

Clara Copley

(Season five of London's Night Stalkers)

Chapter 9 – Fire In The Tunnels

“It was strange to see her Gudara vanish, taking other people with him. Usually Laura saw the world fall away as her Gudara took her to where she wished to go. It still happened, the way reality around her Gudara seemed to fold in on itself. He was gone less than a minute before returning.”

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Mabina Gladitch had really wanted to be in Jerusalem, but she was booked to do the dayshift for several weeks. There had been a final warning about missing shifts. There had been final warnings before, but her line manager seemed to mean it this time. It wasn't just that Mabina needed the money, though her salary was useful. It was mainly because Mabina enjoyed being a senior nurse at her local hospital. Night shifts were best, but that was probably a vampire's natural love of the dark hours.....

“Are you alright, Noah ?” She asked.

About eight in the evening, in the part of her home that was used as a private medical facility. Only for those she knew and trusted though and never for money. She'd seen Noah shifting about and had wondered if he was fully waking up. He'd been out for a while, longer than she'd expected.

Noah blinked at her a few times, before nodding his head.

“I had some weird dreams.” Said Noah. “How long was I asleep ?”

“You were given something, but your body needed sleep.” Said Mabina. “You've been out for three solid days.”

“That must mean Clara has left for Jerusalem.” Said Noah.

He was trying to get out of the bed, but Mabina easily pushed him back down onto the sheets.

“No, I promised to keep you safe and look after you.” Said Mabina. “In the morning I'll run through my own discharge checks. If you seem well, I'll get you onto a flight to Jerusalem. No fights, Noah.....Do you agree ?”

Clara said he was tough. Even in a weakened state, he was trying to push her out of the way.

“I feel fine.....She'll need me.” Yelled Noah.

“The attack on the Psochics will already have started.” Said Mabina. “I would have liked to be at the Hornsey House, protecting the baby. Instead I'm here, trying to stop you being a fool.”

“Sorry.” Muttered Noah.

That news seemed to floor him. Noah lay back on the sheets while staring up at the ceiling.

“If I get you on a plane in the morning.” Said Mabina. “You'll arrive in time for a victory celebration, or as reinforcements for the next attack. Either way, Clara will be glad to see you.”

“I understand, Mabina. I promise to be good.”

She'd had him hooked up to a banana bag, but now he was awake, he'd soon feel very hungry. She'd already decided that if he tried to make a break for it as she ordered them a takeaway, she'd tie him to the bed. If he behaved, she'd share a decent bottle of red with him.

“You've been on the banana bag for three days.” Said Mabina. “I think it's time for solid food. I'll order a takeaway for both of us. What sort of things do you like ?”

"Indian food is my favourite."

"One of my favourites too." Said Mabina.

She ordered the food and the bottle of wine was already there. If Noah had gone back to sleep, she'd intended to drink it all on her own. There was a fairly basic TV in the medical room, hooked up to Netflix. Mabina had spent many hours, watching that TV. When she returned from the food being delivered, Noah hadn't tried to run away, or even get off the bed. Good, he was learning.

"After we've eaten, I'll remove the catheter." Said Mabina. "You may as well use the bathroom for tonight."

Mabina hoped he didn't ask about his other bodily function. He'd been in the military and had probably seen wounded friends receiving treatment. He'd have known what happened, even if he'd never been through it himself.

"Do I get some of the wine?" Asked Noah.

"In theory it'll be bad for you." Said Mabina. "In practise.....Of course you do. I'll even let you choose the movie we watch on Netflix. Don't expect too much from the old TV."

There was other news, but Mabina waited until Noah was catheter free and beginning to seem more like his old self. He'd take a while yet to be battle ready, but a night or two in a hotel with Clara.....It would do him a world of good.

"I have news about Rory." Said Mabina. "Clara asked me to tell you, before you got on a plane to Jerusalem."

"Was he the traitor? Did she kill him?"

"Rory admitted it to her, just before Clara killed him." Said Mabina. "It was all approved by Cyril and the body has been disposed of. It's over, Noah.....There should be no repercussions from his death."

"Good." Said Noah.

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Laura was happy Clara was there, but unhappy that waiting for her had delayed the attack a little. At least the Rory problem had been sorted out in a permanent way. No one likes a traitor; treason can be corrosive and destroy those it touches. Laura was back in the tunnels with Tim, though this time; they weren't alone.

"This place doesn't smell good." Said Daniel.

"After a while, you get used to it." Said Tim.

"I could do without paddling in three inches of grubby water." Said Clara.

It felt like they were moaning at Tim and her. They didn't like the tunnels any more than the others, but sometimes you can't choose where to fight. Most of the Silver Dawn's black ops team were elsewhere, but two of them were going with them. Amir and David Huynh were leading the fake attack, which meant them needing most of the Silver Dawn fighters. Not really a fake attack, they were going straight for the main entrance of the Psochic base. It was going to be the noisy attack; with lots of fire, loud explosions and staggering amounts of gunfire. All of it planned to take attention away from Laura and her attack through the back door. The idea was to leave a smoking ruin where the Psochic base now stood. Laura had decided that if there was time, she'd see if the base had anything worth taking. Laura summoned her Gudara, who didn't seem at all worried by being in the wet and smelly tunnels, again.

"Get your equipment ready, we'll be going in three groups." Said Laura.

Daniel had left his backpack on the very wet floor. Laura was expecting more moans as he picked it up. But he actually grinned at her.

"Now dear Laura.....Is when it starts to get interesting." Said Daniel.

"No moaning at me if I stop to feed." Said Clara.

Laura needed to watch for the guard crossing the room. She was back up on Tim's shoulders and looking through the vent. After the guard had crossed the room, they'd have about twelve minutes until he returned. He was in for a hell of a surprise when he did. As the guard finished crossing the room, Laura jumped to the floor.

"Clara and the fighters first." Said Laura. "You know the plan. Hold onto my Gudara, he knows what to do."

It was strange to see her Gudara vanish, taking other people with him. Usually Laura saw the world fall away as her Gudara took her to where she wished to go. It still happened, the way reality around her Gudara seemed to fold in on itself. He was gone less than a minute before returning.

"Daniel and Tim next, I'll go last." Said Laura.

Grubby water went with them, Laura had only just noticed. A good gallon of water had to be ending up on the floor of where they were going. Not that it mattered, as they intended to destroy where the Psochics called home. Everyone had a backpack and they were mostly filled with explosive devises and a few designed to cause fires. Her Gudara was back and Laura hung onto him.

"Fight for me in that place, but don't die." Said Laura. "Do you understand?"

"I understand, Laura."

It wasn't just that the huge original vampire was needed to get the injured away from the Psochic base. Her Gudara was family now, one of the people she'd known the longest, since being turned by Simon. He was also hers and hers alone to use as a mentor and protector. All that made her Gudara special to her. The tunnels seemed to drop away and Laura was stood in a large damp patch with the others. In front of her was the cold fireplace, with the Psochic symbol on the wall above it.

"Go.....Fight well, but don't die." Laura told her Gudara.

He ran down the passageway the guard always arrived from and quite quickly; there was the sound of fighting. The shouting, the screaming as her Gudara killed whoever he'd found. It never crossed her mind, that her Gudara might lose a fight.

"It begins.....Daniel and I will go down the other passageway." Said Clara.

The Silver Dawn fighters went with them, meaning Clara had quite a force with her. The sound of fighting took longer to happen, but once it started; the sounds were intense. For a moment Laura looked to her left at where her Gudara had gone and to her right, where Clara seemed to have found quite a few enemy fighters.

"Well.....Which way are we going?" Asked Tim.

"There, straight on.....I can see a doorway." Said Laura.

Laura opened her pack and took out a fairly small explosive device. She had quite a few of them, as did Tim. Not a huge explosion with each one, but they'd destroy most things they were thrown at. Laura nodded at the stone fireplace, with the Psochic symbol above it.

"That symbol has annoyed me, since I first saw it." Said Laura.

Laura tended to use a blade when fighting, but she did have a gun in a shoulder holster; for emergencies. Tim was carrying an assault rifle supplied by the Silver Dawn, which looked incredibly impressive. He rattled the clip full of bullets, as if checking it in some way.

"Straight on it is.....I'm ready." Said Tim.

A kiss of course, just a quick peck on the lips. Then Laura crossed the room and pushed open the door. Beyond it was a long hallway, with several doors leading off it.

"First door on the left alright for you?" Asked Tim.

"Fine."

Before following Tim, Laura threw the explosive device in the direction of the old stone fireplace. Being a vampire, she could throw most things quite a way. The loud explosion, told her the fireplace and the symbol above it, had probably been totally wrecked. The first door on the left, took them into an empty room. It was either go back and try another door, or leave the room through a door directly in front of them. Laura quite liked the look of the door in front of them.

"Get ready, Tim." Said Laura. "I have a feeling about this door."

A reinforced door with metal bands, yet it had been left slightly ajar. Why put in such a door and leave it open and unlocked ? Laura used her boot to open the door as wide as it would go. She ran through, with Tim just behind her. It was probably the guard room; the place where the guards rested, while not doing their rounds. There were about six or seven guards, all looking as shocked by Laura and Tim arriving; as Laura felt about finding them.

"Get them.....Kill them both." Yelled one of the guards.

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Patsy appreciated being trusted with protecting the baby, Justin Ned Atherton; though she had doubts about the Ned. Niña was there too of course, wandering around the Hornsey house and looking at the screens in the room under the stairs. Liz Grant had adjusted a few cushions on the sofa in the lounge and was currently watching a few episodes of Fringe on DVD. Patsy hadn't seen Karkengara, the bringer of fire. Liz had assured her though, that should they have need of him; Karkengara would appear. Or, at least his huge head would appear. As usual, his massive body wouldn't fit anywhere in the house.

"Rest assured, Patsy.....Clara's son is safe." Said Liz.

Patsy picked at the leftovers from an earlier Thai takeaway. It still tasted alright, but it was getting a bit past its best. She watched a little bit of Fringe, but it wasn't really her thing. When Liz offered her a glass of white wine, Patsy accepted. No second glass though, just in case someone attacked the house.

"Mabina can't be here, Noah needs her care." Said Liz. "She assured me that the Psochics will have enough to deal with in Jerusalem. Relax, Patsy.....No one will be attacking Clara's house tonight."

"I know, Liz.....I'm getting paranoid about it." Said Patsy. "I just have a feeling and like Laura, I've learned to listen to those feelings."

"Fine, but you're missing out on some good wine." Said Liz.

Patsy became restless and decided that two episodes of Fringe were enough. She went to check on Niña, only to find her fast asleep. There she was, lying in her swivel chair, while actually snoring. Liz seemed intent on getting drunk, while Niña was catching up on her beauty sleep. Patsy left the room under the stairs and headed upstairs.

"Who is looking after that poor child ?" She muttered.

It wouldn't be Ronnie, who still wasn't herself after losing Hacker Jim. As far as Patsy was aware, Ronnie was on light duties for a while; which meant lots of rest and as little stress as possible. Patsy opened the nursery door, worried about what she might find. He was there, his enormous head half in and half out of the room.

"Don't worry Patsy." Said Karkengara. "No one will harm this child while I'm here."

"I wish they'd told me you were here." Said Patsy.

"Niña and Liz aren't stupid, or incompetent." Said Karkengara. "They might seem a bit laid back, but you can trust them."

"Yes, I realise that now." Said Patsy.

Patsy heard something outside, just below the now reinforced windows that gave access to the flat roof. It sounded like someone fiddling with Clara's much loved Peugeot, which was parked there. The car was quite old now, but Clara still loved it.

"Can you hear that?" Asked Patsy.

"Oh, just the local kids messing about." Said Karkengara. "Nothing to worry about."

Nothing to worry about....Clara would go crazy if her car was vandalised.

"I'm just going to have a look." Said Patsy.

Opening the window was fiddly, which seemed right; it was the nursery after all. Patsy carefully walked out onto the now infamous flat roof. It was less of a burglar's delight with the better windows, but to Patsy, it still looked to be a security problem.

"Be careful out there." Called Karkengara.

Patsy could hear someone near Clara's car. It didn't sound like a gang of bored kids, it sounded like people older than that. Their voices were deeper than any kids Patsy knew and one kept muttering at the others to be quiet. There were two pipes on that wall of the house, both solid and usually dry if it hadn't been raining. It was the way the Psochics had climbed up to the flat roof. Despite a lot of talk about making it a harder climb, the pipes were still as they'd always been; a climbing frame for robbers, attackers and any passing ne'er-do-wells. Alright, the bringer of fire could deal with them, but Patsy was determined to moan at Clara about the pipe situation. Patsy climbed very carefully down the two very solid looking pipes. About halfway down, the voices below became recognisable words.

"Crap, Phil.....You said you'd get the door open in seconds."

"Normally I would, but it's dark against this wall."

There were three of them, all at least in their early twenties. Two young men and one girl, who seemed to have been tasked with keeping watch. None of them were actually watching for anything, or so it looked to Patsy. Why steal a fairly old Peugeot? Maybe that model were supposed to be easy to steal? Phil seemed to be finding it a bit of a task.

"Come on Phil, before someone comes." Said the girl.

"No one comes around here." Said Phil.

So wrong and despite Patsy hanging off the pipes, a few feet above their heads, none of them had noticed her. Patsy kept climbing, until she was so close.....A stretch of her arm and she could have touched the guy who'd been criticising Phil.

"I think we might need to find another car." Said Phil. "I can't get the right angle on the lock, not in the dark and against this damn wall."

The girl muttered something at Phil, but Patsy couldn't quite make it out. Something about Phil being a bit of an arse. Phil got annoyed and Patsy had become fed up with the whole thing. She dropped to the ground, barely three feet away from Phil.

"Haven't you guys got anything better to do?" Asked Patsy.

The girl was off like the proverbial whippet. No looking back, no concern about deserting her mates, she was off into the distance; her fancy trainers thumping against the pavement. Phil looked worried, but the other one.....Trouble always came from the other one, the quiet moody guy. He actually swung a crowbar at Patsy, probably carried as an aid to robbery. Patsy dodged the blow, but felt the slight breeze, as the crowbar went past her head.

"Bastard." Said Patsy.

She hit the quiet moody guy and Simon had trained her how to fight. The right angle on his jaw, then a hard punch to the throat. Moody guy was on the ground making choking noises, but he'd live. Phil

had decided to follow the girl, by running away. Patsy grabbed him and twisted his arm enough to make him cry out. Patsy wasn't sure if she liked herself for it, but she was beginning to have fun.

"Oh no, Phil." Said Patsy. "No running away until we've had a talk."

Two of them, both glaring at her, though moody guy was still coughing quite a lot. They didn't look terrified of her, but they weren't attempting to hurt her, or run away.

"Satisfy my curiosity." Said Patsy. "Why steal an old, but still very much loved car?"

"We have a party to go to.....Couldn't afford a cab." Said Phil.

"Had a party to go to.....Lisa was the one invited and she's run off." Said moody guy.

The builders fitting new windows, really hadn't tidied up properly, or in fact, barely at all. There was a section of scaffolding leaning against the wall, a three foot length of galvanised steel tubing. There was probably a proper name for it, but Patsy saw it and thought 'weapon.' She hit the ground hard with it, far too close to moody guy's leg.

"Nothing personal, but there's a child in the house." Said Patsy. "If I see you two around here again, I'll use this pipe on your heads. I'm not joking, so please don't assume I am. Find somewhere else to play.....Do you agree?"

"Yeah, you won't see us again." Said Phil.

"You made your point." Said moody guy, while rubbing his throat.

"We'll annoy someone else." Added Phil.

They left and Patsy threw the piece of scaffolding into the long grass near next door's fence. For some reason she climbed back up the very solid and stable pipes. Back into the nursery and Karkengara seemed to have been waiting for her to return.

"I watched and you handled that well." Said the dragon.

"Thank you.....The pipes need looking at. Far too easy to climb." Said Patsy.

It was as if Justin was happy to see her. The baby was making gurgling noises and definitely smiling up at her. Patsy gently prodded his tummy, which was guaranteed to make him chuckle.

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David Huynh didn't really think main entrance was the right description. Old Thomas had provided information and an old, but surprisingly accurate map. In the basement of an old Armenian church, they'd found the double set of very solid looking doors. The Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem seemed to get quieter and less populated with every passing year. They'd needed to break open a few doors to get to where they were, but David was sure no one had called the police. They had police radios and so far, hadn't seen a living soul since entering the old church.....

"If we'd annoyed the Armenians." Said David. "We'd be up to our necks in cops by now."

"We should be moving faster than this." Said Amir.

"Careful.....Among the Aramaic scripts on the door. I can see a curse." Said Thomas.

"Top row of the second panel.....I see it too." Said David. "A nasty one too.....Very dangerous."

"We could simply blow open the doors." Said Amir.

"And the curse would still be active." Said Thomas. "Leave me in peace to remove the curse.....None of us would enjoy what the curse will deliver."

Being liquefied, if David's Aramaic was as good as he hoped. A nasty and very painful way to die.

"Do it, Thomas." Said David. "Just remember that we are working to a timetable."

David sat on the floor, with his assault rifle in his lap. After a bit of muttering, Amir sat next to him.

Two men with state of the art weaponry, held up by a curse applied to a door at least a thousand years ago. It was annoying, but Thomas was one of the best at removing such things.

"The Psochics must use these doors all the time." Said Amir.

"Yes, but the curse isn't intended for them." Said Thomas. "Now.....Give me peace and quiet." There was a lot of running of fingers along the edges of frames containing ancient scripts. Thomas muttered a lot, in a language David didn't recognise. There were languages before Aramaic, but few were now fluent in them. Thomas started running his fingers down to up, rather than right to left. There was some loud chanting, followed by soft reciting of ancient protection spells. Those David understood, though he couldn't have used them magically. Finally and after at least a third of an hour had passed, Thomas yelled two words of power. The doors disintegrated, to become nothing but a pile of dust on the door.

"Wow, that was impressive." Said Amir. "Is it safe now ? Can we get moving ?"

"I had intended to simply open the doors." Said Thomas. "Still.....The curse has been completely removed."

Whether it was bravado, or a mistake, one of the Silver Dawn black ops team, was the first to walk through the gap; where the doors had once stood. He was unharmed, which was reassuring. David had wondered about other curses in the hallway beyond the doors. Thomas was striding along though, so David felt reasonably safe.

"There's a temple.....The next place we reach, will be the Temple of Artemis." Said Thomas.

"Goddess of the hunt and the moon." Said Amir.

The hallway was long, though the lighting was fairly good. They'd only gone a short way, before hearing gunfire and then an explosion.

"Clara and the others are obviously busy." Said David.

"Harming the Temple of Artemis will bring consequences." Said Amir.

"The Psochics must be destroyed.....We all agreed on that." Said David.

Everyone nodded, which was just as well. Even if they hadn't destroyed the temple, it was certain that Clara would. That was the way with vampires, very little respect for old deities and old temples. There was an explosion and a flash of light at the end of the hallway.

"We're there.....Our part in the battle is about to begin." Said David.

"No prisoners.....Every Psochic must perish." Yelled Amir.

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One of the Silver Dawn fighters had gone. Daniel hadn't seen him since they'd turned left and followed a different passage. Probably still alive, they kept hearing an assault rifle in roughly the right direction. The Psochic clerics were attacking them in small numbers, at the junctions of various passageways. So far at least, it was a technique that wasn't working well for them. The passages behind them were full of Psochic dead, but Daniel had just a few minor wounds. Clara was like a whirlwind and seemed to have come through it all, without a scratch. The Silver Dawn fighter still with them had been wounded on his left hip. Just a shallow gash and it didn't seem to be slowing him down. They'd just arrived at a set of stairs leading down, into a large underground chamber. Well lit, he could see a huge statue of Artemis against one wall.....

"Whoever gets here first, begins the destruction." Said Clara. "That was how we left it at the Red Rose. As we're here first.....Let's use these explosives we've been carrying."

"I hate destroying such a place of beauty." Said Daniel.

Not that he wasn't going through his pack and throwing several devices into the temple below. The angle was perfect and there were quite a few Psochics worshipping below them. Clara too, was throwing explosives into the Temple of Artemis. Like most of Jerusalem, the temple was incredibly ancient. As their explosives blackened the walls, Daniel couldn't help shuddering. There'd be consequences for wrecking a place of worship to Artemis. No one attacked such a place, without

suffering consequences. Sometimes minor consequences, but sometimes.....People died in terrible ways. The use of guns by the Psochics wasn't a surprise, but the speed of their response was. No sooner had the first devices exploded, when Daniel was dodging assault rifle rounds.

"Get under cover.....I'll cover you." Said the Silver Dawn fighter.

Clara carried on throwing explosives and the occasional firebomb. She was still a wild thing, seemingly impossible to hit with bullets, or arrows. She actually laughed, as she rained death upon the Psochics in the temple. Daniel tried to keep low, especially after the Silver Dawn fighter was killed. He'd seemed so fast, so good.....But no one is immune to a bullet in the head. Daniel actually crouched over the dead man and spoke a few lines in Aramaic, wishing him well in the next life.

"Daniel.....Keep throwing the explosives." Yelled Clara.

There was the sound of Amir shouting from the other side of the huge temple. Daniel had never been so happy to hear his voice. David Huynh was yelling too, ordering his fighters to show no mercy. When Old Thomas began using dark magic against the Psochics, Daniel thought it might not be such a bad night after all.

"Get under cover, Daniel.....You're too exposed." Yelled Amir.

"This whole staircase is exposed." Shouted Daniel.

It had been a crazy place to start an attack, but there is a saying that hindsight is always 20/20 vision. Daniel managed to get behind a stone statue, but not before a bullet had buried itself in his shoulder. He yelled and tossed yet more unpleasant devices at the enemy.

"May all Psochics rot in Hell !" Daniel yelled.

"I'll second that." Shouted Thomas.

Daniel knew Laura and Tim had arrived, long before he heard Laura yelling abuse at the Psochic clerics. Tim was carrying the latest Heckler & Koch assault rifle. Its sound when fired was as probably destined to be as iconic as the famous bark of the AK-47. State of the art, at the bleeding edge of technology. Not only a fantastic weapon, but Tim seemed really good at using it. Daniel looked around the edge of the statue and watched Tim firing at the Psochics.

"Stay there Daniel." Yelled Laura. "We're on our way down to you."

"Go to Daniel, he's hurt." Shouted Clara.

The Psochics in the temple were finished, but there were others still pouring in through various doors and hallways. The battle was far from over, but it was definitely going in favour of the Silver Dawn. When Laura and Tim were with him, Daniel thought they could take on the world.

"How bad is it ?" Asked Laura.

"Feels deep, but I'll live." Said Daniel. "I've survived far worse."

"I can see a hallway to our left." Said Tim. "I'll make them keep their heads down, while you both get in there."

"Do it." Said Laura.

Tim must have emptied an entire clip, giving them covering fire. Daniel wasn't too proud to run away, as long as it didn't become a habit. It was more of a tactical withdrawal, to get somewhere where they were less likely to be blown up or shot. He stopped just inside the hallway, which was more like a tunnel. Laura ran in after him.

"I remember the map Thomas showed me." Said Laura. "This tunnel will take us round to the far side of the temple.....We'll be behind the Psochics."

"Sounds a good plan to me." Said Daniel.

Actually, it wasn't much of a plan, but ideas during a battle are quite often like that. It was certainly better than anything Daniel had going round in his head. As soon as Tim was with them and ready,

Daniel assumed they'd be running through the tunnel. Everything changed when the statue of Artemis swung its arm in the direction of Amir and David.

"Crap.....Did you see that ?" Asked Laura.

"I knew there'd be consequences.....Terrible consequences." Said Daniel.

The statue's hand had struck the wall near David and Amir, but the blow hadn't been well aimed. There was a lot of rubble, but he could see Amir shouting at someone. There was a good chance that David too, had escaped serious harm. It seemed the statue hadn't chosen any particular side, or maybe it hated everyone who was using explosives in its temple ? The statue stood up, so that its head was just a foot or so below the ceiling. It then stomped on a group of Psochic, with its heavy stone feet.

"Shit.....It seems to hate everyone." Said Tim.

"Consequences." Said Daniel.

The statue wasn't a good likeness for what people now thought of as Artemis. No wonderful hair and beautiful face, attached to a wondrous body. Artemis was just one of many names, for the nurturing deity. So many different names, that it would be hard to list them all. The statue was of a fairly basic looking female shape, with breasts and a vagina. Not ugly, but not beautiful either, though some might think it beautiful. The statue made a fist and hammered it into the ceiling. Everything shook and small pieces of rubble fell to the floor.

"What is it doing ?" Asked Tim.

"I think.....It's only a guess." Said Daniel. "I think it's trying to bring Jerusalem's Old City down about our heads."

"It wants to escape from here." Said Laura. "I feel it.....Its temple has been defiled."

"I knew it.....Massive fucking consequences." Said Daniel.

Three more times, the statue hit the ceiling with its fist. After the third time, the ceiling broke apart. It fell, bringing the building above with it. There was dust, a lot of dust. The lights in the tunnel were still on, but they might go off at any moment. They had flashlights in their packs, but stopping to get them out, might prove fatal. It sounded as though half of the Armenian Quarter was about to collapse into the Psochic base.

"Run.....Follow me.....Run." Shouted Daniel.

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The tunnel went in a sort of semicircle to the right. It was soon full of choking dust and about halfway round, the lights went out. Despite the constant noise of collapsing rubble, there was no alternative. They stopped to dig flashlights out of their packs.

"Will it destroy Jerusalem if it gets out ?" Asked Tim.

"The statue is probably tied to the temple by millennia of worship." Said Daniel. "When the temple is reduced to rubble, the statue will die with it."

"You forgot to add probably to that statement, Daniel." Said Laura. "There was once a statue in Leptis Magna.....I heard about it from a local. The statue only stopped when it tried to swim out to sea. It's probably still thrashing about on the sea bed off the Libyan coast."

"I hope Daniel is right." Said Tim.

Flashlights helped, but they couldn't cope that well with the dust. They were down to a slow pace, to avoid bumping into walls in the dark. So far the statue hadn't died; they could hear it thumping against something, before the next sound of collapsing buildings. When they reached where the tunnel was supposed to end, there was just a massive pile of dust and rubble.

"Oh, this end of the temple has collapsed." Said Laura. "I should have thought of that."

"No point in going back the way we came.....We know that end has been wrecked." Said Tim.

"Anyone have any idea what we do now ?" Asked Daniel.

Laura knew and it was fairly obvious if the others had thought about it. They weren't used to having him about, that was the problem. Eventually they'd take him for granted. Of course, he still had to be alive for his gift to work.

"Shouldn't be a problem, I can summon my Gudara." Said Laura.

"Of course.....I keep forgetting about him." Said Daniel.

"Just hope that the Psochics haven't killed him." Muttered Tim.

"I gave him orders not to die." Said Laura.

When her Gudara appeared, he wasn't alone. He had hold of a Psochic cleric, someone senior by the quality of his robes. No chance to find out who he'd been fighting, her Gudara twisted the cleric's neck until he was no longer in the world of the living. He dropped him to the floor and smiled at her.

"Laura.....I'm pleased to see you're unharmed." Said her Gudara.

"I'm glad you obeyed my orders not to die." Said Laura.

"Where do we get him to take us ?" Asked Daniel.

Typical Daniel, assuming he had a say in where her protector would take them.

"We're safe here, for now." Said Laura. "So, my friend and mentor.....Can you awaken the Djinn ?"

"Clara has the aegis." Said her Gudara.

"We both know such things are nonsense." Said Laura. "I repeat.....Can you wake her ?"

Simon had been given the Aegis of Samnuha by the Djinn. A beautiful undershirt made of unbreakable chainmail. He must have given it to Clara. A nice defence against sharp blades, but the aegis had another far more important use. It could waken and summon a Djinn. Not all Djinn, just one particular female Djinn. Laura knew from experience that this particular female was quite easy to awaken, even without the enchanted aegis.

"I can summon her, but controlling her.....You will need to do that." Said her Gudara.

"Djinn's can be unpredictable." Said Daniel.

Djinn were just another part of creation, according to the Islamic faith. Living beings created from a smokeless flame. Powerful creatures, who could often look like humans, if it suited them. Long lived and wise, but they could be very dangerous.

"Where was statue when you last saw it ?" Asked Laura.

"Still digging its way out of the havoc it caused in the temple." Said her Gudara.

"Any sign of it dying ?" Asked Tim.

"No.....It will get free and continue its path of destruction." Said her Gudara. "Once the Armenian Quarter is nothing but rubble, it will move on to the rest of the Old City."

"I told you.....Consequences." Said Daniel.

Laura was getting fed up with Daniel. A nice guy usually, but insufferable if he was determined to prove a point. She glared at him, almost daring him to mention consequences one more time.

"We need the Djinn.....Please go and bring her here." Said Laura.

"I will need a few minute to wake her." Said her Gudara.

"Well..... We don't seem to be going anywhere." Said Laura.

He didn't look very happy before vanishing, but he'd waken the Djinn and bring her there. Laura had the outline of a plan, which the Djinn could add to, or even discard if she had a better one.

"Does this Djinn have a name ?" Asked Tim.

"I already told you, in a roundabout way." Said Laura. "Her name is Samnuha, but use her name with care. Djinnns have a problem with strangers using their names. If she tells you her name, that's a different thing entirely. As a rule, never use her name unless she tells you what it is."

"Some seem to live for millennia." Said Daniel. "How old is this one?"

"According to Simon, she'd been around for about five thousand years." Said Laura.

"Does she look human?" Asked Tim.

"You'll soon see." Said Laura.

It took a few minutes, before her Gudara returned with the Djinn. Samnuha could choose to look like any human she'd been around for a while, or she could look as she chose to look. Rarely did she choose to be a woman to turn heads in a crowd. She seemed to enjoy being just another face in the crowd. This time she looked like a slender woman in her mid-thirties, with tidy, short black hair. Her dress was more Greek looking, than twenty first century Jerusalem.

"Laura.....I heard you have a problem." Said Samnuha.

"A huge problem.....We need your help." Said Laura.

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