

***Prime: An Echo in the Stones* is an epic supernatural fantasy of reincarnation, ancient magic, Druids, spiritual conflict, witchcraft and a love that endures across the centuries hidden within a battle for humanity that has followed them to the present day.**

A story infused with Romance and Powerful Magic. Its sweeping narrative stretches far beyond genre. This is a story where reincarnation collides with forbidden love, where ancient rites ignite spiritual warfare, and where the struggle between light and darkness plays out on the battlefield and the human heart.

At its core lies a love that refuses to die. Across centuries, a man is pulled back to his ancestral roots through dreams and past life memories, and inexorably drawn to two formidable sisters living in the late twentieth century; women whose destinies stand on opposite sides of a cosmic conflict.

Though the origins of this saga stretch way back to the beginning of conscious thought. Our tale truly begins in the early seventeenth century, amidst the brutal Witch trials driven by Britain's Puritan rule. In that dangerous era, a devoted circle of Pagans, guardians of ancient Druidic knowledge, struggled in secret to preserve their identity. Their rites, their fervor, and their unwavering unity would resonate across the centuries, eventually returning through reincarnation to a modern world that had long forgotten them.

These descendants are known as the 'Prime.' Bound not by race, creed, or religion, they are united by something far more extraordinary: the memories of their ancestors, which they can summon at will. But they are not the only ones who carry this gift. A darker faction emerged: those who embrace corruption, power, and the shadows within humanity. They are the 'Primevil' and ever since their divergence, the two groups have been locked in a hidden war.

Unknown to mankind, this conflict has raged since the dawn of time. And now, as malevolent forces spread across the world unseen, the Prime are losing ground. The balance is tipping.

Darkness is rising.

And the past is awakening.

1 GLASTONBURY 1995AD

The wolf cross came limping out of the dusk and scratched at the front door of Morag's ancient cottage. For nearly four hundred years the little stone dwelling had endured storms, wars, and the slow retreat of the forest itself. Once hidden beneath the cathedral of oaks, it now rested on open meadowland that slopped down to the glimmering lake, while the northern side remained cloaked in the last surviving trees, dark, whispering sentinels that shielded it from the prying eyes of Earlswood Manor.

Bella scratched again. Still no answer.

She padded around to the back door, her shadow long and trembling in the early morning light. Another scratch. Sharper this time. Silence.

Rising on her hind legs she pressed a scorched paw to the latch and pulled, but the door held fast. Locked.

Her name was Bella, but it was more than a name. It was a mantel, one of three sacred titles passed down through the bloodline of Sarah Monkton. Every generation bore a guardian. Bella was the mother of Ghost, sworn protector of Alice's mother... and now the last living witness to a tragedy that had torn the veil between worlds.

She sank onto the porch floor; breath ragged, and set to cleaning her wound. The fur along her flank had been burned to ash; the skin beneath blistered and exposed. Blood and faintly luminescent puss seeped from the wound, glowing softly like embers dying on the floor. Twenty-four hours had passed since the crash; twenty four hours since fire and fate entwined.

The car had crumbled like paper, killing her masters instantly. Trapped in the wreckage, Bella had been consumed not only by flames, but the shimmering cloud that rose from their bodies: swirling colors moving like smoke yet alive with ancient purpose, Prime essence. The soul-force of her charges, as old as the first forest and an unbroken link to the first, 'chosen one.'

And Bella, bound by duty older than memory, had known what she must do. Even as her fur ignited, she had crawled to the dying couple, licked their faces so their essence could flow into her. The memories, their power, their unfulfilled desires; all taken into her body through the ritual known only to the 'Prime,' and their guardians.

Only when the pain became unbearable had she collapsed between the back seats, hiding from the inferno that had tried, and failed to consume her. Now the 'Prime' essence pulsed beneath her skin, urging her onwards. She knew death was coming; her ancestors were ready.

Bella remained on the porch, trembling with exhaustion as she tried to clean the wound along her burned flank. Each lick sent a wave of agony through her, but she persisted. She had one final task to complete, and time was slipping away. Her lineage, half-wolf, half-dog urged her to bark, but the wolf in her chose to howl instead. A howl travelled further, A howl would reach those that needed to hear.

Alice Llewellyn moved through the forest with the stealth of a hunting cat and a lithe grace unusual for one so tall, her waist-length black hair swaying like a dark waterfall behind her.

Her green eyes, always alert missed little, but today her attention was on the menial task of collecting kindling.

Ghost heard it first.

The pale dog lifted her head sharply, ears pricking, tilting her head like a bird listening for a worm. She turned to Alice and barked once: sharp, urgent.

Alice straightened. "What is it, Ghost? What have you heard?" Another bark. A tilt of the head. Alice heard nothing, but she felt a tremor of unease.

She opened her mind and reached out, not with her ears, but with the telepathic gift passed down her mother's line. **What is it Ghost? You believe you have heard the howl of a wolf? Here in our wood. Are you certain?**

Confusion flickered in Ghost's mind, then certainty.

Then Alice heard it too, a long, low howl that seemed to shiver the forest's very bones. A cold dread rippled down her spine.

Bella.

The kindling dropped from her arms, her mind filled with anxiety. *Somethings happened, I know it has, oh Earth Mother, don't let it be bad. I haven't heard Bella howl in years; please Mother let me be mistaken.*

When she reached the cottage, Ghost was already at Bella's side, licking the charred skin where fur had burned away. Alice stumbled to a halt, her breath catching in her throat.

"Bella," the name came out as a whisper of disbelief. She knelt beside the guardian who had protected her mother all her life. Bella's eyes fluttered open, and she began licking her hand in frantic, desperate strokes.

"What happened? Where are my parents?"

A strange tingling sensation raced across Alice's palm. She stared at her hand, horror hollowing her chest. She had felt this sensation in many lifetimes, too many. Tears swam in her eyes. **Both of them Bella, gone? How... when?**

Bella's thoughts drifted weakly into her mind. Shadows of memory, fragments of fire and pain. Alice felt the guardians life force flicker like a candle in the wind/

Oh, no, you're dying too. Alice closed her eyes in further anguish. **And you came all this way.**

She forced herself to breathe, breathe and center. It was difficult, nearly impossible, but she wrapped her arms around Bella's body and sank into meditation, allowing her mind to open fully. And then the memories came: her mother's final moments, her father's last breath, their Prime' essence flowing into Bella... and now through Bella, into Alice herself.

I have them, * Alice whispered into the guardian's mind. *I have them both now. Thank you. You were so brave; you have done your duty.

Bella exhaled a long, painful, breath and her body eased. Her task was done.

Alice cradled Bella's head on her lap through the rest of the day and into the night as the essence of her parents passed into her. Ghost pressed against her side, silent and steadfast, a sentinel always by her side. Exhaustion finally overtook her and she drifted into oblivion, the smell of earth and smoke heavy in her dreams.

She woke with a start.

Something had touched her neck. Something colder than mist and lighter than breath. The fog from the lake had crept around the trees and up the lawn curling around her like a ghostly shroud. Dew clung to her skin like a cloying veil, or... had something else brushed her face. *Was it the Witch? Has she escaped from her prison?*

She lifted her fingers; touched her neck and relaxed. Wet, cold, dew. She relaxed momentarily, and then a wave of despair slammed into her. Her parents were dead and Bella lay motionless on her lap.

Alice moaned, shaking the guardian gently. The stiffness told her everything. Rigor mortice had already set in.

She closed her eyes, grief hollowing her. Then she reached out mentally to the ancestral guardians of Bella's line, calling on them to guide her spirit back to the creator. **And thank you for protecting my mother so faithfully.**

Ghost whined softly beside her. Alice stroked her fur in an attempt to comfort her. **She's gone, Ghost. Her circle of life is complete once more; it's just me and you now...again.**

The forest was waking. Dawn spilled across the sky in ribbons of orange gauze; birds were beginning their morning chorus as though nothing had changed. Life was already moving on. Alice eased Bella's body from her lap and rose, every muscle protesting. She staggered to the kitchen, set the kettle on the stove and then broke. Tears spilled freely, grief pouring from her.

Minutes passed before she steadied herself.

Enough. A voice murmured in her mind. **You knew this day would come.**

"Oh shut up," she muttered aloud. *"You never get used to this."*

She's right, dearie, came another voice, older, dryer. **They had a long life together.**

But.

No buts. You have a grave to dig.

We don't bury our love ones any more. Alice protested silently. **We have cemeteries now and someone to do it for you.**

Not for your dog though. Get a shovel. Come on, chop, chop.

Another voice joined in, another ancestor. And don't forget the memories: best to bring them to the fore before they fade.**

"Oh, not another one!" Alice groaned, then snapped. "Enough, all of you, be quiet."

The ancestral voices faded, one by one, until only the sound of the kettle remained, shrill, insistent.

Alice exhaled; severed the spiritual link and spoke aloud, grounding herself. "I'm going to have a cup of tea. Then and only then will I start."

Alice buried Bella in an area of woodland where she had buried dozens of the dog's ancestors in previous lifetimes. She took a moment and prayed to the Earth Mother, the creator of all things to watch over her on her final journey, then made her way back to her dwellings.

When she arrived at the cottage, her heart sank. There were two policemen waiting in a parked car outside the front. **Oh dear, Ghost, it looks like we have visitors. Dam and blast. It was bad enough having some of my ancestors having a go at me, and now I've got to deal with the police.**

She hesitated, pulled herself together, pursed her lips, straightened her back and made her way toward them. As she approached the driver wound down the window. He was in his forties, overweight and accompanied by a female officer in her late twenties. Alice noted neither of them smiled.

The officer looked up. "Am I addressing Miss Llewellyn? Miss Alice Llewellyn?"

Alice presented the officer with a wan smile. "Yes officer. Would you like tea or coffee?"

Without waiting for a reply, she turned, entered the cottage and called back. "I'll put the kettle on shall I?"

The officers looked at one another, took a deep breath, and reluctantly followed her.

As they entered the cottage, she filled the kettle and made a conscious effort to keep her back turned. "Please take a seat, and before you say anything, I know my parents are dead. How did it happen? Was it in the fire?"

The male officer couldn't hide the relief on his face; this was the part of the job he hated the most. "Yes, I'm afraid so Miss Llewellyn. I was unaware you knew,"

Alice said nothing and stared sightlessly through the window. "Tea or coffee?" She said sharply without looking back, and then added, "Sugar, Milk?" The officers exchanged puzzled glances and were surprised by her lack of reaction.

"How did the fire start, officer?"

"Ah, sorry, Miss Llewellyn, I didn't realize you were not aware of the full facts. It was a car accident, a drunk driver I am afraid."

Alice continued to look out of the window with unseen eyes and numbly repeated the officer's comments.

"A car fire" She nodded her head thoughtfully. "How awful! Did they suffer?"

The officer cleared his throat and again exchanged awkward glances with his constable. "No, Miss. Llewellyn, They would have died instantly. We need someone to identify the

bodies. Could you accompany us to the station?" The kettle began to boil and it brought Alice back out of her reverie.

"Oh, no, no, no, officer, I have seen people who have died in fires. No I wish to remember them as they were, not burnt to a crisp. You may take a DNA sample if you wish, but you are wasting your time. I know my parents are dead."

Again, the officer's awkward exchanged glances before the female constable took the kettle off Alice and began to make the drinks, her voice gentle and filled with compassion. "I will stay with you for a while. You're in shock, but we do need you to come down to the morgue and identify the bodies."

Alice turned to face the officers. She smiled weakly, and when she addressed them further, her words were like water slipping over the ridge of a waterfall, smooth as silk, yet hiding the torrent hidden below.

"This is not up for discussion. You do not need me to identify the bodies. I have things to do and preparations to make for the funeral. I have already told you that I know my parents are dead. There is nothing more you can do here, so finish your drinks and please leave."

The officers sat with her for a while and chatted until they finished their drinks. They then turned and went away, unaware of the hidden enchantment. As they made their way back to the car, the female constable commented. "She's a weird one; she didn't bat an eye, not a tear, nothing."

The officer agreed. "Takes all sorts, but I would not want to look at my family burnt to a crisp either. She was right though, we can send someone around for a DNA sample."

Alice finished her tea and sat on the porch, then gently rocked back and forth in her favorite old fashioned rocking chair. She turned to Ghost and spoke verbally. "I don't know about you, Ghost, but I am going to get pissed."

She went back into the kitchen and returned with three bottles of beer. "I always hate retrieving the memories. Oh Ghost, this can be so upsetting." She had finished all three beers before she had the courage to start.

Alice assumed her favorite meditating position and sat with her legs crossed, and her ankles pulled toward her with her wrists resting on her knees and the palms of her hands facing upward. She began to slow her heart rate and began to feel the tension leaving her. She needed to be at peace with the world, but in the circumstances it was difficult.

She turned her attention to the different scents drifting in the wind. There was honeysuckle mixed with the various roses that climbed the cottage walls - and the gentler scents of maple, juniper and beech trees from deep in the wood. She listened to the birdsong, a skylark so high it was invisible to the naked eye, and then to the wind in the branches of the trees, and the secret whispering of grasses as they in turn, danced a melody with the wind. Her attention turned to the bulrushes swaying seductively. She felt as near to peace as possible in the circumstances, then took a deep breath and let it out slowly.

The memories of both parents began to get clearer. She concentrated until they filled her mind, body and soul until they were one.

Alice laughed at the good times and felt sad about others. She saw the moment of her birth, and felt the joy of her parents as they held her for the first time. Tears trickled down her cheeks as their memories were shared with her. "Oh, mother, father, I miss you so much already. I cannot bear this," her voice a little more than a whisper. She wiped her nose with the back of her hand, took a deep breath, and continued to follow the paths their lives had taken. She re-lived the achievements of both and realized how much good they had done in their lives. She saw joy on the faces of the dancers at the midsummer festivals around various Henge hidden away from the modern world.

Time passed as she absorbed their memories and noted the lessons learned throughout their lives and stored them alongside her previous ancestors.

Deeper into the memories, she found their innermost secrets, and her heart skipped a beat. She relived the memory a second time, hardly believing what she was recalling. It was a secret that they would reveal to her on her twenty-fifth birthday. She said the words out loud, trying to understand the reasoning. "Saul is alive. He walks the earth." She repeated it, as she delved for more. "Saul walks the earth, and Jed knows! Jed knows!" She screamed. Why have they been keeping this from me? Why?"

Again, she dug deeper. "Jed has known for twenty years. Why has he kept it from me? What's this? He is only one year older than me?" She took a deep breath, hardly able to comprehend what she had recalled; her heart began to race and she was lost in thought.

We are the same age at last, after four hundred years, we walk the earth simultaneously. Why Mother? Why Father? How could you have kept this from me?

Alice ran to the stables alongside the cottage and climbed on her horse. She didn't bother with the saddle as she always rode bareback as her ancestors had done centuries before. She galloped across the meadow and made her way to Earlswood manor. The horse skidded to a halt and Alice jumped down and let the horse run free, then sprinted to the reception. Before she could confront Jed, he wrapped his arms around her and hugged her close. "Oh God, Alice, I've just heard. Are you ok?"

The guest of the manor stopped and stared. Alice saw his concern, and for a second, her anger subsided. "Jed, it is ok. We are all together."

Relief flooded Jed's face. "Thank God, Alice. I thought for a moment your parents' memories had been lost."

Moments later, her anger returned with vigor. She broke free from his embrace, pushed him away and screamed. "Jed, why did you not tell me about Saul?"

Jed froze. He was surprised at the change of tack and the anger in her voice. "What do you mean tell you about Saul?"

Alice shook her head in disbelief, as she studied the older man, someone she had trusted all her life. "Jed, I have my parents' memories." She tapped her head, indicating the union with them. "Let me refresh your memory, Joan Masters, America, twenty years ago. You have known where my love is for twenty years, and you and my parents have kept it from me. Why?"

Jed rubbed his hand through his thinning hair and looked uncomfortable, and his eyes turned away from hers not wishing to see her pain. His eyes wandered around the reception area, everyone was watching. He grabbed her by the elbow, pulled her into his office, and then closed the door and blinds.

He took a deep breath before responding, "It might not be Saul; so don't get your hopes up."

Alice was studying every nuance of his face questioning every line, every crease. "My mother and father think it is. Why don't you?" Her eyes were filled with rage, and they burned into his.

Again, he ran his hand through his hair. "Alice, Joan Masters' son is... blind."

Her heart faltered. "Blind Completely? Can he not see anything?"

Jed shook his head. "No blind to his 'Prime' heritage. He has no memories of any of us, no previous lives, nothing. He is called Paul now, but he does not know who he is or what he is capable of." Jed watched as her forehead creased, and she too bit her lip, a trait she did when confused.

She shook her head from side to side; trying to clear the negative thoughts. "How can he not know who he is? Jed, I cannot believe you have kept this from me. You know I have been calling him for the last twelve lifetimes. Blind or not. Why have you not told me?"

Jed looked at the floor sheepishly. "Sorry Alice, but your parents, and to be more precise, Joan Masters, Paul's mother, wanted Paul to finish his education. "It was discussed, and they all agreed to wait until you were twenty-five before they told you."

Alice stepped back. "Jed, you don't need to be educated if you are 'Prime.' You are a font of eternal knowledge - all you do is recall your memories and listen to the advice of your ancestors."

Jed waved his arms in the air dismissively and snapped. "As I said, Alice, Paul is blind to the memories, and the same went for his mother and father; but Alice, I am not even sure it is Saul. What I can say it is someone who knew you, your mother, Ursula, and Morag. It might not be Saul."

"Jed, it was wrong for you not to tell me. I must go to him straight away; I can try to help him."

She turned to go, but he grabbed her arm to stop her.

"You can't, Alice, you know you can't, not now. Remember, now your mother is dead, you are the new keeper of the Henge, it is passed to you by rite, and then there is Sarah, you can't leave her."

Alice threw her arms in the air and screamed at him. "Dam you; I will never forgive you for this."

Jed's face paled. He had not wanted to keep it a secret from Alice but had been overruled by his mother.

"Alice, have you been drinking? I have never seen you act like this?"

Alice burst into tears and through the sobs, screamed. "Yes, Jed, I have just lost both parents and I'm pissed, but not as pissed as I am with you." She called back as she began to leave. "If I can't go to America, I will bring him here."

Jed rushed over to her and once again grabbed her elbow to restrain her.

"You can't, he's blind - it is too late for him."

"What do you mean it is too late?"

He could not stand the pain in her eyes and looked away. His voice was now barely audible. "You can't take the chance. You know as well as the rest of us how dangerous it is to induce memories at such a late age. He could turn towards the dark and, with his latent powers be the biggest tyrant the world has seen for five thousand years, he simply has not had the training."

She snatched her arm away angrily and screamed once again. "Not my Saul. If anything he will become the savior of humanity, and together we can fulfill Mia's prophecy."

She stormed to the door, stopped, then turned back and shook her head in dismay, her voice as cold as ice and full of venom. "Jed, I will never forgive you for this." She slammed the office door and staggered out of the foyer, oblivious to the condolences of the staff.

Later that night, Alice Llewellyn assumed her meditating position and contemplated what she was about to do, her mind was full of excitement, and also with dread.

What if Jed says is true, and it is not Saul? She shook her head. I could not bear the thought. What if it is him, and he does not want me? What if he has already found someone else? Has he got a wife? Will he come back to me if he cannot remember us? Would he be content here? America is so big, and Somerset, so small. What if I call him and he does not come? She again shook her head as she dismissed the thought. That would mean Jed is correct, and it is not him. He will have no choice to come if it is him. Yes, I must call him. It is the only way to be sure. What if he wants me to go to America? I cannot leave Sarah, not now.

Alice pulled her legs up to her chest, as she rocked back and forth, her heart was racing. Worst scenario, what if he is already drawn toward the dark?

An unknown ancestor interrupted her thoughts.

The 'Primevil' would welcome him with open arms.

No, Saul would never join them. Leave me alone.

But my dear, if he did we would have to kill him. Could you kill him?

The mist rose from the lake, its icy fingers creeping across her skin. Her mind changed tack. *Was that the Witch? Does she know he has been reborn? I'm sure that was her malevolence working its way into my mind?* "Be gone Witch, he rejected you once and he will do it again." She spoke the words verbally to give her courage and pressed her lips into a straight line. **How should I word the enchantment? I can't risk getting it wrong.**

A multitude of voices appeared inside her head, each ancestor striving to be heard, so many they became a discordant force. Alice waited; as one by one they fell silent until a spokesperson had been chosen.

The consensus is that you should take him back to the beginning, to the start of your journey together, enchant him through his dreams.

Consensus or not another ancestor disagreed. **No not to the beginning of his journey. Your beginning, the start of your journey, he needs to remember how special you are.**

But he is in his twenties, he will remember me as a child.

Time does not matter in the spirit world, he will hear the enchantment as a child, and he will relate to you as a child.

Another ancestor agreed. **Yes, start from the beginning of your journey, it will bind him to you.**

The multitude in her head agreed with the latter and Alice nodded thoughtfully. **Thank you for your council, I will do as you bid.**

She began to meditate. When she found peace, she began the enchantment in an attempt to call Saul back to her as she had done throughout every lifetime in the last four hundred years.

Caged in her prison, the Witch cackled to herself. **I will do the same, and we will see who he really desires.*

2. NEW YORK 1974 AD

Joan Masters groaned as her throat muscles squeezed back the scream raging in protest of the rude interruption to such a rare bliss that she had managed to finagle. Failing in vain efforts to cling tight onto those tendrils of a marvelous dream fading fast from her mind, she could only sigh heavily as she lay in bed. And waited. Hoping against hope that the echoing sound coming from down the hall would stop. Yet knowing that it wouldn't.

Peter felt an elbow in his ribs. As he began to wake, another elbow thrust brought him to his sense.

"Your turn," Joan said as she turned and pulled the blankets over her head. She wanted to go back to sleep, to recapture the wispy wonder of the unusual dream she was having – so real, so unusually vivid.

Peter lay there blinking, his head still fuzzy with sleep. "What do you mean, my turn? I slept in his room all last night. I must fly to Dallas at midday tomorrow, I need my sleep."

Joan fretted as she continued to lie in bed and listened to the sound of a child crying. It was Paul, her son. She lay there hoping he would go back to sleep, waiting for him to stop, but she knew he wouldn't. She eventually called out: "I'm coming, Paul. Don't cry."

Joan slipped on her dressing gown and made her way down the hall to Paul's room. "It's all right, Paul, shush, don't worry, mommy is here." She sat on the bed, and he wrapped his arms around her like a limpet clinging to a rock. "Shush now. Have you had another bad dream?" Paul did not answer but clung to his mother for all he was worth. "What was this dream about?"

Finally, his sobs subsided. "The men fell from the castle battlements. They were bleeding, Earl Llewellyn was bleeding."

She continued to stroke his hair, trying to soothe him. "It is only a dream, Paul," she whispered lovingly. "It's nothing to worry about, let me get in beside you." Paul calmed down with his mother close, and his breathing slowed as he slipped back into slumber. These sleep terrors were getting to be nightly occurrences and Joan was at the end of her tether. Thinking back over Paul's young life of four years, Joan could not recall exactly when they first started, but the latest dreams seemed to be getting darker.

Badly needing sleep, but couldn't as her mind was lost in thought. *I cannot stand this much longer. I simply need rest.* She decided there and then that he was going to be an only child.

She sometimes wondered if those early fitful baby cries had been misinterpreted; could Paul have been troubled from the very beginning with bad dreams and sleepless nights. As he got older, he started to recount his dreams to his mother – and as she listened to them, she had an uneasy feeling of déjà vu. They were the same type of dreams that troubled her.

She shuddered, once again lost in thought. *I thought I was going crazy, and now Paul has them. Are we both possessed? Have I passed this curse on to him?*

This fear cemented a drastic change, for Peter and Joan Masters had always dreamed of having a large family. They were rich and had a lavish lifestyle. Peter's grandfather had emigrated from England to America in the early 1920s. His father was a keen golfer, and as the sport took off in America he saw an opportunity to get in on the ground floor. He started a company designing and constructing golf courses. As the sport took off in a big way, so did their finances.

Some hours later, Joan discussed the latest dream with Peter as he read the newspaper over breakfast. He was compassionate and knew she had also been troubled by strange dreams for many years. She had been seeing a psychiatrist and had recently confided in her that she'd gone on to hear voices too. The mention of voices in her head had changed the attitude of the psychiatrist, and Joan stopped going. Now her son was showing the same symptoms.

"Do you think we should take him to a child psychiatrist, Peter?"

"Well, it didn't do you any good, dear. I don't think we need to pin the crazy label on him just yet."

Joan bristled as he said it, and Peter realized he had put his foot in it.

"Crazy like me, you mean." Joan pushed the chair backward angrily, and it fell over and she walked sharply away.

Peter rested his forehead on the table in frustration. "I didn't mean that the way it came out." He listened for a reply, but there was only silence. He knew it was too late the moment those words left his lips. Again, he called her. "Joan, I didn't mean that. You know I didn't."

Joan returned to the table five minutes later with two cups of coffee. She wrapped her hands around her cup and, after sipping the hot liquid, deliberated aloud. "Peter, have you ever used the word 'battlements' when telling Paul stories?"

Relieved that his wife had calmed down and was again speaking to him, he drew his attention away from the newspaper. "I don't recall telling him stories about castles full stop, let alone battlements. Why?"

She took another sip of her coffee. "Paul has just used the word in his latest dream, and I can't remember using it either."

He flicked his broadsheet back up and speaking through it added: "He has probably got it off the television. What was this dream about?"

"Oh, he said two men fell from the battlements of a castle with lots of blood."

Peter took time to reply, but Joan noted the crease in his forehead. "Another dark one then, I think he is getting all this from television. We need to keep an eye on what programs he is watching."

After another sip of coffee, Joan added: "You're probably right." Her thoughts, however, drifted once again. *Yes, Peter, you keep telling yourself that. What's the alternative? Our son is possessed, haunted even? Yes, Peter, television is a safe option. But I need answers; I need to find out what is happening to Paul and me.*

"Oh, by the way, he gave us another name, Earl Llewellyn. Have you ever spoken about an, Earl Llewellyn?"

Once again, Peter looked over the top of his broadsheet and stared at his wife deep in thought. He was momentarily distracted by her lucent green eyes, and his heart, as always, skipped a beat. "Llewellyn, you say. I know of several noble families in England's West Country by that name, and some in Wales, they probably lived in castles. No, I have never spoken to him about anyone called, Llewellyn." He flicked his newspaper up once more and continued reading, then pondered aloud. "I wonder from whom he gets his imagination."

Joan continued to sip her drink, but she had picked up his sarcastic witticism. *Yes, Peter, I know you think it is all in my head.*

*

Joan never took Paul to see a psychiatrist, but he accompanied her to church every Sunday in case they were both possessed. However, several months later she took him to see a spiritualist for a private reading without Peter's knowledge.

Joan Masters did not believe in ghosts, or spirits, but her son's well-being was of paramount importance to her. She had secretly attended several spiritualist meetings before and felt she could bring Paul along on the pretense of having his fortune read. She decided he would feel less threatened if she had a reading at the end of the regular weekly session at the local spiritualist church.

From what she'd heard, the medium had a sound reputation and many pastoral members were excited to have her. At first sight, the medium looked to be in her fifties and had dark black hair down to her shoulders. On her fingers was a selection of gold rings. Her dress was black and contrasted starkly with her pale complexion. However, her eyes were a striking green, piercing, hinting at her intelligence and unknown wisdom.

She could be a gypsy. Joan thought as her eyes narrowed, studying her. *Yes, she has gypsy blood, but she is not suntanned like a gypsy. I wonder when she last spent time in the light of day; she has such ashen skin.*

The medium called Joan to her. They were now alone as the last of the congregation had left, the woman smiled as she walked over to them. *Oh, God, she even has a gold tooth.* Joan mused, *definitely Gypsy.*

She took Joan's hand in hers and closed her eyes. "Let us see what we can see, dearie," she said as she continued in well-rehearsed monotones. She instantly informed Joan that she was going on a long journey. It was a term used at most meetings and was well-worn.

Joan's heart sank. *Oh, here we go. I am going on a journey, am I? Doesn't everyone in America go on a journey every day? Have I wasted my money here?*

The spiritualist fell silent for a minute. She cocked her head to one side, giving Joan the impression that she was listening to some distant voice. Joan shook her head and was glad she hadn't told Peter she was going to see a medium.

The medium stalled, then turned to Joan with a perplexed look on her face, and after a sustained silence stated. "You are a seer?"

"What!" The statement shook Joan and was totally unexpected. "What do you mean, I am a seer?" she snapped indignantly

"You have the gift. You have second sight. Did you not realize?"

Joan's forehead creased, and a shiver went down her spine. She did not answer and kept eye contact with the medium's piercing eyes.

"How could you not know? Can you not hear the spirits calling you?"

Joan felt the hair lift on the nape of her neck. *Oh God, the voices are ghosts. Am I possessed? Oh no, could Paul be too?*

When she did not respond, the spiritualist pressed "Voices? Can you not hear them?"

Joan mumbled wordlessly in response, unsure what to say. Finally, the long-dreaded words left her lips. "Voices? Yes, I hear them."

The old woman shook her head in confusion. "In that case, why are you asking me for a reading?"

She studied the older woman's face. She was dumbstruck, and unable to break her stare. "I did not know what they were, so I have been seeing a psychiatrist."

The mediums face softened and filled with compassion. "You poor thing. You should have asked for a reading sooner."

The spiritualist continued to hold Joan's hands; closed her eyes and continued to meditate. Joan watched her eyes moving under her lids and studied every nuance on her face. After a couple of minutes her eyes opened wide in alarm and it startled Joan.

Unnerved, she started to back away, but the woman gripped her hands firmly so she couldn't lose the connection.

"Mrs. Masters, your mother or father should have prepared you for this, for at least one of them must have had the sight?"

Joan finally found the will and turned away from the woman's piercing eyes. "My parents were killed in a car crash when I was very young."

The medium nodded and her face visibly softened. "Ah, I see, that explains it. I am sorry to hear that."

She turned to Paul and took his hand as well and held it for several minutes. Eventually, she released both their hands and repeated her first statement. "You are going on a journey, but not yet. The time is not right. You both need to go home to England, to your family's ancestral home, especially Saul, but not just yet."

Joan shook her head. "We are American. America is our home, and his name is Paul, not Saul."

The medium presented Joan with a tolerant smile, her eyes bright, piercing, and full of excitement. "You are new to this, Mrs. Masters, I can see that. If you listen to what I have to say, things may become a little clearer to you. You are very special, and this little one is so special you would not believe. Does he hear the voices yet?"

Joan shook her head. "No, I don't think so, but he is troubled by dreams."

The medium again nodded. "Ah, that's how it starts; they are educating him through them. OK, Paul needs to return home to England, but the time is not right. His destiny is in England. Paul is very special, and all being well she will call him when the time is right."

"Who? Who will call him?"

"Lots of relatives, 'Prime' relatives, but one in particular has been calling him for a very long time, they both need to fulfill Mia's prophecy. Like the rest of us, this one has been searching for him for almost four hundred years."

Joan could feel the breath leave her lungs. Her eyes, however, never left the face of the medium. "What do you mean special?"

The woman took her hand once more and placed her second hand on top. "Mrs. Masters, please breathe. You have gone pale."

Joan did as she said and took a deep breath.

"That's better. This has been a shock for you. I can see that. It has been a shock for me too. I have known about Saul, err, Paul, for a long time, but I never expected to meet him. Mrs. Masters, you must listen to the voices. They know who you are. They know who Paul is. Do not ignore them. They

are your kin, and they are trying to help. Oh, you poor thing. If only your parents were alive, they could have prepared you for this.”

The medium’s eyes then turned to Joan’s son, and Joan saw love and awe in them. She caressed the side of his face as if she was praying, almost worshipping him. “It’s nice to meet you at last. So, your name this time is Paul Masters. Right young Sir, let me take your hand and tell you your fortune.”

Joan could not remember the journey back home. She had driven on autopilot, her mind elsewhere. There were so many questions running through her head. *Is this for real? Was she genuine? How does this affect my Christian beliefs? Am I comfortable with it? Why on earth did she rip up the cheque? And some woman will call Paul away from me. And these voices are my ancestors talking to me, advising me. Oh, God I think Peter’s right, I am going mad.*

She shuddered, parked the car in the garage, and closed the electric doors with the fob on her keyring. Again, she shuddered and sat in the dark lost in thought. *Do I tell Peter?* She subconsciously shook her head. *No, he will flip, no, definitely not, he really will think I am nuts.*

A cry from the back seat disturbed her reverie. “Ok, Paul, mommy’s coming.”

Joan didn’t tell her husband about taking Paul to the spiritualist meeting. She knew Peter, being a devout Catholic would never have understood her reasoning.

Sleep that night was fitful, but when she did, the dreams returned. Each time she slept, they were more vivid and realistic. It was the old lady of the woods once again, a dream that kept returning, time and again.

Once awake, she continued to hear the voices, but they were little more than echoes, faint, very faint, and for the most part, gibberish. However, the dreams grew stronger and appeared to be a continuous story. Each morning she lay in bed and recalled the dream.

Her mind was in turmoil. *Do I tell Peter about the spiritualist? Would he understand? No, of course, he wouldn’t, he really would think I am crazy.*

*

Later that year, however, Peter also started hearing voices and started talking in his sleep. He began calling out the names of various places, so Joan secretly wrote them down. She did the same for herself, and soon had quite a list.

Peter did not see a psychiatrist himself. He also began to make a list, and after they collated their notes, they realized that these were not just dreams.

“Peter, I think we have given it enough time, it’s been a month now. Get your notepad out. We need to see if any of these dreams are the same. Let’s see if we are haunted. I have the notes that I have taken from Paul’s book as well.”

Peter did as she suggested, and they both sat up in bed.

“Ok, Joan, let’s start with types of dreams. My most common one is dancing. I have several when I was dancing in a forest or a wood.”

“Well, that’s a start, Peter. Me too. I was often wearing a white robe, what about you?”

Peter counted the times on his pad. “Four, I have had four dreams wearing a white garment, and I have had six where I was wearing nothing, completely naked.”

Joan looked pensive. “Naked. I have had three or four dreams in these last two months where I have been dancing around naked. However, two of them I can completely explain.”

Peter looked across at his wife and arched a brow questioningly. “Go on, this should be interesting.”

“The first one was when we were in San Francisco at that all-night party, up in the woods where we met for the first time and were completely stoned.”

Peter smiled as he reminisced, “God that was a good party. I can still see you gyrating, dancing seductively around the campfire. That’s when I realized I was falling in love with you for the first time.”

Joan smiled as she reminisced “You then carried me over your shoulder like a fireman and off into the woods, and the rest, as they say, is history. The other naked dream was when we went to Woodstock in sixty nine, and we were again stoned as usual.”

“Yes, you were on my shoulders cheering the bands with your boobs out. How could we have done that in front of all those people?”

“We were wild then, I couldn’t do it now. Enough reminiscing, Peter, which leaves two dreams, and these are two that I can’t explain. I was dancing in a circle of clear ground in some wooded area. I

had a lamp in my hand, not an electric lamp, but a lamp with a naked flame. It was dark, I was spinning around with the lamp, and it created a magical effect on my eyes. There were lots of other people doing the same. I think it was some sort of festival.”

Peter pursed his lips, and Joan noted the crease in his forehead. “That’s interesting. Most of mine were in a forest and involved some sort of circle. They were always in the dark, and, yes, we held lamps in our hands. There was a big, flat stone slab in the middle and a couple was having it off on it. Everybody was watching and cheering them on. As soon as they finished, everyone, and I mean everyone, joined in making love to each other, a right old orgy it was.”

Joan studied his face, and a feeling of *déjà vu* overcame her. “Peter, I have had that dream several times. I spoke to the shrink about it. She said I was fantasizing, trying to recapture my youth, and that it was quite normal and nothing to worry about. I have had many dreams about dancing with the white robes on, again in the forest. See I am not going mad if we both have the same dream.”

Peter leaned across and kissed her lovingly on the cheek. “I have never thought you were going mad, Joan.”

She raised a brow in what only can be described as a cynical twitch, and added sarcastically. “Really, Peter, then why send me to all those shrinks? Ok, if these are not normal dreams, what are they?”

Their eyes met, and neither of them spoke for a while.

Peter eventually broke the silence. “An old film perhaps? Perhaps we subconsciously remember a film from our past?”

“Oh, you mean like television influencing Paul.” She said bitterly. “I don’t think so. Anyway, I can’t remember a film like that. Can you?”

Peter did not speak. He simply shook his head and changed tack. “Right. Names of people in our dreams. I have loads, how about you?”

“I have plenty. I will read mine out, and you tell me if you have any that match.”

Joan read out her list of names, followed by Paul’s, while Peter cross-referenced them.

“We have plenty that match, but most are common garden names. I will read out the matched ones. Robert, Paul, Ben, Simon, Jed, Richard, Thomas, Stewart, Mia, Monkton, Llewellyn, Morag, Saul, James, Luna, Jake, Samuel, Eleanor and Christopher.”

“Ok, the real common names we need to cross off, I can understand the Roberts and Paul’s’, but there are some very unusual ones here. Monkton, Morag, Mia, Saul, Llewellyn. Peter, all three of us have dreamed of someone called Morag, Mia, Saul, Monkton and Llewellyn. How can we explain that?”

Paul simply shook his head. “I can’t Joan, maybe there is more to this than just having the same dreams, but I haven’t got a clue what it is. What about places? Any common names for places?”

Joan consulted her notepad. “Right, I have an Avalon, an Earlswood, a Glastonbury, a York and a Bath.”

Paul studied his notes. “I have a Glastonbury and an Earlswood, Joan. You’re right, this is getting scary.”

They were both lost in thought, trying to fathom the reason until Joan prompted.

“Peter, do you think it could be a ghost or something that is haunting us, or maybe it’s just this place?”

Paul gave a derisory laugh. “I don’t know, you know I don’t believe in that sort of thing.”

Joan decided it was time to let Peter into her secret and took a deep breath. “Peter, I took Paul for a private reading by a spiritualist.”

He gave a disapproving snort. “What!?” When? His voice edged with scorn. “Why would you do a thing like that?”

Joan drew her eyes away from his. “I wanted answers. You thought I was going mad, and the shrink just leeches our money away and agreed with you.”

Peter stared at his wife, his face getting redder by the second. She knew he would be upset, although he did not go to church as often as she did. He did consider himself a true Catholic and lived his life by Christian principles.

He raised his voice by a couple of decibels. “You should not have done that, Joan. That’s mumbo jumbo stuff, and you know it is.”

Joan studied her husband's reaction and thought he took it better than she expected. Feeling braver, she continued. "Anyway, I took Paul to see this spiritualist. I told him he was going to get his fortune told. He is only four, and I hasten to add too young to know what was happening. It was a rather interesting meeting. She said Paul was special and that I came from a long line of seers."

Peter studied his wife's face intensely, half expecting her to burst out laughing. "And you believed that Joan, that you come from a long line of seers? You are beginning to freak me out. Do you know what, that sounds more like necromancy or even schizophrenia?"

Joan ignored his sarcasm. "She said the voices in my head were spirits trying to get in touch with me and that they would guide me."

Peter was getting angrier by the second and his voice getting louder with each syllable. "You really are worrying me, Joan. That's what necromancy means, spirits talking to you, guiding you." Peter ran his fingers through his hair and began to massage his temples. He then took a deep breath and let it out slowly. When he spoke, he had calmed down, and his voice was barely a whisper. "So, you believe in ghosts now?"

Joan could give as good as she got and argued. "Will you shut up and listen? I went to see her about Paul and his dreams. She said he is very special and needs to go back to the land of his ancestors, England, and fulfill his destiny."

Peter controlled his voice, repeated. "His destiny?"

Joan remained unabated. "Some woman will call him when the time is right."

He couldn't hide the sarcasm in his voice. "Call him? Right, Joan, this may be hard for you to believe, but quite a few girls will give him a ring when Paul is growing up. It's what teenagers do. For God's sake Joan, how much did this cost?"

"Peter, she did not mean the telephone. Some woman will enchant him and call him back to join her in England."

"Enchant him?"

"Yes, she said my parents should have prepared me for these voices and that we should prepare Paul so that he understands what is happening to him as well. Peter, the spiritualist charges one hundred dollars for a private meeting."

"I thought so, Joan, you have been had."

"Will you just shut up and listen?" she snapped angrily. "When she realized who Paul was, she gave me my money back."

Peter fell silent, his face reflecting his confusion. "She gave you the money back. I don't understand, what's the point in getting a punter there and then giving them the money back?"

"My thoughts exactly. I went back the following week for a second reading, and they said she was only booked for the one night and had left the area. So, she wasn't even after repeat business."

For a while, Peter looked blindly into space, deep in thought. He shook his head slowly. "It doesn't make sense, Joan. Why would she do that?"

Joan placed her hand on his. "That's the point! It only makes sense if she is telling the truth. Peter, she said my parents should have prepared me. Obviously, they couldn't because they died so young. Now, this is happening to you, maybe you should talk to your dad and see what he has to say. We need to understand what is happening to us all."

"Anyway, I have always thought that I could see into the future. Now I understand why." Her voice had taken on a lighter tone.

His brow creased, reflecting his confusion. She was smiling. Why?

"All right, Joan Masters, prove it, tell me what the future holds."

Joan unbuttoned her top one button at a time and licked her lips seductively and after running her hands through his hair pulled his face down onto her breasts.

"My prediction is you are about to lock the door within the next thirty seconds, in case Paul wakes."

Later, lying sated in the arms of the only man she ever truly loved, Joan drifted into a deep sleep and, as had become the norm for her, she returned to the dream about the old lady of the forest.

3. SOMERSET, ENGLAND

1599 AD

The morning air lay cold and damp. The opal mist rising from the depths of the lake carpeted the forest and surrounding landscape, hiding its secrets. Above the tree canopy, high streaks of orange pierced a clear gray dawning sky.

The old lady blinked. Using the heel of her hands, she cleaned sleep from her eyes as reality dawned and replaced the comfort of oblivion. The knot in her stomach tightened, and the heat of the sun had not yet penetrated the tree canopy. The fog crept silently as a specter from the lake, weaving its way through the forest, its insidious touch wrapping around the healer like a wet blanket.

The cold had gnawed at her body throughout the night and she shuddered as the feeling of despair engulfed her. Morag got to her feet and removed her sodden shawl, her old bones stiff and reluctant. She stood at the side of the cot waiting. Her life, she knew, was in the balance. Would she live to see nightfall? She doubted it.

Her eyes turned to the woman lying on the cot. Lady Llewellyn. Formerly Princess Mia from the land of Persia was dying. Lord Llewellyn, who was lying on the cot next to hers - had tasked the old lady to keep his wife alive.

It was only a matter of time, and Morag hung her head in despair. She checked the young woman's temperature and pulse, making a mental note of the pallor of her silky-smooth skin, then lay her hand upon the swollen belly and felt her heart weep for the life moving inside. The Princess was full-term pregnant and they were both going to die. With her likely to join this luckless duo.

Morag mopped the sweat from her brow as she turned nervously toward the person lying next to the Princess and silently prayed to the creator that had guided her for eternity. *Earth Mother let him die first, I beg you.* Morag knew with all her heart that he would kill her if he didn't die before his wife. The plague had got them both, together and with the baby so near, and yet so far.

It was a mortifying outlook for Morag, who was 'Prime.' A title bestowed only on the most Elite of Druids and healers of the highest repute. She saw herself as someone who could draw on the arcane knowledge even older than the Avalonia Druids of old.

Like all women of that time living alone, she was aware of the whispers surrounding her. The healer was a welcome member of the forest community but she was also feared. In their minds, those who can cure - can also kill - after all, she was not a Christian who feared God and despised everything unholy. Who knew what she got up to on her own in the forest? She kept herself to herself, and those that feared her kept their distance unless a community member was sick.

How then had this party found her in the middle of the forest, well off the beaten track? She rubbed her temples wearily as there was no way of knowing.

Why don't you save the child? The voice came unbidden from deep within her mind. It was not hers. It was one of the thousands of ancestors whose memories she carried within her. 'Prime' memories - secrets that only the Elite 'Prime' could access at will.

Save the child how? She answered wearily.

Recall my memories, dearie, just think back. I did it when my Masters' favorite sow died just before she could give birth. Just cut her stomach across the middle and lift the baby out - you must be quick, mind.

Morag sat deep in thought but she disagreed. **A pig is one thing - but a woman?**

We are all the same under the skin, my lovely. It was another voice, a different ancestor. **I knew of a woman that was run over by a cart - she was full-term and split in two. The baby lived for a few hours before dying.**

As she contemplated the options, Morag recalled what had occurred before the duo fell unconscious.

Lord and Lady Llewellyn had arrived by boat two weeks previously from France in perfect health along with a troop of guards. Two days after landing on the English shore, the guards fell sick and died. When they arrived deep in the forest at the cottage of Morag the healer, their numbers were

down to four. It had been too late for her to help the guards – and it was only a matter of time before these two would follow them. But the baby, could it be possible?

“Ten gold coins if you save her,” the Lord had promised. More money than Morag had ever had in her lifetime. But no amount of money would save either the Lord or his wife.

Morag’s silent reverie was broken when she felt the Lord grip her arm.

“Healer, my wife, how is my wife?” His hand, so weak, fell away moments later.

The healer edged away, eyeing him like a fly trapped in a spider’s web. There would be no escape if the Princess died before him. Her eyes turned back to the woman lying on the cot, her voice barely a whisper.

“My Lord, I have told you, your wife will leave this world before sunset.”

His eyes were blood-red, and he pleaded hoarsely: “No, you must save her! I have more gold in the wagon, name your price.”

Morag cautiously shuffled further away. Every inch away from the Lord could make the difference to her life expectancy. The extra inches between them gave her more confidence and she turned to face him once again. “I may be able to save your baby, but your wife is too weak.”

“Damn the child she can have others, save my wife - she is so unbelievably special you would not believe it.

Morag thought he was evil from the moment she touched him, a malevolent force working its way along her fingers. She had sensed it from the very beginning. She knew she should have run and saved herself, but the healer within her prevented it. “My Lord,” her voice was barely audible, “My Lord, no amount of gold will save your wife but I may be able to save your baby if the Earth Mother wills it.”

“Healer, I pray to God, you save them both for your sake.”

Morag backed further away from the Lord but her hand still held the Princesses in a firm grasp. “My Lord, I have heard that you’ve tried many healers on your journey here to me, so I know what to expect. I say again that your wife will not walk in this life after today. Her ancestors are calling her, they are here, waiting.”

“Don’t talk gibberish you old Witch, just heal her.”

No more words were said as the Lord fell quiet. Hours passed and Morag watched bleakly as the chest of the ailing Princess rose and fell. As a healer, she had seen many people die, young and old. With yet more deaths looming, she looked around her. Surely no one could wish for a calmer, sweeter resting place, the peace almost Benedictine.

Eventually she heard the death rattle and stood over the Princess waiting for her chest to stall. Upon seeing that frail chest still, she took her sharpest knife and pulled aside the makeshift blanket to expose the pregnant belly.

Knowing she had little time left, Morag drew the blade across the bloated belly. Immediately liquid gushed out; she lifted the baby out of her womb and placed it on a blanket she had readied. She saw further movement in the womb. “Another one,” she gasped as she lifted the second child out. “Another girl, two girls, holy mother, can I save two?”

You are doing well Morag, quickly get them breathing, you have done this hundreds of times, even in this life.

Yes, yes, don’t fuss, leave me be. The ancestor fell silent but Morag knew they were all there ready to help.

She rubbed them both with a towel in a bid to revive them with no response. She checked their nostrils, the throats for blockages before lifting both by their ankles, then smacked their backsides. First one, then the other began to cry.

“Mother, be praised,” she whispered to herself as her eyes drifted nervously across to the Lord and her brow creased in anguish as he began to wake.

Hearing the cry of the babies the Lord raised himself on one elbow. “You have saved the child, and my wife, is she well?”

The multitude within her head began to panic. **Run Morag, run.**

Morag took the knife in her hand and hid it behind her back, waiting. ‘*Earth Mother,*’ she prayed. *I beg you to protect me from his wrath.* She turned to face the Lord but was careful and kept the knife hidden. “My Lord, I’m afraid your wife has left this world. But praise God we have a miracle, your daughters are safe. Yes, my Lord, you have not one, but two beautiful daughters.”

A howling wail split the air as the Lord saw his wife's stomach sliced open. Anger lending him the strength to get off the bed, he staggered over to the body. Unable to comprehend the vision before him, he accused: "You have killed and butchered her, you hag! You have murdered her!"

Morag's blood ran cold. She felt an icicle envelop her heart and the knot in her stomach tightened further still, and her voice faltered. "M... my Lord, she was not cut until she died. Yes, she is dead, but look, my Lord, your wife lives on. You have two beautiful daughters."

The Lord's eyes never moved to his daughters; all he could see was his wife's butchered abdomen. "Murderer!" he shrieked hoarsely.

She looked at him pleadingly. "But I have saved your babies."

The Lord lunged and when she swung her arm to stop him, the weapon she had hidden came to light. He tried to grab the knife but failed. Backing away as far as she could, she held it high above her head in a defensive posture, ready to strike. He, however, still had her other hand in a vice-like grip.

Morag looked into his eyes. She could see no compassion, only hate and rage. He had not even looked at his daughters. Slamming the knife hilt onto his head, Morag broke his grip, and the Lord fell forward face down on the floor.

With his arms splayed on all fours, he growled: "I will have your head for this Witch!"

Acting instinctively in self-defense, Morag stepped over his back and simply sat upon him. This sudden weight immediately caused his arms to collapse.

"Get off me, witch!" He raged and tried to move but didn't have the strength.

Morag sat there, unknowing of what her next move should be. Her heart was racing and she clutched her chest in panic. She could hear the roar of the blood rushing through her ears.

He continued to try getting to his feet, but she bore all her weight upon him. Finally, he realized that he couldn't get free.

Morag came to the same conclusion and began to control her breathing, causing her heart rate to slow. She sat there as he struggled and weighed her options. Her priority was the survival of the babies. Morag also knew he would show her no mercy.

Her eyes drifted to the wagon, to a prize that could be hers. A wagon containing gold and finery from Persia. And then there were the horses – he called them "Arabian". They were the finest she had ever seen.

Not forgetting the babies. Morag was past childbearing age and alone in the forest. Here were two girls to raise; Two companions for her old age. Girls to whom she could pass on her knowledge of ancient healing. She nodded her head thoughtfully and closed her eyes in anguish as she made her decision.

A voice came unbidden. **No Morag, you mustn't.**

I have no choice, the babies?

Just stay where you are, he will be dead soon.

Remember your vows. Shrieked another ancestor from deep within her mind.*

But the babies need me now.

"My Lord, did your father ever teach you to play chess?"

The Lord responded weakly. "What are you talking about, witch? Get off me!"

She repeated the question slowly. "Did. Your. Father. Teach. You. To. Play. Chess?"

The Lord's voice was barely audible, exhausted by the effort. "Chess, no, never."

Morag's voice, however, had become strong and forceful. "I thought not, my Lord. Blame your father for your predicament. The first rule of chess is never to threaten if you can't back it up. It is the same in life. Never threaten anyone when you are in a position of weakness."

No Morag, don't do it. The voices screamed in unison.

Morag grabbed a handful of hair, pulled his head backward, and drew the blade across his throat – slitting it from ear to ear. His legs thrashed violently and a gargled curdle left his lips as he grasped his throat in an vain attempt to slow the flow of blood.

Morag watched the pool of blood grow, a crimson halo fanning out to frame his head. She remained seated on his back as his body convulsed in spasms and paused for reflection as his life ebbed away. She had broken the vow all healers live by. She had taken a life. Tears ran down her cheeks, she sought support for her action from her ancestors, and found none. They were silent – not a whisper, not even an echo.

As he stilled, the years fell away from the hunchback that was Morag the healer. A much younger woman stood upright, stretched her limbs and turned her attention to the babies. Quickly she cleaned their bodies and wrapped them in blankets. Both began to cry loudly, and when she started to rock one of them it began to suckle her fingers.

Morag was unprepared for this need. Her main objective throughout the night had been to outlive the Lord. She never dreamt the babies would live. But now they have – how could she feed them?

For a while, she sat on the Lord's cot in silent contemplation. *There's no one within a day's ride, and the babies need milk. Do I know anyone who has recently given birth and could be a wet nurse?* She searched her memories and the hopelessness of her predicament dawned upon her. *No one would come anyway – no one trusts me. How can I feed them? They need milk or they will die.*

An unexpected reprieve emerged right then when the Princesses' wolf came out of her den. It was her personal guardian and it had been attracted by the smell of blood. It approached the dead Princess cautiously, its ears flat against its head as it gave a blood-curdling howl that echoed through the forest. The response was instant, as echo's returned from every direction.

Morag shuddered and looked at the two corpses stretched out before her. The retort from the other wolves sent a shiver up her spine. *So many, I did not realize there were so many wolves in the forest.*

Earlier, Morag had calmed the creature by enchantment, and the wolf now thought of Morag as the pack's new leader. She then remembered the wolf had given birth to four cubs just two days previously, and only two had survived.

You have milk wolf, yes milk, and spare milk at that? Morag's mind began to formulate a plan. *I can make an enchantment to make the wolf believe they are hers. It might work, it might just work. I must ask the old ones.*

Amid this rising hope, she saw that the sun had once more risen above the tree canopy and had dispelled the gossamer-like mist. Ignoring the wailing babies, Morag sat cross-legged on the ground, closed her eyes, and began to meditate. She was calling upon her ancestors for guidance. Seeking the archaic wisdom passed down from the Stone Age and beyond.

You shouldn't be talking to us. Do you know what you have done.

I have saved two girls, that's what I have done. Eventually the negative remakes subsided and Morag patiently listened to the hundreds of voices within her head.

A female Avalonia Grandmaster's suggestion caught her attention. **If you take the skin from the cubs that died at birth and fasten it around the babies, it will fool the foster parent into thinking that the babies are hers.**

At last! A smile emphasized the creases on her weathered face. She thanked her ancestor – then recited an enchantment to calm the wolf and collected the bodies of the two cubs that had died. She skinned both cubs, cutting off the legs where they reached the abdomen. After cleaning off the blood, she slipped the skins over the babies, putting their arms and legs through the holes in the skins, she then stitched the skins back together, covering the babies' bodies.

She admired her handiwork and nodded her head approvingly, further gladdened by the thought that the skins would help keep them warm as well. She laid the babies next to the wolf so they could latch onto the nipples. Immediately they clung on and began to suckle.

"It's going to work. Yes, it's going to work." She sang the words aloud and began to dance, hardly able to contain her excitement. Morag knew that by the time the wolf's milk passed through the babies' digestive systems, the smell would confirm to the female wolf that the babies were hers.

Immediate concerns taken care of; Morag focused her next efforts on longer-term gain. She took full advantage of being a shapeshifter, a rare talent that she'd kept hidden even from her fellow 'Prime.' Turning her attention to the dead Lord, she placed her hand across his forehead and bent his head backward. With the other hand on his chin, she opened his mouth and appeared to kiss him. When she breathed in deeply, nothing seemed to happen. It took a few moments for the skin of the Lord to tighten, wither, then shrink as the flesh underneath dissipated – until all that was left was only a skeleton covered in skin.

At the same time, her hair had started to change color, and the masculine features of the former Sir Robert Llewellyn replaced those of Morag. Moving quickly to the rear of the cottage, she collected an essence jar and removed the stopper. Placing her mouth over the vessel, she released her breath into it.

Morag labeled the jar with the name of the Lord and, after sealing it, put it on the shelf next to a row of similar jars. As her features returned to normal, she cackled: "Now, Sir Robert, you are mine to do with as I please."

She returned to the desiccated remains of the Lord and removed his rings and clothing. She tied a length of rope around both ankles and secured the other end of the rope to the harness of the horse used for pulling the wagon. She led the creature deep into the forest, dragging the Lord behind until she reached a clearing downwind of her dwelling.

After removing the rope from the body, she performed a simple ritual and called out. "Creatures of the forest, I give this man back to you. For many years he has hunted you down. He has feasted on the bodies of your brothers and sisters. Now, his circle of life is complete, and it is your turn to feed on his bones."

With the ceremony completed, she walked back to her cottage to check on the babies and was pleased to see that they were sleeping.

Morag turned her attention to the Princess and took time to examine the dead woman. The deceased's hair was long, jet-black, and straight without the hint of a curl. Her eyes were emerald-green, in sharp contrast to her silky smooth olive skin. The most unusual feature of this woman, however, was her height. Being almost six feet tall, she was eighteen inches taller than most forest women, and the tallest woman she had ever seen.

The healer, like most people of the forest, was a Celt. Most were little more than four feet six inches tall, some slightly taller. Her own hair, although now gray, used to be a dark yellow. Most people of the forest had complexions similarly fair as hers, alternatively a very light brown or the color of sunbaked barley.

She looked back at the girls, fast asleep, and wondered what the girls will look like if they survived into adulthood. *Sir Robert was also tall. They too will be tall then, tall, and magnificent girls.*

Morag removed all her clothing, revealing the body of a middle-aged woman. She moved across to the Princess and kissed her in the same manner as the Lord. Again, she breathed in deeply – taking in the essence of the dead woman. As with her husband, the Princess's skin contracted with the essence extracted and Morag took the form of the Princess.

Excitedly she ran to the mirror in the cottage and examined her new form. She twisted and turned, taking in every aspect of her new body. She reached for the hairbrush - and began to comb her hair. Hair that fell to her waist. Then, lifting her ample breasts, she felt the heavy milk inside. Her eyes drifted to the babies still sleeping alongside the female wolf and wished the milk was natural. She then ran her hands down her unmarked stomach and legs and liked what she saw.

Morag fell silent, sensing something strange within her. *What's this? This is unexpected. I feel different. She paused for a time as strange sensations began coursing through her body. What is it? Power, I feel her power, so much power. Ancient power, I'm sure of it. So, Princess you were a sister!*

Her eyes drifted back to the corpse of the Princess and reappraised her. *'So, my Princess, you had powerful talents and skills that are different from mine, but skills I can use. So, it was you calling me these last few nights. You who warned me of the evil intent of the Lord. Thank you. By doing so, you have saved my life, and I Morag of the North Wood will repay the debt. Your daughters will have love and devotion from me for the rest of my days.'*

Once again, her form slowly returned to that of the healer. *Yes, my dear, I will have so much fun being you as well. This has been a wonderful day, a glorious day.*

She took stock of what she had acquired. Wagons containing unknown finery. The gold, the horses, and two girls. Girls that could hopefully inherit their mother's gifts and possibly her looks. She mused as she recalled the Princess's image in the mirror. *They will charm any Prince or noble in the land if they do. Yes, this has been a wonderful day.*

*

Against all odds, the girls survived, and the wolf cared for the girls as if they were her own. They grew stronger every day, as did the wolf cubs which grew rapidly.

Three months later, Morag was busying herself doing the everyday household chores when she sensed something was wrong. There were no bird noises and the forest creatures were utterly silent. She searched the heavens and could see a flock of rooks circling in the sky in the distance. A rook's parliament was held daily in the tall ash tree, but that was always at the first light of dawn. It was now midday, so something or someone had disturbed them.

"Someone's coming," she said for her own benefit, and after collecting the babies from the wolf's den, hid them in the cottage. "Wolf, you go back to your den and stay there," Morag commanded as she went back into the cottage.

A group of soldiers on horses approached and as they came to a halt outside, a man's voice called out. "We come in the name of the Earl. Is there anyone at home?"

She quickly hurried to the rear of the cottage where she stored the essence jars. Opening the one labeled Lord Robert Llewellyn, she took a deep breath.

Wolf now moved to the entrance of her den and a guttural growl resonated from deep within her throat. All at once the horses began to panic, and their riders struggled to bring them under control.

One soldier cried out, "Captain, a wolf, a giant wolf."

Another cried, "Kill it."

A powerful male voice called out from inside the cottage. "There will be no need for that!" As the soldier's eyes turned to the cottage, Lord Robert Llewellyn stepped out.

The captain called out triumphantly, "Lord Llewellyn, you're alive,"

The Lord waved his hands dismissively. "Yes, as you see, captain, I am very much alive."

"Sire, we have been searching for you for months."

"Well, now you have found me, captain. What can I do for you?"

"Lord, your father sent several patrols out looking for you when you failed to arrive at the castle a month after your ship docked." As he addressed the Lord, the captain started to dismount.

Robert put both hands, palms out, facing the men and commanded, "Stay back, do not get off your horses."

The captain froze with one leg in the air. "What is it, my Lord?"

"My men and I caught the plague on our way home. Every one of my companions has died."

The soldiers immediately backed their mounts several feet from Sir Robert. Seeing his Lordship's unkempt condition and lack of dress, the captain inquired, "Are you well now, my Lord?"

His Lordship began to cough and again waved his hands dismissively. "No, I still have the plague but I am recovering."

"The Princess, Lord?"

"The Princess also has the plague, but she too is recovering. She is very weak."

"Your child, Sir Robert, has it survived?"

"Yes, I have two daughters and both are well. The healer Morag is attending to them as we speak."

"Praise God Lord, two daughters. Will you be able to travel back with us today?"

The Lord shook his head. "I fear it will be a long time before we can travel." He then rested his weight on a table outside the cottage, feigning weakness.

"But Lord, your father instructed us to return with you."

"Don't be stupid! My father would not want me to return with the plague you fool!"

The effort of his outburst appeared to weaken him significantly and he sat down. After almost a minute's silence, he continued in a more moderate tone. "We were treated on our journey by many healers, but my men died one by one, we were down to just the four of us when we arrived here. Sadly, the other two did not make it. But this healer is the finest in the land. She has treated my wife and me for many weeks, and we are getting stronger."

The captain moved on his saddle uncomfortably. "We too have fine healers, Sire. You can be treated at the castle in comfort."

"No, Captain, don't be ridiculous we cannot leave this place."

"Sire, your father's orders."

"I said no, Captain!" The Lord let his head hang with fatigue, then continued. "The healer says the herbs she needs only grow in this forest, and she says only fresh herbs picked daily will heal us. I cannot risk traveling until we are both cured."

"But Sire."

"I said no you fool, and I won't repeat it! According to the healer, it will be at least a year before we will be free of the plague. I will return to the cottage and write my father a letter. Give it to him, and he will understand. I will put my seal on it to prove you have found us. Do not get off your horses and stay exactly where you are. There is no way we are traveling back to the castle while we still have the plague."

Sir Robert walked back to the cottage, clinging to any object that would aid his support. Wolf, in the meantime, was watching the men and stood between them and her den growling. The wind was lite, the air still, and the eyes of the giant wolf took the measure of each soldier in turn.

The captain called out nervously. "The wolf, my Lord, is it safe? I have not seen a white one before, or one so large."

He called back loudly from the confines of the cottage. "She will not harm you if you stay where you are. The wolf belongs to my wife; it is her protector and never leaves her side. She has two cubs in her den, so you will be safe if you stay on your horses."

Fifteen minutes later, the Princess walked out of the cottage and the men fell silent. She wore a long green dress adorned with a gold-colored belt, and unusually for women of that time, her hair was loose and fell to her waist. She was stunningly beautiful, a woman the likes of which they had never seen before.

Morag could sense the men's admiration and was enjoying the sensation. It had been many years since any man had admired her and noted her beauty transfixed them. "My husband asks me give you this." She said and held out a sealed letter.

The officer was staring open-mouthed and did not comment.

Morag had deliberately emphasized the Princesses' foreign accent. "Well gentlemen, how you say in this country, has cat got tongue?"

The officer eventually pulled himself together. "B-beg your pardon, my Lady."

"It is all right, captain. May I have name?"

"Roberts, my lady."

"Captain, the title you give is wrong, I am Princess, not Lady. You must use title, Princess, when you address me. Understand?"

The captain nodded. "Sorry, my Lady - I mean Princess."

"Captain Roberts, would you kindly take letter to father-in-law?"

The captain took the letter and the Princess gave him her warmest smile. It was a smile the Princess had practiced throughout her lifetime and one that made most men weak at the knees. It was a tool she regularly used to good effect.

"You must forgive husband for being abrupt. He very weak. He say - you search for many month?"

"Aye, aye," the men chimed in unison.

"As you can see, we are not well, but safe. We sought this healer because she live deep in forest, so we have less chance of passing on the disease. So, you brave men must leave this place. I could not bear it if even one of you were to catch it." Her eyes moved to each soldier in turn, and her smile never wavered and noted the effect on them was profound.

"Of course, Princess, we will do as you say. But I am concerned for your safety as you are alone here."

"We not alone. We have 'Wolf'." Hearing her name, the giant wolf moved alongside the Princess, and her growl became louder. She reached across to comfort her and keep her close.

"It's all right, Wolf. It's just father-in-law's soldiers." Wolf could smell the Primeval fear emanating from both the men and horses. The Princess placed her hand on its head and the creature sat by her side and the growls began to subside.

"Truly a magnificent beast, you're Highness, a giant, but it is still just one creature."

"Yes, but what a creature." The Princess continued to stroke the wolf. "This is royal wolf, bred from the largest and finest wolves in my country. She do everything I ask of her. She can kill a bear, snap a man's neck, or rip throat out in a second."

The captain winced but was unconvinced. "But it is still just one creature and an arrow could bring it down. Your Highness, I will leave several men, and they can camp at the side of the road to keep an eye on you from a distance."

"No!" The Princess replied sharply, and the smile left her face. "Husband say we no draw attention. Leaving men nearby, it do that!"

Softening her features, she added: "Husband, say you go back to next village and spread word we have plague in forest. This will deter anyone from venturing nearby. Morag tells me no one lives around here for miles. We be safe as long as we careful."

"Whatever you wish, your Highness."

The Princess lifted her arm to her forehead, feigning fatigue. "I feel weak and must rest, so go now and report to father-in-law. Tell him as soon as we healed, we send word for you to return and escort us back." She again turned and smiled at each of them in turn. "Now please, captain, take your men and go."

She shuffled back to the cottage, and after closing the door rested her ear on it and listened as the captain barked his orders. The men turned their horses and retreated. Wolf watched them leave and, when they were out of sight, the creature turned and went back into her den.

A feeling of relief and euphoria overcame Morag. *See the look on their faces, they adored me. With just a simple smile, they were wrapped around my little finger. They didn't suspect a thing. With this body and my gifts, anything is possible.*

*

The wagon did indeed contain gold and other treasures. Morag kept the horses and began to breed them. After six months, she decided it was time to tell Earl Llewellyn that both his sick son and wife had survived but were still not strong enough to withstand such a long journey.

In the guise of his son, she sent a message to the Earl seeking to have a grand house built in the forest. Being on the southwest tip of the Earl's estate, the land would serve as a long-term residence for his growing family. The costs would be met and paid for with the dowry from the Princess.

A request for forty craftsmen to be sent south to construct the property was granted, and the construction began almost at once. She still used the subterfuge of the plague to keep the workers and forest dwellers away from the cottage. However, Morag never once stepped outside without using one of the many guises she had stored in her essence jars.

*

Communicating with the spirit world came as naturally to Morag as breathing. She found comfort in her solitude and was at peace with the forest and the creatures that shared it.

From the very beginning, she educated the girls on the ways of the Ancients; an archaic species that were little more than animals; and later the arrival of the swift footed hunter-gatherers, a new people that migrated north from the plains of Africa and how over time they interbred with them. This group with mixed blood set themselves apart from the rest of humanity. They alone could recall their past lives, they alone were fully aware. They were different and known as 'Prime.'

She described the Wood and Stone Henge and how by aligning those with the stars could predict the seasons.

She told of the vision these early peoples had to create a place of learning - where all men were equal and free to study the heavens - and live in harmony with nature. A place they eventually called Avalon, and later how the invaders from Rome destroyed it.

She taught about the flora and fauna of the forest and how to observe them and learn their ways. To study the seasons as they unfolded, to enjoy simple pleasures like feeling the wind in their faces, and be in touch with the elements. To gain comfort from basic pleasures like walking in streams and feeling the water on their feet as it journeyed through the forest to the great sea. She taught about the destructive force of fire and how to control it, and how to touch the stones and listen to the echoes of times past.

Throughout their early years, Morag's life was dedicated solely to the instruction of the girls, passing on to them the 'Prime' wisdom and archaic memories passed down through the ages since time began. She was at pains to point out how special they were, what they could achieve in their lives, and that one day if they learned their lessons well, they may be accepted into the 'Prime' Sisterhood of healers.

She told of the Shamans and Arch Druids, men and women, practitioners of the healing art and early magic, whose memories they would soon recover, and the ancestors that will reside within them for the rest of life's journey. Ancestors that will advise and comfort them, passing on knowledge from the clear springs of ancient wisdom.

She taught them how to converse with animal and plant spirits, skills gathered through countless lifetimes. Skills the rest of humankind sought from them, healing arts they wanted and feared.

She cautioned the girls that humanity would always fear someone who can heal, and that it caused discomfort to those whose souls are dead and whose spiritual eyes are blind. When this happened, the healer would become feared and proclaimed, 'Witch.' Someone to be judged, punished, and even killed.

She emphasized the joy of carrying the memories of their parents, brothers, and sisters, the joy of healing others, and the love of life itself. And to be aware of the dangers of the dark forces that corrupt and destroy and how they are fed by jealousy, anger, greed, suspicion, envy, hate corruption and other dark thoughts. Thoughts and deeds that worm their way into the soul blackening it forever; forces that sucked out life's beauty, causing sickness and despair. She warned them of the personification of the dark side, the Primevil.

Morag was also aware these girls were different from most other children. They had the genes of their parents. Their father, she knew, had been a cruel man. However, their mother was a healer, a sister, and a seer with powerful new wisdom. Wisdom passed down a path unknown to anyone in these lands. What secrets? What healing practices may they have when eventually their memories are awakened?

These girls were the daughters she could never have, and they now filled her life day and night and gave it purpose. The skills she hoped to pass on to them would make them extremely powerful women, with talents that could corrupt or blossom.

The girls were becoming more aware, and distant memories came to the fore daily. Both girls now seemed to be in contact with their mothers' spirit, and they seemed perfectly comfortable with this. Due to Morag's teachings, they not only expected to receive the 'Prime' memories of their ancestors, but they looked forward to them with anticipation.

She knew these girls were unique. Every day, weather permitting, they ventured into the forest where they settled down and continued with their instruction. Their favorite places to study were near a lake or stream so they could be in close contact with the lake spirits and, of course, their mother.

Morag found the lessons were simply reawakening distant memories. Once these memories had come to the fore, they were there forever. This made teaching them extremely easy, and soon the girls were retaining knowledge that an average person would take a lifetime to accumulate.

*

It soon came time to introduce them to the Sisterhood and inform the Earth Mother's representative at Avebury. This was a return journey of almost a hundred miles and it presented many dangers. Taking two five-year-old girls and three wolves would undoubtedly draw unwanted attention. Leaving the girls on their own for an extended period of time, was also not an option, she would need to get there and back within a few hours.

She was reluctant to leave them unattended but she had no choice. She called the girls and told them she was going on a journey and they were to stay in the cottage with their wolves - who would watch over them while she was gone.

Ursula bit her lip, a trait she always did when she was worried, and turned to Morag, "Nana, will you be gone long?"

"Only one night, little one."

She tugged at Morag's skirt, and her watery green eyes looked up eagerly. "Can we go with you?"

Morag smiled down at her daughter. "It's a very long journey, Ursula - too long for you or your sister to travel in one night."

"If it's a long journey, how can you go there and back before sunrise?"

"Easy child, I will fly."

Both girls burst out laughing until they realized she was serious. Sarah posed a question, her green eyes as big as saucers. "I didn't know you could fly, Nana!"

"I can't," she said smiling down at them. "But I know a bird that can."

Once again, both girls began to laugh. "Nana, you're too heavy. It would have to be a huge bird."

"The bird will carry my spirit. My body will be here with you, sleeping in my bed."

"So, you will be with us, but asleep in your room?"

"Yes, but I will be in a very deep sleep, so you won't be able to wake me until I return. I will go into my room and lock the door from the inside so that no one can disturb me. Then I will call a bird to carry my spirit and I will be back by dawn."

Both girls fell silent as they absorbed this new information, then Ursula quipped. "Will you call your Raven totem, Nana?"

"Not this time child. What bird would you take for this journey?"

"A hawk because they are the fastest birds - so you will be back before dawn."

"That's very true. What bird would you choose, Sarah?"

Sarah bit her lip, a trait she copied from her sister, and thought for a while. "I would call an owl."

"Yes, Sarah. I will be calling an owl. I could have called a goose - or a nightjar - as they both fly at night - but not a hawk. Hawks cannot see in the dark."

"So why did you choose the owl over the other birds?"

"Good question, Ursula. As Sarah realized, the owl can see in the dark. It also has very few predators, and it flies on silent wings. If you listen when an owl is on the wing you will hear no sound. If I chose a goose, it would make too much noise. A goose can't fly far without making a honking noise, and this would draw too much attention to me. Although swift and graceful, the nightjar is a small bird, a bird small enough to be attacked by other birds of prey."

Both girls looked up at Morag, their eyes still as big as saucers and steeped in wonder. "Is it dangerous when your spirit is carried by another creature Nana?"

"Yes, Sarah, it is a most dangerous time. Anyone whose spirit dwells in another body is very vulnerable. If that creature is killed, the spirit may not find its way back and be lost forever."

Both girls looked horrified and clung to her skirts as their eyes looked up pleadingly. "Then you mustn't go, Nana."

Ursula echoed her sister. "No, Nana, you mustn't go - we need you, please, stay."

Morag bent down and hugged her wards, her eyes moist with emotion, and tried to comfort them. "I must make the journey - but you girls can help. Did you know your mother was a seer?"

The girls replied in unison. "What does that mean, Nana?"

"A seer is someone who can look into the future and tell if something bad is going to happen. When you go to sleep, I would like you to ask your mother if it is safe for Nana to make this journey. Would you do that for me?"

"Yes, Nana, but what if she doesn't come?"

"I'm sure she will come. She has been expecting me to make this journey for quite a while."

"You are going to see the Earth Mother, aren't you?"

Morag felt the hair lift on the nape of her neck. She had not mentioned the creator of all things to her. *So, Ursula is in contact with the spirit world as well. I was beginning to think it was just Sarah.*

"I'm going to see the representative of the Earth Mother. How did you know Ursula?"

"Mother told me, of course."

"I see, when did she tell you this?"

"Yesterday." They said again in unison.

Morag hugged the girls. "It looks like I'm always the last to know. Did she say when?"

Ursula replied, "She said tomorrow night just after sundown, but she did not say you would be calling a bird."

"Then I know my journey will be safe because she's already spoken to you."

The following evening, Morag prepared herself for the journey. It was a journey she did not want to make. She was aware that when the spirit left its host, the body itself was very vulnerable and one step away from death - and was something she dreaded doing.

She prepared a concoction of exotic mind-expanding elements from the forest's flora. Archaic knowledge obtained by communicating with plant spirits across the ages; potions to slow her heart to the very minimum.

After calling the three wolves to her, she instructed them to guard both girls and to stay by their sides until she returned. Ghost would watch over Sarah and Shadow would stay with Ursula. Wolf herself would remain in Morag's room to watch over her as she slept.

Morag locked all the doors to the cottage, and after putting the wolves in the girls' room, she returned to her bedroom and bolted the door. The window was left open enough for the owl to enter. And after retiring to her bed, she began to call the owls of the forest.

Within minutes, a pure white barn owl answered her calling and flew into the room, a phantasm. It settled at the foot of the bed and waited as Morag's breathing began to slow until she was barely alive. A glow began to emanate from Morag and encompassed both the owl and the bed. Eventually, the owl turned, flew out of the window as silently as it came, and flew away.

The owl flew swiftly south, skimming the treetops of oak, juniper and birch, and it made the forty two mile journey in just over two hours. Finally, she could see the giant stone circles of Avebury below her.

A stray memory came of how the Stone Megaliths near the village of Avebury were first erected during the Neolithic period. The sanctuary comprised three separate stone circles. Its outer circle is the largest stone circle in the world. These stone circles and the earlier wooden ones were ceremonial centers. Places where people from the Early Neolithic onwards would meet up to worship their 'Earth Mother' in her various guises.

The two main meetings were the summer and winter solstice, the longest and shortest days of the year. At these meetings, multiple marriages would take place. Tribe and family members who had passed away would be honored. News was exchanged and future ceremonies were organized. There were animal sacrifices to thank the Earth Mother for her bountiful supply, and hopefully, encourage her to grant them good hunting in the coming season; and when humankind turned to the plow, a successful harvest.

The Henge was steeped in folk law and ritual practices. They began as meeting places for the early hunter-gatherers. Being nomadic it was challenging to meet up with other groups. They needed a focal point to meet, somewhere distinct from the surrounding area.

At first, they used wood to construct the Henge. Wood was plentiful at this time because most of Britain was covered in forest. After selecting a meeting place, they formed a large circle and inverted a ring of trees around the circumference. They left the roots in place so they acted like branches. This prevented the trees from regrowth and it made the circle as conspicuous as possible. It was a meeting place, a focal point for the tribes to meet twice a year. A place to celebrate life, and in later centuries when the population and manpower increased, they built them out of stone.

The only time references they had was the longest and shortest days of the year. At these points in time, they would meet, celebrate and copulate on mass. I was the beginning of humankind's 'organized society.'

The population of the British Isles was in the thousands. It was a place to meet when someone was of age and needed a partner, whether for one night or a whole lifetime. The ceremonies would be alcohol - and narcotic-fueled and resulted in copulation on a grand scale. This encouraged diversity in the gene pool and the offspring of these encounters were both more robust and healthier. It also helped link the various tribes together, which the tribe elders noted and encouraged.

Later, the Shamans and Priests took control and used these practices as tools to control society - as religion has done throughout history. Later they increased the annual ceremonies to four, adding the spring and fall equinox to the infant society.

It was at one of these forthcoming meetings that Morag wanted to present her daughters. The person she needed permission and guidance from was the 'Earth Mothers Representative'. The name people used for her was simply 'Mother,' or for ceremonial purposes, 'Earth Mother'.

Mother was the embodiment of images and carvings found at archeological sites throughout history. As the Earth Mother's Representative, it was her duty to replicate this image, and with the excess food presented to her at ceremonies was obese to the point she could hardly walk.

She could be quick to anger and was very stubborn. Her moods could be dark, her temper quick. However, she was not chosen to be the 'Mother's Representative' for nothing. Her mind was sharp, and the memories passed along her ancestral line gave her immense knowledge.

*

The owl was circling above her dwelling in the early hours and Morag was hoping she was a morning person. It landed on her windowsill and hooted several times.

Her sleep disturbed, the Earth Mother' sat upright and came face to face with the owl. She blinked several times in disbelief and the tone of her voice reflected her annoyance. "Who in the name of the 'Mother of all' is this? Do you not know what time it is?"

Please forgive the intrusion, Mother, I need your advice.

The Earth Mothers' representative snapped. "Could it not have waited until the morrow?"

No, Mother, it would have been complicated. I have children who are now alone and hence I must return before sunrise.

"Very well, give me a moment."

'Mother' raised herself with difficulty and sat cross-legged on the floor and meditated before once again addressing the bird. "Who is this that wishes to consult with the Earth Mother?"

My name is Morag.

"Morag, from the north forest?"

Yes, Mother.

"Morag, the Earth Mother welcomes you."

Mother, I have two daughters, born not to me, who have the gift and I believe they are special.

The Earth Mother sighed heavily. "Special, are they? All mothers think their daughters are special. Why do you think they are special?"

Their summers are now five in number, and...

"Five!" she snapped, cutting her short. "You can't tell if a child is special or has any gifts at five. You woke me up to tell me this?"

Mother, if you listen to what I have to say, you will understand. I need guidance and I can speak to only you.

"Morag, this had better be good... speak."

Five summers ago, a Lord came to my dwelling, the son of Earl Llewellyn. He was returning home from a great journey overseas. He had with him his wife, who was regarded as a Princess in her country. They and their companions had caught a plague while on this journey. They came to me for healing.

"Wait. Is this the Lord that killed two of our sisters?"

It is, Mother.

The Earth Mother gasped in disbelief. "And you helped him?"

I tried Mother, but I did not have much choice. His wife was with child and ready to give birth. We have a duty.

"I see, but what happened to them?"

Lord Llewellyn and his wife died. I am here because his wife was a seer and she had the gift.

"Ah, I see. Were you able to recover her memories?"

Yes, Mother, and they are new memories.

"New memories?"

Completely new.

"Are you sure about this? We have not had new memories for hundreds of years?"

I am sure Mother. This Princess came from a distant land. Her skin was olive-brown and her hair jet black without the hint of a curl. She was almost six feet tall, nearly as big as Lord Llewellyn. I had not seen her kind before.

"So, you obviously managed to save the baby?"

Yes, both babies survived.

"Babies?"

Yes, Mother, she had two daughters.

"You are rearing these children as your own I take it. Does the Earl not want them?"

I recovered the essences from both Lord Llewellyn and the Princess. When I took her form and recovered her memories, I realized her marriage was a business arrangement between the families. She hated him. He was a cruel man and she did not want his family to rear her children.

"I see, so you're raising them as your own."

Yes, Mother. When the Earl's men came looking for them, however. I took the form of Robert Llewellyn and the Earl's family thinks he is still alive, and the Princess too.

"Morag, if they lived with the Earl they would live in comfort."

They are loved and will live in comfort with me. The Earl is building a great house by the lake in the woods near where I live and we will live there.

"Do the girls know you're not their mother?"

Yes, they know. They call me 'Nana' and they know their parents are dead. What they don't know is I killed their father.

"You killed him?"

Yes, he was trying to kill me when his wife died. I knew he had killed our sisters and I was expecting it because the Princess had warned me in a dream. She had foreseen her death and that I would save her daughters and lead them to the light. I hoped that when he saw that I had saved his daughters, he would bond with them. But no, he saw his wife's body and went into a rage. If he had had the strength, he would have killed me there and then. The plague was too advanced, so it was only a matter of time. Anyway, it was a mercy.

"Mercy, do your ancestors agree?"

Yes, eventually, well some of them do anyway.

“So, you think these girls are special.”

They are unique and have recovered lots of memories already. I think they will significantly benefit the ‘Prime’ Sisterhood with the correct guidance.

“Excellent, Morag, we will present them at the next meeting. But we need to keep this secret, I will not tell anyone about what we have said tonight. The fewer people who know we have children with possibly new memories, the better. Also, there will be less chance that people, who have taken a darker path, could be drawn to them. I will see you at the summer solstice.”

One more request, Mother. I need help guiding them especially when we move into the large house – people we can trust. Can you recommend anyone?

“I will think on this. I would like to judge for myself how special these girls are. I will give you my decision at the solstice.”

Then I will take my leave.

The owl turned and fled.

The Earth Mother sat for a while, deep in thought dissecting the conversation with Morag. *Children are usually born with memories. Some newborn babies are distressed and cry when remembering their earlier death. Some, who are contented, either don’t remember, or had a gentle passage from their previous life. Then the memories fade. Being ‘Prime’, all children recover them but not until puberty. For girls to remember at such a young age is unheard of. Then again, if they are from a new ancestral line who knows what, is normal for these people? This is exciting news. Yes, if they are as advanced as she says they are we must keep them close. We must also keep them away from the dark brothers and sisters who may want to corrupt them.*

*

The journey back was swift. The owl flew straight through the bedroom window, perched on the bed, and waited. After ten minutes, the owl was again bathed by a glowing light. It grew larger until it encompassed both the bird and the bed.

Morag began to stir, and verbally said “thank you” to the bird, which then turned and flew back into the forest.

The exhausted healer slept through to midday, waking suddenly when Wolf roused her by licking her hand.

“Thank you, Wolf, I’m getting up now.”

She stretched her stiff muscles and went through to the scullery.

“Nana, you’re back,” cried both girls as they rushed over to her and wrapped their arms around her legs. As Morag looked down upon her daughters, her heart melted as she saw the joy on their faces.

“Goodness girls, what a welcome were you worried?”

Their eyes were once again as large as saucers. “Yes, Nana, you said it was dangerous.”

She knelt beside them, lifted them and rested them on her hips.

“Yes, but I chose wisely, and thanks to your mother I knew the owl was a perfect host. Remember, girls, it’s important to make the correct decisions throughout life. If you are not sure about something, consult with your mother, me, or your ancestors. Then you will be safe because we are here to guide you.”

As soon as Morag put them down, Ursula tugged at her skirt. “What did the Earth Mother say, Nana?”

“Yes, Nana, what did she say?” echoed Sarah, who was jumping up and down with excitement.

“She said we are to go and see her at the summer festival.”

“Does that mean we are going to fly too?”

“No, girls, we will have to make the journey on foot.”

As the words left her mouth, she fell silent and was lost in thought. *How are we going to get there? We can’t take the horse and cart the roads are simply unsuitable. It would take a week on foot with a couple of five-year-old children – I could ride on a horse, but there is no way the girls could.* Sarah asked. How long will it take on foot Nanna?

“Almost a week I think, but don’t worry we will take our time – unless I can think of something else.”

Sarah said excitedly. “We could ride on our wolves as you do on your horse, Nana.”

Morag waved her arms dismissively. "I don't think your wolves would let you ride on their backs, Sarah. You're being silly."

"But Nana, Ghost lets me sit on her back."

"So does Shadow," quipped Ursula.

"They do? Your wolves let you sit on their backs? When did this happen?"

"About two moon cycles ago, when our mother first started talking to us."

"You must show me. I have never heard of children being carried by wolves."

The children ran outside and called their wolves. They were never out of earshot and arrived almost at once. Each wolf went up to its companion. The wolves remained motionless and simply stared at the girls.

Morag watched and was expecting some sort of verbal communication. The girls, however, said nothing. They merely looked into their creature's eyes and after a couple of seconds both wolves lay down in front of them. The girls stepped across their backs, and the wolves stood up.

"How did you do that? What did you say? How did you speak to them?" The questions left Morag's lips in a rush; she had never seen anything like it and was dumbstruck.

"Easy Nana, you just ask."

"How did you ask Sarah? I didn't see your lips move."

"They looked into our minds and asked us what we wanted them to do."

"I see." Morag shook her head, trying to clear her thoughts, and then added, "Is that the same for you, Ursula?"

"Yes, Sarah could do it first. She talks to most of the animals and showed me how to do it. I can't do it with all the animals, just Shadow."

This was further news Morag was unaware of. "You can talk to other animals, Sarah."

"Not talk, Nana. But I know what they're thinking, and they seem to know what I think."

"How long has this been going on? No, let me guess. Since you started speaking to your mother two moon cycles ago?"

"Yes, Nana."

Morag again felt the hair on the back of her neck rise and her stomach twisted with excitement. *They can talk to animals without speaking. No one does that these days, I have heard that the Avalonia Grand Masters used to do it, but it is a skill lost in time - and their control over the wolves is unbelievable.*

"Will they walk with you on their back?"

"Yes of course Nana. Watch."

Both wolves then began to walk around in a circle.

Morag shook her head in amazement. *Unbelievable, totally unbelievable.!*

"They will run too. Watch."

"No! Ursula, be careful."

Instantly both wolves began to trot.

"Nana, they can go really fast."

"No, stop!" Morag yelled, but it was too late – the wolves had gone.

Unperturbed by the danger, both girls began laughing hysterically.

"Stop, stop, come back. Come back this instant!"

Morag felt her heart race as the wolves picked up speed and she rested on her staff for support. Finally, the wolves slowed to a trot, then walked back. Morag outwardly held her excitement in check – and managed to keep calm and not let the girls see how frightened she had become.

"That was very interesting, girls. Walking will be acceptable, but no trotting or running unless you are in danger."

A new voice wormed its way to consciousness deep within Morag's mind. **It's good to see my girls so happy.**

Who is this?

You may address me as Mia, or to give me my correct title, Princess Mia.

Oh, finally. What took you?

What took me where?

Why has it taken so long for you to introduce yourself? You have been in contact with our daughters for months now.

Our daughters? Mia fell silent for a while before continuing. **Yes, I suppose they are 'our daughters' now.*

*Forgive me, I have been close by, but you know how it is, so many old friends to see, let alone lovers to reminisce with.**

Well I could do with a little help now and again. Did you know they could ride on the backs of wolves?

Of course, we all did when we were young. The wolves are their protectors and will never leave them, there line as always done so.

None of my ancestors have even heard of anyone riding on wolves.

Morag, I think you are beginning to understand that my daughters are special. They will, with your guidance become the most powerful female 'Prime' ever.

And you have entrusted them to me. A woman that lives alone in the forest with no friends outside the sisterhood.

I am a seer, all my line have had this gift. I see everything and you, and you alone will guide them to their destiny. You have already made the first step on their journey when you introduce them to the sisterhood.

And will they welcome them?

Yes, of course. The next step on their journey will take place at the meeting; that is why you must allow them to arrive on the back of their guardians.

But Mother said we should be discreet and blend in.

Mia's voice was incredulous. **You are in contact with the Earth Mother?**

Well not the real Earth Mother, the representative at Avebury.

What does she know, she knows nothing. No you must go as me, make a grand entrance and enjoy yourself.

Go as you?

Yes, it's a festival, get drunk, take a lover or two, I can see you have been celibate for many a year.

Morag hung her head and shook it slowly from side to side. **I used to join in, in my youth, but as I grew older and my looks faded I only did the 'dance of the free spirits.'**

What is this free spirits, we do not have this dance in my country?

Oh, they keep it until last. It is for people that do not have a companion, or those who have not found a lover that pleases them. It's a free for all, everyone was always so high by then that no one cared about my looks.

I see, that must have been painful for you. I've never had that problem. Do you remember the Earls men that arrived at your cottage.

Yes.

They were in awe of you then. Think of it, a dozen, maybe more wanting to honor you.

A dozen!* she gasped. *I've never had more than two at one festival.

I'm not saying you have to sleep with a dozen, silly. I'm just saying, take your pick.

Morag fell silent and Mia left her to her thoughts, she then nodded her head thoughtfully.

I'm not saying I will, but I will think on it.

And you must arrange their hand fast.

What! Hand fast them, but they are only five.

Yes, it is necessary, I will show you the correct family.

They are too young,

I have seen the outcome; this is the reason for my journey. Trust me, it's their destiny.

Holy Mother I going to have trouble with you.

Mia didn't reply verbally, but the Witches cackle cut Morag to the core.

Morag turned and called to the girls. "Your mother says it's ok, you can travel to the ceremony on the back of the wolves," she then mumbled to herself. "I'm not sure if I can control this one, and all this talk of ceremonial sex. What have I let myself in for?"

4. LONG ISLAND NEW YORK 1974 AD

Peter's father was a widower, his wife had died just after their golden wedding anniversary. He lived in a gated house on Long Island, New York, with just one housekeeper and a dog. He liked his privacy but was always happy to see his family.

Over the evening meal, Joan skillfully guided the conversation to the dreams that they were all having. His father did not comment at first, but as he listened to their comments his mind drifted back to his youth, and to a conversation he had had with his wife.

He eventually placed his knife and fork down on his plate and cleared his throat to indicate that he was about to speak. "You say Paul has these dreams as well?"

Peter nodded to confirm it.

"I see. This takes me back a bit. Your mother used to say that dreams like the ones you have just described are windows to the past. She came to terms with them - God rest her soul - and insisted they were simply the memories of her ancestors."

Joan looked at Peter and she could see the relief on his face. "That makes sense, Peter, and it certainly makes more sense than ghosts talking to us all the time."

Peter's father cocked his head studying his son. "You hear voices as well?"

Again, Peter and Joan exchanged awkward glances before nodding in unison.

"Joan has been troubled by them for year's dad, but I have only just started hearing them."

"Do you mean lots of people talking simultaneously?"

"Yes, dad," Peter said excitedly. "That's exactly what I mean. Why, have you had the same problem?"

Peter's father inhaled deeply before continuing. "Yes, when I was very young - that is. However, your mother was troubled by them all her life, but we kept it quiet. We did not want people to think she was going nuts. She said she could have full-blown conversations with them - it was like they were different people. I stopped hearing the voices when I was very young."

"Ok, dad, which would explain me and you having these dreams, but what about mom. Were the dreams you and mom had the same? Or were they different?"

"It's hard to remember now son, as I said the voices got less and less as I got older, but I can't remember the dreams. Your mom found comfort in them. I remember getting very worried about her at one point. She used to ignore them when I was around, but I often heard her chatting away like there was someone in the room, especially when she thought she was alone."

Peter again glanced over at Joan, who appeared to be lost in thought. "It looks like it is just some hereditary trait on my side of the family at least, so we are getting somewhere."

"Dad, can you remember any names or places from those dreams - or what the voices said; anything that springs to mind?"

He shook his head. "Tell me the names you have - and let's see if any of them jog my memory." Peter reeled off a list of names, and nothing jumped out at him, so Peter again changed tack.

"What about places? Have you heard of Glastonbury, Avalon, or Earlswood?"

His father laughed wholeheartedly and thumped the table with the flat of his hands. "Of course I have, I was born at Earlswood Manor, Glastonbury in the Vale of Avalon."

Joan interrupted. "You were born there? Then it is a real place - it really exists. Peter, the spiritualist said Paul would be drawn back to England, to the place of his ancestors. She said a woman would be calling him to come home when the time was right. Maybe she is already calling him. Maybe she is calling all of us."

Peter's father couldn't hide the surprise on his face. "You have been told a woman would be calling him back to England. That is an unusual thing to say."

His eyes turned to Paul and he addressed him in person. "It reminds me of something your mother said to me when we were very young. She said she had been calling me and that is why I was drawn

to her. She said her mother had taught her how to do it before she died. As you know she was only ten when it happened - and I have never heard of anyone else using the term 'calling' other than by telephone, how strange."

*

The meeting with Peter's father was informative, but it raised even more questions. Joan could understand Peter, and even Paul inheriting memories about Earlswood manor, but how could she be having the same dreams? Her family as far as she knew had never lived there. Joan wanted answers. It may have comforted Peter knowing his mom and dad both heard voices, but it still troubled her.

The following day Joan was chasing her breakfast cereal around her plate absentmindedly with her spoon deep in thought. *So, I am not mad. I might be possessed, but not mad. How do I feel about that? Well, surprisingly not as bad as I think I would have done last week, so much has happened in such a short space of time. Peter took the spiritualist thing well. I think he realizes he has wasted a lot of money on shrinks, which serves him right. Thank God, at last, I have proof I am not mad.*

"Maybe we should go to this Earlswood Manor and spend some time in Glastonbury? We could do with a break - we never seem to stop working these days."

Peter raised his eyes above the newspaper which he insisted on reading over breakfast and shook his head. "I don't think we can get away just yet. We have the golf course in Dallas halfway through construction - and I must finalize the plans for the one in Florida. Maybe next year. Why don't you just give them a ring?"

Joan continued to chase the cereal around her plate and snorted. "Give them a ring and say what exactly. Can you help me, please? Why am I dreaming about your house and town? Get real."

Peter continued speaking, but he now did it through the newspaper. "Ask them to send some brochures. Dad said it was a hotel now, so I am sure they would do that."

Joan Masters cupped her cup of coffee in her hands and looked thoughtfully into the swirling liquid. *I might just do that.*

*

Jed Stevens was manning the reception desk at Earlswood manor when the phone rang and a lady with a strong American accent asked for a brief history about the manor and the estate. She seemed pleasant and commented on his strong Welsh accent.

The conversation was cordial and Jed gave her a quick rundown of the manor's history with plenty of facts and legends about the place. Thinking she was enquiring for an upcoming visit, he offered to send some brochures and the booking forms.

"May I have your name and address please?"

"Joan, Joan Masters... May I just ask? "Does Saul, Mia, or Morag still live there - or any of their relatives?"

Jed fell silent, he did not answer immediately. Eventually she raised her voice breaking the silence. "Are you still there!?"

"Err, I was just thinking..." He said nervously. "Do you know their surnames by any chance?"

"No, sorry."

"Why did you ask?"

"Oh, it's just something that came up in conversation at my father-in-law's house over our Sunday meal. He was born there you see, his family owned the house in the early 1900s."

Jed's mind whirled.

Why, why would they talk about someone that had been dead for four hundred years? And think they might still be alive?

"I can ask around Mrs. Masters." *This could be a trap. How do I answer this without compromising myself?* "I was thinking does the word 'Prime' mean anything to you Mrs. Masters?"

"Yes, I think my father-in-law mentioned someone with the surname 'Prime.'"

So, she thinks 'Prime' is a surname, I think I am safe here. "I can ask around, there are a couple of staff members that have worked here for years - they will know. So, your father-in-law was born here. If you don't mind me asking, what prompted the conversation about the 'Prime' family?"

"You will laugh, I keep dreaming about them, and my father-in-law said it was someone from the manor. He is going a bit senile now, but he is sure he remembered them from his youth."

Now it is beginning to make sense. Could it be, could it really be?"

"I see Mrs. Masters. Well, I will ask around, and if there are any relatives still living - I will put the contact details in the brochure. May I have your address?"

When Jed put the phone down, he sat pensively as he considered his next move. He needed to meet with her quickly before it was too late.

He picked up the phone, and his hands were visibly shaking. He dialed a number from memory. "Earth Mother, I think I have found a sleeper - I must go to New York at once."

*

The very next day Jed was given a two-week holiday and flew out to New York. He made his way to Joan's house and casually rang the doorbell.

As he waited for someone to answer - he took in the surroundings. He was unused to city life and danger seemed to be around every corner. His heart was filled with mixed emotions and he prayed that he was not walking into a Primevil trap.

Joan opened the door - and Jed was pleasantly surprised when he saw her eyes were bright green, and she smiled openly.

"Can I help you?" she said as she bent down to pick a newspaper off the floor.

Jed laughed nervously. "We spoke on the phone a couple of days ago. You asked for some brochures on Earlswood Manor, and I thought - being as I was passing - I would drop them off in person."

Joan stood there, open-mouthed, unable to speak.

Jed prompted. "You asked about certain people, you remember, Morag, Saul and Mia. I have information about them. It is a little sensitive, and I felt I should not talk to you over the phone."

Joan's mouth was still open. Finally, she realized and closed it. "Jed, is it?"

"Yes, Joan, do you think we could go somewhere where we could talk?"

Joan stepped to one side to let him pass. "Yes, of course. Please come in - my husband will be home soon."

Jed followed her into her kitchen, where she began to fill the kettle. "Well, Jed, this is a surprise. Would you like a coffee?"

"Not really; Any chance of a cup of tea?"

"Sorry, Jed."

He waved his hands dismissively. "Maybe a glass of water." She smiled openly and it lit up her whole face, and his heart skipped a beat. *She's 'Prime' and she doesn't know, I am sure she is.*

"Well, Jed, this is a surprise," she turned and rested her back on the sink studying his features. He was six feet tall, strong looking with deep blue eyes. She found him pleasantly attractive, even though he was a few years older than her.

"What an amazing coincidence - you coming to New York and drop off the brochures just days after we spoke?"

He smiled, to ease the situation. "No, it wasn't a coincidence, the brochures were just a front to come and see you. Once I spoke to you on the phone, I realized that we needed to meet up."

Joan's hand reached into the sink behind her and grabbed a knife, she held it out of sight behind her back; the solid feel reassured her and the smile left her face. "My husband will be back shortly. I think you should leave."

"Oh good, I think he should hear what I am about to say before I go."

Joan continued to study him, she was wary but he didn't seem to be threatening in the slightest, and she wondered if she was missing something.

"Jed." She said nervously. "People do not travel halfway around the world without a very good reason. What is this all about?"

Jed looked around. "Do you mind if we sit down? This is going to take a while." Joan did not speak, but she indicated which chair he should sit on by nodding her head.

Jed sat down and quipped. "You can bring the kitchen knife if it makes you feel more comfortable until your husband gets back."

Joan watched him suspiciously and sat opposite him, and Jed noticed that she had taken the knife with her.

Jed sighed. "Sorry if I have frightened you, Mrs. Masters. It was not my intention. Do you want to talk now, or shall we wait for your husband to return?"

“Jed, would you please tell me what this is all about?”

Jed clapped his hands and rubbed them together. “Right, ok. Could we start with you telling me what you know about Morag, Saul and Mia, and please don’t say they were your father-in-law’s friends?”

She was about to say just that and found her mouth wide open once again.

When she did not speak, Jed continued. “You had a dream about them. Is that correct?” Joan nodded. You have had many dreams you cannot understand - am I correct?” Again, she nodded.

“What about voices? Do you hear voices?”

Again, she gave an affirmative nod and put the knife down on the table.

Finally, she found her voice.

“Yes, I hear voices. Are you a spiritualist?”

Jed pursed his lips and shook his head. “No, Joan, but I know why you hear voices and why you are having these dreams. That is why I have come all this way. You need help, and, I’m sorry to say you are in grave danger.” His eye’s bored into hers, measuring her. “Have you told anyone about Morag, Mia and Saul? It’s very important.”

Joan took a deep breath and looked suspiciously into his eyes. “Only my husband and father-in-law.”

“Thank God for that, just family. If I say the word Primevil does that mean anything to you?”

A frown crossed Joan’s face. “Is that a real word? I have heard of Primeval, not ‘Primevil,’

Jed continued to study her face intensely. “Do any of your dreams contain images of people in red robes mutilating or abusing people?

The color drained from Joan’s face.

“Yes, and they are always nightmares. I have felt troubled by them for years, and when I have one of them I can’t sleep - I haven’t even told my husband about them.”

Jed chewed his lip thoughtfully. “Ok, first the bad news, the people in the red robes are real people - no, not people, less than people, less than animals. They are called the ‘Primevil,’ The images you see in your dreams were real events - and believe me it is just the tip of the iceberg, they have happened in the past. One of your ancestors witnessed the event, and you have inherited the memory from your ancestor. It’s a memory - not a dream.”

Joan’s eyes were fixed on Jed’s, taking in his every word, and she found herself holding her breath impatiently. “Then why am I in danger if they are simply inherited memories?”

She watched as Jed took time to continue.

“Right Joan, if, as you said you have kept it in the family and told no one, then you are safe. These ‘Primevil’ are very powerful; they control several governments and even some countries. They have eyes and ears everywhere, and they are our mortal enemies. If they know who you are and what you are, you would be just one more victim in one of your red dreams. So, tell no one - you must keep this to yourself.”

She glanced cagily at him. “Then I think it’s time you told me what I am.”

Jed clapped his hands hard excitedly and rubbed them together, and Joan nearly jumped out of her skin.

“Now for the good news; I am one of the good guys, and you, Joan Masters, are a ‘Prime’ stray.”

*

Jed stayed at Joan’s house for the next seven days. He explained who and what she was, and taught her how to meditate to reach her inner self. He advised her on how to communicate with the ancestors embedded within her. He explained the different dreams she had had - and what they meant. He discussed the red dreams and explained why it was necessary to remember them. He implored her to fixate on the white dreams and be guided by what they represented.

The emphasis was always on secrecy, if the ‘Primevil’ did not know Joan and her family existed, they were safe.

She promised to bring Paul to Earlswood as the spiritualist had foretold, but not until he had finished his studies when he would be twenty-five. She drove him to the airport, thanked him, and said jokingly she would see him in twenty years. When Joan began to dream that night, she felt relieved that it was a white dream and snuggled into the bedclothes with renewed interest.

5. THE WOLVES, 1604 AD

Morag rose early the following day. She had found sleep hard to come by. The events of the previous day had troubled her greatly. The girls' power over their wolves was disturbing, and it was simply unheard of to communicate with land animals without speaking. During the night, she searched memories that went back to the Stone Age and beyond and found that only a select few Avalonia Grandmasters ever had this ability.

The sun was rising over the tree canopy surrounding the cottage and the mist from the lake was ascending to the heavens once again. The sky was filled with rooks and other corvid flying in great flocks celebrating the joy of life. The air was filled with birdsong; it was going to be a beautiful day.

She addressed Wolf verbally. "Today, I am going to take the girls out deep into the forest. We need to broaden their horizons and I want to witness their interaction with other animals, especially Sarah. I am sure Ursula is exaggerating, but I need to be sure. I also want to see if it will be possible for them to travel on the backs of your daughters."

She cupped Wolf's head in her hands and stared into its eyes as the girls had done in an attempt to communicate telepathically.

How much do you understand, Wolf? Can you read my mind as well? Just sit down if you can. She waited, but the creature looked blindly into her eyes.

She called the girls to her. "Girls, we are going on a trip today. We will take my horse Jasper and the baskets and trowels. I want to show you some important plants. Plants we need for food, plants we need for healing, and plants we need to avoid. I want you to get your wolves ready and let us see if they will carry you on a journey. Oh, and for a special treat today, I will be traveling as your mother."

"Yes, yes," cried Ursula excitedly. "We haven't seen mother for ages."

"Now remember, always call me Mother when I take her form. You must get used to it, ordinary people wouldn't understand."

"We know Nana,"

"Very good, now call your wolves." The girls called out to them, and they came at once. Morag in the meantime took the form of the Princess and dressed as commoner.

"Mother, you look scruffy?"

"Yes Sarah, we will be getting our hands dirty and dressed like this, people will not give me a second glance. Now get on your wolves."

The girls cupped the wolves' heads, looked into their eyes, and both animals lay down. The girls stepped over the backs of their respective wolves, and both creatures stood and waited. Morag watched her daughters, studying their technique and shook her head wordlessly. *Amazing.*

"Sarah, you lead, and Ursula you follow your sister. If you get frightened, call out."

The animals moved off without the girls saying anything verbally, and the Princess followed with her wolf guarding the rear.

It was a strange sight, two young girls at ease on the back of giant wolves who appeared to be as gentle as horses strolling through the forest.

An hour had passed when Ghost, the lead wolf, stopped and turned her head and looked at Shadow. Suddenly, both wolves began to growl. The Princess called out to the girls.

"Why have you stopped?"

Sarah answered her mother nervously, "There are people up ahead. Ghost thinks they are some of the builders who are working on the big house."

Ursula added, "Shadow says they already know we're here."

"Does she indeed? If they know we're here, be prepared for some unusual reactions. I will lead; you girls follow when I give you a signal."

As the Princess moved into the clearing the men stopped working and removed their headgear. "Your highness, we didn't recognize you - this is an unexpected honor."

Princess stood aloof on her horse with her back straight; looked down menacingly at them and snapped. "What are you men doing here?"

The lead man fumbled with his hat nervously. "W, we have been tasked with marking trees suitable for timber. It's for your new house, my lady." The man looked around and seeing she was alone said. "Is it safe for you to be so deep in the forest without an escort, my Lady?"

She continued to look down on them as if they were insignificant insects and each man withered in her glare. She snapped her fingers, and both girls moved into view sitting astride their wolves. The startled men gasped. It was a sight that no one had seen in this country before.

"As you can see, the Princesses and I have personal protectors - the wolves will keep us safe. Lord Llewellyn has approved, but thank you for your concern. Another matter." She paused and looked at each man in turn. "I was under the impression that my husband had informed you I am to be addressed as Princess."

"B - beg your p - pardon, P - Princess - err, sorry."

"Don't let it happen again," she snapped and left, closely followed by her daughters.

Morag made a mental note. *That was interesting! Both girls seem to communicate with their wolves, and they make formidable guards. Their keen eyes, sense of smell, and instinct for danger will be beneficial. It's no wonder the Princesses' families used them for protection, though it's a pity those workmen saw them riding on the wolves.*

Morag called the Princess from deep within her head.

Well done, Mia, I resurrect you for one morning - just one morning, and you do this, you were supposed to be keeping a low profile.

The group continued for a couple of miles until the Princess called the girls to a halt. "We will make our way to the stream where it joins the lake down at the bottom of the valley." Upon arrival, the Princess dismounted and spoke words of comfort in his ear. "Girls, if you can dismount from your wolves, we will start your lessons." First, Ghost then Shadow simply sat down and the girls slid down their backs into a standing position.

Mia smiled. "Well, girls, you made that look easy."

"It was easy, Nana. Our Mother said that was the way she used to do it."

"Remember girls now I am in the form of the Princess - you must call me mother - not Nana. Right girls, let us get to work. Collect your basket and trowels and follow me to the stream's edge. There are plants growing here, important plants - plants we use for food - and plants we use for medicine. This one is called Yarrow."

One by one, Morag pointed out the merits of various plants and how to recognize them by the shape of their leaves. She informed them what time of the year the plant flowered and how much of the plant they could remove without killing it. Where in the forest to find them and what time of year to harvest them - what their uses were - which were poisonous - and which plants they should avoid.

The Princess noticed Sarah had a confused look on her face. "Is there something troubling you, Sarah?"

"Yes mother, I have no memory of any of the plants that you are showing us."

This surprised Morag as the girls had always taken new information in their stride. "What about you, Ursula?"

"I don't know them either. The land mother came from was nothing like this. We did not have big forests with streams running through them. The land was mainly sand, and the plants were all... different."

Morag's spirit interrupted the Princess. "No trees, just sand?"

"There were some trees, Ursula said defensively, but they were all... different. Sometimes it was just sand as far as you could see and not a tree in sight. There were no streams or lakes, just small, isolated pools surrounded by trees."

Sarah added. "Mother called them oases."

Morag commented thoughtfully. "That must be an extraordinary land?"

"Just different and hot, so hot the sand burned your feet, and you always had to wear sandals."

“So, girls, these plants are all new to you both. In that case, I will concentrate on instructing you and your mother on the different flora and their uses. You may find this harder because you’re not simply reviving old memories.”

Sarah turned to her mother. “The wolves are hungry. Is it all right if they go and find some food?”

Mia’s gaze moved over to the wolves lying in a group on the ground. “Is that what they are asking, to go hunting?”

“Yes, Mother.”

“In that case, Sarah, tell Ghost and Shadow they can go together. Tell Wolf she is to stay with us to keep us safe. Your wolves must bring food back for their mother. Can you do that?”

“Yes, Nana.”

The young wolves trotted off into the undergrowth without a word being spoken; Wolf settled down by the girls, and Morag made a mental note that Sarah had complete control of the creatures.

“Girls, I think it’s time for us to eat as well.” She unpacked the food and spread the blanket on the ground by the stream. As she sat with her wards listening to them laugh and giggle. Morag, even in the guise of the Princess, thought she was as happy as she had ever been in this lifetime. She let her mind wander, wondering what the future held for the girls and what the Sisterhood would do with them.

A couple of hours later, a rustling noise from the undergrowth heralded the return of the wolves. The faintest of smiles creased Mia’s lips as Morag noted that they had indeed brought a large rabbit which they presented to their mother.

Later they walked along the edge of the stream as the Princess continued to instruct the girls about the different flora using Morag’s memories, patiently explaining their various uses. They were having difficulty remembering, so Morag persisted with this instruction time and again.

*

The seasons moved forward, and it was time to introduce the girls to the Avebury Sisterhood and, hopefully, participate in their midsummer festivals. Morag was particularly excited this year. The influence of Princess Mia was getting stronger daily - and she began to fantasize that she should participate in the form of the Princess. Her mind drifted back to the first time she took her form - and the reaction of the soldiers that came looking for Lord Llewellyn. She absentmindedly nodded her head. *Yes, they adored me.*

Mia agreed. **Of course, they adored you - all men will - believe me - I know - even some women if it takes your fancy. Come on Morag - we can have fun. When did you last have fun? One last dance for old times' sake.**

Mia, you know what the Earth Mother said. We are to keep a low profile.

Boring, boring.

Morag’s will was weakening. She felt butterflies in her stomach and squeezed her crotch tight in anticipation. It had been several years since she participated. She remembered the embarrassment of being the last clothed dancer, and the loneliness that etched itself deep into her soul - as her eyes drifted around the circle when the others began to honor the Mother.

She could remember looking at her reflection in a polished bronze mirror when she returned to her tent. Her looks had faded; she was growing old, again. The feeling of loneliness and despair had engulfed her. There would be no more dances in this life. But if she took the Princesses’ form, she would be treated as an exotic guest. The thought appealed to her but was it her thought - or was the will of the Princess taking over?

*

The day of the journey finally came. The Princess decided she would be traveling on her favorite horse, ‘Wind,’ a pure white mare. She had packed her traveling bags which Jasper the packhorse carried. She also brought several small pottery jars that held the essence of different people, among them the Princess. Mia took a supply of dried meat, fruit, bread, and various medical supplies. She also packed several of the Princesses’ dresses, exotic costumes suitable for ceremonies, and a couple of traveling tents. The girls couldn’t contain their excitement as this was their first big journey.

Morag had informed the villagers that she would be traveling with Lord Llewellyn and surgery would be closed for a while. The construction workers at the nearly completed Earlswood Manor had a visit from Lord Llewellyn, and he told them he would be traveling south for an important meeting and would be away for at least one month.

At the crack of dawn, the party set off and managed to travel between fifteen and twenty miles each day. Mia kept the pace leisurely with frequent stops for the horses to rest and the wolves to hunt. As they traveled, the Princess continued to instruct them on the different flora using Morag's memories, and at times they stopped to collect fresh vegetables, root crops, early cherries and wild strawberries.

On the fourth day, they came to a large river. Morag had made this journey many times. She knew the river had a bridge crossing nearby but was unsure if it was up or downstream. She called the girls to her and informed them that she needed to call one of the birds to carry her spirit - because she would be able to find the bridge quickly from the sky.

The Princess started to meditate to call the bird to her, but Sarah interrupted. "Nana."

"Can you not see I'm meditating," she said irritably, "and don't call me Nana, I'm mother, remember? What do you want?"

"Why don't you just ask the bird which way to go?"

"You know I can't talk to creatures like you can, Sarah. "How would you ask a bird which way the crossing is?"

"Is it a ford or a bridge?"

"A bridge."

Sarah skipped away towards the river and called back, "There are wading birds down by the water. I will see what they think."

After ten minutes, Sarah returned. "We need to carry on downstream. They all thought the same, Mother."

"Well done, Sarah. Let's see if they are correct." *This could be interesting. Let's see if she is right.* Morag turned to Ursula. "Are you managing to communicate with any other creature besides Shadow yet, Ursula?"

She let her eyes fall to the ground. "Only Shadow, sorry Mother."

The Princess hugged her close. "Don't be sorry, Ursula. You will have many gifts you are not aware of yet."

The party followed the river downstream and saw the bridge in the distance. Morag called the Princess from the deep recesses of her mind. **Remember, do not draw attention to the girls.**

The girls dismounted from their wolves when they saw the bridge in the distance and crossed on foot. Even so, an exotic-looking lady on such a tall slim horse, followed by three giant wolves and two children, caused them all to stare.

The countryside began to flatten and traveling became a lot easier. The Princess, however, had decided that they should travel well back from the road but parallel to it, she was still concerned that people might see them traveling down from the north.

The wolves had alerted them to people traveling along the road on several occasions. On one occasion, they made a detour to avoid a site where people were sleeping. It turned out that the wolves' sense of smell was a significant advantage. Wood fires they could smell many miles away, and Morag was thankful they traveled with the wolves on many occasions.

Morag felt the need to call Mia once again. **Mia, there is a smell that is troubling both the wolves and me. Be very careful. Hide the girls and investigate.**

She led the girls off the main path and deep into the undergrowth, where she prepared food for the girls and left them with their guardians.

Wolf led the way toward the smell. She traveled on foot, leaving 'Wind' tethered by the girls. She knew what she would find well before she reached the fire. The scene that she beheld both sickened and appalled her. The burnt houses were still smoldering, and corpses were scattered on the ground. They had all been slaughtered, men, women, children, even animals. Not only slaughtered but mutilated beyond belief.

Morag knelt and held the hand of a dead child. Her mind exploded with images. She could see men on horses encircling the village, their faces hidden by grotesque masks. Then the intruders corralled them all, men, women and children.

Morag gasped at the atrocities she had seen. She could feel the terror and confusion of her last moments and prayed to the creator of all to guide her spirit back to her - and began to weep openly. Finally, she got to her feet and spoke verbally to her wolf. "They are near wolf, God help us." She sighed despairingly, and then headed back to the girls.

There was nothing she could do except bear witness. She committed the scene to memory, a memory she would pass on when she died.

Realizing they were only a day's ride from Avebury, she took them down a route to the west, well past the site. When they had done this, they veered to the east until they were south of the meeting place, and after finding the road to Avebury, they traveled along it in a northerly direction. They greeted as many people as possible, always stopping to talk and asking for directions. The excitement was now palpable within the group.

"Your mother thinks you should ride on the wolves." Although she was in the form of the Princess, it was Morag's voice that emanated from her. "She wishes you to make a grand entrance. I feel your mother's influence growing in me. The longer I'm in her form, the stronger the influence becomes. She was a very important person in her own country, and now that I have taken her form for so long, I seem to be influenced by her more and more. I feel she wants you to be the same in this country. 'Mother' won't like it, but it seems I have no choice. Climb on to your wolves. Now remember what I taught you, we do not communicate with animals by thought do we? How do we do it?"

The girls replied, "We must say the commands out loud."

"What did we say about the memories?"

"We haven't recovered them yet."

"Good. The only person who knows anything about your gifts is the Earth Mother's representative. And don't forget you must call me mother from now on.

A mile further down the road, Ursula's wolf slowed. "Ursula, what's the problem, why are you hanging back?"

"It's Shadow, she is very nervous; she senses lots of people and animals."

Sarah added, "Ghost as well. She thinks we should not go any further."

Morag sat lost in thought for a while. *I should have foreseen this. The young wolves have only ever been in contact with a handful of people at one time.*

The party halted in the middle of the road. "Girls, I want you to reassure your wolves. Try telling them that this is an extension of their pack. Tell them that this pack offers no threat, and that they are not to harm anyone unless you are physically attacked."

"Yes, we have done that but I think their mother should lead. She has met many people and is comfortable around them."

"Good idea, Ursula. Wolf, you lead, and I'll follow. You girls follow behind me so your wolves can see how their mother reacts. We must expect quite a reaction from people at the gathering. To arrive on the backs of your wolves is your mother's idea. I think we should walk without drawing attention to ourselves. But no, she wants a grand entrance, quite a woman your mother."

As the Princess was speaking, several horses approached from behind at speed. They were going in the direction of the gathering. Thinking the children were on ponies, they drew close to them. Ghost, the rear wolf, turned her head to see who was approaching, and the horses realizing they were wolves panicked and ran off the road. The startled riders got their horses under control and positioned themselves about forty feet away.

The Princess could feel the rider's edgy fear. She could feel their reluctance to greet them and decided to ease the tension. "Greetings gentlemen!" she called out at the top of her voice. "I greet you in the name of the Earth Mother." Her voice once again emphasized her foreign accent. "Tell me; does this road lead to summer gathering at Avebury?"

She could still feel the sense of agitation and alarm emanating from the travelers, who just stared in amazement. Wolf moved between the travelers and the Princess, her body in contact with her leg and the horse, a low guttural growl rumbling deep within her throat. The travelers backed their horses further away.

"I am Princess Mia. We have traveled far and crossed the sea to be with you. The Earth Mother expects us, and we are honored guests."

One of the travelers shouted, "Are you taking the wolves to the festival?"

"The wolves are perfectly safe and under control, and yes, we are taking them to the festival. Are we on the correct road?"

"Yes, your highness."

"Would you be so kind as to warn people about our mode of transport? We do seem to be alarming everyone we meet."

"I can understand that my Lady. I've never seen wolves that big, and I've never seen wolves that let children ride on their backs."

"In my country, all royal children have a guardian assigned to them from birth. They are their transport and their protectors. They will not harm anyone as long as no one harms my daughters. As you see, my protector is so gentle." The Princess tickled the wolf behind its ear and the threatening growl subsided.

"So, gentlemen, warn travelers we pose no threat."

"Yes, your highness." With that, they continued their journey at speed. The Princess and her daughters watched the men disappear into the distance; while overhead a buzzard circled, its mewing cry piercing the air. The Princess watched it as it spiraled higher and higher. Was her cry a warning? She meditated momentarily, searching for their immediate future. Her ancestors were quiet; the signs good.

"Well, girls, I know I shouldn't be allowing this, we should have traveled on foot, and it seems your mother will now get the reception she wants. I have tried to change back to my form many times on this journey, but the Princess is fighting me."

Yes, Princess, you are very willful, and I say again we should not be drawing so much attention to our daughters, please, please, please give me back control of my body.

The Princess ignored the comments of Morag, who realized she was now beginning to lose control as Mia urged the horse forward.

"Girls do not be afraid - these people are our kin. They will welcome us, but they will also be wary. I am speaking as your birth mother now. Complete the journey and hold head high - with back straight, be proud you are royalty, the daughters of Kings and Princesses' and remember never to show fear. Our ancestors will show you how to behave and what responses to give, consult them now."

The party continued along the road. As they got closer, they could see many people looking from the tops of trees and high ridges. More and more people gathered as the news spread quickly.

They approached Avebury in what today is called the 'West Kennet Avenue.' The avenue comprises one hundred pairs of standing stones that run parallel to one another for one and a half miles; it forms a ceremonial pathway leading directly to the Sanctuary of the large outer circle.

Sarah called out, "Mother, What is that noise?"

Mia stopped the horse, turned and listened. The faintest of smiles creased her lips. "You can hear them?"

"I can hear something... What is it?"

Mia turned to Ursula. "Can you hear anything?"

"Yes, mother."

"What can you hear?"

"Whispering. I think there are people hiding behind the stones."

Mia nodded her head thoughtfully. "What sound do you hear, Sarah?"

"Singing, Ursula's right, it's coming from behind the stones."

Mia turned the horse and led her daughters around the stones in a complete circle. There was no one there.

"I don't understand, Mother. Where is the noise coming from?"

"Touch the stones, both of you." The girls did as she instructed and placed their hands flat on the cold monoliths, they both began to smile.

Ursula was the first to realize where the sound came from. "It's the stones themselves."

Mia's smile filled her face. "Well done, both of you. Very few people can hear the 'echoes in the stones.' Morag taught you about communicating with them when you were very young. These are ancient stones and their power is very strong here. This avenue has seen many things, they know we are 'Prime' and are drawing us to the sanctuary of the circles. Now let us continue."

Following their mother's lead, the young wolves began to calm. There was a sharp turn in the road ahead, and as the lead wolf turned the corner into the avenue, there were gasps of alarm from the crowd, followed by murmurs of admiration at the sight of the tall Princess on her exotic horse. The girls turned the corner next, and the crowd's gasps of astonishment escalated. People close to the roadside were fearful of the wolves and fought their way back through the crowd and hid behind the

standing stones. The Princess and the girls simply looked straight ahead, holding their heads high, ignoring the onlookers.

As they continued along the avenue the crowd parted in front of them and then closed behind. As they journeyed onward, the crowd, who numbered in the hundreds, followed close behind. Up ahead, she could see the reception committee. At the center was a large man resting on a wooden staff. He had a white beard and long white hair. On each side of him were two younger men, and at their sides, two older women also dressed in white robes. At earlier festivals, Morag had met the older man many times. The younger men she knew as Simon and Stephen. Since her last visit, they had grown into men; however, she did not recognize the two women.

6. NEW YORK 1985 AD

Joan Masters stared at the letter in front of her, and her vivid green eyes glanced across at Paul sitting sheepishly at the other end of the table. She ran her hands through her graying hair. “What does your tutor want to see me about?”

“Paul’s eye’s drifted from his mother’s’ before he sighed nonchalantly and took a bite of his apple.

“I don’t know who knows what teachers think.”

Joan’s eyes were still locked on her son, measuring him. He got up to leave the table. “Sit,” she said in a raised voice.

Paul sighed once again and slumped back down in his chair.

“I don’t know, I said.” His eyes turned back to his mother, challenging her. “I don’t know – honestly.”

“No idea, you have absolutely no idea at all?”

Paul shrugged his shoulders and mumbled. “There was a lot of interest in some of my paintings.”

Joan raised a brow cynically. “Not a painting of Jenny, whatshername?”

“Walker – no, I haven’t painted her mom, I haven’t got a clue why they want to see you. Why do you always assume I am in trouble?”

Joan looked away from her son, re-read the letter, and placed it on the table. “Paul, you are always in trouble, that’s why.” She rubbed her temples wearily. “Tell her I will call in after your last lesson tomorrow.”

A man’s voice called down from one of the rooms above.

Joan sighed. “Go and see what your grandfather wants.”

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It had been five years since she had sold her house and moved in with Peter’s father on Long Island. His health had been failing for some time, and his Son’s disappearance had shaken him badly. It had been ten years and they still hadn’t a clue what happened to him or where he was. Paul’s grandfather had taken his father’s place as a role model, but it was not the same, he lacked discipline. Joan had taken over the running of the family business, first temporarily until Peter returned, then as the years rolled by she took overall control.

The following day she found Paul seated outside his tutors’ office. “Sorry I’m late, any idea what this is about?

Paul pursed his lips and shook his head. “I am not sure, but all my paintings have been removed from the storeroom.”

Joan whispered conspiratorially. “Please tell me you haven’t got any more girls to pose naked for you?”

The door opened before Paul could answer, and a small woman with a round face smiled uneasily at her. She wore large round owl-like glasses that were in fashion at the time. Her hair looked like

Michael Jackson's did in his youth with a perm that had been way overdone. She shook Joan's hand weakly and presented her with a nervous smile.

"Thank you for coming at such short notice, please come in."

Joan positioned herself opposite the tutor and steeled herself for what was about to transpire. The look on her face gave nothing away. The tutor opened a large folder, took out several paintings, and spread them across the table.

Joan took a deep breath. "Look, if it's a nude painting of Jenny whatshername, it was her idea - she threw herself at him - you should have her here as well - she has no morals whatsoever."

The teacher looked puzzled, "Jenny, who?"

Paul interrupted angrily. "There are not any paintings of her, I told you."

The tutor continued when neither Paul nor his mother was forthcoming with the name.

"Paul is becoming an outstanding artist; I like his work."

The statement surprised Joan; she had not been expecting a compliment.

The tutor spread the paintings across her desk upside down so Joan could study them. Joan had to agree that the paintings were good. She had seen sketches he had done in his room, so she knew he had talent, especially the drawing of Jenny whatshername.

The tutor, however, never looked once at the paintings, her eyes were firmly fixed on Joan's. Joan, however, could feel her neck turning red as she studied each painting; she had seen images like these many times in her dreams.

"Yes, I agree, Paul has talent. Is that what this is about?"

The tutor appeared to be open and friendly.

"We sometimes call parents in to give them good news Mrs. Masters."

She laid out a different choice of paintings. Again, Joan studied them one at a time and began to feel uncomfortable.

"As you see, some are very explicit." Her eyes never wavered from Joan's face. Joan's eyes, however, were fixed on the paintings.

Joan cleared her throat awkwardly. "Yes, he has a very vivid imagination."

The tutor laid out a different selection. This time, the people were all dressed in red robes, and the nightmarish scene was a lot darker. People were being tortured, and maimed. The hellish pallet was in dissimilar shades of red.

Joan's blood ran cold; she had seen these same images repeatedly in her nightmares throughout restless nights when sleep would not come. She had discussed them with Jed ten years before and knew what they represented, for a moment she was lost in thought.

So, Paul is tormented by the same 'Primevil' images as me. Maybe it is time to explain to him what they are.

The tutor's eyes never wavered. "Have you any thoughts on this latest batch of pictures?"

Joan pursed her lips thoughtfully. "There are pretty dark - aren't they." She continued to study them one by one, and then placed them on one side. "Your point being?"

The tutor didn't answer the question; she simply replaced the paintings with several others.

"These are my favorites," she said, spreading out an assortment of sketches of various parts of a woman's face. One showed just the eyes, green eyes. Another was a view of her head from the rear with her black hair hanging down her back. Next, a side view centered on her ear, and lastly, a full-frontal of the whole face emphasizing her high cheekbones and full mouth. You were drawn to the woman's eyes, drawing you closer, vivid green and an imitation of Joan's.

Joan gasped and looked at her son. "She is so beautiful, Paul, is this her?"

The tutor's eyes followed Joan's and rested on Paul, who shrugged his shoulders.

Joan turned her eyes back to the painting. "I did not realize you were so talented, son."

"This brings me to the point, Mrs. Masters. Paul would have little trouble gaining entry to any art college in the country with paintings like these."

Joan turned to Paul. "Is this what you want - to go to Art College?"

Paul shook his head. "No way."

The statement took the tutor by surprise. "Oh, you seem to enjoy your painting so much, I just thought..."

"No." Paul said sharply, "I will be going to business school to help mom run the family business."

The tutor turned her attention to her notes. "I see there is not a Mr. Masters on the scene."

Before Joan could answer, Paul quipped. "That's because he is dead."

Joan countered. "He's not, he's missing." For several moments the room fell into an awkward silence before Joan continued. "My husband is missing - it's a long story." She waved her arms dismissively and turned her attention to her son.

"Paul, if you want to study art, it's ok with me."

Again, Paul simply shook his head. The tutor leaned back on her chair and turned her attention to the Paintings. "Paul, do you mind if we discuss the content of the paintings?"

His face presented a wan expression. "Sure, fire away."

"They seem to follow a particular Pattern; we seem to have four themes. We have several with a joyous scene of dancing in the woods around a fire at night. Are they supposed to be Druids or something?" Paul did not answer and stared the tutor out. "Two, we have several much darker scenes, these seem to be people wearing red clothes and mutilating people." Again, Paul said nothing. "Three, we have rather explicit sex scenes, and four, these exquisite sketches of this beautiful woman. Who is she?"

Paul's eyes turned to his mother, who nodded her head slightly. He turned his attention back to the tutor. "I dream a lot. I always have, these are some of my most vivid dreams." The tutor lifted her cup of coffee in her hands and studied the swirling liquid thoughtfully. "And the woman?"

"He gave a rueful shrug. "Her too."

The tutor turned to Joan. "You asked Paul if it was a particular woman – do you think you know her?"

Joan began to feel awkward sensing a trap. "Ok, where is this going? We have just gone from praising Paul for his good work to giving him the third degree."

Again, the room fell silent, and the tutor turned her attention to the red paintings. "Mrs. Masters, you have to agree these particular paintings are disturbing."

Joan bristled and threw her arms into the air and was almost spitting with anger. "Now we are getting to the nitty-gritty. This is why you have called me in, not some rubbish about being good enough for art school."

The tutor turned defensive. "No, no, no, well... partly."

Joan shook her head in dismay and began to get to her feet. "We're off."

"Please, Mrs. Masters, we need to talk about this now - we have to report..."

Joan's shoulders sagged. She turned and slumped back on the chair, her body language reflecting that of her son when he was about to be admonished. "Go on then."

The tutor looked uncomfortable and drew her eyes away from Joan before continuing. "The school counselor looked at the red paintings and he would like to discuss them with Paul in person."

Joan controlled her breathing and her composure. "I see, and if I do not approve?"

"It's for his own good; we need to get to the bottom of these things and nip them in the bud, before..."

Joan got to her feet, walked across to the window, and looked down into the street. She started speaking with her back to the tutor and lit a cigarette.

The tutor snapped. "I don't allow smoking in my office."

Joan inhaled deeply and exhaled creating a ring with the smoke, and Paul couldn't hide the laughter in his eyes. Joan ignored the tutor and pressed. "Have you ever heard of the term, inherited memory?"

Indignantly the tutor pressed her glasses to the bridge of her nose. "Well, err yes - when applied to animals."

Joan continued to stare out of the window, but her eyes were seeing images lost in time, and after a pause, she continued. "There are several ongoing studies to evaluate the theory that humans also have this ability. These dreams that Paul is painting are like the ones I have several nights a week. So, you see, he is not some latent hell-bent hatchet man about to run amok amongst your students." Joan flicked the cigarette out of the window then turned and sat down; her eyes still red with anger.

The tutor stroked her chin thoughtfully. "So, you are both experiencing these same dreams?"

"More or less, his grandmother did too. The dancing, the ceremonies, the light, and the dark ones – not the woman, she has tormented Paul since childhood." She turned her gaze to Paul.

"I take it that's who you were painting?"

Paul again turned his eyes to the floor and nodded.

The tutor continued to stare into her coffee. "So, let me get this straight, you both have the same dreams, as did his grandmother – and that is what Paul is painting?"

Joan quipped. "In a nutshell."

"Are they Druids or something?"

Joan waved her arms in the air dismissively. "I wish I knew, some past lives or something - who knows."

The tutor put the coffee down. "Have you considered reincarnation? It has all the hallmarks, and it certainly could be a possibility?"

Joan, who now had full control of her emotions, spoke clearly and calmly. "Who knows reincarnation - Inherited memory? What's the difference, the point being Paul is not about to chop your students up." Joan got to her feet, made her way to the door, and placed her hand on the handle.

Before she could leave, the tutor called out. "Did you know professor Gaskell is calling for volunteers to be regressed to see if there is any proof in the theory of reincarnation?"

Joan released the handle and sat down. "Here at the college?"

"Yes, he is recruiting one hundred students for the study. I am sure he would be interested in adding you and Paul. It might give you some answers."

"You mean he will hypnotize us?"

"Yes, it's all very safe, they follow the strictest guidelines."

Joan rubbed her temples thoughtfully. Her mind drifted back to the conversation she had with Jed all those years ago. *You are only safe if no one knows about you, you are dead if it becomes common knowledge of what you both are.* Her gaze drifted across to Paul. *He must know some time, but not yet.* "I don't think so."

Once again, she got up to go, but Paul interrupted.

"I'll do it."

Joan turned on him. "Over my dead body. We are leaving." She opened the door and pushed Paul out. When he left the room, she again turned to the tutor. "I mean it; I do not want a hypnotist anywhere near my son. Do you understand?" Before the tutor could reply, Joan leaned across the tutors' desk and grabbed the painting of the mysterious woman, then slammed the door in her face.

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Several days later Paul Masters openly chatted with several students in the waiting room outside Professor Gaskell's office. They were hoping to be accepted for the regression trial. He had been given a bullet list and had ticked all the boxes that applied to him.

A girl's voice called out from the crowd. He waved, and she joined him in the queue. She was an attractive girl, slim, with brown hair that fell to her shoulders. She had a full mouth, a friendly smile and high cheek bones. Her crowning feature in Paul's eyes was her vivid green eyes. Eventually, they both handed in the bullet sheet and the authorization forms from their next of kin. Who in Paul's case was, amazingly, his mother.

"I didn't know you were going to apply for this Jenny, it seems exciting, doesn't it?"

She nodded to the door opposite. "I shouldn't get your hopes up too much, several students have gone in. They are evaluating you to see if you are susceptible to hypnosis." Just as she spoke a student came out looking decidedly glum. Jenny called out to her. "How goes it, Kay?"

The girl shook her head and left the room. Jenny whispered in Paul's ear. "Four have gone in, and only one has been added to the list."

Paul looked crestfallen. "I thought it was a done deal, we just had to turn up."

"Apparently not." After a pause, she added, "I think I have a good chance." Her green eyes sparkled mischievously. "After all, I am very open to suggestions."

Paul suppressed a smile and turned to her nervously. "Mom found the sketch I did of you in my room."

The color drained from her face. "What!"

"It's ok; I told her I was using my imagination."

She stared him out. "And she believed you?"

Paul shook his head thoughtfully from side to side. "She has her doubts, but just feign ignorance if she brings it up – it always works for me."

Jenny leaned across and once again whispered. "It's a good job she can't see my butt, I still can't get those dam symbols off. What did you call them?"

“Runes.”

“Yeah, runes. What sort of ink did you use? It’s like a tattoo, my butts raw with all the scrubbing.”

Paul turned sharply to face her. “You are not supposed to rub them off - they are Pagan symbols - they draw us together - but they must be visible.”

Jenny squeezed his hand affectionately. “How do you know this stuff?”

Paul sighed wearily, “I just do, I don’t know how, I just do.” He waved his arms at the crowd gathered before them. “That’s what this is all about – I need to find answers.”

Paul was called in next, he got up and he kissed Jenny on the cheek.

“Here goes.”

Professor Gaskell was reading Pauls’ bullet sheet, and was in the process of checking the various tick boxes. He did not look in Paul’s direction. “Paul Masters, I believe?

“Yes, professor,” he said nervously as his eyes dropped to the floor.

He glanced at Paul and studied him over his spectacles. “I was rather hoping you would turn up. Your tutor mentioned you the other day. If I remember correctly, she said your mother was against letting you participate in the trial?” He studied the consent form and thought the signature looked genuine.

Paul held the professor’s gaze. “She changed her mind; she’s like that, blows hot and cold as it were.”

The professor placed his form on the pile and smiled. “I am so glad; your tutor said you have been troubled by strange dreams for some time.”

Paul simply nodded.

“Good. In that case if you could rest on the couch and make yourself comfortable, we will see if you are susceptible to hypnosis.”

Paul stretched out on the couch. The hypnotist was a man in his sixties, and the assistant was a woman in her forties. They both smiled openly to put him at ease.

The professor slipped a cassette into the tape deck. “As you can see the sessions are being recorded – we have to be transparent at all times, no one will be allowed to listen to the tapes without your guardian’s consent. Are you happy with that?” Again, Paul nodded.

Paul looked around the room, taking in the décor - or lack of, a typical professor’s room, not somewhere that was conducive to relaxation.

The hypnotist spoke softly. So softly, Paul could barely hear his voice. He had to listen intensely, as he took in every syllable. It was both melodic and rhythmic, and he felt relaxed in no time. He could feel his mind separating from his body. Eventually, he found himself in a tranquil state.

“When I count to ten, you will be fast asleep.” By the time he got to five, he was under the influence of the hypnotist.

The hypnotist turned to the professor. “He’s the best yet, he was under in no time.”

The professor looked shocked. “Are you sure...? Already?”

The hypnotist looked in the direction of the medical assistant and nodded. No words were spoken, and the nurse took a sharp needle and pricked the back of Paul’s hand. There was no response. She turned to the professor. “He’s well and truly under.”

The hypnotist turned his attention back to Paul.

“Paul, you are coming out of deep sleep. If you can hear my voice, just nod your head.”

Paul responded by doing just that. The hypnotist’s voice continued in its smooth, melodic tone.

“Do you know where you are?”

Paul looked around the room and closed his eyes once more. “I am in the professor’s study.”

The hypnotist turned his eyes to the nurse again. “Would you double-check?”

The nurse pricked the back of his hand, and again he didn’t flinch. “Definitely under.”

The hypnotist smiled approvingly. “Professor, you can put him at the top of your list. Shall I wake him up?”

The professor picked up his file and double-checked all the tick boxes.

“This is the one I am most interested in. His tutor said both he, his mother, and his grandmothers continually have rather unusual dreams, all similar in content. Do you think we could ask him a few questions?” He looked at his watch, “five minutes, maybe.”

The hypnotist turned his attention back to Paul.

“Paul, listen to my voice. We are going on a journey, don’t worry you will be perfectly safe. I want you to remember your earliest thoughts. Can you describe them for me?”

Paul’s eyes moved under his lids, he breathed in contentedly and smiled. “Joy, warmth.”

“Where are you? What can you see?”

Again, his eyes moved behind his lids. “In the water by the shore, there is light, warmth.”

The three observers exchanged puzzled glances, and the hypnotist pressed. “You are in the water. Where are your parents?”

Paul shook his head, “No, parents, I am alone, but now I am more.”

The hypnotist blinked, confused by his response. “Paul, how old are you?”

“I have no age, but at last I can renew.”

The professor tapped the hypnotist on the shoulder. “Ask him to relive his happiest event?”

“Paul, describe the happiest event you can remember?”

His face filled with joy, and he laughed openly. “My hand-fast.”

The professor grabbed the hypnotist’s shoulder. “Did he just say his, hand-fast?”

The hypnotist nodded. He turned to the assistant. Check again. I am sure he is trying to trick us.” The assistant stuck the needle in the back of his neck and left it sticking out.

“I tell you he is definitely under, not a flinch.”

The professor’s face blanched. He was visibly shaking and he began to take notes. “This is unbelievable. Ask him how old he is.”

“Paul, how old are you?”

Paul looked puzzled. “Who is Paul?”

“Sorry, what is your name, and how old are you?”

Paul’s voice had lost its American accent. “Saul, my name be Saul, and I can count fifteen summers.” The group again exchanged surprised glances. “Saul, in what year were you born?”

“In the year of our Lord fifteen ninety-eight.”

“You say your happiest time was your hand-fast. Where was your hand-fast held?”

“It be at the stone circles at Avebury Henge, of course.”

“You were hand-fast at a Henge; what country?”

“What a daft question, why it be England where else.”

The nurse turned to the others. “There is a Henge at Avebury in Wiltshire England, it’s very famous.”

The hypnotist looked at his watch. “Your five minutes are up. Do you want me to wake him up?”

The professor shook his head. “Not really, I would rather send the others home and listen to him all evening. This is what we have been searching for.” The professor sighed heavily. “I suppose you should, but act normal, don’t say anything to alarm him.

“Paul, when I count to ten, you will wake up and forget all the things you have remembered. Do you understand?” He nodded his head in agreement. On reaching ten, his eyes fluttered open.

“Well, was I under? I was under, wasn’t I?”

The professor smiled. “Welcome to the trial, Paul, you have been accepted.”

Paul’s face lit. “Yes! And you managed to hypnotize me?”

“Yes, Paul. Which evening is best for your first session?”

“Cool man, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays are good.”

The professor jotted the days on Paul’s sheet. “Ok, then shall we say Tuesday at six?”

Paul left the room, and when he closed the door, they all began to speak at once. The professor held up his hands to quieten them. “Right, is he genuine? All their eyes turned to the hypnotist.

“You saw his lack of reaction when we stuck a needle in him, he did not flinch in the slightest. You can’t shut your mind off to pain like that.”

The nurse added. “The needle in his neck was quite deep; there would have been some reaction.”

The professor stroked his beard thoughtfully. “Oh God, I hope this is genuine. He seemed to go under straight away. I couldn’t understand his response to our first question, but this hand-fast story is intriguing, and he has already given us a year and a place, this is unbelievable.” He walked to the door and leaned out, “next.”

*

The following Tuesday, Paul rested his sports bag on the chair next to him and smiled smugly to himself. He shook his head in amusement as he recalled the joy on his mother’s face when he told her

he was going to join the school gym club. She could not believe this latest fad as he had never shown any interest in sports of any kind. The gym club was run after school three days a week, and Joan did not think twice when he asked if he could attend. He glanced at the ticking clock, irritated by the sound, and silently wondered why clocks were so noisy when you were in a quiet room.

He checked his watch for the third time in as many minutes. It confirmed that they were running late. He could hear muffled voices on the other side of the door. Finally, it opened, and a girl walked out. As the girl turned into the corridor, the professor called to her. "See you at the same time next week."

Turning to Paul, he smiled. "Please come in."

Paul entered, and made his way to the same couch without being asked. The professor sat on a chair and took out his notepad. "First, tell me why you wish to be regressed."

Paul looked nervously at his two companions; they were the same people from the first session. He stuttered, "I – I hope it will explain my dreams."

The professor eyed him warily. "Ah, yes, these are the dreams you have been painting in the art class. Am I correct?" Paul nodded. He opened a large folder and took out several paintings. "I took the liberty of asking the art teacher for a few samples." His eyes drifted over them, one at a time. "You're an outstanding artist. Can I ask what this one represents?"

The painting he placed on the desk in front of him was of several female dancers dressed in sheer white dresses. The scene was set in a forest or wood, and several large stones were standing upright, they were twice as tall as the people dancing around them.

Paul shrugged. "It's one of my happy paintings. I seem to be at peace with the world when I have these dreams."

The professor lay a second painting on top of the first. "And this one? It was one of the red paintings."

Paul frowned. "I don't like these paintings, they scare me - they are my nightmares. I don't know what they represent, so I thought if I painted them and studied them, I would understand what they mean."

The professor lay a further painting down on top of the others. "And this one?"

Paul laughed, and he felt his neck redden. "Well, it's an orgy of some kind - maybe a celebration. They always seem to be openly enjoying themselves - in my dreams that is, I'm not sure what it represents."

The professor placed the last painting on the top of the pile. "And who is this?"

Paul picked it up and looked lovingly at the sketch, his eyes taking in every aspect. It was the study picture, showing just the eyes of the green-eyed woman.

Paul sighed. "I wish I knew; I am hoping you will be able to answer that question for me, I have dreamt about her for as long as I can remember."

The professor placed all the pictures on one side. "Apparently, your mother has had similar dreams?"

"Paul's eyes turned away from the professors. "Yes, and my grandmother on my father's side, but she died a long time ago."

"And your mother did not want to join the trial?"

Paul shook his head, his eyes still fixed firmly on the floor. "No, she is dead against it, hypnotism that is."

The professor sighed heavily. "That's a pity. Right Paul, I will run through things so you know how it will pan out. Firstly, there will always be three people in the room with you: Mr. Jones, the hypnotist, Ms. Evans, who is a trained nurse, and me. The sessions are being recorded, and the trial will last six weeks. You will have access to all copies of the tapes, but not until the trial has finished. Do you understand?"

Paul nodded his head in agreement once more.

"Good lad." The professors said as he folded the report and walked away. "Then we will begin, it is over to you, Mr. Jones."

The hypnotist went through the usual procedure, and within moments, Paul was in a deep hypnotic trance. He turned the tape recorder on.

"Subject. Paul Masters, Tape one, parental consent is given...." The professor studied Paul nervously. There was a standard set of questions, names, addresses, ages, etc. The hypnotist reeled

them off. Without warning, the nurse pricked the back of Paul's hand with the needle. She smiled at the professor and felt confident he was under the hypnotist's control.

Then he began.

Paul, I want you to return to your earliest memory." The professor placed a hand on the hypnotist's shoulder. "No, take him back to the hand-fast."

"Paul, I want you to go back to your hand-fast at Avebury. You were happy that day, I believe."

A smile spread across his face. "Aye, it were fine day."

The assistant whispered to the professor. "That's an English West Country accent; I have heard it on the television."

The professor made a note on his pad and the hypnotist continued.

"Why are you so happy?"

Paul laughed. "Well, she be lush maid, I be luckiest man alive."

The hypnotist's voice continued in its melodic tone. "Saul, what is the name of the woman you are to be hand-fast to?"

"Why it be Sarah, o course."

Again, the professor wrote the name down, and a smile spread across his face. He liked names, names could be traced.

"Saul, where do you live?"

His forehead creased with a frown. "Wot you wanna know that for?"

The hypnotist faltered for a second as the tables had been turned and the question was now aimed at him. "I am new to this area, Saul, I was just wondering."

He shook his head disdainfully. "Lunney, o course, I thought everybody knew thaaat."

"Is Lunney a village or a house?"

"Lunney castle, you oaf, where you be from?"

"I am from the east, a long way away."

Paul snorted. "Where's that too?" The hypnotist turned to the others. "What is he asking?"

The nurse proffered. "I think he is asking where in the east."

"Saul, I live in London."

Paul replied tartly. "Thought you be from there. Folk round here says noffin comes from London cept trouble."

"London is not all that bad, Saul have you ever been there?"

He shook his head once more. "Ark at e, no, too far away, takes yonks' to get to London. My brother has, though, his regiment be there."

The professor nudged the hypnotist. "Name. Regiment."

"Saul, What is your brother's surname and regiment?"

A frown creased his forehead once again. "You be nosy bugger. Why all the questions?"

"Just being friendly, I thought I might say hello next time I am in London."

This seemed to appease Saul. "He be Lord Peter Monkton."

The professor gasped. "Yes, a Lord, we can trace him easily. Ask him the regiment."

"Saul, what is his regiment called?"

Silence filled the room, and Paul's head moved from side to side like he was thinking.

"Guard of honor or somfin like that. Can't remember which one, though cus he's just changed regiments. You wouldna catch him in barracks anyhow, he be stayin with his uncle in Mayfair. 201, Mayfair Mews, if you want to meet him, he be there when he stays in London."

"Yes, yes, yes." The professor scribbled the address down, and his hands were visibly shaking. "Ask him his uncle's surname."

"Saul, what is your uncle's surname?"

Paul laughed. "Monkton, o course, me dad's cousin."

The professor continued to make notes, then changed tack.

"Ask him about this, 'Sarah.'"

"Saul, what is Sarah's surname, and where does she live?"

"She be a Llewellyn, from Earlswood."

"This Earlswood, is it a town or a village?"

Paul started to laugh. "Ark at e, Londoners, everyone knows Earlswood, it's a big estate, and you can see it from Glastonbury Abbey."

The professor continued to make notes. "Ask him when he first met this "Sarah."

"Saul, you, and Sarah seem very much in love. Tell me how the two of you met. The professor quickly put a new tape in the cassette and sat back.

"O, aye, we be in love alright, loved her from the first time I set eyes on her, she was in her fifth summer. It was the midsummer festival at Avebury in 1604.

There was a commotion at festival, some riders cum and told everyone three Princesses were a comin. They said the two girls were riding on the backs of giant wolves." He chuckled. "No one believed um, but we joined the crowd anyway. There were hundreds of people a waitin. We don't normally get, Princesses see, so everyone wanted to get best view. Then this woman entered the avenue on the biggest horse I ever saw, white it was. Suddenly the crowd started running away from her." He laughed openly then continued. "Then I saw why; me Sarah was sitting on the back of a giant wolf. It were as white as horse - never seen a white wolf afore. She just sat there like she were ridin horse, and wolf just let her sit on its back like it were normal. There were two of them, sisters they were, twins. That's the first time I saw me, Sarah."

The three of them looked at each other in amazement, and the professor drew his finger across his throat. The hypnotist turned his attention back to Paul.

"Saul, you are feeling tired. Go to sleep for a while and rest and I will wake you shortly."

The professor waited until Paul's breathing became even. "Can he hear us?"

The hypnotist shook his head. The professor did the same before adding. "This does not make sense, girls riding on wolves. Did they still have wolves in the early seventeenth century in the UK?" Have you ever heard of anyone riding on the back of wolves?"

The nurse quipped. "Only in films."

The nurse took the needle and stuck it in Paul's hand and once again he showed no reaction whatsoever.

The hypnotist held his arms in the air in exasperation. "I tell you he is well and truly under. Ok, I have never heard of anyone riding on wolves either, but this guy certainly believes this, Sarah did. Look, we have lots of names, dates, places, and loads of facts to get our teeth into. Shall I wake him up and you check the facts?"

The professor looked at his watch. "We still have forty-five minutes left - it seems a waste. Ask him what happened next.

"Saul, you can wake up now. You now feel refreshed. Tell us what happened after you first saw Sarah."

Paul's face once again filled with joy at the memory. "Well, the Princess and her daughters cum down the stone avenue, all the women were hidin behind standing stones, all scared like. Their party came to a halt afore the Shaman, and there was problem as he refused um entry. Princess Mia was in middle, with the daughters on either side, and her giant wolf stood in front o Princess, guardin her like. The crowd see-in the wolves meant em no harm, felt braver, and fanned out, surrounding um in a semi-circle. The Princess waited, her head held high, and Sarah did the same until the crowd's noise died down. All three just sat there till thee could hear pin drop. Then Princess Mia placed her hands together as if she was a prayin. The other girl and me Sarah, did the same."

*

"Greetings, Shaman, I am Princess Mia, High Priestess of the Shashanti, daughter of Princess Hattie, granddaughter of Princess Ria of Persia. We have traveled a great distance to meet you, and have crossed many countries and seas. We come to honor the Earth Mother and wish to participate in your ceremony and festivities. Your Earth Mother knows we are coming."

The acolyte to the right of the Shaman opened a book and quickly looked through the pages, he turned and whispered in the Shaman's ear, and Mia noticed the subtle shake of his head.

The Shaman responded. "It seems, Princess, that we have no record of you wishing to attend this meeting. Of course, you are welcome, but you must leave your wolves tied up somewhere as we have children playing freely around in the sanctuary, and they could be harmed."

The Princess was sitting astride 'Wind,' a pure bred Arabian which towered above the welcoming committee. As the foremost High Priestess in her country, she was used to intimidating people. It was a tool she used regularly, and the best way was to present an air of superiority. She could feel the eyes of the crowd bearing down upon her, and they were hanging on her every word. It was time to impress

the onlookers, and as was her way, she deliberately looked down upon the welcoming community as if they were insignificant insects.

"Be assured no one will be harmed unless someone harms the Princesses."

The Shaman stood his ground. "You must leave the wolves restrained somewhere outside the perimeter, or you are not be allowed access."

The Princess looked straight ahead. "I am welcome here. As I said, I have already spoken with the Earth Mother."

His voice began to lose its authority. "You must leave now!"

Princess Mia stared down at the Shaman; she was not used to being disobeyed. She could see the effect she was having by the bead of sweat coalescing on his forehead, and wickedly the slightest smile creased her lips.

"Does the Earth Mother herself confide in you, Shaman?" She paused for effect.

When there was no response from the Shaman, the crowd waited, hanging on to her every word. "No, Shaman Bramel, son of Wilmer, from the house of Gent, no, she does not."

The acolyte to the left started to snicker.

"This is not a laughing matter, Acolyte Simon, son of Wilmot, you too, Acolyte Stephen, son of Griff. Does she confide in you? No, she does not."

"I - It seems you have us at a disadvantage Princess." The Shaman said nervously

Again, she turned away from him and looked straight ahead. "I have you at a disadvantage Shaman - because she confides in me. Now go, speak to the Earth Mothers' representative. Tell her the visitor that called to see her in the form of a bird has arrived with her daughters and that her party has been refused entry."

The Shaman's voice faltered. "W - We have not refused you entry, just your wolves."

The Princess took a deep breath to control her anger and when she spoke she was once again calmness personified. "The wolves are tied to the Princesses by enchantment, so they cannot be separated. It is impossible even if you command it. They are guardians, Persian royal wolves. They have served as our guardians for centuries. We have many enemies, so if they are not allowed in, we cannot enter." After a minute's pause, the silence became overbearing, and her anger returned with a vengeance. She shouted at the top of her voice.

Go!"

One of the acolytes turned and fled. The Princess was in her element, she was the center of attention. While she waited, she started accessing deeper into Morag's memories, and she chuckled inwardly.

"Tell me, Shaman, how is your wife?"

"She is well, Princess."

"Does she still have her migraine headaches?"

"She does. How do ...?"

"How are your children? Have the boys found partners yet?"

"They have."

After digging deeper into Morag's memories the barest of grins creased Princess Mia's lips. "What of your daughter by the priestess? Is she well?"

The Shaman's eyes darted from side to side. When he replied, his voice was barely a whisper. "I have no daughter by any priestess."

"Goodness, did you not know? ... Oh, I see. Do you mean you haven't told your wife yet? You can't hide anything from me, Shaman; I can see spirits even you can't."

The crowd gathered closer as the conversation got more interesting. The Shaman studied the Princess and wondered how she could possibly know these facts. As far as he knew no one knew about his daughter.

The Princess was also studying the Shaman and answered his question as if reading his mind. "You do not get to be high Priestess by accident, Shaman."

The acolyte ran back and whispered in the Shaman's ear. The Shaman collected himself and stood to one side which allowed them to pass. "It seems you are expected after all."

The Shaman bowed slightly and now gave them the customary greeting to honor guests.

"I, Shaman Bramel, son of Wilmer, welcome you in the name of the Earth Mother." The three travelers put their hands together as in prayer, and the Princess replied.

"I, Princess Mia, daughter of Princess Hattie, granddaughter of Princess Ria, and High Priestess of the Shashanti in the land of Persia, greet you Shaman Bramel, son of Wilmer."

It was customary to greet people you had not met before by giving your ancestors' names and positions in society and family ties. The more important you felt you were, the more names you would give. This greeting had enough family ties to impress most onlookers, and the Shaman had only given one. With access to their mother's memories, both girls understood what was happening.

First Sarah, and then Ursula spoke which took the Shaman by surprise as the rule did not usually apply to children. "I, Princess Sarah, daughter of Princess Mia, High priestess of the Shashanti, granddaughter of Princess Hattie, great-granddaughter of Princess Ria, greet you Shaman Bramel, son of Wilmer."

Ursula followed. "I, Princess Ursula, daughter of Princess Mia, high priestess of the Shashanti, granddaughter of Princess Hattie, great-granddaughter of Princess Ria, greet you Shaman Bramel, son of Wilmer, the carpenter."

With that, the Shaman bowed and stepped to one side to let them pass. He had picked up this sleight on his father's occupation. The statement astonished him. He could understand that the High Priestess could communicate with the spirits, but the daughter, a mere child. How could she have known that his father was a carpenter?

As they entered the great outer Stone Circle, the girls stared in wonderment. Neither the girls nor the young wolves had ever seen so many people. They gathered around them in their hundreds. Acolyte Stephen led them to the large reception tent.

The Princess dismounted. "Girls, stay here. Keep your wolves comforted. I will take Wolf; I want to see where they wish to put us." The Acolyte turned to the Princess.

"What are your requirements, your Highness?"

"We would like to be away from the center of activities. We need a grassy area for the horses; the edge of the wood would be good so that the wolves can hunt for food."

"I think I can help you there. We have two or three tents for you to inspect if you follow me."

The acolyte took them around all three tents, and the Princess chose the one most suitable. She turned to the acolyte. "Would you inform Mother that I would like to visit her when it is convenient?"

"Of course, you're Highness." He then bowed and left.

She called to her Wolf, who had positioned herself outside the tent. "Get the girls." The Wolf turned and trotted through the crowd, who dispersed sideways as she advanced. She came to a halt in front of the girls who were still sitting on her daughters. The girls were in mental communication with her, but they remembered Morag's instructions.

Ursula called out to Sarah verbally. "I think she wants us to follow." Sarah turned and looked at the wolf before giving her a verbal command.

"Lead the way, Wolf." The wolf turned and trotted off with the girls following behind. There were murmurs of approval emanating from the crowd, who were now beginning to be less fearful of the wolves. After arriving at the tent, Sarah told her wolf to sit, which allowed her to slide down its back, straight into a standing position.

Ursula then did the same. Both girls again told their wolves to stay verbally, which they did. Again, murmurs of approval emanated from the crowd. On entering the tent, Ursula said excitedly, "Do you see how many people are here?"

Sarah added, "I didn't think there were this many people in England."

The Princess smiled at her daughter's reaction. "Well, girls, this is the main meeting of the year, everyone who is anyone wants to be here."

Sarah asked, "Why mother? What is so special about this place?"

"It's a holy place where we 'Prime' celebrate and honor the Earth Mother. This is the summer festival, the day when the sun is in the sky the longest. But there are many other reasons to be here. Our people, the 'Prime,' have gathered at Henge like this since the beginning of time, it's tradition. Later, we allowed the people the Romans called 'Druids,' to join us, they follow our path and our teachings, so they are like us."

Sarah chewed her lip, thoughtfully. "But Mother, if they follow our teachings why do we call them Druids and not Just 'Prime,' like us."

"Good question, this is because we are different from them. You see, we have to keep ourselves hidden from all the peoples of the world, even our closest friends, the Druids."

“Why, what’s the difference?”

“They do not carry the memories like we do. I thought I told you that.”

Ursula, who had remained silent, looked at the crowd gathered outside and lowered her voice conspiratorially. “Mother, if we are different how do we know who we can play with.”

The Princess suppressed a laugh. “All of them. Just pretend you are a Druid, they are good people.”

“So what do we do here?”

“People have come to be married or hand-fasted. Some, ‘Prime’ and Druid, have come to find new mates and see if they can find someone special to spend the rest of their lives with. Others just come to have a good time. Most unattached people come for the fertility rituals on midsummer’s day.” The Princess fell silent and smiled as her mind drifted, recalling past festivals. Ursula interrupted her reverie.

“Why are you smiling Mother? What are fertility rituals?”

The Princess meditated for a few seconds, shook her head and replied curtly. “You’re not old enough to know, but you will remember when the time is right.”

The Acolyte, Simon, returned to the tent. “The Earth Mother will see you now if you follow me.”

“Girls, stay here, you too, Wolf.”

She followed the Acolyte through the crowd and could feel their eyes on her from every direction. She knew how strange she appeared to the local Druids. Her height was the main factor, added to that her skin color was a lot darker, also her hair, being black and straight was another. Pagan women still wore their hair loose at meetings, but its length, which was down to her waist, was another. She relished being the center of attention once again; it was where the Princess thought she belonged.

Morag, however, was not comfortable. She had not been considered attractive even in her youth, and for Morag it was a pleasant surprise, but Morag now had a feeling of unease building up inside her. She had been in the Princess’s form now for four days. The decision to ride the wolves into the meeting was precisely the opposite of what she had planned to do. Was the Princess’s influence growing inside her? Was her will stronger than hers? Was she taking control? Would she become just a puppet at the mercy of Mia?

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Back in the professors office Paul Masters had been released from his hypnotic state. The hypnotist had removed the memories of Saul and the happenings in 1605 AD. Paul glanced at his watch as he came around and fifty-five minutes had passed. His eyes drifted across to the professor. “I take it you managed to hypnotize me and I have not just been asleep?”

The old professor smiled at him. “We are not allowed to divulge what took place or what you may or may not have said at this point, but I can tell you that you have been hypnotized.”

A broad grin stretched across Paul’s face. “Cool, man. Were you able to regress me?”

The professor pursed his lips and shook his head. “That I can’t say - but I will say you are an interesting case.”

Paul nodded his head thoughtfully. “What happens now?”

The professor collected his notes into a tidy pile and tucked them under his arm. “I don’t know about you son, but we are all going home. Is the same day and time ok for you next week?”

Paul nodded his head in approval and left the room.

The professor waited until he heard the outer doors shut, and Paul’s footfalls fade into the distance, and then put his notes back on the table. He turned to his colleagues’, his eyes searching theirs, and sat down. “Well, what did we make of that?”

The nurse proffered. “You first.”

The professor continued. “Ok, so what do we have here? Is this a past life experience, or is he somehow reliving some sort of fantasy? We have girls riding on the backs of giant wolves that appear to be as big as donkeys. We have hundreds of Pagans or Druids who are somehow practicing their ceremonies unbeknown to the puritan regime controlling England at that time. And what is this Morag character all about? It sounded like she was some kind of spiritualist with another spirit taking possession of her body.”

He flapped his arms in the air in exasperation and turned to the others. “It must be some sort of con or trick to discredit the trial, it must be?”

The nurse added thoughtfully. “We have lots of data we can check before next week. This Lord Monkton should be easy – I mean, the nobility will be easy to trace, and then there’s this Sarah

Llewellyn living on a large estate on the edge of Glastonbury. His description of her is confusing. In the beginning, he said she was a Princess, later a maid, either way; there should be some sort of record. That's where they hold the pop festivals these days."

The nurse's voice trailed away under the derisory stare of the professor.

"What has pop festivals got to do with anything?"

The nurse retorted indignantly. "I am saying that Glastonbury Abbey is a ruin, but the village that grew around it has become a famous town – so we again, have a place."

The professor turned once again to his notes. "Oh, and there is the fact that this girl Sarah can talk to animals." Again, he flapped his arms in the air, "I mean, really." He sighed and shook his head. "I was pinning my hopes on this one, he had by far the best profile - it has to be a con."

"I think this was real."

The professor turned to the hypnotist; half expecting him to laugh.

"You do?"

"I know for a fact he was under my control. Some of the things he said did not make sense to us, but he had a primitive mind. This was an age of superstition, Witches, Druids, and Pagans. He saw what they wanted him to see. His mind was probably manipulated somehow, so don't put it down to just a trick. Do the checks, see if these people existed, and check the names and the dates. After all, he is by far the most interesting case I have ever come across."

The nurse piped up, "I agree – he seemed genuine to me."

The professor wearily got to his feet. "Very well then, but I have an awful feeling about this. See you all tomorrow evening."

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Over 3000 miles away in the town of Glastonbury in the UK, Jed was sitting at the reception desk making notes when a giant of a man approached him.

"Morning Jed, how are you today?" Jed knew the voice and continued to write without looking up; a voice so sweet and melodic; unique for such a large man.

"Fine doctor, it's a lovely day isn't it?"

"Yes, I'm here to see one of your holiday makers, they are on the top floor, I know which room so don't get up. Anyway, you need a rest; you have been run off your feet all day"

"Yes, you are right as always. I am a little tiered."

"You look like you are coming down with something; do you want me to check you over after I have seen my patient?"

Jed waved his arms dismissively. "No I'll be fine, I'm just a little stressed that's all; we are so busy."

"Yes, you need rest and forget about your troubles, take your mind off things; try reading the newspaper or a good book that usually works."

His eyes drifted across to a rolled up newspaper in the rack and he sat down without a second thought. "Your right, I need a break."

The doctor sneered and walked down the corridor and up the oak paneled staircase. When he got to the Master bedroom which was situated on the top floor, his eyes darted each way and listened for footfalls before entering.

The room was in darkness, so he opened the curtains leading to the balcony. Light flooded in highlighting the dust motes rudely wakened from their slumber. His eyes drifted across to the life sized portrait of a beautiful woman, and after opening the curtains that covered it; knelt below with his eyes fixed firmly on the floor.

And waited.

Eventually a disembodied voice boomed out from above. Who is it that wishes audience?"

"My Queen it is I Damien; you called me."

"That was hours ago; what kept you?" she snapped angrily.

"I was in the operating theatre, sorry. How can I help?"

"It has come to our attention that there is a ripple in our timeline."

"A ripple my Queen?"

Several male disembodied voices decided to contribute. A ripple there is.” Another added. “The power is changing; why is the power changing?” Another forceful voice interrupted, The ‘Prime’ are getting stronger. Why?”

The Queen screamed! “Quiet, all of you.”

The male voices of the collective embodied within her head muttered their disapproval and fell silent one by one.

When there was calm she continued. “Yes the power balance is changing in our dealings with the Prime.”

Balance my Queen?”

“Yes, their outlook is looking stronger by the day and we are not happy.”

“This is something you have foreseen my Queen?”

“It is. The balance of power is changing in their favor and we cannot see why.”

“But we have harvested them for centuries and the remainder - hide in the shadows like rats in an alley.”

“We know Shaman, so why is their future looking more positive?”

For several minutes silence filled the room before the Shaman added. “My Queen, we are too soft with them. There are about forty ‘Prime’ in the neighborhood that you will not let me cull; could it be one of them that is tipping the balance?”

“They are little more than cattle awaiting my pleasure; there is no one that stands out.”

Silence filled the room once again until the collective could not hold their silence any longer.

“We are hungry, so why not cull them all and kill two birds with one stone.”

“Quiet,” she said in a more moderate tone.

“Would you like me to cull a couple, and present them for entertainment purposes my Queen?”

The collective roared their approval.

“Wait, all of you I’m searching our future.”

Silence once again filled the room.

“I can see the disturbance now,” she said and it was barely a whisper. Suddenly she shrieked with laughter. “She is calling him. Alice Llewellyn thinks she has found Saul. Can it be? Has he been reborn?” She fell silent once again. But this time the collective didn’t dare interrupt as she continued the search. It was the Queens ability to foresee upcoming events that gave the Primevil the edge in the battle with the Prime.

“If she has found him; why can’t I?” She said thoughtfully as she continued to search “Sarah has been calling him for centuries, but this Alice creature is sure she has found him. Why?”

The Shaman proffered. “Can we take the risk; should we not simply kill her?”

The collective agreed. “Yes, we are hungry; you could bring her here and we could feast....”

“Enough!” The Queen screamed. “There will be no feasting on Alice Llewellyn. I can see it now - it is imperative that she survives. Yes she is right, Saul has been reborn but he is not close, he is a long way away.”

“But my Queen, the prophecy?”

“No matter Shaman,” she said decidedly. “We must let her succeed and bring him too me.” She cackled. “They are going to set me free – I will be free once again.”

“But my Queen, if Saul and Sarah get together again, this could be the shift in power that you foresee.”

“Yes, you’re correct - it is the reason for the shift.”

“My Queen, remember Princess Mia foretold Saul and Sarah would be reunited and destroy us.”

“She was nothing more than a fairground performer, and it’s nothing more than ‘Prime’ propaganda.”

She fell silent once again before adding. “It is worth the risk, now I know what the problem is, I can solve it.

“Very good, my Queen, will that be all?”

“No, the collective raged. “We are hungry.”

The Queen agreed. “This is a joyous day, after nearly four hundred years we will be free. Yes you can cull a few local Prime, we will feast tonight.”

The collective could not contain their excitement and roared their approval. The Shaman got to his feet, bowed and left. As he passed Jed's office he could see that he was fast asleep. Jed was so easy to manipulate.

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