya blade could have removed his head, but she'd sunk it into his chest. A badly punctured lung, the brute of a man was almost certain to die. There wasn't a lot of time, but there was enough time to drink from him before his heart stopped. Clara knelt on the grubby floor and dug her fangs into his throat.

"I thank you for your blood." Said Clara.

She'd overheard Laura thanking those she fed on and picked up the habit. It seemed polite, to thank those who gave their lives, so that she might feed. His blood tasted good, but the old saying among

vampires was right; all blood is good blood. In the warehouse part of the shoe factory, Clara heard the deep sound of a hunting rifle. There was the answering sound of Noah's HK416.

"He'll be fine.....He's an experienced fighter."

Clara muttered to her meal, who was still a few minutes away from death.

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David Huynh looked like an Asian banker, or maybe a derivatives trader. At least that was what Nathalie Aurigny had told him, after hiring him.

"All those skills, all that bottled up rage." She'd told him. "Yet you look like someone about to offer me a good price on crypto currencies."

He'd taken it as a compliment, merging into the crowd was the aim of everyone in his family.

Originally his family had lived in Hong Kong, but David's grandfather had decided their future was in America, the United States. When his family moved to New York, they took the family business with them. From an early age, David had been taught the ways of his Triad. He could have risen to the top; he was still a respected member. If asked where he came from, David always said he was American. He'd decided to really embrace the American dream and join the NSA. Much to his surprise, and despite knowing his background, they'd accepted him. To them, being Asian looking and fairly nondescript, was an asset. Plus David was bright with an off the chart IQ score. More than once, his links with the Triads had been useful to the National Security Agency.....

"David.....I heard you'd agreed to work with Laura." Said Nathalie. "Off to Jerusalem I heard, the old part of the city. You're welcome here, David. I've allocated a living area to you and my PA has an access card for you.....Use whatever Silver Dawn resources you need."

"Thank you, that's really appreciated." Said David.

Nathalie's latest PA had come for him in the refectory and he already had an access card to get just about everywhere. He'd also been allocated a fairly nice apartment, without having to ask for it.

David hadn't even asked the latest PA what her name was. She wouldn't last, they never did.

Nathalie was being nice to him now, but there were times when he'd worked for her....David thought of them as cleaner days. The days when Nathalie talked to him as though he was in her office to empty the bins. The Silver Dawn had paid him very well, but there comes a point where dignity and respect, matter more than money. And David had to admit to himself, that after a while, working behind a desk most of the week, bored him.

"You must have your own contacts in Jerusalem." Said Nathalie. "If you have any problems, the Silver Dawn can get you out of the Middle East fairly speedily. Laura is still employed by us and knows who to contact."

She was so nice.....It was hard to equate her old buddy persona, with the woman who'd treated him like crap, every day, for several years.

"Yeah, things are flaring up out there, but things are always flaring up." Said David. "We're strictly keeping ourselves to ourselves in Jerusalem. A decent hotel and we'll even dress like out of season tourists. We'll be fine."

Nathalie passed a note across her desk. It was his old team, apart from Gardner who'd died in some piece of nonsense in the Sudan. Just looking at the names brought back so many memories, most of them good.

"I promised Laura a decent team for when she attacks the Psochics." Said Nathalie. "She never gave me any preferences.....And I get the impression you think I owe you."

"You do owe me, Nathalie." Said David.

The granite eyed look was there for a second or two, but softened again. They'd actually slept together a few times in the beginning. Now that kind of intimacy felt impossible with her. They do say the top people in large organisations, tend to be sociopaths. With Nathalie, there might well be mild schizophrenia in there too. Maybe it was all the stress and sometimes having to send good people out to die ? Whatever the reason.....David was glad he was working directly for Laura and not Nathalie.

"Alright.....Maybe I do owe you." Said Nathalie. "You can have your old team for Jerusalem, fully equipped and ready to go. I'll even throw in Barzani to replace Gardner. They're yours.....If you want them ?"

"Yes, of course I want them." Said David. "Can I ask a favour though, a fairly big favour ?"

"You can ask, but I don't guarantee I'll agree to do it." Said Nathalie.

There was playfulness in her eyes, which reminded him of the old days, when they'd briefly been lovers. Not real love, not the soulmate kind of love. The sex had always been good though, they'd both agreed on that.

"We'll be up against Psochics using ancient dark magic." Said David. "Can we borrow a shaman for the team ? A good one.....One of the best."

"Hmmmm.....If I'm a good judge of people, Laura will have already enlisted a damn good archivist. She'll have made old Thomas an offer, or maybe an ultimatum. Thomas is good, but maybe not as good as he likes to think. If you want him, I can let you have Amir ?"

"Amir.....He's very good, but we've never got on that well." Said David

"There are times when we've never got on that well." Said Nathalie. "Well.....Do you want to add him to the team for Jerusalem ?"

That playful look in her eyes again. There were times when Nathalie seemed to treat it all as a game. Then again, maybe that was the best way to look at it.

"Thank you.....I'll take Amir."

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Daniel was certain the local police would be waiting outside. Or they'd have broken through the rear doors and be waiting near the loading bay. All armed to the teeth of course and wearing Kevlar. There were sirens, but most of those were probably the usual ambulances, fire tenders and police call outs. Somewhere rural and it was likely the sirens meant trouble heading your way. In Colindale, in the London Borough of Barnet, sirens just meant it was an ordinary kind of night. They had a routine now, for dealing with internal wooden doors. Clara and him....One kick together and no door was left in one piece. Daniel rushed into the loading bay, to find.....Lots of dust and empty boxes on grubby looking pallets.

"Well.....I can't say I'm impressed with the police response." Said Daniel.

"I've had that before when in a fight.....Time appears to run faster." Said Mabina. "I honestly doubt if it's more than fifteen minutes, since the first sound of gunfire."

"But we fed.....There were all those cartel guys." Said Daniel.

"She's right, fighting does weird things to how we perceive time." Said Clara. "According to my watch, it's only twenty minutes, or so, since we entered this place."

Noah mentioned Colindale cop shop and how none of them would want to be dead heroes.

"The call will have come in." Said Noah. "They'll be waiting for MO19 to arrive, the weapons specialists. They're probably stuck in traffic somewhere."

Daniel thought it was a joke, but Noah had the look of a man who was being serious. It was TV cop shows of course, giving a warped idea of the reality of modern day policing.



"We still need to hurry.....Did we get them all ?" Asked Daniel. "I'm not picking up any human heart beats, apart from Noah's."

"No heartbeats in here, but I sense several outside." Said Clara. "Probably cartel guys, waiting to shoot anyone leaving, who they don't recognise."

Daniel had seen Cyril's file, the one that mentioned a dozen bad guys inside the building. They'd already dealt with more than that and now there were even more outside. No mentioning it now, but Cyril definitely owed them a bonus.

"I believe, it's my turn to go through a door first." Said Mabina.

"We'll all be right behind you." Said Noah.

Being truthful, Daniel thought there was a good chance that Noah would have been dead by now. A heavy corpse to be dragged out to the van, because if the police found his body, they'd all be in trouble. Noah had a few minor cuts and grazes, but for a human fighting a cartel.....Daniel was impressed with Noah, very impressed. Mabina used her foot on the door and walked outside.

"Where the hell are we ?" Asked Daniel.

"Not where we intended, we're as far back as the factory goes." Said Clara. "We're near some kind of river, or canal. Patsy shouldn't be far away, but she'll be wondering where we are."

The number of people lurking about near the river, was well in excess of what could honestly be called several. They might have been a gang of friends, out for a very late stroll. The weapons marked them as cartel guys; a few were carrying pump action shotguns. Daniel was becoming more and more determined, that Cyril owed them all a sizeable bonus. Noah was the first to make the obvious observation.

"There are a lot of them.....We might have been set up." Said Noah.

Daniel knew the situation with Cyril and it seemed absurd that he'd screw up his own operation against the Kosovans. There was Rory though; who Clara had said seemed a little negative with her lately. He'd even advised Clara to take a good long break from working for Cyril. Nothing conclusive of course, but it would need investigating. Not that Daniel thought a couple of dozen guys with shotguns, were going to win the battle.

"Come on you bastards !" Yelled Daniel.

Noah let loose with his HK416 Heckler & Koch assault rifle, as the first cartel guy fired a shotgun. The noise was incredible. If they had the Colindale cop shop windows open, they'd be able to hear the gunfire. Daniel didn't think a shotgun would kill him, but the wound would be bloody, painful and take a while to heal. He used speed to avoid two shots fired at him and get him among the cartel sicarios. Would they risk shooting one another ? Unlikely, unless things became really desperate.

"Fuckers.....You're all going to die." Shouted Mabina.

Daniel liked to use his strength when possible; a snapped neck was quick and clean. He got behind one of the men with shotguns. Before he could end the guy's life, a shot aimed at Daniel, blew out a good part of the guy's chest. Things seemed to have become desperate, very quickly.

"This is all taking too long." Yelled Clara. "We need to be leaving."

Daniel held up the dead cartel guy, using him as a shield. Clara wanted speed, so no showing off when dealing with the sicarios. There were already less of them, probably most killed by Noah and his assault rifle. As a bad guy walked in front of him, Daniel rammed the dead guys face into his. There was a crunching sound and Daniel was stood over two dead cartel guys. Messy, very messy, but quick and Clara had asked for quick.

"I always wanted to try that.....It actually worked." Muttered Daniel.

He was hit by a splash of blood, happy that it wasn't his. Daniel looked and Noah had been hit somewhere around his left shoulder. It had to hurt, a lot, but Noah was still managing to fire his HK416. A wonderful weapon; Daniel was thinking of buying one when he got home to Pitmedden in the Parish of Udry.

"Come on.....One last push and we can leave." Shouted Mabina.

Daniel saw Clara drop her Janbiya, as a shotgun shot caught her side. No fountain of blood, which was relief, but Daniel's confidence took a tumble. Clara was unstoppable, everyone knew that. Now she was bending to pick up her dropped blade. Two wounded out of four, but the ground was covered in dead sicarios.

"This way.....Run.....This way." Yelled Patsy.

Daniel had been around a while; he'd fought on the winning side in a few wars and the losing side a couple of times. He'd seen an Uzi used before and Patsy was using it like a pro. Held tight and braced against her side, she was firing short, well aimed, bursts. It had to be bursts with an Uzi, rarely using it to spray an area. Even if you had a backpack full of ammunition, you'd run out if you didn't use short bursts. Patsy dealt with half the sicarios who had still been breathing; she'd made it look easy.

"You heard the lady.....Get to the van." Shouted Clara.

Another two bursts from Patsy, as they ran, with Noah still occasionally firing his assault rifle. Not really running, but moving as fast as they could. Noah's legs were fine, but he was now needing support. Not a good sign a real red flag. Daniel hoped Noah didn't bleed out before they could get him to somewhere safe where Mabina could use her medical skills. Clara too, was needing help to run, but she was still managing a good pace.

"Where is the fucking van ?" Yelled Daniel.

"Exactly where I was told to wait for you." Shouted Patsy.

A few shotgun blasts as they ran, but Patsy was still answering every shot with a burst from her Uzi. By the time they saw the old Transit, there didn't seem to be anyone still chasing them. Made to run away by a gang of human drug dealers; Daniel was hoping the story didn't spread far. The van might be old, but it was wonderful to see it. Still no sign of any uniformed police, or the almost legendary MO19.

"Noah isn't doing too well." Said Mabina. "There is a medical kit in the van. I'll work on him as Patsy drives. No fancy driving, it might kill him."

"I'll do my best.....But if the police chase us....." Said Patsy.

Into the van, with Clara actually yelling in pain, as her backside hit a memory foam mattress. Mabina grabbed her medical kit and moved towards Clara.

"Not me.....I'm already healing." Said Clara. "Noah.....Please keep Noah alive."

"Someone betrayed us." Said Daniel.

"Whoever they are.....They will suffer before dying." Said Clara.

Patsy drove at the normal speed for an old Transit van; over the speed limit by enough to look like any other old van, but not being silly about it. On Kingsbury Road, four black and serious looking SUVs hurtled past heading the way they'd just come.

"Looks like Noah was right." Said Daniel. "MO19 must have been caught up in traffic."

Tempting to mention Rory to Clara, but she worked with him; the guy was her friend. Daniel knew that Rory would be her first stop, when Clara went looking for answers. Noah yelled, as Mabina used a scalpel on him.

"Will he live ?" Asked Clara.

"Not sure.....Ask me again when we're back at the house." Said Mabina.

