

Raum

The grotesque faces leered down at her, menacing. Lynsey skirted the water spouts spat forth from the gargoyles' frothing mouths and sidled up against the side wall of the cathedral. The mobile in her front pocket shuddered against her soaking shirt. She flipped the lid open and strained to hear its tinny voice over the pounding rain.

'Report.' barked the all too familiar voice of Theo from the other end. 'He's inside. I think he's got another one, it looks like -' She was cut off by the usual sound of the Detective Chief Inspector clearing his throat. 'Okay, backup should be with you any minute now. Sit tight.' She shook her head in the rain, ice cold spray firing off in all directions. 'We don't have time, we know what's going to happen.' She heard the sound of a chair being scraped back - Theo was riled. 'Stay there Detective, that's an order. Tony and Mike will be with you shortly, they can handle it. No showboating.' She heard the telephone click. End of discussion.

She waited, seeking refuge under the overhang of the parapet. She wiped rainbow coloured droplets from her lashes as she checked her watch again. There was no time, this guy didn't hang about. Five bodies in the morgue could vouch for that. She checked her sidearm and crept towards the crypt entrance under the cathedral. A set of laboured muddy footprints entered here, followed by a broken smear where the victim had been dragged.

The heavy wooden door had been left slightly ajar and Lynsey steeled herself as she crept inside. She was greeted with a smothering darkness and a musty smell that stung her nostrils. Groping for her flashlight, she sent a piercing beam across the cavernous space before snapping her hand across the light. Her fingers glowed crimson as she probed her immediate surroundings.

She heard a voice up ahead and cautiously ventured further into the cavern towards it. Columns loomed out of the darkness as her eyes found focus in the dim light. The voice ahead echoed round the pillars and bounced off the low ceiling. It spoke in a slow, rhythmic murmur, the words incomprehensible to Lynsey. As she neared the sound, the visible light grew strong enough for her to abandon the torchlight. Shadows leapt from pillar to pillar as she passed, dancing around her like faeries.

She reached the source of the sound: a clearing in the columns, encircled by flickering candle light. At its centre was the robed priest, standing with his back to her, and there, in a heap before him, a naked man.

The man was clearly in pain, sobbing and writhing around, but thankfully still alive. The sound escaping from his contorted mouth was more animal than human. There were chalk symbols scrawled on the stone floor, strange words and hexagonal shapes. The same markings that had been found at the other crime scenes. This guy was obviously into some weird voodoo. Lynsey's

presence had thus far gone unnoticed so she positioned herself between two pillars and called out to the priest. There was no response and the chanting continued.

She stepped closer, inside the ring of candles. Their flaming tips billowed in her wake. She called out again but still the priest provided no answer. She started to circle him when suddenly he produced a long thin sword from somewhere within his robes. Lynsey backed away immediately and drew her gun. 'Freeze! Drop the sword, hands where I can see 'em.' She barked out. The muscles in her arms tensed, her forefinger lightly kissing the trigger. The chanting continued unabated, and the priest raised the sword above his head.

Lynsey squared her shoulders and tightened her grip on the pistol. Was this guy crazy? She took aim at his right shoulder blade, steadying herself against the nearest pillar, and called out again, her voice strained. 'This is your last warning, drop the sword and put your hands up!' Oblivious, the priest raised his voice to a hysterical shriek. Instinctively, Lynsey fired. The pistol recoiled, sending a shiver down her forearms and evoking a frightful 'crack' that resounded in the enclosed space. The priest crumpled forward in a heap, the sword clattering off to his right. There was hardly any blood, it was a precision shot straight through the muscle.

The naked man stopped his hoarse wailing and looked up in surprise. Lynsey holstered her weapon and hurried to his side. She removed her jacket and had

started to wrap it around him when he began to laugh. Puzzled, she tried to calm him, when suddenly he seized her hands in his. He presented them to her, palm up. They were coated with chalk.

Lynsey was suddenly thrown off her feet by an unseen force, and slammed into a nearby pillar. She landed on the floor with a sickening crunch and saw a hazy image of the other two figures before she blacked out.

She awoke to the murmur of swirling voices. Her eyes rolled into the back of her head before she was finally able to focus on the toe of one shoe. She was stretched out on a gurney, a pouch of clear fluid flowing through tubing into her left hand. She found Tony beside her, his bulky frame hunched awkwardly in the cramped space of the ambulance. 'Hey kiddo, sweet dreams?' he asked cheerfully. She managed a weak smile. 'Did we get him?' She asked, dry mouthed. Tony grinned, 'You did. We've got him in cuffs on the way to A&E. Vic's okay too, a bit shaken up. Can't remember a thing.'

Lynsey tried to sit up but collapsed as a spasm of pain seared across her back. 'Easy, easy. Doc says you're alright, just took a nasty knock, it'll take a few days for the bruising to heal over.' Lynsey breathed deeply as she sank back into the mattress. Her head lolled to one side as she took in the view beyond her feet. Outside she could see Theo and the guys working the scene. She caught his eye and he stalked off, scowling. Tony chuckled, 'Don't worry about him. He's just pissed you're getting all the credit for a change. You did good.' A

paramedic appeared in the doorway. 'Well, looks like you're set to roll. I've still got a few things to finish here, but I'll swing by the hospital later, alright?'

Lynsey nodded and Tony clambered out of the ambulance. 'Oh by the way, nice shooting!' He gave her a wink as the paramedic closed the doors behind him.

Lynsey was released from the hospital a few days later. Doctors orders were a few days of bed rest, which Theo was all too eager to indulge, but in truth she felt fine. She was better than fine and had more energy than she knew what to do with. For the first time in years, she abandoned the tube in favour of a brisk walk that saw her home at the flat in no time at all.

Turning her key in the lock, she heard the familiar tinkle from Oscar's bell as the friendly feline rushed out to greet her. 'Hello you, miss me?' Lynsey cooed. Suddenly Oscar froze and hissed at her, his hair standing on end. Puzzled, she reached out to scoop him up. 'What's wrong, hey?' Before she got close the cat darted to the little window in the kitchen, desperately scratching at the pane to get out. 'Hey, hey. Keen today huh?' When she couldn't calm him, Lynsey opened the window and Oscar disappeared from sight. No doubt he'd be back at supper time.

She hung up her coat and checked her messages. The display read one message. As she reached for the button, she knew immediately that it was from Mark. She frowned at the thought. 'Well, *he* would be calling.' She muttered to herself before yanking the cord from the wall. She wasn't in the

mood for that right now. She still felt raw. She offered the microwave a t.v. dinner and settled on the couch. It wasn't long before her eyelids won out and she slipped into a deep slumber.

Lynsey tiptoed down the sunlit hallway, the rays casting shadows in her path. In her hands, the thick, folded paper of her school painting rustled gently. She hoped it would cheer mama up, she'd painted the sunflowers especially.

She crept into her mother's bedroom. All was quiet and still: mama was in bed like she always was these days. She didn't come out much since papa left. She looked very peaceful, like the angels in the windows at the church. Lynsey slid the painting onto the bedside dresser gently, just behind mama's pill box. Today the box was empty. Very carefully, she clambered into the bed beside her and snuggled up against her warm bosom. She smelled like she always did in bed: a warm, heavy smell like fresh baking. She was different today though. Today she wasn't breathing.

Soon the room filled with people. There was a man who listened to mama's chest and pulled the sheet over her head, just like when they were playing, and a tall, stooping woman who towered over Lynsey. Lynsey didn't like her face. 'Is mama in Heaven?' Lynsey asked. The Sister glowered down at her. 'Heaven child?! Heaven is for God's children, not sinners like your mother. Let us pray it doesn't run in the family.' Lynsey's face started to crack in a torrent of salty tears.

She looked at her mother under the sheet. What had she done to make mama leave her like this? Maybe that was why papa left too. She looked down. The black matte casing of the Glock gave off a slight sheen in the half-light. The cool chassis warmed in her grip, comfortable. She felt it's reassuring weight as she brought the barrel up and closed her eyes. Mama was there, smiling, and papa too, beckoning her with open arms. 'PULL THE TRIGGER.' The smell of fresh baking filled her nostrils, warming her insides. 'IT'LL ALL BE OVER SOON, RELAX.' Lynsey's little finger caressed the trigger. 'LET GO.' The words drifted around her like a warming summers' breeze.

Another voice floated down to her. It broke harshly against the comforting whispers. This was a well spoken voice, more sincere. Lynsey frowned. She wanted this voice to go away, she wanted to- wait! Lynsey awoke with a start. She was sitting upright on the couch, the muzzle of the pistol tight against her temple. The safety was off. Carefully, she let out a slow, deep breath that made her whole body shudder, and very deliberately lowered her arm before re-engaging the safety and ejecting the clip.

She rubbed her eyes and blinked until she was convinced she was no longer dreaming. The t.v. continued it's news report:

"-seems the murders continue despite police reports that the killer was apprehended a few days ago. However, CID officials have yet to confirm

whether this latest killing bears the hallmarks of the previous deaths and the victim has not been identified-"

Lynsey put a call through to the department minutes later and Tony answered gruffly, stifling a yawn. 'Oh it's you. Yeah, geez it's a madhouse down here, phones've been going all morning.' Lynsey asked about the latest murder. '30 year old female, same M.O., half the guys are out canvassing the neighbours right now, but Linz, we got nothing.' Lynsey grimaced. 'Has anyone spoken to Father Malcolm?' 'The priest? Not yet, we'll get a couple of guys down there later. You think he knows something?' Tony sounded hopeful. 'Maybe, I'm not sure. I'll check it out.' 'Well, hey wait, lemme run it by Theo-' Lynsey had hung up long before he finished.

Lynsey's heels echoed loudly as she made her way along the tiled corridor of the detention centre. She kept a straight face as she passed the catcalls of the other criminals on remand. At the end of the corridor she was ushered into a small interview room where she found the priest waiting for her. He was dressed in prison fatigues with one hand handcuffed to the table which, she noticed, was bolted to the floor. His other arm was in a sling. At Lynsey's gesture, the guard stepped outside and closed the door behind him.

'Hello Detective.' The priest's calm voice surprised Lynsey after his shrieking in the crypt. 'I've been expecting you.' Lynsey pulled up the chair opposite and sat down, her eyes meeting the priest's levelly. 'I am DC Quinn with the

Metropolitan Police. I'm here to talk with you about the murders-' The priest flicked his hand dismissively, the handcuffs rattling. 'Oh please, so official. I know why you're really here.' Lynsey cleared her throat and continued: 'The murders of five people, and the body found this morning in-' The priest smirked. 'Another murder? Oh how terrible. Well, clearly Detective, it wasn't me.' He rattled the handcuffs again. Frustrated, Lynsey hammered her fist on the table, demanding a straight answer.

The priest smiled. 'Temper, temper Detective. Now where did that come from I wonder?' Lynsey retracted her hand, the table underneath slightly dented. 'Picked up a few new personality traits yes?' Lynsey looked at her hand and then at the priest, her face betraying concern. She straightened up. 'What do you know about this latest murder? Do you have an accomplice?' The priest settled back in his chair. 'Before we get to that, you have to trust me.' Lynsey snorted in disgust. 'I know more about what's going on than you realise Detective. For starters, are you sleeping well?' Lynsey looked up immediately, alarmed.

'Thought so. They're stronger when you're not awake. You're less aware of their ploys.' Lynsey looked at the priest non-plussed. What was he talking about? The priest's expression grew sombre. 'Demons, Detective, Demons.' A laugh escaped Lynsey's lips. The priest's face remained sober. Seeing this, Lynsey shook her head. 'You can't be-?' 'Serious? The situation is very serious indeed Detective. I've committed atrocities, yes, but all in the public interest.

Demons are invading London.' Lynsey had heard enough, she stood up to leave. 'Good day Father, I hope you won't have to wait too long for your trial.' 'One more thing then.' The priest pleaded. Lynsey grudgingly turned to face him. 'Close your eyes. Just do it, I'm not going anywhere.' Lynsey obliged, unconvinced. 'Clear your mind detective. Forget about the case, forget about me. Listen to yourself. Now, tell me what you see.' Lynsey breathed deeply, her mind eventually settling into blackness as everything washed away.

It started as a feeling, an anger bubbling up from murky depths. No, more than anger. A rage. A torrent of fury seething in the blackness. She could actually feel the heat prickling against her skin. What was this? Suddenly a flash of light and her mind was filled with a dozen images: barbaric mutilations that made her nauseous. Gasping she opened her eyes, blinking to drive out the images. The priest looked concerned, he was sweating. 'I'm sorry Detective, but you had to know. It's merely your strong will that's kept the demon at bay.' Lynsey staggered towards the chair. The plastic back had begun to melt. She looked at the priest questioningly. 'You're connected now, you share feelings, thoughts and-' He indicated the chair. '-abilities. It will take time to master.'

Lynsey collapsed in what remained of the chair, her whole body trembling. The priest leaned forward. 'I want to help you Detective. This demon can lead you to the real dangers out there. They must be stopped.' Lynsey nodded weakly. The priest smiled. 'Now, let's see who we're dealing with. Speak to us demon,

speaking thy name.' Suddenly, from deep within the depths of Lynsey's body, like a giant awoken from a deep slumber, a voice announced itself. A voice that reverberated throughout every bone and made the hairs on Lynsey's neck stand on end. The voice spoke one word, a word that seeped malice in her thoughts: 'RAUM.'