

Clara Copley

(Season five of London's Night Stalkers)

Chapter 24 – Clara's Memories

“At least it's over.” She mumbled. “Jerome can't harm anyone from beyond the grave.”

At least she hoped he couldn't; recent experiences with Laura and Tim had made her less certain about such things. Adelaide had come to the conclusion that reality was often malleable and open to interpretation.'

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Raine Manoukian rarely used her surname, just about everyone knew her simply as Raine. Full names were for forms and officialdom and she'd had enough mindless bureaucracy to last a lifetime. Her family were Armenians who'd moved to Jerusalem at some point in the nineteen fifties; a lot of people were resettling themselves in the Middle East at around that time. Now she loved London, but before losing her child, she'd been proud to be a native of Jerusalem, a Jerusalemite. They do say that most relationships don't survive the loss of a child. Raine had lost the father of her child to violence and Jerusalem to necessity. If Clara hadn't found her a home in London, she'd have died in her beloved Middle East. Cyril H Carter hadn't wanted a CV from her, but he had asked her for her true name, address and quite a few other personal details. Raine had spent ages typing it into a word document on her laptop, before printing it out at the local print shop. There were even a few graphics to make it look more professional. On the whole, she was proud of her, sort-of CV.

“Raine Manoukian.....An interesting name, from an interesting part of the world.” Said Cyril.

She was in Cyril's office and Raine already quite liked him, Clara had said she would. There was no pretence with Cyril, what you saw was what you got.

“My family are Armenians.....You'll find a lot of us in Jerusalem.” Said Raine.

“Clara said she helped you move to Britain.”

“She did.....I was pretty low then.” Said Raine. “If she hadn't helped me, I might not be here today.”

Cyril was a scribbler, adding his own notes to her immaculately printed CV that wasn't quite a CV. It felt like a travesty, but he might offer her a very well paid job in his organisation. Clara seemed to think it was a done deal.

“I'm told by Clara that I don't need to ask if you're good with firearms.” Said Cyril.

“Well, there might be some new technology.” Said Raine. “I'm always keen to learn new things.

Apart from that, I'm proficient with just about everything.”

“Cyril rattled a tin of chocolates wrapped in gold foil. Clara had told her the etiquette for that moment, should Cyril push the tin across the desk at her.

“They're gorgeous; can I take two, one for later ? She asked.

She didn't have to feign a little greediness, she did love nice chocolates.

“Yes, no problem.” Said Cyril. “Don't go away with the idea that the job would be all pistols drawn at dawn. Most of the time you'd be in the office. Occasionally though, there would be a need to get your hands dirty, Would that bother you ?”

Maybe it ought to, but it didn't. Raine had seen so much violence and cruelty, that it no longer made her cringe, or even close her eyes to avoid seeing it.

“No, I can truthfully say it wouldn't.” Said Raine.

Cyril made a point of reading her CV, but Raine knew he was going to offer her the job.

"Let me see." Said Cyril. "Full driving licence.....Valid UK passport, which you will need. Also fluent in six languages, including one I've never heard of. Let's cut to the bottom line. Clara recommended you and I respect her opinion. Did she tell you what the job pays?"

"Yes, she did." Said Raine.

"It is based on you looking after Clara's baby, as well as moonlighting for me." Said Cyril. "A weird arrangement I'll give you, but I can live with it. Once you're a full time employee of the Luna Blue, you'll be earning a lot more. Do you want the job?"

Want it? She was prepared to bite his hand off for it.

"I really do, thank you very much, Mr Carter." Said Raine.

"Cyril.....Everyone calls me Cyril. My human resources people will be sending you tons of bumf, most of which can be ignored." Said Cyril. "Welcome aboard."

They shook hands and Raine officially became a general admin person for the Luna Blue.

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There was news coming out of the Caribbean if you knew where to look; not everything got into the Daily Gleaner. Just about all news from that part of the world was online now, which helped. Adelaide Ducombe had found the article on the website of a news media organisation she'd never heard of.

'Head of the Esoteric Wisdom Group killed in attack by suspected local mobsters. Jerome Taylor and several of his employees were killed two nights ago.....'

The article went on for a few column inches, proof that the news agency thought Jerome was a big deal in that part of the world. No mention of links to criminal activity of course, or that his house was full of explosives and automatic weapons. No one had flown in, so the natural conclusion had to be murder by local hoodlums.

"So, I finally know your surname." Adelaide muttered. "Jerome Taylor actually sounds quite respectable."

Some local thugs would be rounded up for the murders and that would be it. No one was going to be looking for two vampires and a woman who ran a restaurant in Jerusalem. They definitely wouldn't be looking for a Gudara.

"At least it's over." She mumbled. "Jerome can't harm anyone from beyond the grave."

At least she hoped he couldn't; recent experiences with Laura and Tim had made her less certain about such things. Adelaide had come to the conclusion that reality was often malleable and open to interpretation.

"Let's make sure the money is still there, before I start spending it." She muttered.

Her bank had already called her about helping her invest the hundred million. Not content with that, they'd sent her several emails. Now there was a large pop-up advert as she logged on, extolling the virtues of their property investment arm. Sudden wealth seemed to wake her bank up; they'd never been that attentive in the past. Adelaide wondered if she needed to declare the money to some official taxation department.

"My accountant can do that.....Eventually." She mumbled.

There it was on the screen, vying for space with yet another pop-up. This one was recommending the benefits of a regular savings scheme. Her bank balance had always been healthy, but the addition of a hundred million Euros made her begin to question her sanity. No, it was reality that had gone mad, not her. Choronzon had given her the money and he'd intended that she'd spend much of it. Adelaide picked up her phone and dialled the building contractor she used for alteration and refurbishments to the Red Rose.

"Jacob.....It's Adelaide." She said. "The original quote is quite old. I know you'll need to revisit the numbers. I definitely want to push ahead with the hotel style bedrooms and the general refurbishment of parts of the restaurant."

"Today.....Yes, I'll be here all day." She said.

After Adelaide ended the call, she had to smile. She hadn't intended to mess Jacob about, she was never certain if her business could afford the repayments on the loan to get the work done. Now things were different and if his reworked quote was sensible, she'd probably make his week. Her PA came in with coffee and a croissant. A brief thank you and onto the next of several calls. It wasn't that the money was burning a hole in her pocket; she had been wanting to expand her business empire for a very, very long time. Another call to someone who'd put in a lot of work, only for Adelaide to appear as though she was blowing hot and cold.

"Meredith.....Please don't hang up, it's Adelaide."

"Nice of you to say that.....I did take up a lot of your time. My finances are better than projected. I'm hoping the three properties I liked are still available. If not I'm sure you can find others for me....No messing you around, I promise."

"Yes, Yes.....I'm looking at all three cities again; Paris, London and Rome."

"Tomorrow.....I'm seeing Jacob tomorrow.....Yes, the day after tomorrow is fine."

Adelaide made an appointment to see Meredith at two on the day after tomorrow. Her business had done well, but having a Red Rose in those three cities.....It really was a dream come true.

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Clara knew memories could play tricks in dreams, but she knew it was no ordinary dream. The explosion and subsequent inferno were yet to happen, yet everything smelled of fire and burning. She looked behind her and Niña had followed her into the pocket world of dreams.

"Remember it's all a dream.....Nothing here can hurt you, Niña." Said Clara.

No one seemed to be able to see or hear them, which made sense. The wind was blowing their clothes about, which was strange. Clara saw her six year old self with her father, which was beyond weird.

"There's me.....The man is my dad." Said Clara. "Can you see me?"

"I see you, Clara." Said Niña. "You're pretty.....Cute too, pretty and very cute."

"Yeah, alright." Said Clara. "I want you to see my mum before the explosion. I need to see her, to get the memory of her as perfect as it can be."

"I'll remember her face and draw her when we get back home." Said Niña.

"Thank you, I'd love that.....Get my dad in the drawing too."

Her mum looked older than Clara remembered her, but that was probably another quirk of most people's memories. She was also surprised how many people there were, as if it was a village fayre of some kind. The mill where they lived and worked was a bit of a distance from the village. It wasn't often that they saw people from the village in large numbers. Some kind of celebration was going on, though Clara couldn't remember what.

"Oh, my brother.....He was a sandwich short of a picnic, but I loved him." Said Clara.

"I had a cousin like that, a bit daft and huge; but wouldn't harm a fly." Said Niña.

It was the first time Niña had talked about a specific family member. Clara would remember that and ask her about it, once they were safely out of the locked off rooms.

"Everyone loved my brother." Said Clara. "He could carry two full flour sacks at a time, one over each shoulder. My sister.....I can't see my sister."

"How long until the explosion?" Asked Niña.

"Not long now.....Too soon." Said Clara.

Daniel was there, taking sacks of grain out of the back of carts and carrying them into the mill. That was it, the reason for a kind of festive celebration. It was the first milling of the first grain harvest of that year. For people who lived a fairly hand to mouth existence, that was an important time in the village calendar. Her sister was talking to Daniel and Clara's six year old self was there too.

"Fuck.....This is it, when it all happens." Said Clara.

"Tell me, I'll remember her.....Which one is your sister ?" Asked Niña.

"Girl in the yellow dress, talking to Daniel.....Yes, that is our Daniel." Said Clara.

The flour explosion when it came, was centred in the mill, which wasn't surprising. It was a massive explosion, which had killed many where they'd been standing. Some, like her brother, had lingered on in pain for a week or more. Clara felt it like a huge wind, which pulled her clothes about, yet didn't burn her. Niña looked terrified, but there was no sign of the explosion hurting her. After all, it was just the memory of a gigantic flour explosion.

"Look, Niña.....Look." Said Clara. "Daniel covered me with his body to save me."

Daniel had looked certain to die from the burns he'd received that day. Clara could see the skin on his back looking cooked, liked the crackling on the harvest festival pig. She could even smell his flesh burning. Niña held her hand and squeezed.

"It's just a memory." Said Clara. "The real explosion took place over five hundred years ago."

"Why did he do that ?" Asked Niña. "Why burn in such a way to save a stranger ?"

"Remember there's no outrunning that kind of fire, he'd have burned no matter what." Said Clara. "I have spoken to Daniel about that day. He saw me as a child, pretty and helpless. Fairly sure he could take the agony of the flames without dying, he decided to save me."

"Wow, I can see why you formed a bond." Said Niña.

Clara had always considered that she and Daniel had a bond, forged in the red hot flames of that explosion. It was nice to know that Niña could see that too.

"Daniel was acting on the same idea, when he had a vampire turn me." Said Clara. "I hated him for centuries, but now I can see why he did it."

"Wow, that would make a hell of a book." Said Niña.

"If I could find someone to write it, no one would believe it." Said Clara.

As the memory ended, the chamber they were in became nothing but plain walls and a high ceiling. Tempest had obviously been waiting to appear.

"Well vampire, have you had enough of your nostalgia ?" Asked Tempest.

"I have, the dreams here can decay as they were supposed to." Said Clara. "Once we've left, you can seal the locked off rooms forever."

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Laura had heard snippets of information about goings on in the Hornsey house. They tended to be mixed in with updates on Ronnie and how well she was healing. As her Gudara dropped Tim and her off in the hallway, just inside the front door; there was that wonderful feeling of coming home. First place to look for anyone was Niña in her room under the stairs. Laura shrugged at Tim.

"Niña must be elsewhere." Said Laura. "Karkengara is probably babysitting Justin."

The kitchen door opened, it was one of those sounds Laura would recognise during an attack on the house; in the middle of a storm. Ronnie put her head around the corner.

"He is.....But I get to change Justin's nappies." Said Ronnie. "Sounds a weird system, but it works."

"Rough claws.....I get the idea." Said Tim.

"I just made coffee." Said Ronnie.

There was a lot of hugging, before Ronnie took them into the kitchen and filled their mugs with coffee. Bacon sandwiches were offered and accepted. It really was fast becoming just another morning in the Hornsey house.

"I heard so many rumours, Ronnie." Said Laura "Most had you being in hospital for weeks."

"Karkengara healed me." Said Ronnie. "He left me with just enough healing to do, so that the doctors didn't think they were going nuts. I still get a bit of pain if I stand up too fast, but they were happy to discharge me."

The bacon sandwiches were brilliant, though there was a moment of nostalgia; when Laura didn't think they were quite as good as Simon made. No matter how long he was gone and no matter how impossible he was to reach; memories of Simon would always haunt the place like a friendly ghost.

"So, are you guys back for a while?" Asked Ronnie.

"We're here to organise our dream holiday." Said Tim.

"Somewhere with lots of sunshine and sandy beaches." Said Laura. "Not in the rainy season of course, we want somewhere dry."

"We're going for an entire month, maybe longer." Said Tim. "We've been thinking about it all year."

"Wow, that sounds really nice." Said Ronnie.

There were some legal things regarding the house to take care of too; in theory Laura still owned the place. She was the only one with a sensible, checkable ID and using the name she was born with. Nothing much, they'd managed to get the legal paperwork down to a pleasant minimum. Not that Ronnie needed to know about that.

"Did you hear that Raine is employed as a nanny for Justin?" Asked Ronnie.

"Yes I heard a few rumours." Said Laura. "She's as tough as old boots and fiercely loyal to Clara. The perfect choice to look after the young vampire. She can even teach him how to fight."

"As Justin gets older, Raine will begin working for Cyril full time." Said Tim.

"We were only in the world with pyramids for a day or so." Said Ronnie. "So much has changed."

"It'd be boring if life in the house never changed." Said Laura.

Laura sensed Ronnie needed a hug, probably a lot of hugs. She'd come close to dying, and not for the first time. There was no time to agree it with Tim, but he was a great partner; he'd understand.

"We're going to somewhere hot dry and sunny for a while." Said Laura. "How about joining us? When we travel we do it in style, you'll have the time of your life."

"Surely you and Tim want some time alone?" Asked Ronnie.

They did, of course they wanted a month or so with nothing to do but enjoy one another. Laura was pleading with her eyes, hoping Tim didn't say that.

"You are very welcome to join us, we'd just about agreed on Bermuda." Said Tim. "All on us of course, you'll just need to bring a passport and a bit of spending money."

"I've always wanted to go there.....Yes, I'll join you." Said Ronnie.

It was either going to be a huge amount of fun, or a massive disaster. Laura knew Ronnie well enough to lean towards a huge amount of fun.

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Nathalie Aurigny was often referred to as the Uber boss of the Silver Dawn. She quite liked that title, even if it did mean living permanently in Brittany, France. A wonderful spot near the Carnac stones, they even drew power from those ancient lines of stones. It was the weather which annoyed her, bad winters were incredibly bad. On the whole though, she enjoyed living in the Silver Dawn headquarters. David Huynh was sat in her office; as he was once again a mixture of her PA and a kind of director of clandestine operations. Since Gen had been sent to Ethiopia someone had to do the

job and David was fully healed from the wounds he'd received in Jerusalem. Nathalie needed David so she was determined to be all sweetness and light.

"David, this simply won't do." Said Nathalie. "I can understand the clerics wanting to do a good job. But I'm now hearing they want to hang onto the Albrecht artefacts for six months. The Hand, journal and Codex, all effectively kept locked in a vault for half a year."

David was like his old self now, the David Huynh she'd invited into her bed on a great many occasions. He had that twinkle in his eyes again. Nathalie was seriously thinking of doing the wild thing with him again. Not as part of a relationship though, that had been her mistake the last time. "I understand your frustration, I really do." Said David. "I have seen the clerics and a few seers for good measure. The main item of power is the Hand. They need both the codex and the journal to activate the Hand and render it safe. I honestly can't see a way around that."

It was a question of in for a penny, in for a pound, though she'd never fully understood that English saying. It was now or never, seemed to sum up the situation better. Nathalie ran her hand over David's and smiled at him. Much to her surprise and delight, he didn't pull away. It wasn't as if she was prostituting herself, they'd once been lovers for a hell of a long time. HR might frown on it, but they could take a long walk off a short pier.

"You're the best operations guy I ever employed; I know you can do this." Said Nathalie. "I need access to either the journal, or the Codex. I'd prefer the journal; it's full of words of power I can learn and use. Find a way to get me the journal and you'll be well rewarded."

Again, she rubbed her hand over his. There'd be a financial reward too, but David was no fool, he'd know what she meant.

"I promise you.....If it can be done, I'll get the journal for you." Said David.

"The clerics mustn't be slowed down in their work on making the Hand safe." Said Nathalie.

"I understand that.....I've already thought of two ways to get you the journal." Said David.

David was gone, muttering to himself as he left her office. It was how he used to be, at his best when there was a lot of sexual tension between them. Sadly, the sex always created problems. This time she'd put a lot of thought into making sure it didn't. One thing she was sure of; David would get her the journal, without wrecking the clerics' plans to make the Hand safe.

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They were working on a well-lit bench against a wall. Some might not think it was ideal, but it meant pages of various Psochic Bibles could be fixed to the wall. Even the fake versions might well have genuine ways to handle problems. Of course the genuine alchemical instructions in the version vouched for by Samuel Westcott took pride of place, right in the centre of the wall. As for calling upon the help of the deities from another world? The long dead James Maynard who'd owned Glade Hall, had ways of dealing with such entities. He'd left instructions in his personal papers. Gen wasn't accusing her deceased great grandfather of theft, but one moment he didn't have the papers and the next they were one of his most precious possessions. That had all happened a very long time ago of course, Glade Hall had burned to the ground since then. The correct page from the Maynard instructions was fixed to wall with blu-tack. Gen suspected Maynard was turning in his grave over such a travesty.

"That is all the instructions we'll need." Said Gen. "Who has the lead bar?"

"I do." Said Max.

It was the first ingredient and there was an area of the bench allocated to base metals. Not much yet, but eventually and with luck, they'd be transmuting many pounds of lead into pure gold.

"I have the Philosophers Stone." Said Anne. "I was up late coating it in the necessary organic catalyst."

Gen knew her team were tired, she was tired. They'd agreed to begin creating gold that morning though and putting it off until another day, would set a bad precedent. According to Maynard's papers there needed to be an altar set up for the deities Gen would call upon. Akiva had looked at her a bit sideways when she's given him the job of creating the altar, but there it was; right in the centre of the room. There was blood on the altar, fresh blood, but not from a human.

"Where did you get the blood on the altar from, Akiva?" Asked Max

"No worries, Gen told me it didn't have to be human." Said Akiva. "There are stray dogs everywhere, enough to supply blood for a ton of gold. I grabbed one of them last night.....I'm sure no one saw me."

"If you were seen; the locals would probably thank you." Said Anne.

"But it would be yet another reason for them to be curious." Said Gen.

There were several enchanted artefacts that had been boxed up from the lab in the Westcott Villa. Some of the icons exuded power and were probably useful. There were a few talismans that were probably useless, but they could go on the edge of the bench.

"Have the icons been cleansed?" Asked Gen.

"Did them myself with a smouldering sage stick." Said Max.

"Thank you." Said Gen.

She moved the icons quite close to the one pound bar of lead. With luck, it'd be eight ounces of gold by the time the alchemical procedure was complete.

"I think we're ready." Said Gen. "Gasmasks on, Maynard thought every step might well release toxins; even just calling on the deities of another world."

"I thought that, we're effectively heating up the dogs' blood." Said Anne. "There might be all sorts of pathogens released."

Gen wanted to hug Anne; she knew Akiva wasn't keen on masking up for the whole process. Just one mention of pathogens released into the air and he was happily putting on his gasmask.

"Check each other's masks.....They need to fit nice and snug." Said Gen.

She began by reading the words Maynard had thoughtfully provided in his notes. There had been talk of using the blood of a human child for a really good gold yield. Gen wanted to impress Nathalie, but she drew the line at slaughtering toddlers from the outskirts of Addis Ababa. The deities from another world could learn to make do with the blood of stray dogs.

"Aptis Seranae Vertenue Agreval.....Agreval Sedit." Began Gen.

There were six lines in total, written in a language Gen didn't understand. How had Maynard learned the language of the deities from another world? He had a sinister reputation, coming close to sacrificing his own sister to gain the approval of the deities. Who knew what strange places he'd visited, to carry out unspeakable acts. When there was just one line left to read, Gen found herself hesitating. There was a definite feeling of evil in the room.

"Are you alright?" Asked Max.

"Yes, just wondering if this gold will cost me part of my soul." Said Gen.

Gen looked at Maynard's writing and the characters were wobbling about on the page. It was stress, it had happened to her before. Gen gripped the skin on the back of her hand between finger and thumb and squeezed hard; so hard she almost screamed. The characters were now steady on the page.

"Wetal Hernfar Sedit Agreval.....Agreval Hernfar." She spoke.

There was no clichéd chill in the air, though Gen had been expecting it. There was the sound of quiet talking from the far side of the room.

"They're here.....The deities are with us." Said Gen.

"Dark deities from dark places.....I hope you know what you're doing." Said Akiva.

"I've done what needed to be done." Said Gen.

Gen could see them, moving around in a darkness they must have created. Quite small and a long way from looking even slightly human. A good clear view of one of them made her shudder.

"I'd avoid trying to see them." Said Gen. "Their appearance is rather shocking."

Maynard had mentioned their appearance in his notes, as to how once seen; he thought their appearance would haunt him until the day he died. Gen was feeling much the same way. One of them had put words into her head, saying that this time the dog's blood would do. Next time though, the altar had to be anointed with the fresh blood of a child. Gen had no idea how she was going to tell the others about that.

"Calm, everyone." Said Gen. "We have gold to make."

The alchemy itself was quite easy to perform, the words were in Latin; high school Latin at that. The words powered up the various icons on the bench and the transmutation had begun. It was all about the tree of life, with lead and other base metals at the bottom. Gold was at the top of the tree. The whole thing ran like an automatic washing machine using one of its pre-set washing cycles. Actually it was a little harder than that, Gen had to keep nudging and tweaking the formulas. Her late great grandfather might well be watching and cringing, but she had the feeling it was working.

"The lead has gone.....Vanished." Said Akiva.

"That's fine.....Shows we're nearly finished." Said Gen.

The philosophers stone was glowing, but the catalyst was stopping it being used up. There was a loud popping noise and the lead bar was back, but it no longer looked like lead. Gen had a thing about the soft yellow metal, most people have. On the bench was a bar of what looked like gold, pure gold.

"Fuck, we did it." Said Akiva. "Can I take the mask off now?"

"No, we'll leave the room windows open when we leave." Said Gen. "Anything bad in the air will be taken away in the night time breeze."

It was Max who trimmed a tiny piece of metal from the bar and used it in a testing kit. His jaw really did appear to drop, as he weighed the bar.

"We gave the formula a pound of lead." Said Max. "It gave us back a pound of gold. That's impossible; no reported transmutation has ever been that efficient."

"That is a gift from the deities." Said Gen. "How about purity?"

"My test kit needs a second or two." Said Max. "Wow, a pound of gold as pure as it can get; 99.9% pure."

"Nathalie will be on the first plane out here, I guarantee it." Said Anne.

"99.9% pure, that's amazing." Said Akiva.

"Are the deities going to remain here?" Asked Max.

"Yes, so we need to only use this room in twos." Said Gen. "A nuisance I know, but they did all sorts of damage to people in the Maynard household."

"Two by two it is then, like creatures into the ark." Said Max.

"What do they get out of all this?" Asked Anne.

It was the blood of course, though even her great grandfather didn't fully understand why a little blood on an altar was worth so much gold. Maynard had never understood it, he'd written that in his

notes. Gen intended to call Nathalie and tell her the good news about yield and purity. She'd also tell her what the deities wanted for their ongoing help. The others had a right to know, even if it did cause division and conflict.

"They want the altar anointed with blood every time." Said Gen.

"A bit of dog's blood, it hardly balances the books for a pound of gold." Said Anne.

"The next time, they want the altar anointed with the blood of a child." Said Gen. "A human child."

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Clara hadn't mentioned names for her family, but that didn't stop Niña retrieving her own memories of that weird and horrific dream. She probably now knew the face of Clara's dad, as well as she did. Niña had the artistic ability to turn that memory into a drawing. She loved her room under the stairs, but the lighting was useless for drawing. Niña was sat in the kitchen, where the light through the large frosted glass windows was perfect. On the table in front of her was an artist's A3 sketch pad, several different pencils and a sharpener. An eraser too, to get those shading effect just right. There was also a half-eaten bacon sandwich and a full cup of coffee; her second of the morning. The drawing mattered, it was for Clara. It had been a while since she'd created a drawing that really mattered. Niña picked up a pencil.

"Memory.....Don't fail me now." She muttered.

The title first, she wrote 'Clara's Dad,' at the top of the paper. If it went wrong she could always title up another page. Some of her drawings of Simon and Giovanni had taken a few attempts. She had plenty of paper, but too many attempts could fray her nerves.

"What are you doing?" Asked Raine.

"Drawing pictures of Clara's family." Said Niña.

"Wow, I'll leave you to it." Said Raine.

Raine was obviously looking after Justin that morning; she filled a cup from the coffee machine and left. Niña had a lot of respect for Raine anyway; the woman from the Middle East had been through a hell of a lot. Now that respect increased, as she left her to her art, without asking dozens of pointless questions.

"The eyes.....Get the eyes right and you have the face." She muttered.

It took a while, but it wasn't a race; Clara understood that. Niña liked the final drawing of Clara's dad, as he'd been looking slightly up, as if examining the weather. It was good, a definite one to keep. Not there could only be one picture of Clara's dad. Niña remembered his right profile as he'd stood on the steps of the flour mill. She titled the page 'Clara's Dad Two.'

It was a harder image to turn into a drawing; she wanted to include the mill steps and the farmer he'd been talking to. Niña was concentrating so hard, she knew someone had come in for coffee, but couldn't have said for sure who it was.

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