

## Clara Copley

(Season five of London's Night Stalkers)

### Chapter 20 – The Philosophers Stone

**'There had once been security guards and regular visits by cleaners. They claimed to have seen strange human like creatures; a few talked of being attacked. After one of the security guards had been killed, no one remained there after dark. The cleaners refused to enter the villa at all.'**

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Karkengara would never have gone looking for the missing two vampires and Ronnie, if he hadn't asked Clara about the unorthodox method of using the dragon statues in the hidden rooms. He was developing a feeling about the three of them, almost like an itch it was impossible to scratch. It wasn't as if he was becoming fond of them, but if anything happened to them; it would disrupt the daily working of the Hornsey house. He'd never have admitted to anyone, that he thought of them as family. Karkengara was watching Clara change Justin's nappy. A very messy affair now that the vampire child was on solids; laced with his mother's blood.

"He's getting bigger by the day." Said Karkengara. "Your blood obviously agrees with him."

"Good, I want him to be tough and strong." Said Clara.

"I know telling Niña to slap the dragons was just a joke." Said Karkengara. "I'm getting a bad feeling about them and I'm rarely wrong in such things. Where has your joke sent them?"

Clara looked at him, as if she'd suddenly realised something important.

"Oh, me and my baby brain." Said Clara. "The confusion is real; even I've had a run in with it. Laura mentioned slapping the dragons; she thought it highly amusing to find herself on the outskirts of Luton, or on the rear carriage of the last train from London to Liverpool. No harm, her Gudara could bring her home. Now I remember why Laura stopped doing it. She ceased hitting the dragons, as the final time she did it.....She was sent to somewhere very unpleasant. I dread to think where our friends are now."

"Did Laura say where she was sent?" Asked Karkengara.

"Just that it was very unpleasant." Said Clara. "I feel such an idiot, forgetting why she stopped doing it. Please find them, or we may never see them again."

Sent to a world of unpleasantness, believing it to be some kind of prank. They wouldn't think they were in any real danger. They were going to learn fast that being sent there was a long way from being a harmless prank. If anyone was going to survive in a world of unpleasantness, it was going to be two tough vampires and Veronica Neophytou.

"I need some clue to begin looking." Said Karkengara. "I'm a deity without a world, but my powers are still immense. I just need a start point, Clara. Have you even a tiny clue about where they are? Anything might help."

"So you're saying they're no longer in this world?" Asked Clara.

"I am, I'd sense them if they were." Said the bringer of fire. "They've effectively vanished from this world, which is quite concerning."

Why hadn't he started by telling her that? At the end of the day his main allegiance was to Clara Copley. He'd not wanted to cause her to worry unduly, or question her own judgement. Now he seemed to have done both of those things.

"There is Tempest." Said Clara. "If anyone knows where they might have been sent; he will know. Do you know Tempest ? Is he a friend to you ?"

"Not a friend, but nor is he an enemy." Said Karkengara. "I know the place where he lives in the world of the locked down rooms. I'll go there and see if he can help me."

"Thank you.....I'd never forgive myself if any of them were hurt." Said Clara.

"I'll do my best."

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Gen Debré remembered Sophia talking about seeing a glow in one of the rooms Samuel Westcott had treated almost as a private flat in his own villa. The American woman had put it down to stress and an over active imagination. She even claimed to have searched the room; finding nothing. If she'd mentioned the glow to Youcef, things could have quickly turned nasty. A way to create pure gold in huge quantities, would have tempted the loyalties of anyone and Youcef didn't strike her as being at all trustworthy.

"Westcott has a small private study." Said Gen. "It looks out over the garden, right at the back of the villa. She saw something there, but thought she'd imagined it. That's where she'll be."

Akiva Yatsko was running with her, as if her feelings of anxiety were infecting him. There were stories about Westcott's villa and not all of them about it being haunted in some way. There had once been security guards and regular visits by cleaners. They claimed to have seen strange human like creatures; a few talked of being attacked. After one of the security guards had been killed, no one remained there after dark. The cleaners refused to enter the villa at all. Nathalie had assured her that all the rumours were nonsense and keen to look professional; Gen had pretended to believe her.

"Just hope she and Youcef aren't dead." Said Akiva. "Wounds can be dealt with by a local doctors, but if they're dead.....The police will give us a really hard time. I'm known to the Ethiopian police."

"Are there any police anywhere, that you aren't known to ?" Asked Gen.

He smiled, but if any of the others had been killed, she'd get in touch with Nathalie. Disposing of bodies was well above her paygrade and only Nathalie could make that kind of decision. The first gunshot came when they were quite close to Westcott's rooms. It was followed by a woman, yelling at someone. Her words were unclear, but it definitely sounded like Sophia.

"Not far now.....One more corridor." Said Gen.

Akiva had a gun in his hand by the time they reached where the yelling woman should be. If it came to it, Gen knew he wouldn't hesitate to use it, even on Youcef. The first thing Gen saw was Sophia, her face covered in bloody scratches. It was the thing that had probably scratched her, which caused Gen to come to an abrupt halt. It looked like something no woman had ever given birth to.

"Crap, Akiva.....Kill it, kill that.....Thing." Yelled Gen.

Youcef was on the floor and he wasn't moving. Maybe he wasn't the bad guy after all; his upper torso had been ripped apart by something. As the misshapen human had the right claws to get the job done, it seemed safe to assume it had killed Youcef. Akiva's gun was deafening in the confined space. He shot the thing several times in its body and then its head. Even then the strange looking creature moved a few paces, before collapsing on the floor. Akiva was giving her a confused 'what the hell just happened here' look. It definitely wasn't what they'd expected.

"Careful.....Youcef shot it twice, but it got up again." Said Sophia Lombardi.

"Where did he shoot ? What part of its body ?" Asked Akiva.

"I think.....No, I'm sure.....The body, twice in the torso." Said Sophia.

Akiva shot it twice more in the head from very close range. Two round in the side of its skull and Gen didn't feel even the slightest sympathy for the thing. It was like a creature from a movie, a strange mixture of a brute. Sharp claws and teeth, with arms twice the length of a man. Akiva was the first to get to Youcef.

"I'm afraid he's gone." Said Akiva.

"I misjudged him.....He got between me and that brute." Said Sophia.

"I think we all misjudged Youcef." Said Gen. "Don't beat yourself up too much, he was fairly creepy."

"Oh yes, really creepy.....He had the stone." Said Sophia. "It must still be in one of his pockets."

The dead thing actually moved slightly, but Akiva put it down to a post death spasm. He'd seen a few dead men twitch about and one or two had even let out stomach gas that sounded like words. Akiva went through Youcef's pockets and found a stone object which made his fingers tingle slightly.

"This must be it.....I can feel the power in it." Said Akiva.

It looked for all the world like something Gen used at home to grind up spices; the pestle to go with a mortar. A grey stone with a wooden handle; she'd expected something a little more mystical looking. Gen was a little disappointed, though there was no denying the power pouring off the humble looking pestle.

"We found it in the laboratory back down the hallway." Said Sophia. "Then that thing appeared when Youcef picked it up. The brute seemed to be attracted to the philosophers stone."

For the first time, Gen caught a full at look at Sophia's torn and bloody face. It was beyond first aid, but that would have to do for a start. The poor woman had facial injuries which cried out for expensive plastic surgery.

"Oh, Sophia.....Your face." Said Gen. "I have some first aid supplies; then I'll call Nathalie about getting you transport to a private hospital somewhere."

"Is it that bad ?" Asked Sophia. "I haven't had the chance to see it in a mirror."

"Don't.....No mirror, not yet." Said Akiva. "Look at your face once Gen has tidied up the wounds and applied a few dressings."

The CIA training had to help. Sophia must have guessed how bad her wounds were, yet there were no tears, no hysterical screaming. Gen wasn't sure if she'd have handled the situation so calmly.

"The medical supplies are back near the area we're living in." Said Gen. "Akiva.....Give Sophia your shirt; she can hold it against where the wounds are still bleeding."

"Sure, no problem." Said Akiva.

"What about Youcef ?" Asked Sophia.

Akiva gave her another look that seemed to hint at a bagged up body disappearing into the miles of local grasslands, or maybe a hole in the ground.

"I'll take care of him later." Said Akiva.

Sophia was holding Akiva's shirt on her face and they were moving, even if only fairly slowly. Gen had already made up her mind to ask Nathalie for a more secure location to create the gold. It seemed the rumours about mystical goings on at the villa, just might be true. She definitely didn't fancy running into any more brutes like the one Akiva had just killed. It was as if it wanted to go with them; the thing they thought was dead, stood up and began to follow them.

"Fuck.....Why won't it die ?" Asked Akiva.

It began to swing its arms, but Gen didn't even want to think the word zombie. It had been over used in far too many films and TV shows. Besides, no zombie she'd seen in a movie had claws and razor sharp teeth.

"Maybe if we cut its head off ?.....Decapitation might finish it off." Said Sophia.

"How ? We'd need an axe." Said Gen.

"There's a meat axe in the kitchen." Said Akiva.

"Please.....Lets just get in the cars and leave this place." Said Sophia.

Gen was tempted, they'd found the alchemical formulas and the philosophers stone. There might be useful items in the laboratory, but they had everything considered essential by Nathalie.

"I'll need to get the formulas from where I hid them." Said Gen. "I don't mind going on my own; I won't be long."

"No.....Anywhere we go, we go together." Said Sophia.

"Sounds a sensible plan." Said Akiva.

Maybe it was getting used to its wounds, but the thing was speeding up. Fairly soon they'd have trouble keeping ahead of it. They'd have to fight it then, if they wanted to or not.

"Am I allowed to call it a zombie ?" Asked Sophia.

"I was thinking that, but zombies don't have claws." Said Gen.

"I could run ahead and get the axe." Said Akiva.

"No, listen to the CIA trained lady.....We stick together." Said Gen.

Samuel Westcott had died in 1891, well before the age of mass ownership of phones with built in digital cameras. Gen had seen drawings of him in a few files and there were two paintings of him hung up in the lounge. She recognised the nebulous form of Sam Westcott, as he appeared quite close to the zombie. There had been no agreement to use that word, but one name is much the same as any other. The ghostly figure of Sam Westcott touched the zombie and it disintegrated, becoming a heap of dust on the floor.

"Genevieve Debré, I knew your Great Grandfather." Said Westcott. "Or maybe he was your Great Great Grandfather; it was a very long time ago. I have destroyed this one and no more should bother you tonight. Take what you need from this place and be gone by the time the sun sets again tomorrow night. After that, I will no longer be able to protect you. Oh.....And give my regards to Nathalie Aurigny."

The ghostly apparition vanished, leaving just the pile of zombie dust on the floor.

"Wow, Gen.....I'm impressed." Said Akiva. "You seem to have useful friends in high places."

"Not me, but my Great Great Grandfather was a famous occultist." Said Gen.

"That wasn't in your file." Said Sophia.

"You heard the man." Said Gen. "We need to pack up and leave; as quickly as we can."

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Laura was glad to have Old Thomas with them, even if he was halfway between this world and the next. He was useful, even in a fight and Thomas was effectively their key to get into the secret laboratory in the cellars of the Albrecht mansion. According to Thomas even some of the current Albrecht family, had no idea there was a large laboratory in the basement.

"Not a laboratory with bottles of chemicals, flask and beakers." Thomas had told them. "Though there are bottles of substances useful to occultists. Elias Albrecht kept magical artefacts in the laboratory beneath his home. He even imprisoned the occasional test subject down there, or one of his numerous enemies. Few realised how powerful Elias actually was, but I knew."

Tim was with her of course, as was Adelaide Ducombe. According to Thomas there weren't many guards at night, but those there were, had firearms. Tim and her were going to rely on vampire fangs, strength and speed. Adelaide had been allowed to bring a gun and her wicked looking knives. As he was a fairly powerful magician; Laura was looking forward to seeing how Thomas dealt with any guards who got in his way.

"Crap.....It's a cold night." Said Tim.

"It is a bit.....Can we go inside ?" Asked Adelaide.

All of them were stood in the cold of the middle of the night, though Thomas was probably immune to the effects of the cold. They were at the rear of the Albrecht mansion, looking at a very rusty, but securely locked grating.

"We'll soon be inside." Said Thomas. "The grate looks badly corroded, but it's all an illusion. The locks still work and will carry on working for centuries. Enjoy yourselves down there, but don't underestimate the guards. They're all well trained and carry military grade weapons."

"Are they all human ?" Asked Tim.

"Yes, but as I said.....Don't underestimate them." Said Thomas.

"Open the grate, even I'm beginning to shiver." Said Laura.

How had he learned the key to opening the laboratory ? Laura had asked him a few times, but he always avoided the question. He'd probably once had dealings with the Albrecht family. Thomas seemed to have had dealings with just about every occult group with genuine power. He got close to the grate and whispered a few words. The grate opened up all on its own, leaving them looking at a pretty steep passageway into the ground. They were prepared for the dark; everyone apart from Thomas was holding a powerful LED lamp.

"Come on, the grate closes after a minute or so." Said Thomas.

They'd gone a few feet down the passage when the grate closed and locked itself. Laura had seen a lot of strange things and faced a lot of weird danger; since Simon had turned her into a vampire. She still gave a slight shiver, as she heard the clang of the grate closing. Thomas had no exact number for the night time guards, but had predicted there'd be no more than seven, maybe eight.

"This passage is an emergency exit from the laboratory." Said Thomas. "I seem to remember it being quite long."

Old Thomas had once needed to use the emergency exit. Laura filed that information away, as it might well prove useful one day. Adelaide gave her a smile, indicating that she too had noted the information. The passage ended at a serious looking metal door, with a dull green light above it.

"Green is safe, we can enter." Said Thomas. "Any serious hazard in the laboratory, will lock the door and we'd have needed to use a voice key to enter."

"Do we get to know that voice key ?" Asked Adelaide.

"I have no intention of abandoning any of you down here." Said Thomas. "The voice keys are long and in a dead and rarely spoken language."

Tim pulled at the door, which opened smoothly. Beyond the door was a short hallway, with two fairly normal looking office doors, leading off it. Both the doors had green lights above them.

"The closest door will take you to the archive room and the codex." Said Thomas. "The furthest door is for the main laboratory itself. If you've time and don't mind carrying a fair amount of weight; there are some nice things to snag in the lab."

"Like what ?" Asked Laura.

"Just.....Have a look and you'll see what I mean." Said Thomas.

"You go after the codex with Thomas." Said Tim. "If she fancies my company ? Adelaide and I will do some old fashioned looting of the lab. I can carry quite some weight."

"Sounds fun, let's do it." Said Adelaide.

"Alright the pair of you, just be very careful." Said Laura.

Tempting to send her Gudara with them, but she might need him herself. For pure strength and the ability to transport her out of dangerous places; her Gudara was worth his weight in gold. She'd

already decided to only summon him if she was in extreme danger. Use him too much and one day, she was likely to get him killed. There was no replacement; Wiremi had once told her that. Anyway, her Gudara felt like family and it's impossible to replace family. She watched as Tim and Adelaide headed towards the lab and the wonders that just might be worth pillaging.

"Can you carry anything at all ?" She asked Thomas.

"A set of keys, maybe at a push I could use a firearm." Said Thomas. "Nothing heavier though, it actually causes me pain to carry something heavy."

"No problem, I'll summon my Gudara if we need something moved, or pushed out of the way." Said Laura.

"Do I sense an attitude, Laura ?" Asked Thomas. "I don't have to be here, helping you."

"Actually until I release you from your oath, you have to help me."

"Oh, and I thought we were becoming friends." Said Thomas.

"We are.....But a friend who could bench press four hundred pounds; would be even better."

Thomas was giving her a hurt look, as Laura opened the door that Thomas said would take them to the archive section and the codex she sought. She was deliberately trying to keep Thomas on his back foot. Eventually he'd agree to anything, rather than disappoint her.

"This looks nice.....I was expecting something a little more gothic." Said Laura.

"It used to be very grubby and gothic." Said Thomas. "Then the younger end of the Albrecht family decided to modernise. Personally, I prefer the new modern version."

"I never saw the old version, but I like it how it is now." Said Laura.

The archive room was full of terminals any user of IT would recognise. There were also one or two old microfiche machines, presumably because they still needed to access data in that format. There were lots of flashing lights on data servers and lots of other equipment that Elias Albrecht wouldn't have recognised. Modern looking desks and even moveable screens used to create cubicles. All of it colour coordinated in cream and green. Laura had always assumed the Silver Dawn were the top of heap in the occult world. Now she was beginning to wonder.

"We're about to get an unwanted visitor." Said Thomas. "Door directly to your right."

Why hadn't she sensed something ? She'd heard of anti-vampire screening, but had assumed all the stories were nonsense. When the guard with an assault rifle arrived, there was no telling her to put her hands up, or lie flat on the floor. He began firing in her direction. Thomas became non-corporeal and effectively vanished. Laura moved fast, very fast. Behind the guard before he'd got a good aim at her, she twisted his neck until it snapped. A waste of nice fresh blood, but she wasn't there to eat. Old Thomas was back with her.

"You sensed him, but I didn't." Said Laura. "Do they have anti-vampire screening ?"

"Yes, it's rare, but they have it." Said Thomas. "They were raided by vampires once and lost a lot of expensive and unique data archives. The vampires screens went in the following year. Sorry.....I assumed Nathalie would have told you."

"No, she didn't." Said Laura. "Tell me, Thomas.....Are the Albrecht's a larger concern than the Silver Dawn ?"

"No, the Silver Dawn will always be number one." Said Thomas. "The Albrecht's are just far more specialised in certain areas."

"Let me guess.....One area of specialisation is vampires ?" Asked Laura.

"Again.....I assumed you knew." Said Thomas.

"If you're to be of any use.....Stop assuming and start telling me information that might keep me alive."

"Sorry." Muttered Thomas.

Was she manipulating him, or was he manipulating her. It was beginning to get hard to tell. One day she'd visit the Albrecht's with Clara, Daniel and maybe Mabina. They'd turn the place upside down and discover what the Albrecht family had learned about vampires in all those centuries. Niña could come too; it would be unfair to leave her out of all the fun.

"Where from here, Thomas?" She asked. "Which door are we leaving by?"

"I am of some use.....Another guard arrives; same door as the last one."

A petulant Thomas, that didn't suit his usual vibe. Laura got close to the door and grabbed the guard before he could use his assault rifle. She plunged her fangs into his neck and fed; just a little. Too much blood and she'd feel euphoric and a bit light headed. A few mouthfuls were enough, before she dropped the guard to the floor.

"Just a little blood, Thomas." Said Laura. "He may even survive, unless Tim decides to feed on him too."

"I have no problem with you feeding on the guards." Said Thomas. "The codex should be in the room where the magical artefacts are stored; at least it was when I was last here as a living human. The door directly behind me is the one we want."

"Can you sense if there are any guards in that room?" Asked Laura.

It was funny to see an apparition close its eyes and appear to concentrate. Life as a vampire was full of new experiences and watching Thomas furrow his brow was one of them.

"No promises, I need to be quite close to get it right." Said Thomas. "I can sense no one in the room we're about to enter."

Laura pushed the door open and felt many strange emissions from quite a few artefacts. She instinctively knew it wasn't a place to needlessly hang around in. It was slightly alarming to feel so much magical energy, yet have no idea what it might be trying to do to her.

"No wonder there are no guards in here." Said Laura. "I think some of the items in here might try to do unnatural things to them."

"The magical equivalent of radiation.....I feel it too." Said Thomas.

Too many items with too many enchantments. Laura had felt it from the horde of weapons Horus had once given her, but nothing like the aura of magic in the room. It was so thick, she was sure it was clouding her vision, just a little. She knew the codex when she saw it. That was strange, as she'd never seen it before.

"Here.....Tell me I'm right." She said, pointing. "This is the codex we're looking for, isn't it?"

It was a rolled up scroll, which looked to be the considered priceless by the whoever looked after the Albrecht archives. Inside a plexiglass box, which was covered in warning signs. It seemed that opening the box without the proper key, would cause you to be electrocuted. Not happy with that, there was a promised release of poison gas. Other magical deterrents were hinted at, none of them pleasant.

"Yes, that is the codex." Said Thomas.

"I take it you don't have the key, Thomas?" Asked Laura.

"A correct assumption. It's likely to be in the security office, upstairs in the main building."

"Fuck." Said Laura. "Will anything in here hurt you?"

"Well.....Most would say I'm already dead." Said Thomas. "As far as I'm aware none of the protection devices in this room can cause me any lasting harm. One or two might sting a little."

"Stay or go, your choice." Said Laura. "If you do that vanishing thing, come back later; I still need the knowledge in your head."

"I'll stay."

Laura had decided to open the plexiglass box the easy way, by using her vampire strength. She'd set off every piece of nastiness, but she didn't have the time, or the inclination to find the key.

"Here we go." Said Laura.

There was an obvious lid, with the lock in it. Laura grasped the lid and pulled; harder than she could remember pulling at anything recently. So hard that the muscles in her arms actually ached, which was probably another first. The lid broke away from the lock and opened. There must have been micro wires in the plastic, or something capable of conducting the electrical current. The voltage hurt her heart, really hurt it. Being a vampire, her body would eventually repair any damage. Laura was in pain though, by the time she'd pulled the entire lid off the box. That stopped the electricity completely.

"You alright ?" Asked Thomas.

"Yeah, though I wouldn't want to do this kind of thing too often." Said Laura.

Next came the gas, as her hands entered the box. A light green gas, which made her cough quite a bit. She spat out a mouthful of phlegm and there was blood in it, her blood. Another new and interesting experience. She made herself feel better by thinking that whatever the gas was, it would have probably meant instant death to a human. The gas stopped after about a minute and she heard Thomas coughing. You learned something every day; it seemed poison gas could make apparitions cough.

"You alright ?" Asked Laura.

"Yes, but it did sting a bit." Said Thomas.

The gas dissipated, as gas tends to do. There was nothing between Laura and the rolled up scroll, the codex they were looking for. Destroying the item being protected was almost never used as part of a protection scheme. Who would protect a priceless ancient scroll, by incinerating it ? Laura couldn't be certain, but if she closed her fingers on it and gently.....Very gently lifted.

"Well done, Laura.....I knew you'd do it." Said Thomas.

The codex went into her pack, which held spare batteries, quite a few things she considered essential and a long thin assassin's blade; just in case.

"Good.....Now we can go and see what the others are up to." Said Laura.

"There are other enchanted artefacts here." Said Thomas

"And the next one might turn you into a pillar of fire." Said Laura. "We'll go and see if the others need our help."

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Mabina Gladitch rarely worried about anything, but her nursing career was important to her. She needed the pay to cover the day to day expenses of her house. Plus being a nurse gave her access to drugs and equipment that the others needed, but could never buy. Her direct manager had told her that if she missed one more shift for no good reason; she'd be fired. Yet there she was, trudging through a passage deep in a pyramid, on a world she didn't know. It wasn't good and she was worried. Yelling for help from Karkengara didn't work, they'd tried that. So far, they had no idea why an old worn, painted sign; had once instructed Clara to enter the pyramid.

"No offence, but you've had a fairly chequered past, Ronnie." Said Mabina. "May I ask you something personal."

"I've never pretended to be an angel." Said Ronnie. "Ask away, Mabina.....Ask away."



"My manager at the hospital said I'll be fired if I miss another shift for no good reason. Well.....As we're stuck here, it looks like I'll be missing the next shift; maybe a few others too. Any advice on how I keep my job?"

"It needs to be an invented excuse." Said Ronnie. "The real reason is perfect, but a slapped dragon delivering us to another world, with pyramids. They'll send for the men in white coats."

"You need an excuse that it a good reason." Added Niña. "A reason so good that your boss will never doubt it for an instant."

"Yes, the kind of reason that no one can say isn't a good one." Said Ronnie.

"Sound exactly what I need." Said Mabina. "Do you have any ideas about this invented good reason?"

"HmMMM.....I'll need a while to ponder on it." Said Ronnie.

"Me too." Added Niña.

"I'm going to be fired.....I knew it." Said Mabina.

The passage went straight on, into darkness with just a little light from holes in the walls. Or, there was another passage to their right; leading to somewhere with lights; somewhere cool air was coming from.

"I want to go that way.....I say we head towards the lights." Said Niña.

"Me too.....There might be food there, and water." Said Ronnie.

"Probably a chamber in the centre of the pyramid." Said Mabina. "Someone turned the lights on, there has to be someone there."

Mabina set off down the passage, with the other two following her. Of course people on another world wouldn't speak English. On the other hand the arrow meant for Clara, meant they were aware of other worlds. Worlds where they too constructed pyramids. The more Mabina thought it over, the more certain she became that walking toward the chamber at the centre of the pyramid, was a good idea.

"Crap." Said Ronnie.

"Coming this way was definitely a bad move." Said Niña.

Mabina had seen carvings on the walls of pyramids in Egypt. She'd seen depictions of lines of soldiers on pillars all over Egypt. The armour and weapons always seemed to be deliberately vague; as if the artist preferred style over substance. There had to be several hundred warriors in the chamber, all dressed in armour and armed to the teeth. Plain and simple armour and similarly simple, but deadly looking swords. The fighters looked exactly like carvings on walls in Luxor.

"Well.....They don't seem to be attacking us." Said Mabina.

"They don't look friendly." Said Niña.

Rows and rows of them and on a raised podium in the centre of the chamber was a tall priest in brightly coloured robes. Human looking, if it hadn't been for having four arms and an elongated head. He or she was pointing at them and yelling in an angry manner. The sex of the priest was unknown, thanks to the thickness of the robes.

"Have you any knowledge of these people?" Niña asked her.

"No, they and their world are unknown to me." Said Mabina.

"Trust me; I've been in a lot of fights." Said Ronnie. "When the priest up there gets angry enough.....They'll attack us."

"I tend to agree with you." Said Mabina. "We should back into the hallway.....It'll limit how many can get at us."

"It might not be a priest." Said Niña.

“Whatever they are, we’re obviously upsetting them.” Said Ronnie.

They were out of the chamber and backing down the hallway, when the sound of angry ranting stopped.

“Whatever weapons you brought with you; get them ready to use.” Said Mabina.

Niña had a blue steel blade, probably given to her by Clara. Ronnie produced a gun, which was totally unexpected. A fairly old looking automatic, it probably held a lot of ammunition. Mabina had her fangs, her strength and thousands of years of experience of extreme violence. There was the sound of many feet, running their way.

“Here they come.....Show no mercy.” Said Mabina.

“I am allowed to use magic ?” Asked Niña.

“Use whatever works best for you.” Said Mabina.

They never made a sound, which was strange; every battle Mabina had been in, the enemy had done a lot of shouting. Some even brought their drums and horns, to make even more noise. Apparently the soldiers of the four armed priest, fought and died in silence. Niña drew first blood, which Mabina would never have predicted. A disruption spell of some kind; it left several of the enemy writhing on the floor in agony, as they died. Then it was hand to hand, with edged weapons, fangs and vampire strength.

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