

The following story is based on Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem. All characters, that were originally in the game by Silicon Knights and Nintendo are property of those companies. The characters Richard Cale and Yvette Cale are characters from my own stories. All other characters are original.

=====

The Darkness Comes

Chapter 1: Darkness Invades

It was another typical day at Howard Phillips University. Many of the students had gathered in the one student lounge to watch some of the shows. Usually, the student lounge wasn't crowded for a show, but over the past few months, students flocked into the room when the news came on. There were very few students who didn't watch the news.

One of those students, who was there at the time, was James Mulroy. He was a junior at the school, and very rarely watched the television, especially the news. He always viewed the news as biased, usually for one political party, or reflecting the public opinion. However, it was the recent story that was being broadcast that bothered him the most.

He sat silently as everyone else listened to the news caster. *"For those of you who haven't been around the past few months, today marks the sixth month since the death of noted psychologist, Dr. Edward Roivas. After being brutally murdered, about less than a month after that day, leading investigator Inspector Legrasse was found murdered. The lead suspects in the case are Dr. Roivas's granddaughter, Alexandra Roivas, and two British citizens, Richard and Yvette Cale. Richard Cale is also being sought for the murder of his own parents, who were brutally murdered. It was also at this time that the Roivas Estate began to burn, as if set ablaze by arson."*

As the image changed, James couldn't believe the lie the news was telling. The image on the screen was not of a mansion ablaze, but of it just sitting there untouched. However, he couldn't believe that everyone in the room gasped in horror. He even heard one of the school's jocks say, "That blaze is horrific. They should catch those jerks and kill them."

He shook his head slightly as the news caster continued. *"Shortly after that, it was announced that Mrs. Cale's father, noted archeologist Edwin Lindsey, was currently being sought in the disappearance of business man Paul Augustine. It is believed by some that both are related. We urge people to use extreme caution if you see any of these individuals, and inform police right away."*

As the new cast end, for a brief moment, something caught James's attention. He could have sworn he heard a low hiss from the newscaster. He put that out of his mind when he heard one of the female students say, "That was a shame. I heard Dr. Roivas lecture here once. You know he was more than a psychologist, he also studied the occult."

James got up at that moment, and started to make his way out of the room. He knew that Dr. Roivas had known about the occult. He had even attended one of those

lectures. It had been very interesting, learning what things people still believe existed. However, one topic of that lecture still made his blood run cold. The creatures that were mentioned, which even had autopsies done by an ancestor of Dr. Roivas. It still bothered him, and with the odd things he saw in the news cast, there was only one place he felt he could ask the question bothering him.

As he headed out of the student center, he passed by another student, Marlene Jacobs. She wasn't a girl he would usually associate with, mainly because while she was drop-dead gorgeous, he was average looking, and above average intelligence. Obviously, not a guy she would want to be with, at least that was his opinion. As he passed her, he could tell she was escorting one of the campus jocks toward her dorm. He figured that only meant one thing.

He put that thought out of his mind as he made his way across the campus to the Theology department. It wasn't a long walk, but he didn't want to waste much time getting there. He usually walked fast when outside, since in the past months, the sky always appeared gloomy, like it was about to rain. In fact, as he thought more about it, it had been that way for a few years, and he wasn't sure why.

As he neared the building, he slowed down as he saw something odd. Someone wearing a trench coat was just leaving the building, and as they walked, it appeared everyone was momentarily walking around the person. What was odder still was that those that didn't even look up were stepping out of the way.

When the strange man passed him, he almost gasped when he saw who it was. It was Richard Cale, the man the news had named as one of those involved with Dr. Roivas's death. He wanted to say something, to draw attention to the man, but stopped when a feminine voice said, "*He is not who they claim he is.*" He was stunned, and in part wanted to look for the speaker, but the way the voice sounded, he thought the speaker wasn't one that anyone could see.

The man then walked by him, briefly nodding, as if he realized he had been seen. James inwardly braced himself for something to happen to him, in case that voice was wrong, but nothing did. The figure kept walking on, and as he did, he heard the voice again. "*He helped stop a danger from coming to this world, but another danger is looming. You've noticed things that seemed wrong, where others don't. Talk with your Professor, and you'll learn more.*"

He silently nodded, and then headed into the building the Theology department was in. No one paid attention to the fact that he was entering, since while it wasn't his major, the department was sometimes a second home to him. That was because his favorite professor, Professor Marsh, was in that department, and they had spent many times discussing religion and the occult, and finding out that some of the things people viewed as fiction might actually be fact, and after that encounter, he really needed to talk with him.

Professor Percival Marsh watched from the window of his office, and saw the reaction of one of his favorite students to his most recent visitor. This visit was actually something he partially expected, but what he was told during the visit was not expected. He was glad at his student's calm appearance as the man passed, but figured the student was also a bit worried.

He turned to his desk and looked at the note the person had also given him during the visit. He had not said much during the visit, but it had confirmed some thoughts he had prior to the events of the past months. In fact, it put everything into a perspective that he had never thought about before, and one he knew that he could share with one of the school's students.

He sat down at his desk, pulling out a copy of a book he had purchased long ago. It had led him to his friendship with the late Dr. Roivas, and had led to many discussions about the works of various authors, and the discoveries linked to those 'fictitious' writings. He then repressed a shudder, as the words of his last visitor echoed through his head.

If those words were as true as he believed them to be, it meant huge ramifications, especially when it came down to who he could trust. Knowing that anyone he knew might have been replaced by an inhuman creature was disturbing, but more disturbing was how they could attack and replace the poor soul, as well as the tell-tale hiss. It was one he had heard once, in a meeting of all department heads, but he wasn't sure who it came from.

He stopped thinking about the hiss when the student he had seen through the window came in to his office and shut the door. He could tell he was stunned by the brief encounter, especially as he spoke. "Professor Marsh, you will not believe who I just saw leaving here. I think I just saw one of the people accused of murdering Dr. Roivas. However, as I saw him, I heard someone say he's not who they say."

Professor Marsh just held up his hand, and his student quieted down. "There is an explanation for all this, and it is both simple and complex. The simple reason for what you saw is exactly what you said. It was Richard Cale who you passed. He had been here to visit me."

He noticed the shocked look the student was giving him, and raised his hand to pause the student. "Remember the last lecture Dr. Roivas gave, a few days before his death." When the student nodded, he continued, "After you had left, we had spoke, and he told me he knew his time was coming. He also told me about some things I was unaware of, including that Mantorok is truly on Earth, and that his end was coming soon at the hands of an old evil named Pious Augustus, who had used many disguises."

He noticed that James blinked, as if he realized something, and then said, "You know, I noticed that everyone else didn't appear to see Mr. Cale. Could he be really this Pious Augustus?"

Professor Marsh shook his head. "No, but I have seen Pious, but he was wearing the guise of a Inspector Legrasse. It was after Dr. Roivas left, and I remember an other professor said he was with the police. I saw what he was, but didn't let on. After that encounter, I started to look more into the Ancients that Dr. Roivas talked about in his book, but stopped after Dr. Roivas's death." As he said those words, he felt a bit of regret, pausing his research in fear he would die the same way.

He sighed and then continued, "A few weeks later, I heard news that the Inspector had died. I acted like I was shocked, however, I was relieved. Soon, some things changed outside. For a brief time, the sky appeared a little brighter, and then it got darker. It was then I received a letter from the late Dr. Roivas, and in it, he warned me that something was coming, and that his granddaughter might need my help."

He watched as James got up, and started to pace. "Professor, this is a lot to take

in. What make you so certain of any of this, other than what you know of other occult items? Not that I doubt you, but there has to be another reason to take all this as fact.”

Professor Marsh nodded, and when he said his next words, he knew he struck a cord. “When Mr. Cale came in here not to long ago, I heard a voice that I had heard once before, shortly after I opened the note from Dr. Roivas. The voice was angelic, and comforting.” He continued as the student turned to face him. “One thing that Dr. Roivas and I had discussed was the existence of a fifth ancient. It was after Dr. Roivas told me of another incident from his younger days, that he had reason to believe that. Even my research had shown that there was evidence of a fifth Ancient, but her name had been removed from all known references.”

He then placed the note in front of his student, and pointed to the symbol on it. “Now, if you need anymore proof, this is a symbol I just confirmed is the rune for Mantorok, who manipulated events to lead to the destruction of three other Ancients. Mr. Cale informed me that the coming Darkness is Mantorok’s doing, and that things are in place for untold things to come forth, and that certain people can stop it, because they have been given the gift to fight it. Those that follow this symbol are Mantorok’s minions. I take it you recognize it as well.”

The young man nodded, and then walked to the office’s window, pointing towards a gathering of people at the main hall which could be seen from his office. He also noticed that Richard Cale was staying clear of the area, but also walking as if no one noticed him. Professor Marsh knew why the crowd was gathered in that area, and whom James was also pointing at, when he spoke. “It’s the symbol used as the icon of Lucinda Tepes’s company. She’s been one of this colleges main benefactors. If what you say is true, then that means...”

He nodded and then said, “It means that I may have to leave very soon. A powerful disciple of an Ancient is one that can do anything without fearing normal justice. I also have no doubt that if that is the case, and given Mr. Cale’s appearance, she, or another of the Ancient’s minions, will be coming to make sure I am not around long. Also, if you were able to see Mr. Cale, or notice anything else odd, I suggest you leave the school soon.” As the words crossed his lips, he looked down at the crowd so far away, and noticed that Lucinda had appeared to noticed Mr. Cale, and then looked up in their direction for a moment, before looking back at Mr. Cale. In that moment, he knew he would have to leave the school before the day was out.

Lucinda Tepes had just left the dean’s office, and was pleased. She had made another sizable donation to the school, as well as checked with some of her associates at the school. She had purposely put some at the school, since she knew the late Dr. Edward Roivas has spoken there a few times. Her placement of those associates at the school was a direct order from her lord and master, Mantorok.

For many years, her family had been in the service of the Ancient being, slowly making way for his return. However, over those years, the human population grew, and many forgot the being that made their world livable. Of course, she knew the story of the other Ancients, and how Mantorok worked to make them disappear, except for one. He had worked to sever any connection to that Ancient that was initially made in all the religions.

Now, after all this time, she knew it was time for Mantorok to return, and to thin out the herd of the creatures that were the human race. Of course, those truly loyal to Mantorok would remain, but the rest were fodder. However, top of the list were the biggest threats, the ones who Mantorok had used to further his plans along, and who had discovered the truth. The only trick was that since they discovered the truth, they had found a way to hide from her lord.

Luckily, as she stood there surrounded by the crowd of students at the school, she saw one of those figures in the distance. Her first instinct was to force her way through the crowd, and kill the man. She had seen his face in her dreams, as her lord told her everything about him. It was one of the reasons she kept a specially concealed blade on her at all times. Thanks to the magic infused on the blade, it was never detected by anyone. It also allowed that even if her victim got away, the wound would be so enchanted that it would kill the target within an hour.

She then decided to excuse herself, asking those there to let her through. She noticed that some quickly moved, and noticed they were either her minions, or loyal creatures to Mantorok. Each of those that she passed, she heard give a slight hiss. When she finally got through the crowd, she noticed the man was now leaving the campus grounds. She started to follow, but in that moment, she heard a voice say, *“Do not pursue him now. There are others in place to intercept him. There is another who needs to be dealt with now.”*

She froze, and quickly muttered a special spell. It worked quickly, and those that were either loyal to her, or could see beyond the veil, would see her mouth glowing purple as she spoke. “Lord Mantorok, he is one of the ones who knows your plan. What could be more urgent than eliminating him?” She quickly shut her mouth, hoping her words didn’t make her master angry.

Soon, she looked in another direction, which she realized was her lord’s way of telling her who the new target was. *“See the girl approaching that building.”* She nodded slightly as she saw an attractive young lady entering the building with one of the school’s jocks in tow. *“She is the great granddaughter of one of those who helped those who now try to stop me. She has the potential to destroy all I have accomplished. She must be eliminated before she can join with the others.”*

She nodded, and briefly glanced back in the direction of the man she had seen earlier. It was obvious to her that soon he would no longer be on campus, and she was already aware that a special cop was in the area. With any luck, that cop would be able to stop the man, permanently. She then looked at the woman, and smiled as an evil scheme came to mind.

She quickly muttered another spell. As it began to be cast, she told her special instruction as the creature appeared currently to her. “I want you to go in that building, and kill the girl, and any who are with her. Make sure you don’t kill her first, since if she escapes, she will have to flee or be charged for murder.” As the creature acknowledged her orders, she looked around again for the one she spotted earlier. She could not see him.

Inwardly, she cursed, hoping to find him and wipe him out for her lord. However, there were other matters to attend to. One of which involved a friend, at least that’s what her friend thought. The real truth was much more sinister, and she would have to set

those plans in motion soon. She then started for her limo, and started to call her friend. If things went right, her friend would be loyal to her cause, otherwise one of her minions would make sure her friend became loyal to her and Mantorok.

Richard Cale quickly left the campus of the university after he had noticed Lucinda Tepes was there. He was not ready for any confrontations with the woman who The Goddess, which was the name they called the Ancient protecting him and the others, had informed them of being a priestess of Mantorok. Right now, the confrontation had to be avoided. They needed more people to be ready to fight the evil that was coming.

When he glanced back, he noticed something that bothered him a bit. At first, it had appeared that Lucinda had noticed him. He realized that she knew of him, as well as Alexandra, Yvette, and the other, thanks to Mantorok, and he figured she would give pursuit. However, it appeared her attention was on another person. In part, he was thankful for that, but at the same time, he felt sorry for whomever had gotten her attention.

He was about ready to double back, fearing it might have been the professor he had visited, when The Goddess spoke. *“Do not double back, the three that are at the school will be coming shortly.”* Richard blinked as he heard that. He had only been to see one person at the school. Then he remember the encounter leaving the building. The young man who had seen him. That had to have been the second one.

He didn't stop to think about the third one, remembering that time was short and he needed to get back to the mansion, and the underground city of Ehn'gha. So far, that was their only safe haven, since as time passed, what they had access to of their own was under more and more surveillance. The fact that the mansion appeared the source of never ending flames kept everyone away, even Mantorok's minions.

Now, their only safety to venture out of the mansion was the invisibility spell powered by The Goddess's rune, which they had found shortly after being in the underground city on a permanent basis. Yvette's father had been so overjoyed after finding it. Using that ruin with the invisibility spell, or reveal invisibility spell as he remembered, did almost the same as Mantorok's, except it lasted longer, and only allowed them visible to those who were open to the truth, or very powerful minions of Mantorok.

This knowledge had kept him at ease as he approached a cop that was on the other side of the street that lead to the mansion. He was certain that all the cops, whether they were minions of Mantorok, or real human beings unaware of the other side of the veil, were going to arrest him. Pious, most likely not knowing the manipulations of Mantorok, had set things up to frame everyone. Luckily, the spell always kept them out of sight when they were on the surface.

As he passed, he heard something that caused his blood to run cold. He heard the unmistakable hiss of a Bonethief. He chanced a glance back, and saw the officer was now crossing the street, crossing to make sure his path reached him. It was also then Richard noticed the cop had on dark sunglasses, even though it was not sunny out, not that days had been overly sunny for months.

Richard returned his gaze forward, and ran towards the mansion. He had gotten to the point where he could run the distance between town and the mansion in ten minutes, and that was at a casual pace. Now he had a reason for getting as close to the mansion,

without getting all the way there. If they got too close to the mansion, the beast would see the truth, since it saw him. He needed to eliminate the threat before it could give out information, however it would do that.

He ducked into a small wooded area not far from the estate boundaries, and waited. He knew he was far enough to make it think they were not on the grounds. It was also the right place to pull out his sword, which was now permanently infused with the golden yellow power of The Goddess. He then ducked behind a tree, and waited.

Soon, he heard the cop, who had been possessed by a Bonethief, enter the area. The hiss was the only thing that told him he was right, since the creature had found a way to at least master its victim's voice. "Stop in the name of Mantorok." In part, he was thankful that the cop was alone, otherwise the creature wouldn't have said that. However, he was hoping that the creature would not use the officer's gun.

He remained behind the tree, listening for when the creature got near, but he spoke to the lone creature. "I'm not going to give in to Mantorok. We had figured out what Mantorok was up to, and we will stop it." He then waited for the creature to near him, figuring he would only have one shot at stopping the creature.

He listened as the creature neared, not hesitating as it stepped. He was certain the creature would not have known where he was unless he spoke, and he didn't want a chance at a face-to-face confrontation. It had been months since he fought a human possessed by a Bonethief, and he did remember how they increased some of the attributes of the ones they possessed. He knew the creature was close enough when it said, "You will give in. The world of your kind is soon over. Soon, you will all be hunted down. You never have dealt with the true minions of Mantorok."

Richard swung his blade, and turned as it swung, which appeared to add to the power of his swing. Instantly, the blade sliced through the cop's neck, causing the head to fall off. He stepped back as the head hit the ground, and the body didn't collapse. It stood for a moment, arms outstretched and shuddering. Soon, the body exploded, in a mess of gore, and what was left standing there was a Bonethief the likes Richard had not seen before. While its build was similar to the ones he had seen in the past, this one's blades were jagged, and it had a horned skull as well.

The most surprising thing was that the creature could speak as well. It almost left him flabbergasted when it said, "Thank you for doing half my job for me. Now, I can get into the city and take care of the rest, since my master's foe won't detect me in you." He realized just as the creature leapt at him what it was going to attempt, and quickly jumped to the side, while raising his sword.

In that instant, he cut off the one arm of the creature, causing it to fall onto its side as it missed him. Before the creature could recover, Richard quickly swung his blade again, and removed the creature's head. After it fell to the side, he hacked up the body, and then made for the mansion. He was now certain that things were going to happen faster than they had thought, and hoped that the three others The Goddess had mentioned would make it safely to the mansion.

Marlene Jacobs stood in the bathroom of her dorm suite. She had been one of the

lucky students to receive one of the special rooms on campus. It meant having a private bathroom, which worked for her lifestyle. For a few years, she had been with a few guys, and the guy she was about to entertain was the most recent. It wasn't a lifestyle her parents approved up, but after hearing some of her great-grandfather's stories from World War I, it didn't make sense for her to wait until marriage.

Of course, some of her great-grandfather's stories had sounded far fetched, like the three-headed monsters, walking corpses, and a huge monstrosity in the bottom of church. However, it had to add to the reason why he thought the world might be headed for doom. If the world was doomed, why care about the consequences of ones actions.

Right now, all she cared about was the handsome boy waiting in the main part of the dorm suite. She had told him to wait while she got ready. She had done this for a few guys on campus, and every guy enjoyed the outfit she put together, not that it would be on long. It was just the beginning of what she was sure to be the most memorable time in his life.

As she put on some special perfume, she heard a loud thud out in the main room. She wondered if the guy was getting impatient. She coyly said, loud enough to be heard through the door, "One more moment, and you'll be in for the time of your life." She decided then to wait another moment before opening the door.

As she waited, her mind went back to her great-grandfather's stories. She couldn't help but let her mind go back to those. Lately, they had been on her mind a lot. It was still a frightening idea that those creatures existed, but the thoughts had come back after the first time she heard of the death of Dr. Edward Roivas. She had never met the man, but the image she had seen of the one man accused of being part of a murder plot looked just like how her great-grandfather described the man who had helped him. She was sure it couldn't be the same man, but the stories her great-grandfather had told said the man had come from the future.

Another thud from the main room brought her back to the moment, with some worry. Usually, if a guy was nervous, he bumped something which caused a thud. Never was there a second thud. When a third thud followed, she quickly opened the door, and froze at the sight she saw.

In the dorm room, holding the guy she had brought in, was a huge hulking monster. It was purplish in color, and held the guy in one claw. Judging by the look on the guys face, he was no longer alive. She then watched as the creature threw the body to the far end of the room. The creature then turned to face her, and she saw that the big hulking body had what looked like three heads on it. The middle one looked like a horrid monster's face, but the one other head looks like huge eye, and the other looked like a monstrous mouth. It was as if her great-grandfather's stories were very true.

Soon, she saw a purple lighting form between the limbs of the creature, and she remember the stories of what that meant. She was also thankful that the bathroom door was right next to the door for the suite, and quickly ran out. She moved quickly, running towards the entrance of the dorm. She picked up her speed, inwardly cursing she hadn't put on her shoes instead of her slippers, but there was no time, especially as she heard the creature burst down the door.

Inward, she also cursed having her fun when no one was around. If others were about, she could have relied on someone helping her, but it appeared no one was about in

the dorm. However, she now realized that the stories her great-grandfather told were true. She also realized that the man whom the news said was in on the murder of Dr. Roivas might actually know the truth about what was going on, and might be able to help her. However, right now, she needed to get away from the monster that was now pursuing her.

Chapter 2: Influencing Fate

Michael Edwards quietly entered the foyer of the Roivas Estate. He did it cautiously, even though the Goddess was still doing what she could to protect them. An illusion of a raging fire kept many away from the estate, including those that were followers of Mantorok. That was a truth he had learned over his time hiding from the forces of Pious Augustus years ago.

As he moved through the foyer, his main reason for being there was to wait for the return of Richard Cale. He was to return soon from his mission, which was finding one of the people the Goddess was certain would help them. Usually, it was either Richard or Alexandra Roivas who went on these missions. However, each mission had gotten more and more difficult over the months. Seeing any number of their already small numbers get captured, or killed, by Mantorok's forces was not a good thing.

Being a seasoned veteran, he had seen a good many people die, but after the mission in the Middle East, and his discovery of the otherworldly forces, every death made him wonder. Every death even saddened him, wondering if it was a just one, or one of those who were already dead. His exposure to those horrors had caused him to no longer be surprised by the strange and unusual. In fact, when ever one of the creatures exposed themselves, he wasn't surprised.

One thing that did manage to surprise him was when the front door burst open, and Richard Cale came running in, quickly shutting the door behind him. The sheer speed at which it was all done was enough to worry Michael. As his friend paused long enough to catch his breath, he walked over to him asking the question on his mind. "Did something happen this time in the city?"

He watched as Richard nodded, and then started to head to the basement door. "Yea. I had a near close run in with Lucinda Tepes, and one of her minions. It was one of Mantorok's Bonethieves. They are more fearsome than the others, and can even talk. It's not a good sign. I hope there is some good news here."

Michael followed him, and nodded, even though Richard wasn't looking at him. "That is a problem, however your wife and father-in-law made a discovery in Ehn'gha. They aren't sure what it is yet, but it is something big." As they entered the basement, he felt a bit safer. The main estate's only security was the illusion that it was on fire, and if things were escalating, it would mean that the illusion might not hide them anymore.

As they descended to the top of the stairway that led down to Ehn'gha, they both heard the voice of the Goddess speak to them. "*That discovery came at the right time, as it's purpose will be revealed soon. It will also help bring those Richard had contacted here, as well as others who will help defeat Mantorok.*" He took a deep breath after the Goddess spoke. The words gave hope, but also a sense of foreboding.

They stopped for a moment at the balcony that overlooked the underground city, and he thought back to his arrival at the mansion. At that time, only a small patch of the city glowed with the friendly yellow light. Now more of the city glowed yellow, showing where those who were ready to fight the Darkness dwelled, and the growing safe zone of the Goddess.

He then looked at the rune on the balcony, and it made him realize how safe they

were now. He pointed down to the floor and said, "There is some more good news. The Goddess's barrier now reaches up here. I doubt any of Mantorok's minions will make it into Ehn'gha now."

He watched as Richard nodded, and then said, "Seems that way, but I won't really relax until Mantorok is stopped. Besides, we now know a Bonethief aligned to Mantorok exists, but does the Ancient also have Gatekeepers, Horrors and other creatures. If that's the case, people are going to start seeing these things more and more." Hearing Richard say that worried Michael, but as they started down the rest of the steps, he felt a feeling of peace and security come over him. He also noticed that Richard seemed to relax a little as well. However, he had a feeling that relaxing might not be an option right away, since they needed to head to the new discovery.

Yvette Cale looked around the strange building that she and her father had come across while exploring Ehn'gha. Ever since her father's arrival in the underground city, and the growing power of Mantorok's followers, exploring the city became a past time for her. It helped her keep her sanity during these trying times. In fact, it made her happy to be exploring ancient structures with her father, and to dress in archeological gear again. The only downside was her old clothes wouldn't fit proper anymore, since they were before she had become the woman she was now. She had to modify them, but it had proved that while they were not normally practical, her husband had loved the outfit.

Right now, however, she had wished she had something nicer, since it wasn't just her father and herself here at the latest discovery. After they had found it, Alexandra Roivas was with them, as well as some of the other people who had made their way to the city. If it had been just Alexandra joining them, she wouldn't have minded, since the last of the Roivas family, who had been fighting the Ancients for years, still liked to wear her black tank-top and black pants. Like Yvette's current outfit, it highlighted Alexandra's figure, but since Yvette was married, she didn't want a lot of people looking at her figure, just her husband.

She was brought out of those thoughts when her father said something of interest. Since he had returned with Alexandra, and some of the others, he had been looking over what looked like a console, and a huge rock sphere. Like almost everything in the city, they looked like modern equipment, but worked off magical energy. She went over to her father's side, and asked, "What did you just say, Father?"

She watched as he turned to face her, and answered. "Right here, it looks like these had preset coordinates on them. Some appear to be close by, while others appear to be halfway around the globe. It's as if this is part of some sort of teleportation system, like those mentioned in those science fiction shows."

She looked at what he was talking about, and realized he was correct. In fact, she noticed one set of numbers in one corner, and further confirmed her father's thoughts. "You're right. This here has to be our co-ordinates. And here is another set not too far from here." She even noticed co-ordinates that appeared to be on the other side of the globe, but didn't mention it. She did realize what the discovery truly meant.

It was Alexandra who voiced that thought then. She watched as Alexandra looked at the console as well, and said, "If this is a transport system, that means we wouldn't have to keep sneaking out through the illusion of the burning mansion. If things are

picking up, we can't keep using the mansion." She then watched as Alexandra turned to look at both her and her father. "Do you think we'll need to use the array to get this thing started?"

Before she could even answer the question, she was startled to hear her husband speak, since she wasn't aware he had returned. "We may need an answer to that one quickly. I just narrowly avoided a Bonethief of Mantorok, as well as the full attention of Lucinda Tepes." Hearing those words sent a chill through her, since they were all aware of how Lucinda moved in after Pious Augustus was defeated. It had been her company that bought up all the holdings of Pious' one alter-ego, Paul Augustine. In fact, it was Lucinda who had said that her father was responsible for Paul's death.

She was broken out of her thoughts when Alexandra spoke. "What happened? Don't you usually use The Goddess' version of the invisibility spell? Didn't we figure that it works for a few hours?" She nodded, remembering how they had tested it. It had been a huge success, and they could get some things The Goddess could not provide for them.

She then notice that Michael was with her husband as well. "From what he told me, Lucinda had noticed him, but then got distracted. However, it appears that Bonethieves can now see through the invisibility. Richard even said that this one could talk while not in the skin of it's victim." She gasped when she heard that. From what she remember during the reading of the Tome of Eternal Darkness, the creatures only noise had been a hiss. This news meant that Mantorok's creature had some surprises they were not ready for.

Her thoughts were then interrupted by the ethereal voice of The Goddess. "*I know you have all heard some disturbing news, but we must act quickly or many allies will be lost. Someone must place their hand on the corner of the 'console' as you have dubbed it to activate the portals. The ones that Richard has contacted are now in grave danger. The portal closest to them should be obscured to most of Mantorok's minions, including Lucinda and the Horror she summoned.*"

Without missing a beat due to the horrifying news she just heard about the Horror, Yvette quickly ran over to the console only to see her father already put his hand on the spot. Soon, two portals lit up, and one had the co-ordinates lit up that she noticed earlier. Before she could voice her concerns about the other tunnel, she heard The Goddess speak again. "*The other portal will allow another chosen one to arrive here. The others that need help may need to be defended.*"

She watched then as Alexandra headed into the portal, and she quickly followed. Just as her husband moved forward, she turned and said, "Wait here. Alexandra and I can handle ourselves." She watched as her husband nodded, and then smiled at him, before entering the portal.

After a moment of nothing but bright yellow light, she realized they were in a dimly lit tunnel. She looked around, seeing that the portal was the only source of light, and that at the end of the tunnel, she saw lights. Before she could say anything, she heard Alexandra say, "This is the subway in town. This tunnel must be hidden by an illusion. Let's remain quiet and watch." She nodded and waited. She also wondered how the others would see the tunnel, and even react to their appearance, since they were considered criminals, thanks to Mantorok.

In Amiens, France, the Church was at work restoring Oublie Cathedral, and Bishop Phillippe was glad to be overseeing the work. He had grown up in Amiens, and even though his parents had told him to always be proud of where he came from, he never understood why his parents always went to church in another town. His grandparents had told him the cathedral was not clean, and when he heard of the restoration effort, he wanted to be at the lead of it.

As of right now, workmen were working on repairing the windows. They had been shattered during World War One, but that was after the British troops had left. Some had even said that spirits of the wounded that had been in the cathedral were still haunting the place. That was another thing he didn't believe was true, but as a precaution, an exorcism had been done on the building.

With all that having been done, Phillippe was certain the restoration would continue to go well. They had even manage to get into the old tower, and start in on fixing it. He had been surprised when some of the work men told of an odd hissing in the old tower, since he was certain that no pipes or anything had been put in over there. It was the only part of Oublie Cathedral that he had yet to visit, except for the crypts under the cathedral.

He was just about to head through the main cathedral when a calm voice spoke softly, but with a power that said listen. "Phillippe, my son, how are things going?" He turned and was stunned to see that he was face to face with his holy eminence, the Pope.

He quickly bowed, honored to be graced with a visit, and surprised as well. "Your Holiness, I was not aware that you would be visiting. Have you come for a tour of Oublie Cathedral." He was stunned when the Pope shook his head. However, he could tell that Pope must have been there for some reason. He quickly motion back to where he had set up his office, right off the Antechamber. "Please, if you wish to talk then, come into my office."

He was happy when the Pope nodded, and then entered into the office, but oddly enough, he motioned for those with him to wait outside. He quickly followed the Pope into the office and closed the door. It was unusual for the Pope to go anywhere without a guard, after what had happened years ago.

Once the door was closed, however, Phillippe watched as the Pope looked around for a moment, and then spoke softly, as if he thought someone was listening in. "My son, are you aware of how important you are?" Phillippe nodded, and was surprised when the Pope shook his head. "No, you are not yet aware of how important you are. I wish I had more time to tell you all, but I feel I must tell you all I can, before it is too late."

Those words make his blood freeze. It sounded to him that the Pope's days were numbered, but he didn't want to think that. He slowly approached the Pope, hoping to comfort him. He stopped when the Pope raised his hand, signally him to stop moving, before he continued. "You have a very special place in the history of the church, nae even the history of the world. However, you need to heed my words if you wish to survive."

Phillippe nodded, feeling almost overwhelmed by the matter. He took a deep breath, and then said, "Of course, but my work here has only just begun. There is still much to do in restoring this cathedral. We have only just begun work in the Old Tower." He was stunned when the Pope raised his hand, and shook his head. It was as if the Pope

was saying the restoration was not the task he was meant to take part in.

Before he could question the Pope, the elder clergyman looked around for a moment, and then leaned forward, whispering his next words. “You must head to the old cloak room, and climb down into the catacombs. You will know which way is the proper way to go. It was the location of great heresy long ago, but in light of recent events, and research into the Vatican Library, I have found that nothing was untouched by the heresy. Long ago, our faith was free of it, until it made its way into it. Deep down, in what appears to be an unholy hall, is the way to those who can help.”

He was stunned by those words, and even began to wonder about the mental health of the Pope. However, before he could protest, the Pope continued. “I will not lie to you, but as proof of what I said, I will tell you that those who came with me make an unearthly hiss, similar to the one I’m sure they said came from the Old Tower.”

Phillipe was taken back by that statement. He looked at the pope, and quietly asked, “How did you know about that? We all thought it was something in the pipes.”

We was stunned when the Pope just sighed. “Over the years, The Church has known something was happening here, something evil. We thought it had been gone after the Inquisition ended. It took us far too long back then to realize the evil had been linked to it, but were afraid to admit it. We even thought it was gone, until reports of the demons came during World War I. However, each of those stories also carried word of a strangely dressed holy warrior, who fought the demons, and used their own powers against them. That person exists now, and is accused of crimes I am sure he did not commit. You must go to them.”

Phillipe was taken back by that. He had been following some of the news in the world, but the thought of associating with a criminal seemed wrong to him. He even had to admit that the claim seemed outlandish, when it was associated with a holy warrior. He gave the Pope a look, and in that moment, he saw that the Pope was certain about what he said. There was a look in his eyes that said that. He sighed then. “If that is the case, what am I to do?”

He watched as the Pope handed him an odd key. “Take this key, and head to the cloak room. It holds the entrance to the catacombs now. Trust your faith, and you will find your way to the door it unlocks. At the end of a long hall, the path to those who need your help will be found. Now go, for if I am right, those who came with me will soon be here to kill me. If all goes well, you will be where you need to be. Go, my son.”

Phillipe nodded, and ran out of his office. He was somewhat surprised not to see the Pope’s bodyguards there, but if the Pope was right, they were not there to help him. He then ran into the cathedral, and listening to his faith, he remained in the shadows. He made his way to the Cloak Room, and quietly entered. However, as he entered, he heard a hiss come from the front of the cathedral, and a voice shout, “His Eminence has been murdered. We just found him in the Bishop’s office.”

His heart fell, and he quickly closed the door, and made his way to the ladder. He was sure the Pope was speaking the truth now. He even could see how it be viewed by others. They would blame him, and he would be disgraced in the church. He quickly made his way down through the catacombs, all the while thinking that if he had remained, could he have prevented the death, or would he have been killed. He eventually concluded that it would not have mattered.

He was almost surprised when he reached the locked door, and saw the odd markings on it. He looked at the key, and noticed the same markings. He paused for a moment, wondering if he should dare turn back. However, as he looked behind, he noticed something for the first time. There had been a few bodies not fully interred, and they had started to move. All looked like they were walking skeletons, and all seemed to stare right at him. Fright took over, and he quickly got through the door, and barred it. He then ran through the next hall, and down the steps, noticing that bodies there had started to rise as well.

He kept his faith as he ran in fear until he reached a large open hall, with heretic carvings on the side. He also noticed it was the only room without bodies in it, but a huge hole at the far end. He also noticed something else. Where the remains appeared of a missing stained window, there was a glow. There was something comforting in that glow, and as he moved down the hall, he heard a voice say, *"It is safe. Enter the light, and you will be with others. They will explain once you arrive."*

Bishop Phillippe thought about it for a moment, wondering if he should trust the voice. Logically, he felt it was not a wise thing to do, but as the Pope had said, he had to trust his faith. He slowly walked forward, and carefully around the pit, before he stopped right in front of the portal. He then looked back at the far end of the hall, wondering how long the hall would remain safe. Would the forces that killed the Pope be kept at bay by the creatures? He finally decided that he had to trust his faith, and he closed his eyes and stepped into the glowing light.

James Mulroy ran from the dorm, clutching the few items he could pack into a duffle bag. He had gathered an outfit or two, a few of his books, and a few other necessities. He was glad his roommate wasn't in at the time, but in a class. It made it easier to grab the items. The way Professor Marsh had spoke, they were going to disappear. However, he felt Professor Marsh was right about very bad things coming, and that if they hoped to survive, they needed to find those that also knew about what was coming.

As he headed towards where Professor Marsh usually parked his car, his attention was drawn to something at one of the girl's dorms. It was the girl he had seen earlier, and she appeared to be running from someone. He had heard of her before, never got to speak with her, but he had heard of her reputation. He started to wonder if she found a guy who wanted more than what she would do. However, those thoughts left him when he saw what came out of the dorm she had ran out of.

The thing was huge, with three apparent heads like parts, each was a specific feature, and it was after the girl. The fact that she was running from it told him that she saw it, and most likely would be another person that Mantorok must feel is a threat. When she tripped, he knew what he had to do. He quickly ran over, and caught her in mid-trip, allowing her to keep moving. "Come on, I know someone who can help you get away."

As they ran, he heard her say something that surprised him. "You know someone who knows how to fight a Horror, or at least knows what it is?" When he nodded, he

heard some relief in her voice. “I first thought only my great-grandfather made up those stories, but if others know about them, then help me get to them. That thing wants to kill me.”

At that moment, he heard a spark of lightning behind them, and saw the thing had just struck where she had stumbled. He kept moving with her, as he spoke to her. “I don’t think it cares if it kills just you or not, but I have some bad news. I think we are the only ones who see it.”

He heard her groan at that, as if she didn’t want to hear that news. When she spoke, he understood why. “That thing killed a guy, and when people see it, they’ll blame me.” It was then he noticed how she was dressed, and he realized that the reputation she had wasn’t mere talk. At least he was thankful that she had something on.

As they ran, he then saw Professor Marsh in his car, and he could tell the engine was running. As they neared, he saw Professor Marsh get out for just a second, saying, “You better get in quick. It looks like something is already after us.”

They stopped long enough to get into the back of the car, and he said to the Professor, “We already know. It was after her. Just drive once we close the door.” He let her get in first, and then quickly followed. Once he had the door close, he felt the car accelerate, and they were leaving the campus.

He looked back only once, and saw the Horror, as the girl had called it, was still following them, but given its size, he was surprised that it was keeping up with the car. It wasn’t a comforting thought that it could keep up, but before he could voice his concern, he heard Professor Marsh address the girl. “Pardon, Miss, but who are you, and why is that monstrosity after you?”

He looked at the girl for the first time since helping her. It was at that time he remembered her name, and answered his favorite professor’s question. “She’s Marlene Jacobs. I can’t say I know her, but she seems aware of what that thing following us is.” He noticed the startled look she gave him, but ignored it.

He did notice, by way of the rear view mirror, that Professor Marsh’s eyebrows raised. “Wait, are you related to Peter Jacobs?” When she nodded, he realized that it was important, especially when Professor Marsh continued. “Dr. Roivas once told me about him. He was at Oublie Cathedral back in World War I, when he came across the Ancients’ plot. He returned with one of their essences. That’s why she knows about that creature. He probably passed the knowledge on.”

He was stunned when Marlene let out a sound. “Fat lot of good it did me. He always talked like the world would end. I never thought he was serious about the creatures. He even said some guy helped him fight them.”

James wanted to ask on that, but at that moment, he noticed a spark come from the creature, and soon, one of the tires exploded. It was by luck that the car didn’t go out of control. It did come to a stop, and a slight panic started to fill his soul. It appeared they were in a slightly open part of town. There wasn’t anyplace they could hide from the creature, and it was still coming.

All of a sudden, he swore he heard the same voice he heard when he first saw Richard Cale. He also noticed that Professor Marsh, and Marlene heard it as well, as they both had a stunned look on their faces. “*There is a way to safety near by. Go there, and you will be saved.*” He glanced out the car window, and saw it. He also noticed that the

others saw it as well. It was the entrance to the city's subway system.

He looked at them, and heard the roar of the creature. They all nodded, and then he, Professor Marsh, and Marlene got out of the car. Just as they did, he remembered that he left his bag in the car. He was about to turn back, when a brief yellow glow appeared in the car, and a purple bolt of lightning came towards the car. He turned and ran back towards the others, just before the bolt hit the car, causing the trunk to explode open. If he had not turned around when he did, he would have been killed. However, he hoped that monstrosity would not be able to follow them into the subway, and if it did, he hoped that their hiding spot would not be discovered.

Amber Snow had just arrived at one of the city's nicest restaurants. It was not someplace she could normally afford to go to, but a friend of hers, Lucinda Tepes, was paying. Lucinda was one of the few friends she kept in touch with, but was also one of the more difficult ones to get along with. Most times, it always came down to religion. Amber was a devout Wiccan, and while she never knew her friend's religious following, she felt it was one of those that would not accept a Wiccan.

As she was escorted to the table, she noticed that the place wasn't very busy at all, which she thought was very odd. For many places, this was one of the busiest times of day. It also put her nerves on edge, since it seemed surreal. She then put it in her mind that any topic of debate would not come up at all as she said down across from Lucinda. "Good day, Lucinda."

As she picked up her menu, she noticed that Lucinda had already been served. In fact, it appeared her food was already partially eaten. If she was late, Lucinda didn't seem to mind as she said, "Good day, Amber. I'm glad you got here on time. I'm afraid I arrived a little earlier than I thought I would. I hope that my call didn't inconvenience you."

Amber shook her head, as she waited for a waiter to come by. "Not in the least. It had allowed me to make some preparations for later today." She didn't want to mention religion now, but her recent title as High Priestess would only spark an argument.

Her thoughts of avoiding that topic were thwarted when Lucinda just nodded and said, "Indeed. I'm sure it takes a lot of work to prepare for a Wiccan ceremony." She looked over the top of her menu, and watched as her friend just smiled. There was something in that smile that wasn't there the other times she smiled. It was something unnerving.

Amber put her menu down for a moment and just said, "I did not come here for you to make quips at my religion. You said there was a reason to meet, so please get to it." She knew Lucinda was a business woman, but even when they went to school together, her friend was always interested in religions, but none more so than Wiccan. She just never understood why her friend always poked fun at it.

She was taken back when her friend just said, "You are right. This was about business, but it is also about religion. There was always something about Wiccan that grabbed my interest. I think it was the fact that almost all other religions have a name for evil. It's just so odd that Wiccan doesn't have that."

Being a High Priestess in Wiccan, Amber was aware of that fact. She calmly picked up her menu, and said, "That's because we believe that if we give evil a name, it makes it more powerful. If we don't name it, it doesn't have that power."

She started to look over the menu again, but heard her friend continue. "Odd, but what if the evil has a name. Surely you can't ignore it if it has a name, like Lucifer, Beelzebub, or Mantorok." Amber shivered when she heard the last name. She had heard other names used before, but this was the first time a name made her shiver.

She wanted to enquire, but Lucinda just continued. "Let's face it, if you know it has a name, you can't ignore the name. Some would say not saying the name gives it just as much power. Plus, if you add the name into a religion, it gets a grip in that religion."

She put the menu down, and stared at Lucinda. She noticed that some of the people were looking at them now, so she kept her voice down. "Even if a name is known, not saying it, or even acknowledging it, will keep its power down, no matter what. It is strengthening evil to give it a name, no matter if it something like Tony, or something obscure as Man...." She stopped there for a moment, as something in her told her not to say the name.

Another chill went up and down her spine when Lucinda spoke. "You mean as Mantorok. However, you can't deny the name if it is actually what is supposed to be dominant. No matter what, Mantorok is in all religions, except Wiccan. I was hoping you'd help enlighten the Wiccan world, since I am his High Priestess."

She started to get up, especially when she saw the look in Lucinda's eyes. It had told her that her friend was telling the truth, but there was a deep malevolence in it. She shook her head, and then said, "I would never, ever, do that. It is wrong to give evil a name, but to insert that name just to corrupt a religion. I can't allow that."

As she stood, she heard a hiss come from everywhere in the room, and she again noticed that everyone was staring at them. No, they weren't staring at them; they were staring at her. She chanced a quick glance, and saw the waiter was moving towards her, a malevolent look in his eyes.

At that moment, she heard a sickening sound, and looked at one person near them, except there wasn't a person there anymore. In the person's place, amidst a pile of gore, blood and ichor, was an inhuman creature, slender, with blades for arms, and a horned skull. As she saw it, Lucinda spoke calmly, "I had been hoping not to have to do this, but Lord Mantorok needs to get into your religion. One of my bonethieves will help in that."

At that moment, the creature leapt. Luckily, she was able to move, and quickly ran through the restaurant and through the door, as more of the creatures exploded out of people. As she ran, she thought that it could not be happening. She had to be having a nightmare. Unfortunately, the pain in her feet because of her shoes told her she wasn't dreaming.

Now she needed to get away, and as she ran, she heard Lucinda in the background shout. "Get her. Lord Mantorok says we need her, or his return to power will be jeopardized." That did not make her feel better, but as she ran towards a subway station, she saw another fearsome sight. Three people were running from a car, and fleeing a huge creature. That creature was just as unreal as the ones following her, but the people seemed to be heading down into the subway.

She was almost leery about heading that way, but a voice said to her, "*That way*

will lead to safety. There are those ready to help you down there.” She wanted to doubt her sanity now, but something in her told her the voice was right. She looked at the creature, and took a look back to see the ‘Bonethieves’ as her former friend called them catching up. So she did what she felt was right. She rushed down the steps after the others, and into the subway system.

Alexandra stood patiently close to the end of the tunnel. It was a difficult thing to do, mainly because she knew there were others coming, ones who needed their help. She tried looking out of the tunnel, and all she could see was the large group of people there now. That also meant it might be harder to see the others, when they arrive.

She sighed and then turned to face the other woman with her, Yvette. The redhead almost had a similar build to her, but since she now had some clothes to suit being an archeologist, she wore some of those outfits in a way to entice Richard. If they would have had the time, she would have insisted on Yvette changing clothes, just a bit at least.

She watched as Yvette chanced a glance out the tunnel, and then heard her ask, “Did the Goddess give you any idea on what they look like?” She shook her head, and tried to figure out if they could pick them out.

Alexandra looked at the Gladius she kept on her at all times now. It was the enchanted one that she used to defeat Pious Augustus, almost six months ago. Since then, it had lost its original glow, but gained a yellow glow. She would still practice with it, and deep down hoped she would not have to use it, especially since it was not very useful on larger creatures. She then looked towards the tunnel entrance again. “Well, let’s hope there isn’t anything like a Horror following them. This Gladius may still be enchanted, but I don’t want to test how it works on a Horror of Mantorok.”

She noticed that Yvette shuddered at that. “I hope we don’t see one too soon. After how Richard describe the Bonethief, I don’t want to see a Horror just yet.” She then noticed as Yvette stopped leaning against the wall. “I think someone is coming. In fact, it sounds like four people running.” That news surprised her, and she could see Yvette was surprised as well. They were only expecting three, according to the Goddess.

Just at that moment, she saw a gentleman her grandfather’s age appear, and stop just for a moment, looking at them. He then pointed at them, and said to someone behind him, “Right here. James, you get Marlene in there first.” She then noticed the gentleman looked as if he were looking a bit upwards. “Ma’am, are you fleeing from something? Good, follow my student and his friend.”

Soon, she saw a young man close to her age escorting a young lady into the tunnel. The second they entered, she saw a surprised look on the ladies face, before a calming voice radiated in the tunnel. “*It is alright. What you had heard on the news about them is a lie.*” Obviously, the Goddess was reassuring the young lady, who she had just notice was dress . Then, the man, who must have been a college professor, escorted another lady in who must have been her age or older.

She noticed a look of panic on her face, but it quickly disappeared as a loud thud started to approach, as well as a hiss and footsteps. Quickly, Alexandra said, “Hurry, head towards that light at the end of the tunnel, and pass through. It will take you to the only safe place for right now.”

She watched as they headed to the point, but the man stopped for a moment and

looked at her. “I take it you are Alexandra. Your grandfather was a friend of mine, and he warned me this was coming. It wasn’t until your friend approached me that I knew the full extent, and The Goddess. I know we are safe with you.” It was comforting words to hear, and knowing that this man knew her grandfather was also a good sign.

She stopped thinking about that as Yvette hurried them along. “We can talk more about this later. We need to get back before we are spotted.” She nodded, and helped the others get closer to the light.

As the others disappeared into the light, to be sent back to Ehn’gha, she and Yvette froze when then heard a woman’s voice shout. “I know you came down here Amber. I know you came here with others Lord Mantorok wants gone. And don’t think someone will come to your aid. I’ve already masked myself from everyone’s view, except my minions that is.” She dared a look back, and saw first a bone thief appear in front of the tunnel, and then a Horror. Then the woman appeared, dressed in a business suit, and a look of anger crossing her face. She noticed that all were looking straight ahead, but the woman she recognized as Lucinda Tepes.

She wondered if the illusion of a wall would hold up, especially as Lucinda turned her head to face them. This close to escape, they could jump through and hopefully seal the tunnel before any of her minions reach them. For a moment, she stood still, chancing a glance and seeing Yvette did the same. For a tense moment, she saw Lucinda look at her, and stare for a moment, before turning her head again.

Once Lucinda’s head turned away, she quickly motioning to the light, and she and Yvette headed through. As they entered, she let relief pass over her, knowing that soon, they would be home, and safe. She also hoped that it would give them time to figure out their next step.

Chapter 3: Reality Is Veiled

Richard Cale paced nervously around the portal generator room, as he and Edwin Lindsey awaited the return of the others. After the close encounter with the Bonethief, he was nervous for the safety of the others. That nervousness was only made worse because he knew his wife was outside the safety of the underground city.

As he paced, his father-in-law tried to calm him down. "Richard, calm down. I'm sure they will be fine. Alexandra knows how to defend against these creatures." He nodded, but it still didn't relax him. He had only recently seen a bone thief of Mantorok, and the creature's abilities had surprised him.

He stopped for a moment, and then said, "I know Alexandra is able to do it, but I didn't see Yvette take a gun with her. She is better with firearms." He watched as Edwin nodded. He then looked at the portal they had gone through. "Bonethieves of Mantorok can speak, even outside a host. Who knows what other secrets they have? Plus, if that is the case, then what do Horrors and Lesser Guardians look like."

Before he could continue, a noise made them all turn to face the other portal that had appeared. He had remembered The Goddess had said another chosen one would be appearing, but he could not relax as the man came in. There was a look of fear on his face. Also, from what Richard could tell, the man was dressed in the outfit of a Catholic Bishop. Before anything could be said, he heard Edwin say, "I'll try to calm the man down. He may have been startled by your sword."

Richard nodded, and turned his attention back to the other portal. He was sure if the man had heard the news over the past few months, he would think that he was a killer. It was the surprise Mantorok had set up for when they succeeded in stopping Pious Augustus. Over the months, he had thought about the fallen centurion, and wondered if the man had been fooled in the long run.

He was brought out of those thoughts when people started to come out of the other portal. The first ones that appeared was someone who he only met in passing, as he left the teachers building at the university, and he was escorting a young lady in. He raised an eyebrow briefly as he noticed her attire. It was almost as if she had been taking a nap, or, given the appearance of what she wore, possibly 'entertaining'.

The next one through was another young lady, and from what he could judge, she had to be close to his age. She also looked like she had been dressed for a nice meal. He also noticed a look of apprehension on her face, but it disappeared as she softly said, "The news had been lying. The news had been lying."

Soon another person came through the portal, and Richard was glad to see it was the professor he had met earlier. He extended his hand and smiled. "Professor Marsh. I'm glad you were able to get here. I shudder to think what would have happened if we had not found this portal device."

He could see the man was about to speak, but held up his hand as Yvette and Alexandra came through. Both seemed out of breath, but he went to his wife's side. Before he could even ask, his wife said, "They had been pursued by a Horror, and other things. Lucinda Tepes was also nearby."

He looked over at Alexandra, and she nodded. "She was. However, I think she

was pursuing Amber.” He followed as Alexandra pointed at the woman who was closer to his age. Hearing that made him worry, especially if the woman had been a friend of the woman who served Mantorok.

He was about to ask her about that when Professor Marsh spoke up. “Don’t blame her. From a quick glance, I could see her being pursued by Bonethieves, if your description of them was accurate.” He nodded in understanding, and then motioned for his father-in-law to close the portals.

Once the portals were closed, he watched as Alexandra motioned everyone over. It was time to introduce everyone, and since there were a few more people than they expected, it was definitely needed. He stood next to his wife, placing his arm around her waist. He remained silent as Professor Marsh, who understood that this was an introduction session, motioned those he arrived with over, and his father-in-law brought the Bishop over.

Once they were all in a group, Alexandra started. “I’m sure some of you have a lot of questions, but you were guided here for a reason. Since you might not know who we are, allow me to introduce you all. First off, my name is Alexandra Roivas. Six months ago, my grandfather was killed by otherworldly forces. I had found out the truth about what had happened, and found the man who had my grandfather killed, with the aide of my friends, Richard and Yvette Cale.” He nodded when Alexandra pointed to the two of them.

At that point, his wife took up the tale. “My husband and I had discovered a message to us in one book Dr. Roivas had written, and we had come to America. By the time we had arrived, he was dead. We then came across the truth, something my husband and I had been aware of for some time, but not the whole story. As we learn about, we found out about those otherworldly forces, and how they manipulated human events to the ends. We fought to stop them, only to find out we had been manipulated as well.”

Richard then took up the tale. “After that, we had to go into hiding. The force that had manipulated us made it so that people thought we killed Dr. Roivas, as well as the aliases of the man who had done it. It also framed us for other murders.” He paused for a moment, and then continued. “It also started hunting down people who were a possible threat to it and its priestess.” He motioned to his father-in-law and the African-Canadian man. “That included my father-in-law, Edwin Lindsay, and Michael Edwards. As time passed, we found others, and others found us.”

With that, he watched the Professor he spoke with earlier step forward. “Well, my name is Percival Marsh. I am a professor of ancient religions at Howard Phillips University. Dr. Roivas had been a good friend of mine. He had warned me that something might be coming, and when he died, I started to worry. Until you had shown up, Mr. Cale, I had started to wonder. The young man and the one young lady are both students at the school. The young man’s name is James Mulroy. The young lady is not one of my students, so I don’t recall her name.”

At that moment, the young lady spoke up. “My name is Marlene Jacobs. This Horror creature killed a ..” Richard noticed her hesitation for a moment, and felt she was trying to cover something up, as if they all would not approve. “..fellow student. I only realized what it was because my great-grandfather spoke about the things. If it had not been for James and Professor Marsh, that thing would have killed me.”

Then, the other lady spoke. "If it was anything like those things that were chasing me, then I'm guessing the woman I thought was a friend isn't. My name is Amber Snow. I'm a Wiccan High Priestess, and those things that were chasing me were acting on orders from Lucinda Tepes." Richard gasped when he heard that. He now knew why Lucinda didn't go after him when he was sure she spotted him, but he was unsure of the reason.

He was pulled out of that thought when the Bishop finally spoke. "I had been instructed to make my way here, within the past hour, by his Eminence. I am Bishop Phillippe from Oublie Cathedral." Richard gasped when he heard that. He should not have been surprised that the place was still around, or by the fact that someone from there had come at this time. However, he held his words as the man continued. "I fear the Pope is dead, killed by demons, but since you said a high priestess of evil was behind it. I have no doubt she is right in front of us now." With that, Richard saw this new man point right at Amber, and he was certain this was the last thing they needed.

Edwin Lindsey could see what was about to happen. It had been well documented in history at how the Catholic church tried to abolish other forms of worship. He had also noticed other things in all the religions, and those outdated views were about to threaten things here. He quickly stepped between Amber and Bishop Phillippe, and held up his hands. "Now wait a moment. You can't make that conclusion. Do you think the Pope would have sent you here if he thought it wasn't safe?"

The man shook his head, and before he could say anything, Edwin continued. "Over the years, both before the incident at Angkor Wat, and after, I had found many things out. One of those things was the way the church used to destroy old religions. However, I've also discovered many similarities in all those religions. They all seem to have a devil entity, and they all have a name. The only one I ever found out about that didn't have a name for evil is Wicca. Also, if she was evil, she would not be here, nor would she have been chased by those creatures."

At that moment, he was surprised to hear the college professor speak. "Bishop, it is true. I have come across a few religions that describe certain deities the same. They also describe them in the same way. There were a few that didn't feature them, but they were quickly destroyed. So far, of all the religions that do not feature this entity, only one still survives today. That's Wicca. However, I don't know the reason why."

Edwin was stunned when Amber spoke up. "It's because in Wicca, we don't believe in giving a name to evil. We believe that giving evil a name only makes it stronger. It ended up that was the reason Lucinda had wanted to see me. She knew that fact about Wicca, and wanted me to introduce this deity that she worships." He noticed her shudder for a moment. "It was like the name sent a chill up my spine. It was..." He could tell she was fighting for the right words, or that she knew them and didn't want to say them.

At that moment, Edwin was surprised to hear the Goddess speak. *"It was as if she was putting a name to that evil force. Sadly, it is true. Mantorok is a great evil. And this is not the first world he has manipulated into a world of living death. However, this is the first world that has been able to stop him. It will not be easy, since he and his followers are already vilifying you."*

This puzzled him for a moment, but his answers came when one of the others came running in with one of the radios they had to keep in touch with the outside world. The

young man looked shook up, but it took him a moment to calm down, especially when he saw the outfit on Bishop Phillipe. “Everyone, you won’t believe what we just heard. There is news that the Pope is dead. Listen.”

They all watched as the man turned up the radio, and the announcer spoke. *“Again, this breaking news. It was just announced that in Amiens, France, the Pope was found brutally murdered. His body appeared to have been stabbed several time. There is only one suspect, and that is Bishop Phillipe. The Bishop had been head of the restoration efforts at Oublie Cathedral. Of the other members of the church there, they said that the Bishop had been acting odd since the restoration started. The church had been the site of various satanic worship, which they could never fully flush out. It is believed that the Bishop had joined them, and murdered the Pope in hopes of destroying the Catholic Church.”* As the man spoke, Edwin heard the hiss that was the tell tale sign of a bone thief. It was obvious to all but the new arrivals that the claim was false.

The announcer then continued. *“In similar news, there was a brutal murder at Howard Phillips University. One of their rising sports stars was also found brutally murdered. The police are currently investigating, and found out that two students there, Marlene Jacobs, and James Mulroy, were apparently together on the brutal murder. Various witnesses have sited that they had been plotting this for weeks. There is even reason to suspect they are in a cult with one of the professors, Percival Marsh.”* This news was met with gasps of disbelief. It wasn’t a surprise to think a story like that would appear, but he was sure it was set up when they realized all three were gone, since the Professor didn’t even know the young lady’s name until now.

There was a brief pause in which he heard someone, most likely the young man named James Mulroy, say, “No one could believe that. We didn’t even have any classes together. In fact, today was the first time we ever spoke to one another.” Edwin could tell that even the tone reflected his anger at the situation. However, that was not the end of it.

When the announcer spoke again, it seemed to serve the worst blow. *“Finally, a gruesome scene which almost lead to the murder of one of the world’s most prominent businesswomen. Lucinda Tepes narrowly avoided being killed today by a mad woman.”* There was a brief moment of silence, and the announcer spoke again. *“Reports recently came in where a crazed woman attacked and slaughtered many people in a resturant, all in an effort to kill one of the most powerful women in the world. Lucinda had been able to escape, but was clearly unnerved by the incident.”*

Almost instantly, they all heard the voice of Lucinda Tepes. *“I had no idea the woman was that crazy. It is even more startling that it was someone I thought I knew. I had no idea she was so unstable that she would have killed those people, and threaten me. She even shouted something about me ruining this world.”* He looked around at the others and could tell of those whom he knew look disgusted. He could also tell that Amber was about ready to lash out.

Before anything could be said, the announcer was back on. *“Luckily, Lucinda had managed to escape unharmed. There are no words to describe the slaughter of those that died. The unfortunate thing is that the suspect fled before police arrived. She is considered to be armed and dangerous. Contact the police if you see her.”* After that, the announcer gave a detailed description of Amber Snow, and by the sound of it, some

details would have only been known by a true friend. Instantly, the new arrivals realized how bad of a spot they were in. In a matter of moments, the shock passed, and everyone wanted to know what it meant for them.

Everyone was silent as the news sank in. Professor Marsh realized what it meant. If they went back to the school, they would be arrested, and no matter what they said, they would be locked up, or killed. He sighed and then said, "Well, I had figured when we came here we might not be able to head back. I just didn't realize it would happen so quick."

He was not surprised when James looked at him. "You had a feeling something like this would happen." He nodded, and the student sighed. "Well, you did have the feeling. I just thought we would be able to recover some of our stuff before that would happen."

They were all comforted when Dr. Edwin Lindsey spoke. "It happened to all of us. You would not believe how fast things locked down on me after word came out on the murder I had been blamed of. That quick, everywhere I called home was under lock down. I made my way here, which was easier said than done, but thanks to a prior visit, I easily got here."

After a moment, Professor Marsh remembered something said earlier, as well as talks he had with Dr. Roivas. "Wait a moment, you said a moment ago that you were familiar with similar deities. How similar were they?"

He watched as their new friend thought about it for a moment. Then, the man spoke. "They were almost all the same, but I can say for certain which one appears to be the original. It was a temple in Angkor Wat. In its depths, I came face to face, so to speak, with Mantorok. At that time, many of us thought that the evil being name Pious Augustus had bound Mantorok there, but we had all been wrong. It had all been part of the plan to remove his rivals."

He was almost stunned when the young lady, Marlene Jacobs, said, "You mean Ulyaoth, Xel'lotath and Chattur'gha. My great-grandfather often told me how they had infiltrated a cathedral in France. He even dismissed a guardian of one of them. Come to think of it, he said it was in Amiens."

It was at that moment that Bishop Phillippe spoke up. "That was the cathedral that I was restoring. I had heard the tales, but until now, dismissed them. Could that be possible for this Mantorok, and the other forms?"

For a brief moment, he remembered something in one of his books. However, before he could even bring it up, he heard the ethereal voice of the Goddess speak. "*All of those forms are one in the same, and no matter where Mantorok is worshiped, and what name, the being is one in the same. However, unlike the other ancients, Mantorok is devious and cunning. In fact, I don't doubt that Mantorok even hid any references to any weaknesses.*"

After hearing those words, the item he remembered came to the front of his mind. "Wait a minute, I remember reading something in one of the legends. It's been a while, but I remember something about a relic, and it supposedly could destroy a certain deity. I just can't remember all the details." He tried to focus on the story, or where he read it, since he was certain it was important.

As he thought of where he read that, he watched as the lady known as Yvette Cale walk out of the place they were with her husband. He started to wonder where they would go, and remember they had been here for six months. Down, in the underground city of Ehn'gha, a place where another civilization lived countless ages ago.

At that very moment, he remembered part of the story. It had mentioned an underground place, but he couldn't remember if the relic was hidden in one, or needed to be used in one. He looked at everyone, and said, "I think I remember where the story was, so we can try and verify the facts."

He was almost startled when Alexandra said, "Good. I know you brought some books with you. Which book, and what page?" He watched as she started rummaging through his duffel bag. He knew in the bag were at least two of his books, but neither would help.

He quickly took the bag from Alexandra and shook his head. "It's not in there. In my haste to get here, and thinking there would be a chance to head back at the time, I left the book in a hiding spot in my office." He lowered his head, and sighed. "And if they think I was leading some kind of cult, it's probably sealed for investigation." He sighed, and then smiled. "At least the hiding spot is not easily accessible. We just need to figure out how to get at it." He watched as Alexandra just nodded, and then started talking with Dr. Lindsay, and the man named Michael Edwards.

Lucinda Tepes entered the corporate building near the college. So far, it was the only thing that was going right. She had a chance to get rid of a few threats to her master, Mantorok, but all had failed, and the back-up plans were in motion. The down side of those was that some that weren't loyal minions of Mantorok were involved. It was a shame that they couldn't get all of the police and media under his control, but Lord Mantorok had stated that would cause some people to take notice.

Now, she had to quickly deal with the concerns of some employees. Many of the people who worked for her did not realized that she was a willing servant of Mantorok, and only saw her as the image she put forth; one of a benevolent businesswoman. Since this was the image she put forth, she knew she had to appear shaken up by what had happened.

She quickly held up her hands, causing all the employees to stop in their tracks. She studied them all for a moment, before giving the statement she had been rehearsing for when she got here. "Before anyone can ask, let me explain what had happened was very disturbing. I had been very lucky to survive, but it had been close. It was unnerving that and old friend had cracked, but the police are doing what they can to bring her to justice."

She looked around for a moment, and noticed one figure seemed totally quiet about it. She gave a slight nod, and noticed the figure start to head to a special elevator. She then returned her gaze to the employees. "Right now, I want to get some rest, and forget this incident. I want all my calls held, and anyone who bothers me will be fired."

She then headed toward the elevators, glad that everyone moved out of her way. She seemed confident that everyone knew their place. They all had to serve her and her master. She made note to notice those she was certain had suspicions, figuring it was

soon time to change their minds on the matter.

As she walked towards the elevator she wanted, the man she nodded to earlier joined her. She knew he was loyal to her and her lord as she heard a hiss. She summoned the elevator, and then placed her arms to her side as she spoke. "I think we'll need to replace some employees soon. I'm sure you know which ones."

As the elevator arrived and they entered, the man nodded, and spoke with a slight hiss. "Yes. I shall have a few of my brethren visit them tonight." As the door closed, and she pushed the special button, the figure looked at her. "I take it your meal time plans were a disaster."

As the door closed, and the elevator descended, she nodded. She was aware at how he was staring at her, but she remained calm. "The ambush had failed, and Amber escaped. She was our best way to get Mantorok into the Wiccan beliefs." She sighed and then continued. "I had pursued her, but she followed some people into the subway. All three had been at the college earlier that day. I had sent a Horror after the girl in that group earlier, so I hope they all ended up killed. If not, the news will make sure everyone is after them."

She glanced over at the man who was with her, who only looked forward and nodded. "I know you'd prefer all threats eliminated. However, if any of them have links to the Roivas family, they will not be easy to eliminate. Even the Cale's are difficult to find. I'm still waiting to hear from one of my brethren who is posing as an officer."

She nodded, and stood still as the elevator continued its descent. She had been aware of that relationship, and it did seem odd that no word from the Bonethief was received. For a moment, she came to the conclusion that the Bonethief had failed. If it had succeeded, she was sure she would have had their heads in front of her. She then looked at the man. "Anything else I should know about?"

She was hoping there was nothing else, but the figure just said, "There is more concern about the item. It is the only thing that Lord Mantorok can be destroyed by. He's also concerned about a growing area of..." She cut him off as the elevator stopped, and the doors opened. They were finally at the temple.

She started out, and headed right over to the outfit she wore down here. She then glanced back at the man. "It can wait until after the meeting. Now, I must prepare. Lord Mantorok prefers traditional attire for meetings." She then picked the outfit up, and started to change into the traditional outfit of a High Priestess of Mantorok.

Robert Ossein quietly watched Lucinda prepare to speak with Mantorok. He was aware that she didn't mind changing in front of him, since he knew she thought he would not be interested in her. It was a mistake in her thinking, but he wasn't about to correct her. It was true that in his normal form, he would only view her form as a potential host, but when in the body of this male, he understood the enticement of her curves.

He then brought his mind back to the matters at hand. The ancient item came to his mind. They needed to find it before any of Lord Mantorok's foes found it. For years, the location of that item had been removed from every cultures legends. At least that is what he had believed. However, now that the other Ancients, except for one, were gone, they started hearing word that one tale had survived all this time. It was most likely shrouded by the veil by the now dead Ancients. It was also located somewhere on the

school campus. It was part of why Lord Mantorok wanted Lucinda to focus on the school, so they could find this tale. However, now they had an idea, but they could not be sure if it was still in the same spot or not. His brethren on the police force had already told him that the book wasn't in the office, but he was not certain.

He was brought out of his musings when Lucinda cleared her throat. He glanced at her, and noticed she was in the proper attire. He nodded, and then followed her into the main temple. He carefully followed, remembering that while he was the elder of his kind, she currently held the rank. However, his current host allowed him to enjoy the view, since the sheer robes didn't cling to her. That was due to the fact that Lord Mantorok had linked himself to ideas of fertility.

Once they were in the underground temple, he watched as Lucinda started the summoning spell to bring Mantorok to the temple. It wasn't like she really needed to. All of his minions knew that Mantorok lurked all over the planet. It was just the illusion that mankind didn't know that part of the planet's crust was Mantorok. The only ones who knew the truth were either followers of Mantorok, or followers of the other Ancient, and the latter were usually eliminated. Of course, the recent group were managing to hold on to their lives, and since that was the case, then the item that could stop Mantorok had to be found and destroyed.

He stopped the musing when the spell ended, and the various worm like appendages of Mantorok rose out of the central pit. While they had no eyes, each turned to face Lucinda, maws open, and they heard Mantorok's unearthly voice. *"You did not manage to kill them yet, but you have made them outcasts. Do you know where they are?"*

He watched as Lucinda stood, and shook her head. "I'm sorry, Lord. They all escaped, but I feel they have joined Roivas and the others. Even the Wiccan has made her way there. However, they are outcasts now. People will be watching for them."

He was not surprised when Mantorok did not make a sound. He knew the Ancient was deciding how this would play out. Finally, Mantorok spoke again. *"It complicates our plans, as now they may have all they need to defeat me. They are only lacking the one artifact needed. However, the location of it is not in their hands. It is still in the office of the Professor."*

Robert gasped at this. "My Lord, where could it be? No one has found it yet." Then it dawned on him. The only reason he could not see it was that The Goddess was hiding it. "So she has it veiled." He heard a rumbling acknowledgement come from Mantorok.

It was then Lucinda made a key statement. "I shall go get it then. I'll be able to get in there and see the book." At that moment, he saw her cringe, as the maws lunged at her, but stop. While Lucinda was a good High Priestess of Mantorok, she did try to overstep her bounds.

The maws stayed in place as Mantorok spoke. *"No. It will ruin all I have planned. You will be needed to do another task. The Goddess has increased her hold on Ehn'gha, and I need you to work on a way to break the barrier. However, my servant,"* As those words were said, Robert felt the focus on him. *"and one of my lesser guardians will wait for the one who will come for the book."* At that moment, runes appeared on the ground, and soon, a huge mass with many tentacles, and maws all over its body appeared.

It was a lesser guardian of Mantorok. He smiled, thinking what it might do. He even watched as some of the tentacles went to grab Lucinda, but stopped. It knew she wasn't its prey. However, he did wonder what it would do to whomever went to get the book, and looked forward to seeing it happen.

Chapter 4: A Clue In The Darkness

Alexandra Roivas sighed as she led the way to the living area in Ehn'gha. Normally, showing new arrivals the living area wasn't a reason for her to sigh. This time, however, she was going to get the Cale's, and she had a feeling it would be an inconvenience. She had seen Yvette pull Richard out of the building where the newly discovered teleportation structure was, and she was certain what they were doing. This caused a bit of envy in her.

The Cale's were married before they met, but ever since the events that forced them all down to Ehn'gha, she could tell they were a loving young couple. She had hoped, after meeting them at first, that she would be able to find someone, but that had been destroyed by Mantorok. The evil Ancient even managed to take away their chances at a normal life, but the Cale's tried to keep some aspects of normal life.

While she did admire that, she had also accidentally walked in on them, and it was embarrassing for all of them. Now that she was approaching with others, she had to warn them. Without pausing, she shouted, "Richard, Yvette, we need to talk. We may have an idea on stopping Mantorok." She didn't know if they heard her or not, but if they caught those words, they would hopefully be ready to meet them.

As they neared, she looked at Professor Percival Marsh, and calmly said, "This is the general living area. Everyone has a room, and those rooms appear to be furnished for those living there. Some of the things are transported here by the magic of the Goddess. The only down side is none of these rooms have doors. Usually, the sleeping areas are furthest from these doors."

She noticed the Professor nodded in understanding. "That seems understandable. I also take it that the Cale's are the only married couple down here." She nodded, and a look of understanding crossed his face as they neared the place the Cale's resided in. She wondered if he realized why she called out the warning that they were coming.

Just as they reached the door, she saw Richard and Yvette coming out to meet them. If anyone didn't know any better, they would have thought nothing was out of the ordinary, but Alexandra knew them better. While they all did what they could to look well groomed, Alexandra noticed small details that told her that her friends were having one of their rare moments alone. The only obvious sign that they had hastily dressed was the fact that Yvette's shirt, while it fit her when she was younger, now was worn as a crop top, and the knot was not completely tied. It was Richard who spoke first. "Alex, your timing is impeccable." For a moment, she blushed, but she quickly regained her senses.

She was thankful, however, when Michael spoke. The Canadian born firefighter had always shown a no nonsense attitude when it came to the Ancients. "Professor Marsh had been telling us about a book that has a clue on how to defeat Mantorok. He started telling us about it after Yvette pulled you out of there."

At that moment, she saw both Yvette and Richard blush. However, Michael either didn't notice it, or just stayed in an almost military mindset. "The only problem is, the book is hidden in his office."

In that moment, the couple had stopped blushing, and were focused on the topic. Yvette was first to speak the obvious complication. "And no doubt the office is being

searched by the police. If this book is well hidden, then we have a shot at recovering it.” She then saw the redhead shudder. “It still sends chills through me that bonetheives have gotten everywhere. If one of them finds the book, all might be lost.”

This time, it was Professor Marsh who spoke, and his words put them all at ease. “Not this hiding spot. It’s a bit tricky to open. However, they might be able to find it if they use some other means. Hopefully, we can get to it before then.”

Alexandra took over from there. She had been thinking this out the whole time they were walking over. “We can do it, but it will have to be a two person team, and when security is at its lowest. That will most likely be this evening. I’ve even thought about who that team should be, and it will be Yvette and Michael.”

She was stunned when a shocked look crossed Richard’s face. She didn’t think he would take the news badly. “Wait a second. I know Yvette can handle herself, but we are only now seeing how Mantorok’s minions are. Isn’t there another choice? And why not have me go up to claim it?”

She looked him in the eye, and calmly said, “Simple. Out of all of us here, who are prepared to handle these things, Yvette and Michael are not high on any watch list. You ran into a bone thief coming back, and I’m wanted for murder. Our new arrivals can’t go, for similar reasons. That leaves Yvette and Michael. You may not like it, but it is the only option.” She waited a second, since she was certain he was trying to figure out any way for someone else to go. Honestly, if she was in his shoes, she would be thinking the same thing.

Michael Edwards could understand why Richard was on edge. He had seen Yvette go through the same worries when Richard ventured out of the underground city, usually on less risky missions. With this one, the odds of an encounter were high. They were going to sneak into a public building, into a place guarded by police, and then sneak out. In all honesty, if it went smoothly, he was sure something was wrong.

Finally, before Richard could voice another objection, which he was sure Richard was trying to figure out, he spoke. “Listen, Richard, we are already ready to do the infiltration. On one of my trips, I managed to get uniforms for police officers. One male and one female. It’s the only way this can work, and it may lead to the defeat of Mantorok. Plus, if it makes you feel any better, I will keep a close eye on her, and keep her from trouble.”

He watched as Richard relaxed a bit. If one didn’t know Richard by now, they would think he wasn’t worried at all now, but Michael had known better. It wasn’t until Yvette put her hand on Richard’s shoulder and said, “Don’t worry, Hun. I’ll be fine. Besides, even if there is trouble, I’m sure it’s nothing we can’t handle. Besides, I’m sure we’ll be armed, just incase one of Mantorok’s minions show up.”

He then looked at Professor Marsh, who just nodded and knew just why they had turned to face him. The man pulled out a tablet and pen, and started sketching the office they were going to search. “The hiding spot of the book is hidden in one of the shelves. You may need to remove the books from that shelf, and then open a hidden panel in that shelf. Once you do that, you’ll find the old book.”

He nodded, thinking it was a bit too simple, but thought better than to say that. If anything would make a mission go wrong, it was a statement like that. He looked at

Yvette, and they started heading out of the living area. As they walked, he just said to her, "I have the uniforms up in the mansion. We'll have to get them on right away, and head right out. We'll cast a temporary invisibility spell so we can make it there unnoticed."

He watched as she started to walk faster. "Good idea. Where exactly are those outfits?" He knew why she was asking that. He figured she wanted to get in costume before he did. There was only one person who she would change in front of, and that was her husband.

As they neared the way up to the mansion, he just said, "I have the costume in the master bedroom. You head up first, and I'll be there in a few." He watches as she then ran towards the long stairwell. If they had not been able to extend the protection to the mansion, he would have been worried. However, the illusion was still enough to keep curious away, and the barrier kept any of Mantorok's minions from entering the building.

He waited for a few moments, wanting to give Yvette some time to reach the building, and get changed. He needed a few moments quiet. It was a habit he had gotten into during the war, and it came in helpful a lot now. It allowed him a few moments to build up his sanity. He knew that was not a problem for Yvette, since she saw things for what they were. It was another reason why Yvette was the best choice for this mission.

He then started to head up to the mansion, when he was approached by one of the new arrivals, James Mulroy. Just from their first meeting, he knew the young man was a favorite student of Professor Marsh. Just from the way the young man carried himself, he had a feeling about what was coming. However, he decided to ask the obvious question. "Is there something you wanted, James?"

He was not surprised when the young man nodded. "Yes, sir. I want to help in this task. I've been in Professor Marsh's office a few times. I can help you find the hiding spot, and help you get by campus security." Michael just looked at the man, hoping the man wouldn't need to be told why his help would be a bad idea.

After a few moments, the young man didn't move. Michael signed, and put a hand on James's shoulder. "I'm sorry. While the offer to help is appreciated, I have to turn it down. You do remember that they are looking for you." He saw the man was about to protest, but he held up his hands. "Listen, I know you didn't do anything, but you must be someone who Mantorok and his followers perceive as a threat. With them recently naming you as linked to a 'killer', you are high on the alert list. So far, I'm not on any list, and Yvette is low on the priority list. That will make it easy for both of us to get in."

He was surprised when the young man sighed. "I'm not happy about it, but I understand. Let me just give you some advice. The building Professor Marsh's office is in is connected to the drama departments building. Maybe that can be useful to you, just in case." Michael nodded, and then watched as the new arrival walked away. He didn't feel good about it, but it was for the best. They needed this mission to succeed. He then headed up to the mansion to prepare for the mission.

Bishop Phillipe sighed as he walked through the underground city of Ehn'gha. He was sticking to the areas that Dr. Lindsey had pointed out, but his mind was still trying to wrap its way around all he had to take in. It was still hard to believe that not to long ago, the Pope himself had revealed one thing, and now he had so much more dropped on him.

It would take time to process all this information, especially that his faith had been corrupted. Before, he would have sworn it was nothing but blasphemy, but now he really started to think about it. The Church itself was not without sin. Even he questioned why the Inquisition had happened. While he saw the point in saving heretics from being punished by God, it could not be right to torture them into belief.

He sighed, and took another look around. As the archeologist had told him, the city looked to be ancient, yet it still looked like it was new. It was a wonder, but Edwin had said that was because of The Goddess. It was also thanks to The Goddess that they understood one another, even though he was speaking French. It was another one of the things he had to wrap his head around.

Thinking about all of these things, he was almost surprised when someone spoke to him. "Bishop?" He turned to see who had spoken to him, only to find the one young lady who had arrived with the others. He had noticed it before, but he didn't want to comment on her outfit, which seemed to suggest she had been planning to sin.

He politely nodded. "Yes, my child. How can I help you?" He was ready to still live up to the duties the priesthood demanded of him, even in what had to be very dark times.

He was surprised when the young lady just looked at him and said, "You said you were restoring Oublie Cathedral." He nodded, remembering that she said her great-grandfather had been there many years ago. "I was just wondering what you knew about it. Growing up, before my great-grandfather passed, he had told me about stories, about how under the cathedral, there was altars to those Ancient things. He even said how the place had been haunted by other creatures, but he had defeated them. I was wondering if it was true. Even though he had said he had defeated them, he always insisted that it was only a delay."

He nodded, and sighed. He had not really expected this, but he was also aware of the sordid past of Oublie. He had heard it growing up, and during his time in the church. "I wish I could say it was pleasant, my child, but it was not. Oublie had been under a shadow for many centuries. I had heard of the young savior growing up, and was told of how he had saved the Cathedral from a true devil. However, the rumors of demons still persisted. The old tower remained sealed up. It was said that the old tower held many dark things, and that it was only sealed off by a priest."

He sighed again, "At least it had been sealed off by a priest. I somehow recall that the tower had been open when I was a child. But, I kept thinking of the story of the young man who defeated the evil, and the other man that had helped him." He recalled the way the second man had been described, and realized the image was similar to Richard Cale.

He watched as the young girl, Marlene as he recalled from the introductions, nodded. "Yes, my great-grandfather spoke of that to his dieing day. He remembers how shocked he was at finding the altar rooms, one where he said some sacrifices had been made. At times, he even thought the cathedral had been built off the old temple."

He wanted to protest after hearing that, but she continued. "However, if corruption had already been there, it could have been built when the church was built." While it didn't sound much better, given the recent revelations, it was plausible. "What I do know, is that my great-grandfather often said that some of these horrid things knew

how to hide and how to corrupt. The field hospital that was there turned into a killing ground. Soldiers were being used to feed some monstrosity, that he killed. He even described that the one altar, which was over a chasm, still seemed to see use”

Bishop Phillipe gasped when he heard that. He was certain he didn't see that altar, but had heard about it. From all he knew, it had been destroyed, but if she was correct, and given what had happened, could that altar still be in use; and if so, it gave light to some of the disappearances that happened in Amiens. For a moment, he forgot himself, and spoke out loud, “Mon Dieu, how these pagans have soiled your house.”

At that moment, he was stunned when another voice said, “Maybe you should not say that word. It makes you sound like they all work together.” He glanced in the direction of the voice, and was surprised to see the Wiccan, Amber Snow, approaching. However, after his momentary lapse, he noticed that she did not seem upset. In fact, she seemed quite calm about it, given everything they had just heard. He then wondered if she had a better grip on things, given her faith, than he had.

Amber Snow had been walking around the small area of the underground city that they had been told about when she heard the Bishop speaking with someone. At first, she was sure he was trying to convert someone to his religion, but then she heard mention of an altar in a way that any religion wouldn't condone. At least any religion in the current era would condone, but those in the past would. It is what had prompted her to make the remark she had.

When she had seen the Bishop's face, however, she felt a bit sorry for him. It was his strict religious ways that was making it hard for him to accept this. Since her religion did not have a name for evil, that was the only thing making it hard for her to accept this. Learning that the evil might have a name, as she kept telling herself, was the only difficulty, everything else was easy by comparison.

When she had gotten to those talking, she crossed her arms in front of her, in a casual way, and then spoke. “While you might not believe this at first, Wicca does not practice human sacrifice. In fact, I think all structured religions around today frown on that. Wiccans practice a oneness with nature. I think it was that misconception that caused many Catholics to view us as heretics.”

She watched as the Bishop blinked, and then nodded. While he said nothing more, it was the young lady, Marlene as she recalled, that spoke. “I think you are right. My great-grandfather had said it was the altar for an Ancient deity, but he could never recall the name. It was as if the name couldn't remain the same.” For a brief moment, Amber felt a chill go through her. She had heard stories from others of her faith of tainted areas, where some old name is whispered through the air. Those that had been in those areas always mentioned some names, names she didn't want to admit knowing. The names were evil names, and evil should not be named.

She inwardly calmed herself down, and then spoke. “What you speak of, that altar, had been encountered by other Wiccan, but we quickly leave those areas. We can sense the evil there, and we avoid it. I will not lie that there are some that would embrace it, but given our beliefs, it is folly to do so. However, they also don't give that evil force a name. To do so is to give it a terrible strength. We also know that the evil is an Ancient one.”

In that instant, she heard an ethereal voice say *“Your beliefs are mostly right. Amber, your religion has been the only one to remain pure, untainted by all of the Ancients. Most of the Ancients do not care at all about the people of this world, and would do all they could to remove them. Some are impassive, but the ones I have fought to contain and defeat control people for their own amusement. However, not naming evil is just as dangerous as naming it. To be afraid of a name gives that being just as much power as not naming it. Without the other Ancients around anymore, Mantorok will keep trying to insert himself into you religion.”*

She heard Bishop Phillipe gasp, and then say, “Why would this thing do that?” She wanted to know that to, but was still afraid to say the name.

She was horrified when the voice answered. *“Months ago, Mantorok completed a plan to use humans to destroy the three Ancients that had been imprisoned in your world’s space. Many eons ago, Mantorok and I had corralled three of the worst Ancients, who always battled, and those battles destroyed many civilizations, not just here. Mantorok and I were not allies, but we knew that these battles would destroy all. What I had been unaware of was that Mantorok’s reasons were selfish, and that he plotted to have some humans kill the Ancients. Now Mantorok wants this world, and he is escalating his actions. If we do not stop him soon, his true followers will overtake this planet. Mankind will die out.”*

There had been an audible gasp come from everyone as the last words echoed in her mind. She then heard Marlene ask the question that had been bothering her as well. “Wait, isn’t that what the others had wanted, to destroy mankind. Why didn’t Mantorok team up with them?”

She was not surprised when Phillipe answered the question. “Maybe it is because that evil usually does not trust anyone, especially those who shares its interests. No doubt these other Ancients were easily imprisoned because they warred with one another. And if Mantorok is stepping up his own plans, that means that he feels there is no opposition, or he must do it...”

Amber was surprised when she finished the thought the Bishop had started. “because opposition that shows up now could be devastating. The Goddess spoke to each of us, or made sure we could get here for some reason. We must be able to stop...” She paused for a moment, and then made herself say the name. “Mantorok. We just don’t know how yet, but we can stop him.”

In that moment, she heard another gasp. She glanced in its direction, and was surprised to see Marlene running off. She wondered why the girl decided to run off, but Phillipe answered her unspoken question. “She had just seen the boy she had arrived with speaking with someone. She had rushed off, possibly moved by the way that Goddess spoke.” She noticed that he didn’t seem to have much difficulty saying that, make her wonder if it was because of his beliefs to begin with.

After a moment, she was stunned when he just extend a hand and said, “I apologize for earlier. I was still in shock for what had happened to the Pope, and all this strangeness. It is not a good excuse, but it is an honest answer. I should rethink my views, with all this happening.” For another moment, she wondered if she should accept the handshake, but then she remembered that they were in this together. The only right thing to do was to accept the apology.

Lucinda Tepes left the elevator, now back in her business suit, with Robert. She was happy that her meeting with her master, Mantorok, had gone so well. She had suspected so much, even during the time when the Roman Centurion was doing what he thought was for one of the other Ancients. She just couldn't find any reference to a weapon to defeat her lord. Now, Robert would be able to stop them before they found the location of its hiding spot. She still wished she could get it, but Mantorok had his reasons.

She was brought out of those thoughts when the receptionist came over. All she knew for certain was that the girl was a part time worker, who went to Howard Phillips University. She also had to be new to the company, since all the other receptionists knew that when she was in the temple, she was not to be disturbed. Of course, most of them believed she was in an important business meeting. All of them were unworthy of following Mantorok, and if they suspected, that had to be dealt with immediately. However, this moment required staying calm. "Is there a problem," she paused to glance at the woman's name tag, "Roberta?"

The woman looked at her nervously, and then glanced back at the reception desk, and Lucinda saw the officer there. For a moment, she was concerned, since not all the policemen in the city had been taken over by Bonethieves. Some were still human, and had to be handled carefully. It was made worse when the receptionist just said, "He arrived not to long ago, and said he had a few more questions for you. I had just arrived, and I had been told you were not to be disturbed. I tried to ask him to come back later, but he wouldn't leave." She then looked around for a second, and softly said, "I'm also worried there may be a problem. I've been hearing a strange hiss lately, like there is gas leaking in. I keep hearing this odd hiss everywhere."

Lucinda did not react to the statement, but studied the receptionist for a moment. She would have to be dealt with, and very soon. She then looked at the officer, and heard the tell tale hiss of a bone thief. She looked at the officer, and said, "You wanted to speak with me, Officer?" She discretely held up her hand, and waited until the receptionist was back at her desk. Once the girl was seated, she softly said, "Well, what have you found out?"

She watched as the officer looked around for a moment, and then looked at her. He removed his shades, revealing his scarred eyes. "The initial search revealed nothing, however, the investigation is being led by a human. He is holding off on a full search, since he is trying to verify if the search is needed." She waited for a moment, hoping the creature had some other news to tell her.

After a moment, she frowned and said, "I see. You will need to recruit more, and maybe make sure that the one in charge corrects his error. We need to find what is there, even if it is protected by Mantorok's ancient foe. It could lead to them finding the item to defeat him."

After a moment, she took a deep breath, still upset about how things had played out. She did not need failures to happen now. Her company was now a world wide force, since it had bought up all the proxy companies set up by Paul Augustine, which would

allow world wide access for Mantorok's minions to destroy the unworthy humans. Now, with that small group running about, she needed to make sure no one could stop her lord. They had to exterminate all those sensitive to the veil, since they could oppose Mantorok.

With that last thought, she looked over at the receptionist. She was attractive, and no doubt could go anywhere on the campus. She was also sensitive to the veil, since she could hear the bonetheives. The young girl had to go, and maybe she was the answer to the problem. If they couldn't get to the police officer before night, then the only solution was to replace the lady, and send her in. She smiled at the thought of what she was going to do, and motioned for the girl to come over to them.

Robert watched for a moment as Lucinda beckoned the receptionist over, a little unsure of why she was doing that. After a moment, the reason came to him. As the confused girl started to walk over, he whispered, "I take it you want me to possess her." She discretely nodded, and he waited at her side.

When the girl had reached them, he could see she was nervous, and afraid. He loved fear, it made it easier to possess them. When they were scared, it was easier to shred their souls. However, he remained quiet, knowing this was best. The girl looked at him, then at Lucinda, "Is there something I can help you with?"

He almost smirked when Lucinda smiled what had to be a sweet smile at the girl. "In a way. Robert was a bit concerned about those hisses you are hearing, and want you to guide him around, pointing out the sources. I'm sure you'd agree that we don't want gas leaks here." He could see the girl nod briefly, and he was sure it was because of rumors. He made sure he had rumors going around of how malevolent he was.

He glanced around, and then noticed the one room nearby. It was empty. He could easily do what he had to do in there, even though part of him wanted to do it in front of everyone. He motioned to her, and said, keeping the hiss out of his voice. "We'll start in here." He watched her enter, noticing every curve in her body. He was sure he would enjoy everything about that body, once he shed this one for hers. Robert enjoyed possessing the female body, since it seemed to have more power, especially when it came to controlling males.

He then entered the room, and closed the door behind him. For a moment, all was quiet, and then he let out the hiss. He watched as she looked around for a moment. Finally she spoke. "I do hear it in here. However, I've been in here a few times before, to fetch stuff, and never heard it." He wondered if she would catch on before he released the body he was in. It was already dead, and he was sure the reveal would make her scream in pure terror. That was one of the best things about shedding a form.

After a moment, he was glad to see she was looking at him. She was still oblivious to what was going to happen. "I think its near you. That's still odd. I've..." He shed the body at that moment, causing what remained of the body to splatter all over the room, and some of it hit the girl. He then locked eyes with her, letting her fragile mind absorb the creature he was. He knew she was taking in his odd horned skull, his thin body, and his blade-like arms.

He was not disappointed when she screamed. It was a primordial scream, one that came from as far back as when humans had just started walking on two legs. It was also a scream that if it went on too long, would draw people to it. He quickly pounced, expertly

landing on her shoulders, and gouging his blades into her eyes. Humans didn't know how true it was that the eyes were the window to the soul, and as his blades made contact, he shredded her soul.

When ever a bone thief shredded the soul of their next host, they learned a lot about them. He learned that while this girl dressed proper, she longed to, as humans would say, let her hair down. There were other secrets, like feelings she had for a boy. He would use all this, taking all the information in as he got used to the body. He would, no, she would use all this.

She then left the room, and looked straight at Lucinda. Roberta, as she was now known, smiled. "It's done. I've take over her body. Mind you, I'll need to clean up first before I do anything."

She watched as Lucinda nodded. "Then you better leave now. Once you clean up, you need to observe that Professor's office. What ever is hidden in there, there is no doubt that someone will come to get it. I don't think it will be Professor Marsh, but it might be Alexandra Roivas, or one of the Cale's that comes for it."

Roberta nodded in understanding, but then smiled a wicked smile. "Shall I kill them, or have the guardian kill them?" She could just see the ways she could use this form to detain, and then kill Mantorok's enemies.

She watched as Lucinda thought for a moment, and then said, "All but one. We will need one, maybe to lure the others into the open, or even to learn their plans. Make your call when you see who arrives. However, you can be certain that whomever it will be, it is one that isn't going to draw a lot of attention." For a moment, she thought about it, and then remember which two were low on the watch lists. She nodded, and then left, hearing the guardian behind her, in the floating ball of light form they all took for traveling. The time to strike would be upon them soon.

Yvette Cale carefully searched for the hiding spot in Professor Marsh's office with Michael Edwards. They had lucked out when they arrived at the building. The only thing barring their way into the office had been some police tape. The office didn't even appear to be searched at all. However, they remained clear of the windows, and door, which was not easy. The office, with all of the items in it, did not allow them many ways to be out of sight. Also, once the sun finally set, they could not risk turning on lights. It would be advertising they were there.

It was also why they had remained quiet since they got there. They had barely fooled a few campus security people, and they didn't want to chance another encounter. At least most of the students had thought they were campus security. This time, however, they needed to speak. "Michael, any sign of the hiding spot yet?"

She felt disappointed when he responded. "No. We need to find it soon, though. I don't think we want to run back as late night falls. I've got a feeling that more creatures are out at night anymore."

She nodded, and the froze as she stumbled across the hiding spot. She quickly reached in, and pulled out a small, leather bound, book. She quickly opened the book, and was not surprised when she saw the contents. In it, in writing that translated itself on the

spot, she read about the item to stop Mantorok, where to find it, and where it had to be used. "Michael," she excitedly said, "I found it. It says what we need to find and where it has to be done."

As she looked at the book, she heard him come over to her. "That's good, but why do I have the feeling it isn't going to be that simple." She looked over the pages, and realized he was right. It wasn't going to be that simple. It was going to be very complicated. From what she could see, it seemed that so the betrayal couldn't be discovered, various precautions were made to make the item very difficult to find.

She put the book into a case they had brought with them. With hopes, anyone who saw it would think it was a case to carry crime scene evidence. "You're right. It isn't going to be simple. The clues to the item are hidden in various locations, like a scavenger hunt. It's amazing they seem so far apart, but after seeing the latest discovery in Ehn'gha, I'm not so surprised."

She watched as he nodded, and then glanced out the door. "Coast looks clear, we should be able to make it out of here, and off the floor." She nodded, and made sure her hat was on. It was sad to say that it was the only part of the costume that fit. She had found that out trying to fasten all the buttons, and right now, certain ones were ready to go flying.

They left the office, and started down towards the stairs out. Neither of them had an idea of any alternate routes, so if something went wrong, they would need to think very quickly, otherwise, they would be in trouble. That fact worried Yvette, recalling some of the methods that the Lesser Guardians used to move. If that were to happen, they would need to run fast, since the method would allow the creatures to pass through the walls.

She was almost lost on those concerns when she noticed a college student entering the floor they were on. Almost the second she saw her, something told Yvette that something was wrong. She noticed Michael had slowed down, and he could tell something was wrong too. He softly said, "Something doesn't seem right. Be ready to head down this hall, just in case." She nodded, since she was carrying the case with the book.

She stayed back, glad that the brims on their hats kept part of their faces hidden. Michael also had the commanding tone, since he had been in the military. Since it was a student, she was certain that would be enough to make the girl leave. "Miss, there is an investigation going on here, and I advise you to leave. Official police business."

She waited for a moment, discretely looking at the hallway. Something in her told her that she may have to run in a moment. She also noticed that the girl wasn't moving. She was standing her ground. She also noticed something else in her stance. The stance didn't seem right for a college student. Something in that stance hinted at a confidence that comes with years of age. It also seemed like her body seemed alien to her.

All of sudden, she knew what she was looking at. It was then confirmed, when the girl spoke with a hiss in her voice. "Honestly, I know you aren't police, Mr. Edwards. Now give me the book, and maybe Lord Mantorok won't kill you, yet." She was possessed by a bone thief. She recalled what her husband had said about his earlier encounter with one, and realized how bad this was.

In an instant, she saw Michael pull out a handgun, which he had hidden, and heard him say to her, "Go." She turned down the hallway, and ran, not sure where to go. As

she ran, she heard him yell. “It is only one of you, and I’ll shoot you before you can even leap at me. You won’t get the book.”

She ran to the end of the hall, and almost froze as an orb of purple light passed her. She knew what it was, and was almost horrified when it materialized. It was a shapeless blob, with tentacles everywhere. Several of them grabbed Michael before he could turn to shoot, and some were heading for her. She turned and ran, towards another door, one that looked a little out of place.

As she ran, she heard the bone thief start to run down the other hall, the one near the steps. It was shouting orders. “Kill him, and nab the girl. She has what we need. You must keep her alive. Lucinda wants a word with her.” She swallowed hard, and almost screamed when a tentacle grabbed her arm. As it did that, she heard a horrid ripping sound, and a scream from Michael. She knew what had happened.

She didn’t take time to morn though, as the tentacle around her arm tried to tighten. In a swift moment, she ripped her costume open, and spun out of the top. She then ran through the door she had seen, with the case. The door lead to a hall into another building, and quickly got out of sight of the door. She heard a loud scream, which only told her that the bone thief knew she had gotten away. However, she wasn’t sure for how long.

She could only hope it would take them a while to realize where she had gone, but now her dilemma was how she could get back home. If she left the building like she was now, she could be facing charges. She was lucky she only lost her top, and that she had something on under it, but that wasn’t enough to avoid a charge of indecency. She was in a dilemma, unless she could find a more covert way. She made her way down the hall of where she was now, and stopped long enough to look back. While the door she had come through was closed, it had a faint purple glow in it, and she knew she was in trouble. She was scared now, but she held enough strength to keep herself from screaming. This had been good, since at that moment, she felt someone grab her from behind, and pull her into a door. She didn’t know who had grabbed her, but for some reason, she was certain it wasn’t worse than what was coming for her.

Chapter 5: A Dark Path Begins

Marlene Jacobs had been relieved when they had found Yvette Cale. Ever since she and James Mulroy heard about the mission, she had been having feelings of dread. These feelings weren't uncommon to her. In fact, she had been trying to shut those feelings out for years, making them another reason for her promiscuous behavior. Since what had happened, she didn't focus on doing that anymore, although, now that she was starting to interact with James more, she saw him differently.

She put those thoughts out of head for a moment, and looked at Yvette, now realizing that the woman's top was gone. James had stepped away, trying to listen for the other person that had been on the mission, Michael Edwards. She could also tell Yvette was upset, so she tried to calm her down. "Mrs. Cale, Yvette, calm down. What happened? Where is Michael? And what happened to your outfit?" In part, she had expected that the British woman would not go without a bra, but she noticed that it didn't look too conservative.

She waited until Yvette calmed down, which was relatively quickly. "Michael and I had found the book in Professor Marsh's office, in the hiding space he described. However, just as we left, a bonethief appeared, in a student's body. It summoned forth a Lesser Guardian. Michael tried to fight it off, while I ran. His orders, mind you."

At that moment, she saw James turn to face Yvette, trying hard to look at Yvette's face, and not her body. For a moment, Marlene thought that was very noble of James, and wondered if James would show that same consideration to her, if they were in a similar situation. He then asked the question she had started wondering, "What happened to him? Did you two get separated?"

At that moment, she saw Yvette look down, as if she was ashamed of what she was about to say. "The Lesser Guardian killed him." She wanted to ask what that was, but Yvette was already supplying an answer. "Lesser guardians are creatures that serve their Ancient. Each have a form that somehow reflects their guardian. This one was a writhing purple mass, with hardly any definite form, except for tentacles."

For a moment, images ran through Marlene's mind. Thanks to some of the things she heard the nerdier people talk about, she was certain she didn't want to be caught by the thing. She looked around the vast room they were in, and then motioned to a far corner. "Well, if that thing is back through the door, we should head through the costume shop here. It is a veritable maze of costumes used in the schools performances, and we might be able to nab some to take with us. I'd suggest you getting one right now, Yvette, or any authority figures we come across will be arresting you on sight."

She watched as Yvette nodded and then looked over the outfits. In a brief moment, the redhead had tried on first a top too small for her, and then one that fit correctly. Just as she got it on, she heard a voice on the other side of the door. "She has to be down here. All these doors are locked, and that hall dead ends. We had some of my brethren possessing officers and all stairwells since we arrived." She glanced at Yvette, and noticed the scared look in the woman's eyes. The voice had to be the person possessed by a bonethief.

In an instant, she motioned and Yvette and James followed her. She was familiar with the costume shop, and knew the room by heart, since she not only helped with the

costumes, but had some rendezvous in the room. In mere moments, they were at the other door, with a few costumes in hand. She had opened it quickly, and they were heading through the door when she noticed a purple glow coming from the area they had been in.

She didn't bother to close the door, but quickly ran with James and Yvette. She let James lead the way, since he was able to find the way to the subway station. He had been able to spot the officers, and the only door they had neglected to guard. That had been because they didn't even know about it. The darkness that had now covered the campus was a help. Before, she had not ever worried about the dark, but since the whole incident with the Horror, and this, she was spooked.

The subway station ended up not being a far run, but before they had only gone there because a Horror had struck the car, disabling it. She had been surprised to see that the car had not been towed yet. The third time they passed the wreck, she looked at it again, wondering why it was still there. A loud rumble told her the reason. Something picked up the car, and heaved it aside. She let out a startled scream as James shouted, "Damn. That Horror is still here."

She heard Yvette shout, "Keep running. It has to stop to launch its lightning attack." She nodded, and kept running. She chanced a glance back at the thing, and saw the purple lightning begin to form. She kept one eye on the creature, and one on the others. Seeing the spark hit just a few inches behind her made her thankful that Yvette knew about the thing.

She glanced forward again just as they were entering the subway terminal. She inwardly felt relieved as they neared the hidden tunnel, but was stunned when James and Yvette stopped short. She almost ran into them, but stopped to see two police officers looking right at them, both with guns raised. It was something they didn't need, not so close to their way back to the underground city.

Fear engulf Marlene as the lead officer spoke, and there was no hiss in his voice. "Hold it right there. All three of you are wanted fugitives, and you are coming with me." She slowly raised her hands as the others started to do so. She wanted to protest, but she didn't know how much time they had. She didn't know how fast Horrors moved.

She heard James try to calmly say, "Officers, there has been a terrible mistake. We are not criminals. Some one set us up." It was at this point the lead officer advanced, but she noticed something odd about the other officer. He had not lowered his gun, but that gun wasn't being aimed at them. It seemed to be aimed at the lead officer.

The lead officer was reaching back for a pair of handcuffs as he advanced. "Yeah right. I heard all about that cult stuff you were doing. I'm guessing Mrs. Cale was one of your cult...." The look that crossed his face was of pure terror. He aimed over their heads at something behind them. "What the hell is that?"

At that moment, everything happened. She heard the Horror roar, just as two shots were fired. The first was the officer firing at the Horror, and the second was the second officer. His shot severely wounded the lead officer, and Yvette lead them through the illusionary wall into the tunnel. This was followed by a hissing voice saying "Follow them. We need what they have, and make sure one stays alive." The other officer had been a bonethief. At that moment, she realized that the officer was dead the second they had shown up. Even if he had been able to take them into custody, the bonethief would

have killed him. That thought alone gave her the extra speed they needed to make it to the teleportation spot, and hopefully before any attacks reached them.

Edwin Lindsey kept his hand on the controls on the teleportation device. It was the only way the portals would remain open, and it left him a little nervous. No one had known that the two new people, James and Marlene, had insisted on using the portal. All they had told him was that it was to help his daughter and Michael. This, of course, made him want to do this, but the fact that he had to keep it open, for hours now, worried him. It was still possible for something else to travel through one of the open portals, and if he was forced to close them. He shuddered after wondering about that.

It was during that moment that he heard footsteps. For a moment, the worst possible scenarios played through his mind. Some sort of minion of Mantorok, or possibly the woman they all knew had to be one of his followers, Lucinda Tepes, had found a way through the portal. It wasn't until he looked up, and saw Richard Cale entering the place did he relax a bit. He didn't totally relax, since he could tell Richard was puzzled by what was going on. "Edwin, what are you doing here?" He could hear the concern in his son-in-law's voice, and noticed that Richard had moved his hand to his sword, which he always carried anymore.

He took a deep breath, and knew this would be tough to explain. However, he was certain the reasons would calm his son-in-law down. "The two new arrivals, James and Marlene, had asked for me to open the portals. Both seemed to think that they needed to go help Yvette and Michael."

He watched Richard blink in surprise. "I knew James was keen on helping, but why Marlene. When she arrived, she wasn't really in attire for doing any sort of fighting." He knew what Richard was referring to. She had looked, to use an old term, like she was going to entertain a gentleman caller.

Edwin shrugged, making sure he kept his hand on the device. "Well, if they could really help keep Yvette safe, don't you think it was wise to let them go through?" He got a look from his son-in-law that made him regret what he said. "Sorry, I know she's with Michael, and that they aren't ready for what ever they might run into. I just had a bad feeling that if they didn't go, we might not see any of them again."

He was startled by the next words that were said, since it was from someone he didn't expect to hear. "Who might we not see again?" He then saw Alexandra Roivas, entering the place with Bishop Phillipe. He had obviously been talking with the new arrival, and saw her give him a slight frown. He could not believe how worn the young woman looked, and the recent turn of events didn't help. "Dr. Lindsey, what is going on?"

Before he could even answer, the portal came to life, and Yvette, James and Marlene came running through. As the first two fell to their knees, obviously exhausted from running, Marlene just said between gasps for breath, "Turn it off, there are some creatures behind us." He did so quickly, removing his hand from the controls. In the briefest of moments, he saw a blade coming through. It was cut off as the portal closed, and they all heard the unmistakable hiss of a bonethief.

As the hiss faded away, he saw Richard helping Yvette up, trying to comfort her. He noticed that Alexandra was helping James up, and Bishop Phillipe was helping Marlene

up. The costumes that they had brought with them remained strewn on the floor. It wasn't until Bishop Phillipe spoke that the question on all their minds was asked. "What happened, child?" He had to give credit to the priest, whose tone was calming, and let people relax a bit.

It took a moment, but Marlene answered the question. "James and I convinced Dr. Lindsey to let us go through the portal to try and help. We had managed to make it to the campus, and sneak into the Drama departments costume shop. It wasn't far from Professor Marsh's office. We had just gotten to the door that was closest to the office, when we discovered Yvette standing there."

It was Yvette who continued the tale, clinging to her husband, and Dr. Lindsey gasped as she told the tale. "Michael and I had found the book, but we had gotten ambushed. A bonethief had possessed one of the girls there, and they brought this hideous tentacled mass with them. It was one of Mantorok's lesser guardians. Michael had told me to run, and the creature killed him."

He noticed Alexandra stagger at that news. He wondered, for a moment, if it had been because she was supporting James, or if it was linked to Michael. Maybe she had started developing feelings for the older man. He didn't wonder about it much as James continued the tale. "We quickly made our way back to the station, but we almost were caught between two police, and the Horror that chased us earlier. What was worse was that one of the officers was a bonethief."

All the news was too much, and he could see it on the faces of the others. The fact that things had started to escalate like this could not bode well for the human race. They needed some hope, something to tip things in their favor. In fact, it was something that could offer that very hope that Michael and Yvette had gone for. He knew that his daughter had said they had found the book. Deep down, he hoped they had not lost it in the race to get away from their pursuers. In light of what happened, he didn't want to ask.

After everyone was silent for a moment, he saw Bishop Phillipe lower his head, and start to pray. He watched as everyone did the same, even though they were probably not of the same religious following. Each one of them was paying respect to their fallen friend. After a few moments, he watched as his daughter got up, and walked over to him, She handed him the very book they had to get. "He told me to go, since he knew how important this was. I just wish he hadn't died so violently."

He watch as both Alexandra and Richard walked over to her, and held her for a moment. He even did the same, since they were all linked by the events half a year ago. They were all ones who fought the first wave of the darkness that threatened to take over the world. Now, the second wave had started to come in force. He disengaged from the hug, noticing Alexandra had done so as well, and watch his daughter and son-in-law leave the room. He looked down at the book, and knew he needed to decipher the text inside.

He looked up as Alexandra said to everyone, "It would be best if we all retired for the night. A lot has happened, and we need to rest. Something tells me tomorrow is going to bring more things, and I'm certain they won't be good." He watched as they all headed out to the living quarters, and followed. He looked down at the book again, and he knew he would not fall asleep that night. The book would keep his mind awake for hours.

Lucinda Tepes was kneeling in the small shrine to Mantorok that was in her home. Her spacious mansion was in an isolated area, since she valued her privacy. It was also at a point where Mantorok could be directly connected, even though it was thousands of miles from his core. It was where she could commune with him, and now she was thinking about their plan.

Her master had known that something dangerous existed in the world. It was a relic of the only other Ancient left, the one known only as The Goddess. Her relic could kill him, just as he had orchestrated the death of the lesser Ancients with their own relics. Since no one knew exactly where that relic was, the only thing they could do was destroy all clues of where to find it, and all who could use it.

For a moment, while she focused on the plan to stop them, she almost didn't hear Roberta Ossein enter. She didn't have to turn to know who it was, since only the bonethief was allowed in the shrine. Once the footsteps stopped, she opened her eyes, and spoke to her visitor. "Well." It was all she had to say, since she knew a report on tonight's plan was forthcoming.

She relaxed when a slight hiss came from the girl as she spoke. "I had arrived at the Professor's office to search for the book, but Michael Edwards and Yvette Cale were coming out. They had been dressed as security people." While the bonethief could not see her face, Lucinda had raised her one eyebrow. She had not expected the Canadian firefighter to be in the area.

She turned her head to look at Roberta. While the one name was not expected, the fact that they were coming out of the office was not good to hear. "Did they find the book?" The book was the first clue to locating the item that would defeat her master.

She remained calm when the Bonethief continued. "They had, and I had the Lesser Guardian attack. Yvette ran, while Michael defended. The Guardian quickly ripped him to shreds. It then grabbed for her, but all it got was her top."

For a moment, Lucinda recalled the imagery that Mantorok had installed in many minds of what his Lesser Guardians would do. No doubt that when the Guardian had caught her, it took care of her in the same way. "I take it that it grabbed her again after that, and you have the book."

Her blood froze when Roberta continued. "She had escaped. She must have stumbled upon some of the others you had been told to take care of." She had not thought that they had joined up with them. Last she knew, the Horror was still hunting them, since the bonethieves had not reported their capture. Then the news got worse. "The Horror had spotted them, but they had been cornered in the subway they were in earlier. It had been a normal police officer partnered with another of my kin. The police man had to be neutralized, since it had seen the Horror, and they escaped."

In that moment, she saw the human face Roberta had go pale in fright. After a few moments, she knew why, as a voice echoed through the room. *"This is not good. Those individuals should have been killed, and that book destroyed. If the Goddess is involved, then plans must be escalated again."*

Lucinda turned to face the pit that was part of the shrine, and saw one of Mantorok's massive tentacles, like a huge purple serpent, over her. For a moment, she felt

like it would gobble her up, for failing him. She spread her arms, in a pleading way, and addressed her master. "Lord Mantorok, if they have the book, is there anyway we can anticipate where they will need to go. I am certain their base is under the Roivas Estate. I had heard that the one we killed was..."

Her lord cut her off, but not terminally. *"Yes, I know. No doubt they had been working to increase The Goddess's barrier. Until we can find a way past it, they are safe. The only way we can strike them is when they venture out. It seems now is the time to call forth my Gatekeepers."*

Both she and Roberta gasped. Gatekeepers were one of the most powerful creatures aligned to any Ancient. They were the only creatures that could summon and control other creatures, and the cost of using their magic was a bodily strike. Some even liked to have zombies around, killing one to conjure another being. They also had a history of striking at the loyal followers of Mantorok, even if they were not supposed to strike them to power their magic. She looked at her lord, and said, "Lord Mantorok, where are you going to be releasing them?"

For a moment, the tentacle wavered, which she was sure meant Mantorok was thinking. *"In the catacombs of Oublie Cathedral, in the Forbidden City, and in some abandoned buildings world wide. I shall also have the Bonethieves hold an immediate conclave. They are in control of the largest church in the world."* Lucinda smiled as she realized that the age of Mantorok was now beginning. At this rate, even though things weren't fully ready, the forces against Mantorok would fall. She then wondered what they would think of this move.

Alexandra Roivas woke up as the news began. It was something she had conditioned herself for. She pulled the portable radio closer to her bed, figuring the first thing she would hear would be about last night. What she did hear was a bigger surprise. *"In an almost amazing turn of events, due to death of the Pope in Amiens, France, the Catholic Church had an immediate Conclave. This unprecedented event led to the election of a new Pope."*

That news caught Alexandra off guard. She wasn't Catholic, but she knew enough about their church to know that Conclave would happen fifteen days after the passing of the pope. The fact that it happened immediately reminded her of something the Goddess had stated last night. She sat up, saying to herself, "Mantorok has full control in the Catholic Church." She knew the concept would be unthinkable, not only to the loyal followers of Catholicism, but to the world in general. However, with things happening this way, it could mean no other thing.

She snapped out of those thoughts when she then heard another bit of news. *"In related news, the number of Satanic Cult attacks have increased. Various killing have happened, not only in Amiens, but in every country in the world. It is believed Bishop Phillipe, the Bishop in charge of the restoration of Oublie Cathedral, is leading the cult activities in Amiens. It is also believed that he is contacting other cult leaders worldwide."*

Alexandra gasped when the newscaster said his next piece, even though she

expected the news. *"It is believed one of those cult leaders is the recently exposed leader Professor Percival Marsh. He is believed to have launched an attack on some police officers who had been pursuing his followers, and searching his office. One officer who had barely escaped the crazed cultists had stated that they had just brutalized a body to beyond recognition. The only evidence at the scene was a brutalized corpse, and the top of a security uniform."*

Alexandra had turned off the station at that time. She couldn't stand to hear anymore lies. All through the newscast, she hadn't heard it, not until the end. The telltale hiss of the bonethief. She had been so shocked by the news, she had forgotten to notice the discomfiting sound. Now, she had to find the station that was telling the real news. Five months ago, she had stumbled upon the show. Before her grandfather's death, she would have thought it nothing more than conspiracy nutcases. Now, she realized that they were more tuned into the truth.

After a few moments turning the dial, she found the show she was looking for. The program had been a lone person, who seemed to come up with crazy conspiracy theories. However, since the events of the past months, she found the man to be remarkably accurate. *"For the past few months, I've been telling you that something is not right in the world. We just received more proof of that today, folks. How in the world would all those priests know to be ready for a Conclave. I have little doubt that they were planning to pick a new pope for some reason. Maybe the one that died was not in on some big conspiracy. It also makes one wonder if the Bishop accused of murdering the pope really did kill him."*

Alexandra gasped at the implications that theory implied. If it was true, which she was certain of, it truly meant that Mantorok had control of one of the world's oldest religions. She shuddered, realizing that it meant that Mantorok's minions could attack unsuspecting people. Bonethieves could possess millions of people. Then she recalled that the Goddess had said that Mantorok had infiltrated most of the religions in the world, and struck down most of the pure ones.

Her mind was going down that path so far, she almost missed the next item. *"Also, there has been reports of mass hallucinations in several cities in the world. Well mass hallucinations can't explain the videos coming in. I, and several of my colleagues, have received videos of strange creatures. Some have claimed that the videos are hoaxes, but given that these videos are from security cameras, home video camera, and stuff which cannot be hoaxed, not in this short a time. Police are saying that what is going on is cult activity, but given all the strange things happening now, I highly doubt it."*

She turned off the radio, and shuddered. The truth about all the claims, and this dire news, was obvious. Mantorok had escalated his plans. She had already heard about the Horror, and the Lesser Guardian. What else could there be? She started getting dressed, and then paused. There was another creature, which she remembered reading about in the Tome. Gatekeepers.

She finished getting dressed in a hurry. It didn't take too long, since coming down the Ehn'gha, she stuck with the black tank top, and black pants. Once she was dressed, she headed out of her residence, knowing they needed to call a meeting. Everyone down in the city had to be made aware of the situation. Many had left loved ones behind when

they came down to the underground city.

She was moving so fast, she almost ran into the two people coming to see her. She paused, realizing it was both Professor Marsh, and Dr. Lindsey. Both of them had a smile on their faces, which told her that they had not heard the same news she had. She took a deep breath, hoping to calm herself down, and hoped she was interpreting their smiles correctly. "Do you two have good news?"

It was Professor Marsh who answered her question. "Indeed, Ms. Roivas." For a moment, she wanted to remark that this wasn't a classroom, but the tone in his voice just seemed to relax her. "I had woken a few short hours ago, and Dr. Lindsey had told me the book had been recovered. We have been looking over it, and we have a feeling of where the path begins."

That news did make her smile. She then motioned for the two to follow her. "That is great news. In fact, you can tell us all at the meeting. There is a great deal to talk about today." She then lead the way to the meeting center, making sure to relay to all in the area that an important meeting was about to happen. In fact, she was sure the good news would off set the disturbing news she had already heard, which would be good for the morale of all.

Amber Snow had been surprised by the news of a meeting. It was true that she was still meeting people in the underground city, but they all seemed pleasant, regardless of their faith. None had ever said anything about a formal group meeting, and she first thought that was going to happen at this meeting. That thought got put aside when she saw the full number of people that had made it to the city.

She joined one of the people she had met already, and sat down just as Alexandra Roivas and both the Cale's walked in. They were in the center of the structure, which she now thought looked similar to the Roman Coliseum, but not as huge. Alexandra raised her hands, and Amber noticed the hush that came over the room. It added to the growing thought she had that Alexandra was the leader, even though she was younger than the Cale's. "Everyone, I have both good and bad news. I must warn you, the bad news is dire."

Amber heard a slight murmur start amongst the people, and then Alexandra spoke, obviously trying to stay calm. "First off, during a mission last evening, Michael Edwards was killed by one of Mantorok's creatures." She heard everyone gasp in shock, and she could tell they had all known the man of African descent. "We all know how brave he was, and how kind, and this was a tragedy. However, it was also a sign of greater tragedies."

Silence filled the room again, and she wondered what could be worse. It was Richard who spoke next, and his tone was grave. "Some people have reported seeing other creatures belonging to Mantorok out there. One reporter, who seems to be able to see through the veil, mentioned it. Since we've had eyewitness accounts of Horrors, Bonethieves, and Lesser Guardians, we feel that these are Gatekeepers. Very few of us have ever dealt with Gatekeepers, but they are dangerous. We do not know if they can get into Ehn'gha, or not. It is our hope that they cannot. We can only hope that any others who are like us here, are staying safe."

All of sudden, Amber's thoughts went to her parents. Would those creatures

target her parents? She knew they didn't approve of her beliefs, and they had not talked in years. She did hope that they didn't believe the news that claimed she attacked Lucinda, even though she wanted to now.

She stopped thinking about that kind of thing when Yvette spoke. It was surprising that woman spoke so calmly, especially after what they had all learned. "There is some hope. The item that Michael died in the process of retrieving, has been deciphered, and will lead us on the path to finding the thing that will end Mantorok. Hopefully, we will be able to claim the item before the death and destruction becomes too much." Amber felt better when she heard those words, and she could tell everyone felt hopeful at those words.

It was then apparent that the meeting was over. Everyone started to rise, and leave the meeting area, but she stopped. She was looking at the group, and saw Yvette beckoning her over. She also noticed that Richard was also beckoning someone over, and she saw it was Bishop Phillippe. There was some purpose that they were being motioned for, and she figured it was best to find out why.

Once they were with Alexandra, Richard, and Yvette, Alexandra spoke softly. "Dr. Lindsey, and Prof. Marsh both figured out the clue. According to it, the item requires someone of a pure religion, which we all believe means you, Amber."

Amber was stunned by that revelation. She wasn't stunned by the fact that her religion was pure, since they had told her that much when she arrived. The fact that this was found out after she had arrived was what stunned her. She also realized that this meant that she would be one of the fighters against the creatures they were now hearing about. She tried to speak calmly, but she heard a bit of fear in her own voice. "Does this mean I'll be fighting those creatures?"

She was somewhat comforted when Richard Cale put a hand on her shoulder. "Yes, it does. It will not be easy, and I know that for a fact. We all do." That last statement was accompanied by a sweeping gesture. "However, all clues point to a location two of us here might be familiar with." She noticed now that Richard was glancing at Bishop Phillippe.

She noticed he seemed a bit confused by this, and then his eyes went wide with realization. "You mean we need to go back to Amiens?" When Richard nodded, she heard the religious man sputter out the obvious question. "Why?"

It was Alexandra who answered the question. "It seems the item we seek is located in the underground part of Oublie Cathedral. Richard is familiar with some of that area, but if you noticed anything odd, it would be helpful." At that moment, without a word being said, Amber realized that the Bishop didn't know of anything odd. For a moment, she felt like disaster was looming for all of them again.

Yvette Cale felt disheartened when Bishop Phillippe finally spoke. "I don't know of anything odd, except the area I ran through to get to that portal. It had been the first time I had even been down in those depths. For years after World War I, a good portion of Oublie Cathedral had been shut off." It was a distressing statement, and everyone looked crestfallen.

Everyone, but her husband, that is. She noticed a thoughtful look on his face. He was thinking about something. After a few moments, he finally spoke. "There is one

being I think can answer the question. Follow me." She watched as he headed out the meeting area, and followed.

Their little group moved through Ehn'gha, passing some others who had made their way down to the city. As she passed them, she could see concern on all their faces, for the friends and loved ones they had left behind. It was natural, now that Mantorok's equivalent of Lesser Guardians and Gatekeepers were roaming about. At least no one was trying to run up to save them. She was certain that very few people would be able to handle it.

She then saw two people who might be able to handle it walking over to join them. Marlene and Jacob had come to her aid last night, and didn't seem too shook up over seeing the creatures. That made them special in her mind. While they hadn't been called over after the meeting, they seemed to join the group like they had always been part of it. She was almost expecting the questions that came out of James's mouth. "What's going on, and where are we going?"

Yvette wasn't sure, until she saw the building they were approaching. It was the first building of Ehn'gha that she, her husband, and Alexandra had entered. "That's the array building." She looked at her husband, and said, "What are you up to?"

As they entered the building, her husband answered. "Remember when we found that new rune a few months ago." She nodded, and noticed that Alexandra shuddered a bit. The incident had involved the two of them, exploring what at that time had been under Mantorok's influence. A zombie had caught them off guard, and while it had not wounded them, it had left some of their clothes in shreds. Alexandra had not liked ducking in shadows, and Yvette hadn't been too thrilled about it either.

She stopped thinking back to that as her husband continued speaking. "I found the codex that same day. It was a rune for 'Spirit'. When paired with the Summon Rune, we can call forth someone who had passed. A bit like a séance, except this is guaranteed to succeed."

It was at that moment that Phillipe spoke up. "I don't think you should try this, child. Séances have been known to open the gates for demons to invade. You can not be certain that this will work." If she had not been already acquainted with the Goddess, and the spells they had used in the past, she would have had the same concerns.

She looked at her husband, noticing that they had entered the array room. He was already setting up the runes, a slight benefit that since the events a few months ago, they didn't have to go up to the towers. She then asked the question she was sure was on some of their minds. "Are you going to summon the spirit of Paul Luther?" She noticed that Phillipe's eyes went wide at that moment, certain he recognized the name of the Franciscan monk who was killed in Oublie Cathedral.

As Richard set the next to last rune, she heard him respond. "No. We are going to summon a spirit who would know the area better. One who would have been aware of an area that might house the item we are seeking for." For a few moments, she thought about what he said. There were very few people they had known that had been in Oublie Cathedral. One was Marlene's great-grandfather, but he only had a passing knowledge of the place. It was possible that the Custodian of Paul Luther's time could know, but they didn't know his name. It could have been the page from Charlemagne's time, but she was certain he wouldn't know. Then, she recalled who was the only person who might know.

At that moment, her husband had cast the spell using the array. She felt her apprehension rise, especially as the form appeared in the center of the array structure. Unlike past spirits she had seen, this one was not a light blue color. It was yellow in color. She then noticed that the being was dressed as a Roman Centurion. He also had his helmet off, and she noticed that the face was not she had expected. The last time she saw the figure, his face was skull like. Now she saw the bearded face of a seasoned warrior. This was Pious Augustus, before he had ever touched the cursed artifacts.

Everyone gasped at the sight, the loudest coming from Alexandra. Yvette was impressed when her husband had not gasped, but it had been him who summoned the spirit. After a moment, the figure knelt and said to Alexandra, "Greetings and thanks, Alexandra Roivas. I know the last time we met, you freed me from the darkness I had been serving. I hope I can repay that service now." Even though the figure was dead, she sensed no malice in his voice, and wondered if he was truly reformed from his dark path.

It was Alexandra who finally broke the silence, and, again, Yvette was impressed when her friend nodded. "You had been a great fighter and warrior, Pious Augustus. We took your dying words as a warning, and now we have need of information from you." She had to give Alexandra credit for saying those words, since the last time they met, Pious and Alexandra were in a battle to the death.

She watched then as the spirit lowered his head, almost as if what he was going to say was going to be poorly received. "I fear the information you seek, I can not fully give you. I can only give you an area I believe it is in." At that moment, she almost lost hope in the matter, but then she realized that what the spirit of Pious Augustus was saying was he knew where it might be.

James Mulroy had caught what the spirit had said, but he felt it lacked information. How could this spirit know, but not know, where the item they were looking for was located. He also noticed that most people seemed dumb struck, but he stepped forward and said what was on his mind. "What is that supposed to mean? You know where the item might be, but never saw it?"

He saw the spirit turn to look at him, and for a moment he felt like the spirit was probing him. When it passed, the spirit nodded, and said, "Yes. During the time where my soul had been corrupted by those other Ancients, I had been tasked with controlling Oublie Cathedral, which had been built on one of their altar sites. Right behind a small altar, there was a pathway to an area that belonged to Mantorok. The Ancient that was controlling me said that once we had rid the world of their foe, and Mantorok had been bound, we could safely venture into the area to fetch the item that would destroy the Ancient."

He then heard Richard Cale speak. "So the path is hidden behind that old altar, the one Anthony had fought the possessed Bishop at." He noticed Phillippe had flinched at those words, but the spirit nodded. "I remember how to get there. Luckily we won't have to go through the main part of the cathedral." He wondered what that meant, and then recalled the news about the swift conclave. The Catholic Church was no longer a place to be trusted.

The spirit nodded. "Yes, but I doubt it will be easy. I had attempted to venture into that area once. Just at the beginning of the corridor down, I noticed a purple mist on

the floor. You know what that means." James didn't know what it meant, but Richard, Yvette and Alexandra all shuddered. He recalled more of the news they had heard earlier, and wondered if it meant some foul creature was about.

After a moment of silence, he stepped forward, and looked at the spirit. Again he had the sense that the spirit was probing him. Finally, he said to the spirit, "Do you have any other information, spirit, that can help us?" For some reason, he thought the spirit knew something else.

He noticed the spirit was starting to disappear, but it answered the question. "There are already people here who know how to handle a Gatekeeper. However, a man with your ancestry should have no problem with them." He was dumbstruck by that statement, and noticed the others looking at him. The statement also made him wonder more about how he got pulled into the events that were happening.

After the spirit disappeared, he noticed that Richard was stepping forward. The man had a grim look on his face, but he seemed resigned to what had to be done. "We knew about the Gatekeepers. They have already been let loose on the world. It is also tricky to fight them, because they are only vulnerable when they are preparing to attack." He then heard Richard sigh. "This is not going to be easy. I won't ask for any other volen..."

Before the man could finish, James stepped up, and said, "I'll go. That spirit seems to think I can handle it." He felt a bit embarrassed when everyone started to look at him, but as the moment dragged on, that embarrassment started to disappear. No one was protesting. In fact, he was certain his offer was accepted.

Finally, the silence was broken. It had been Richard who spoke. "Fair enough. That will make it you, myself, Amber, since everything is pointing for her to be with us, and Bishop Phillippe." He was stunned by that bit, as was the Bishop, but Richard explained. "I want you with us in the odd case that there may be something you might remember. You had been renovating Oublie Cathedral, so maybe a floor plan or something may come back to you." He saw the Bishop nod.

After that, everyone was dismissed, and told to prepare. He wasn't sure what he would do to prepare, but Richard had offered to give him some pointers on swordplay. That thought was on his mind when Marlene Jacobs came over to him. "Hey, do you have a moment?"

He paused, and noticed that they were alone in one of Ehn'gha's streets. Something in her voice had told him it was important that they talk. "I have a few. I do need to get some things ready, but what is it?"

James noticed that Marlene seemed a bit nervous. "Well, I never properly thanked you for rescuing me from that Horror, and when we rescued Yvette, you had kept your cool. It was like none of this was bothering you."

He let out a small laugh. "I wish that had been the case. I was freaking out on the inside. I'm still freaking out a bit. It just got harder to do so when that spirit spoke. He thinks I can handle this, but I don't know why, nor why I haven't really freaked out yet." He sighed, and felt his shoulders sag.

He felt her put a hand on his shoulder, and heard her speak. "Years ago, my great-grandfather spoke of these things. He was convinced they were real, and I let it affect me. I was outgoing to the point of outrage. My parents were afraid I would get knocked up,

as they said. Now that all this is happening, maybe it has slapped some sense into me." She sighed, and then said, "And maybe with all of this, I can finally see guys for who they really are."

The last words, James noticed, had been accompanied by a shy smile on Marlene's face. It wasn't the kind of look he had believed she could give. What made it more unbelievable was that he felt some feeling in him stir as well. Before all that had happened, he would not have even though she would look his way at all. Now, she seemed to be seeing him as the right guy for her, and he was seeing a nicer side of her, and he liked it.

After what seemed like an eternity, he looked at Marlene and said, "Well, I won't disappoint you then. I'll be sure to come back from this mission." He saw a faint smile on her lips, and James wondered if there was any link to the background his family had. He decided not to dwell on that idea, at least not until after the mission was over.

Amber Snow had been the first to arrive in the teleportation area. She didn't need a lot of prep time, since she was already familiar with how to handle a gun. They had been told that of the four, two had to be comfortable with fire arms. This was because of the creature they were calling a Gatekeeper. They had all been given a basic description of the creature, but that had been with the fact that it was what they expected. That didn't fill her with much comfort.

She then took a few moments to look around the room. Her first time in the room, she didn't take notice of the features. Now she could tell that there was, for lack of better terms, a kind of console that operated it. There were also four archways in the room, but only two looked like they were active recently. Also, in the center of the room, there was a globe like structure. That had to be where they could see where they were going to be going.

She stopped looking around when she heard another person enter the room. It was James, the young man who had volunteered. He was carrying a sword, and a few guns. She noticed that each one was glowing with a yellow light. When he neared her, she noticed a slightly stunned look on his face, as if all that was happening was too much for him. She quickly ran up to him, and took the guns out of his hand, noticing they were military issue. She wondered if that was the reason he seemed shocked, but it didn't change when he said, "Thanks. Richard was just prepping me for this. He even taught me how to put the magical charge on them."

She glanced at the glowing weapons again, and then nodded. "Must be so we can eliminate the Gatekeepers easier." She then looked at James, and a slight concern for the college boy surfaced. He had to be around twenty, and he was being thrust into a real life horror movie. "I hope this situation isn't too much for you."

She was surprised when he shook his head. "It's not. I'm actually taking this in a lot easier than what Marlene said to me." Amber remembered the girl, which was easy considering that the girl had been dressed for, in lack of a more polite way of saying it, 'entertaining'. She had the feeling that if the girl had said something surprising, it might have been something involving genuine feelings.

She was about to ask about that when three more figures entered. It had been Richard Cale, Bishop Phillippe, and Alexandra Roivas. The Bishop looked a bit nervous, which was a drastic contrast to the no nonsense looks on the others' faces. It was also then she noticed that Richard and Alexandra had to be only slightly older than James, and Richard actually seemed closer to her age. Their faces, however, looked like they had seen a lot already. A fact that was proven when Richard Cale looked at them all and said, "Alright. I've given James a bit of the basics for fighting a Gatekeeper, but I'll repeat it again, for all to hear. First off, they are easy to recognize. They look a bit like the Grim Reaper. However, when they open their cloak, you see that it is just wings, and what looks like a scythe is really their tail."

She timidly raised her hand, and asked. "Are they easy to kill as well?" It was a good honest question, since the only one of them that would have any experience in that was Richard.

She was a bit crestfallen when he shook his head. "No, they aren't, unless you work in a pair. You see, Gatekeepers are only vulnerable when they are preparing to strike, which is when their wings are open. When that happens, they will strike a victim with their tail, and then channel a magic spell using that energy. One fool proof method for fighting them is to block the strike with a sword, and another person opens fire with a gun. It's that reason why I want you, Amber, and you, Philippe, to take a gun. James and I will handle the swordplay."

She had to admit that the idea made sense. She knew how to handle a gun, and hoped the Bishop did as well. She wanted to ask, but Phillippe had already raised his hand. "Child, what should we do if we run into any people? Surely we have to help them escape." She had to commend the Bishop for thinking about them. If someone had survived the attack on Amiens, they needed to be rescued.

Sadly, she noticed that Richard was shaking his head. "No. We aren't leaving the portal open. Besides, since we are sticking to the catacombs, the only people I think we'll encounter are ones possessed by a Bonethief. Our best hope is to get in, and get out." She saw him motion to Alexandra, who had walked over to the console. "Now, once Alexandra opens the portal, we'll all run through. Make sure your weapons are ready. I'm not anticipating an encounter right away, but it is better to be ready."

As Richard stopped speaking, she saw Alexandra activate the device, and instantly, two doors in the air appeared. Without hesitation, they all ran through the one to Oublie, and instantly, they were in France. In fact, they were in what appeared to be an ornate hall, that was empty, except for a huge gaping hole. It seemed safe, and she was about to say something when Richard raised his hand. She wanted to protest, but then she noticed what he had seen. A purple mist carpeted the floor, but as she looked around the room, it was empty. She then wondered if the Gatekeepers were masters of invisibility, and if that was the case, they needed to adjust to this problem, quickly, before it was too late.

Chapter 6: The Gates Discovered

The second Richard Cale saw the purple mist coating the floor of the binding hall, he knew what was there. "Damn. We have a Gatekeeper in here." He looked around the room, and blinked for a moment. The room appeared to be empty. He looked back at the others and said, "Get against the wall. You definitely don't want a Gatekeeper behind you." Once they all did so, he just said, "I don't see it, but this room doesn't have a smooth, or general shape. It could be in a niche."

With those words in mind, he moved out into the room, minding the huge pit that the Black Guardian had used as its base. He shuddered, remembering the fight he and Peter Jacobs had with the Black Guardian. It had been the one of Chat'turgha's and the memories of that encounter still haunted Richard. As he ventured forward, he hoped that Mantorok didn't have a Black Guardian. He did not want to see what such a creature would look like.

His thoughts were interrupted when he heard Bishop Phillipe shout, "Watch out behind you." Instinct took over, and Richard twirled around, holding his sword up just in time to stop the bladed tail of the Gatekeeper. He was stunned that the thing was behind him, but held the blade at bay. After the briefest of moments, the tail retracted, and the most frightening thing happened. The Gatekeeper vanished from sight. This action made Richard immediately take a few steps back. He had not expected that trick.

Now, he hoped that this new trick wasn't paired with faster movement. Even the ones he had seen that had no legs moved with a motion that was like pacing. He did know, however, that the creature was gazing at him. All Gatekeepers had a gaze that drained one's sanity the longer it was locked on them. He backed up to the wall, and waited. As he did so, he shouted to the others, "Keep an eye out. These have a nasty trick at their disposal."

Just as he finished that statement, the Gatekeeper appeared, spreading its wings. In that brief moment, he saw that the creature didn't have legs, but a mass of tendrils. It even had tendrils at the tips of its wings. It also didn't hesitate. The tail started to come down at him, and he ducked to one side. When he heard the tail hit the wall, he could tell it struck hard, and gotten stuck in the wall. The creature was stuck.

Richard didn't hesitate. He had enchanted his sword prior to coming here, and it still glowed with the power of the Goddess. He straightened up as best he could, and swung the sword. Even though it was close quarters, he managed to swing it in a way that cut the creature in half, bringing the creature's head off in the upswing. The lifeless body quickly collapsed, as best it could with the tail still stuck in the wall, and then disappeared.

He didn't relax, since he wasn't certain how safe the room was. After a moment, he did relax a bit, as the mist coating the floor lost its purple hue. He took in a calming breath, knowing full well he would have to restore his sanity, and then called the others. "All clear. Luckily, there was only one in the room."

He watched as the others walked over to him, then quickly cast the spell that would restore him. He was thankful that the Goddess' rune allowed peaceful restoration of health, sanity and magical abilities. He needed to think, however, of how to combat this new twist. Once everyone was near him, however, it was James that gave him the

idea, although indirectly. "Those things can turn invisible, just like you must have done when you came to the college."

Richard turned to look at James, and the college student offered an explanation. "I saw you leaving the building Professor Marsh had his office in. I think you must have noticed it too. Almost everyone else acted like you weren't there, so you must have been invisible. I think only certain people can see you at that time." He then thought about the statement. The Reveal Invisible spell, which he had used to turn invisible to most using the Goddess' rune, had only turned him invisible using Mantorok's rune, and revealed using the runes of the three ancients encountered before. He even remember the Goddess telling them when they first used it that it could either reveal or conceal.

He looked at the others as he realized what had to be done. "Alright. These Gatekeepers can be invisible, but there is a spell to reveal invisibility." He quickly explained the runes involved, thankful that the Goddess did not need them to use the Tome of Eternal Darkness to cast the spell. He then cast the spell, watching as the rune surrounded him and a golden haze was added to his vision. He heard a few gasps, and saw some were about to speak, but he held up his hands. "Just cast the spell. This way, if there are any more Gatekeepers, we will see them."

Soon, three more circles of runes appeared, each around one of the others. Just as quickly, the spells took effect, and Richard understood why they had initially gasped. Each one had glowing yellow eyes. He wondered how that would appear to others, but Phillipe asked the important question. "How long will this last?"

Richard motioned to door at the far end. "Hopefully, long enough for us to find what we were looking for and then get back. If not, we need just the time to cast the spell to cast it again." He had explained why when he explained casting the spell, and everyone nodded, signaling they understood. He then led them out of the binding hall, and into the catacombs of Oublie.

Bishop Phillipe recalled his passing through the catacombs on the way to the Binding Hall, as Richard had called it, and noticed a slightly more evil feel to the air. He noticed, as well, that the corpses that had gotten up had disappeared. He would have felt grateful for that, but with the last encounter they had had, it worried him more.

For that very reason, as they climbed up the steps to the level above, he asked the question on his mind. "Richard, when I came through here earlier, I has seen the bodies get up. Should we be concerned about them being here now?" Just as he finished the question, he could tell the others seemed visibly stunned by that news, except for Richard, who just paused.

After a moment, he saw Richard turn to face him. "In all honesty, I'm more concerned that they aren't here. I know for a fact that any zombie that is aligned to Mantorok is completely skeletal, and easily dispatched. Given their emaciated shape, I doubt a Bonethief would inhabit them, and even hitting them with a torch will kill them. If they aren't here, that either means they were gathered elsewhere, or used by a Gatekeeper." Phillipe could see that those words made everyone shiver. He wasn't sure which part of the words caused more concern. That another Gatekeeper was about, or that the corpses would be gathered someplace else.

As they neared the door that led to the room where one could head up to the

Cathedral, he heard Amber Snow ask a very good question. "Any idea how many zombies we might be facing? I ask since I know catacombs were usually used as final resting places for some people." Phillippe had never considered that, even after he saw the corpses rising.

He paused for a moment, and noticed everyone else did so as well. The cathedral had been around since the time of Charlemagne, which meant there was possibly centuries worth of corpses. There had also been the times the cathedral had been used as a field hospital. Some stories had stated that some of the wounded disappeared from the church as well. That thought made him shiver, more so now that it would have before.

Finally, he spoke. "In all honesty, I do not know an exact number. On a plus side, Amiens has never been an overly large place, so not many people died each year. There was an increase in deaths during the times of the Inquisition, and the wars." He noticed Amber flinch at the mention of the former. "However, I don't know if all those bodies were buried here in Amiens."

He noticed Richard was now opening the door, as he responded to the last statement. "I would say none of the bodies from the wars and the Inquisition. The ones from the former were consumed by the thing that had been in that hall we had come from. The ones from the latter, sad to say, died when they were turned into a massive pillar of stone and bone." Phillippe felt a cold shiver go through him. The church would have never done that, even to heretics.

Once the door was open, and they had stepped through, Phillippe stopped when Richard put an arm up. In the room that served as a junction for them, he saw a monk. It had to be one from the cathedral, but he was pacing and mumbling. He glanced at Richard, who just held a finger up to his lips. He understood. Silence would be needed, since the monk was obviously looking down.

With extreme caution, he and the others stuck to the walls of the room, and quietly moved to the door they needed to go to. There would be no telling what would happen if this monk saw them or not. If this monk was a follower of Mantorok, then the monk would turn on them. If not, they might believe the lie that Phillippe had killed the Pope. The fact was Phillippe could not be certain that this monk might even be someone who realized the truth, and would help them.

The fact ended up being that the monk had gone mad. Just as they had reached the door, the monk lashed out at an oddly placed bust. He almost gasped when the monk grabbed the throat of the bust and started saying, "I know you killed his eminence, Phillippe. You even put demons in the other monks. I don't know how you did it, but you did. God will forgive me if I kill you, since you in service with the devil." As the last word was said, the monk threw the bust, and it almost hit James.

That action caused the young man to react. Phillippe was thankful that the young man's reaction wasn't lethal. He noticed the monk looked surprised to see James, but before the monk could speak again, James had managed to hit the monk with a blow to only knock him out. After the event happened, he noticed the boy was looking at the monk with a questioning look. "Do you think it is safe to leave him here?"

He was about to respond, when he heard Richard say, "It's the only option right now. We can't cure him of his insanity here, and if he comes to while we have him, he will most likely try to kill us." He then saw the young man sigh. "I feel bad that we have

to do this, but it is the only choice.” He then watched as Richard headed towards the door that was opposite the door they entered.

The second they entered the hallway, he felt the atmosphere change. It felt like the evil was more in control the farther they walked. He also notice a worried look on the others' faces. Phillippe could sense their fear and apprehension growing. As they reached what had appeared to be a small library, part of him wanted to turn and run. All the others appeared to have the same thoughts, except for Richard Cale. The man just looked at the room, and then motioned forwards. "The altar as at the end of the hall. If it helps, take a calming breath.

He did so, not thinking it would help at all in such and evil place, but he did feel better. He was even surprised when Amber said, "That did help. It even felt like a bit of comfort, similar to what I felt in Ehn'gha." He blinked, and then thought about it. There was a bit of that comfort there, but the sense of evil was starting to make itself known again.

When they reached the altar, he heard James say, "Maybe, since Wicca is apparently the only pure religion left, you can detect the Goddess's essence. That should lead you to where it is hidden." Phillippe found himself nodding in agreement, since it felt right. He also felt that the prosecution of Amber's kind centuries ago had been wrong.

In that moment, he noticed that the wall behind the altar wavered, and then disappeared. He felt a stunned look cross his face, and noticed it on the others. What surprised him most was Richard's reaction. Richard immediately raised his sword, and said, "Last time I was here, I did not see that tunnel, and part of me is wishing I wasn't seeing it now." He then saw the man noticeably shudder, and then move cautiously into the tunnel.

The group followed, and Phillippe felt his skin start to crawl as they moved down the tunnel. The place looked unholy, and unnatural. The walls were not built, or dug into the ground, since they looked like they had been grown. Everything had a purple hue to it, and a feeling like death and decay was everywhere. He noticed movement up ahead for a moment, and thought a person was ahead of them. That thought disappeared when he saw a skeletal corpse move forward. He almost screamed, but he saw Richard behead the thing with ease.

The man looked down at it, and calmly said, "A zombie aligned to Mantorok. Let's hope that is the worst thing we'll see." Almost, as if Richard had prompted the creatures, Phillippe saw more shambling towards them. He saw Richard move forward to meet the creatures, and then recalled he had the other hand-to-hand weapon. He quickly moved forward, attacking the skeletal corpses.

As he and Richard lead the way, fending off the corpses, he noticed that Amber had stopped right near an odd alcove. At first, he had thought nothing of it, but then he saw it. There was an odd container, one that looked almost organic, like everything else in the place. She had pulled it out, and something in him said they had found what they were searching for. Before anyone could say anything, Amber opened the container. In that brief instant, all they saw was a bright yellow light. He didn't dare swing his weapon, but all he heard for a moment was just the four of them breathing.

When the light faded, he looked around, and noticed that all the creatures were gone. It was just him, Richard, James, and Amber there. He now saw what Amber was

holding. It looked like a hand, but it seemed more to be a glove of some sorts. Could it be that the item was what had inspired the Hand of Jude hoax. Before he could comment on that, he heard James shout, "I don't like that rumble. We need to get out of here." Phillipe found himself agreeing with that thought.

Lucinda Tepes, who had just finished co-coordinating efforts to have her company help with the search for those who had been killing people, was sitting in her office when a mind-splitting headache hit her. She knew what it was. Her master, Mantorok, was in pain. That meant that the item must have been found, or something linked to it. She started to reach for the weapon she kept with her, and heard Mantorok say "*Prepare to be brought to the one shrine. One of the Goddess's followers hid something there, and the others found it.*"

She gasped in both disbelief, and horror, but put both emotions aside. She needed to be ready to destroy the threat to Mantorok's plans. No doubt, it was part of Alexandra Roivas's group behind the discovery. She had tasked Roberta Ossein to find a way into Ehn'gha, since no one seemed to be getting through the fire at the Roivas estate. Would this mean the Bonethief would be recalled from that task, in order to help, or would it be left to her?

She received an answer as the world took on a purple hue, and it changed all around her. In seconds, she was in an almost organic looking shrine. She instantly knew that she was also in Amiens, France. This made her smile, since the fresh death of the Pope increased all the forces at work. She could summon more than the zombies that were in the catacombs. Since they were the weakest of all creatures linked to Mantorok, they were only good for spell fodder.

She paused for a moment, and concentrated. Her family had been in the service of Mantorok for centuries, and with that, she was the latest, and mastered many skills. One of those skills was being able to cast multiple summons. Soon, she had a Horror and Gatekeeper by her side. She looked at the two creatures and said, "Some of Lord Mantorok's foes are here. We must destroy them." Without another word, she started to head through the catacombs of Mantorok's domain.

The big difficulty would be finding her foes. Mantorok had teleported her to a place deep in his shrine, which meant it would take time to reach where ever they were. There was also the added difficulty that, while she was certain it was close to the point where the shrine touches Oublie Cathedral, she wasn't certain were, or how close to it, they were. Inward, she hoped for a sign for where to go.

She received it the second she hoped for it. The sound of gunfire echoed through the place, and Mantorok made sure she could locate it. She started to run through the hallways, eventually reaching an area with organic looking containers. One had been smashed, and she could feel traces of the Goddess all over it. Just turning a corner not too far from her, she saw Richard Cale, and she could tell he had seen her. She started to run, especially as she heard him shout, "Move. Mantorok has brought Lucinda here. We can't let her get that item."

Hearing those words made her pick up her pace, as well as fueled the bloodlust in

her. She had know that the Cale's were part of the Goddess's chosen leaders, and now she had the perfect chance to kill one. Of course, they were formidable foes, but all it would take from her would be one scratch, and her blade would kill him. She might even hold off on using the blade, thinking how much fun it would be to prolong his death. Those thoughts gave her another boost in speed, as well as a boost in magickal power.

She had made another turn in the path, and saw that straight ahead of the fleeing group was the entrance to Oublie Cathedral's catacombs. Once they passed that point, things would get complicated, especially if some non-converted monks were about. She quickly cast a magickal attack, and cursed as the group kept running, now noticing that Amber was with them. She also noticed that Amber's hands were glowing, and figured the girl was holding the artifact. That was not a good sign, and it fuelled her fury as she shouted, "Amber, you bitch." Those words echoed through the tunnel as her quarry ran into the catacombs.

Amber Snow almost faltered as she heard Lucinda's voice echoing up. She wasn't sure if she had heard right or not, but she could have sworn that Lucinda just made a verbal slur on her beliefs. The fact that it happened in the catacombs under one of the buildings of the largest persecutors of her faith may have made her think that. Of course, it could have been just the fact that Lucinda was there that unnerved her as well.

She pushed through the fear, though, and followed the group back through the catacombs. As she ran, she heard James say, "How the blazes did she end up here in Oublie. Does she have access to that teleportation thing?" That was an unnerving thought, since it would mean that she had access to the underground city that they were calling a sanctuary.

She didn't know if Richard's response made her feel any better. "No, we made sure the Goddess' protection is all over the area. Most likely, Mantorok has a way to teleport his minions between his various shrines." After a moment, she heard him follow that thought up. "Damn, that makes matters worse. Especially if we may have to go to his heart." That last comment made her shiver.

The shiver also served to distract her senses, and she ended up barreling into the monk they had encountered earlier. The man was obviously still out of his mind, but his eyes went wide when they focused on her. She jumped away, luckily, with the group that was now opening the door to the binding hall, as the man spat out hateful words. "You vile witch. You have desecrated this house of God, and damned the Bishop. God will forgive me if I send you to your dark master. He will forgive the right....."

Everyone froze at that moment. The monk had stopped speaking as a purple light started to go through his body. Soon, his body did something that was impossible. It ripped apart in front of Amber's eyes, and each little part exploded. She backed away, making sure she was with the others, but no matter what, they all ended up coated in what little remained of the monk's body. If anyone else had seen it, they would have lost their minds.

She almost thought that had happened when she heard a chilling female voice laugh. She recognized the voice as that of Lucinda Tepes, and looked on to see the woman step forward out of a fading purple glow where the monk had been. "It always feels good to do that. Mantorok likes those sacrifices, but I'm sure he'll enjoy all of you as

well, especially you, Richard Cale." Amber took a moment to glance at the leader of the team, and noticed that he did look nervous. He had obviously not seen anything do that, but he might have been aware of it.

At that moment, she felt the power of the artifact she was holding start to flow into her. She also noticed that Lucinda had paused in her steps. She dared a quick glance, and noticed the hand holding the artifact was glowing with a yellow light. In fact, the artifact was now on her hand, like a glove. She returned her gaze to Lucinda, who now appeared worried. She held up her hand, and just said, "He won't be getting anymore sacrifices today, Lucinda."

She knew how to cast spells, at least the ones Richard had told them. This one just came to her. Little runes appeared around her, and then the lightning flew from her hands, and struck the other woman. The action made the other woman jump back, and for a moment, the woman looked much older than she had a moment ago. The action had obviously stunned her as well, while one of the creatures that had been with Lucinda was now on the floor, flailing like they were fatally wounded.

At that moment, she heard Richard shout, "Back to the hall. It's the only safe way back." She nodded, and then followed the others. As she did so, another notion took her mind, and she started putting up barriers. As they moved, she heard him say, "The artifact must have given her the knowledge to cast spells. She's cast an attack spell, and now barrier spells. No wonder Amber had to come with us, she was meant to use the artifact."

When they were at the Binding Hall, Amber put her hand down, and started to gasp. "I don't know how many spells I cast there, but it was exhausting." She bent over and put her hands on her knees. At least she was certain it would take Lucinda and her minions time to get through all the barriers. She then looked over at Richard, and said between gasps, "Does casting spells always have that affect on you?"

She watched as he nodded. "It does, which is why I usually space them out. When you don't have enough power to make them work, you could seriously injure yourself, or others." She then watched as he looked at the item in her hand. "No doubt, it had a good deal of power in it to begin with. Hopefully, the barriers won't go down too quickly."

At that moment, they heard a muffled explosion from back the way they had just come from. It was James who asked the key question, the one she figured they already knew the answer to. "You think they got through one of the barriers?" After a moment, a second explosion followed.

She was surprised when Phillipe helped her move. "No doubt. James, get her other side. She's worn out, and God would not forgive us if we let her fall victim to that evil woman's magick." She realized what the Bishop was referring to, and she felt thankful for that. The way that monk died was disgusting, and no one else deserved a death like that.

She didn't see Richard, which told her the leader of this mission was behind her. She did hear him, however. "Let's just hope someone gets word to them to activate the portal. I don't think we will be able to wait here too long." She didn't say anything, but she held up the artifact. In that instant, the portal opened on its own. She heard Richard let out a low whistle of surprise. "Ok, that artifact is powerful. Get through, and pray it closes when we are all through."

She saw Richard move forward, not jumping through, but motioning for them to go through. She was thankful the others were carrying her, since this last bit had already made her feel exhausted. In fact, as the warmth of the portal surrounded her, she lost consciousness, and before she blacked out, she hoped it didn't mean they were all dying.

Professor Percival Marsh had been standing near what they figured was the console for the portal device. Alexandra had told him to wait there for a sign after he had told her about the latest find. It had been both exciting, and disturbing, and the leaders of the group in Ehn'gha had to know about it. No doubt, when the others arrived back from their mission, he would have to relay the news to them. He just hoped he would recognize the sign when he got it.

What he didn't expect the sign to be that the one portal burst to life in yellow light. He almost reached out for the button, as well as to shout out an alarm when four figures rushed through, the one being carried by two others. Once they were all through, the portal disappeared, and all four collapsed to the floor. He quickly ran over to them when he realized who they were. Out of concern for his favorite student, he rushed over to James Mulroy, and tried to help the young man up. "What happened? Why were you running like that? Was Miss Snow hurt?"

He had to wait until everyone caught their breath before anyone answered him. He was not surprised that the one who answered was the leader of the group, Richard Cale. "We had encounters with a few of Mantorok's minions, starting with a Gatekeeper. After that encounter, we ran into a mad monk. No doubt, he lost it seeing the corpses shamle off. Luckily, we had no more major encounters until we found the artifact, which Amber is wearing. Then Lucinda appeared, and she had a blade that tore the monk to shreds."

For a moment, Percival Marsh blinked as the words jogged a few thoughts. Since he studied ancient cultures and lore, he had found multiple tales of a blade that would destroy a living thing with a touch. While the legend had been found in many cultures that could never have had any contact with one another, they all agreed on the shape of the blade, and its effects. Every culture called it their variation of what in modern day English was 'The Total Reaper'. To the civilized cultures, it had been described as barbaric. To the cultures that had been called barbaric, it had been considered as a blade beyond evil. In a voice so low, he said, "The Reaper is real."

Much to his surprise, it was Bishop Phillipe who reacted to the words. He could see the shock in the man's eyes as the man spoke. "That was the Reaper we saw. I know the Vatican had been rumored to be searching for the blade, but I only thought that to be rumors. I should have realized it was real, especially after that encounter with the Gatekeeper. The stories the church had heard was it was fashioned from a demon's horn, and destroys even the soul." The words caused a group shudder.

After a moment, Professor Marsh turned his gaze to the artifact, and for the first time, everyone got a good look at it. While the legend in the book never fully hinted at what it was, it appeared to be like a gauntlet. This was the first thought, except that it seemed to be almost molded to the delicate hand of Amber Snow, and had what appeared to be a small weapon molded to it. Upon further inspection, he saw more runes on it.

"Good grief. I'm seeing runes appear on it. This artifact must be only part of the Goddess' relic."

That got him a reaction from everyone. Unfortunately, it was groans from almost everyone. The only person not groaning was Amber, who just seemed to nod. Somehow, the girl seemed to have changed a little, as if the power of the Goddess was giving her a confidence boost or something. "I had that feeling. When I used it, it felt like it was incomplete. If it will help, I think I know what some of them are."

He looked at her in amazement, and then at the relic. Already, in the short time they had been in Ehn'gha, he had started understanding the runes found in the city on sight. He had asked Alexandra about that earlier, as well as Dr. Lindsey, and they both said that that was normal here. Now, here were new runes being introduced to them, and they could be deciphered easily, or with slight ease. The words started making sense, and he could start to get an idea of where the next part was.

The runes also reminded Professor Marsh of the reason why it was him waiting for them to return. He looked over at Richard, and said, "I just remembered. Your wife and father-in-law found something. I think it was another tunnel, but there was something odd about it." He noticed that Richard had straightened up at that, as if a bolt of fear was going through the man.

He watched as Richard started to head out of the building, but heard the man say, "Where is it located? If it is a new tunnel, then not all of it is under the Goddess's protection. Something might be lurking in it." He understood without asking, and quickly relayed the location of the new find. When the others left, he return his gaze to the artifact on Amber's hand, and tried to make sense of what he was seeing, and recalling the old legends.

Alexandra Roivas looked at the mouth of the tunnel she stood before, and shook her head. It was a very disturbing find, since they didn't know how safe it was. As she looked at it, she said to Yvette Cale, "Any idea where it goes to, and how safe it is?"

She watched as her friend pulled out a map of Ehn'gha. It had been one of the pages from the Tome of Eternal Darkness, but it had been removed, and luckily still worked. The page had a mystical quality that could project each level of an area in a different hue. This one, ironically enough, was underneath the level most of the city was on. She then saw Yvette bite her lip as she answered the question. "Not entirely sure, since it seems to point in the direction opposite of the town. For all we know, it could leave to another area of the city, or a cave network."

That answer made Alexandra frown in frustration. "So anyone could get into Ehn'gha through here. If Lucinda manages to convince people that we are hiding in some caves outside town, they could invade." It was definitely an upsetting thought. Many people who could see and hear the truth now called the underground city both home, and sanctuary.

She watched as Dr. Edwin Lindsey step out of the mouth of the tunnel. "At least it is safe from the creatures. The Goddess's protection lasts for a bit into the mouth. I've already spotted a few runes of Mantorok a ways into the tunnel. We will have to extend

the protection, and it is best to do that when things are secured as we go. How soon will Richard and the others be back?"

She was about to shrug, when Yvette looked towards the stairs that descended to the area, and ran past her, jumping into the arms of Richard. She gave a slight smile, still a bit envious of the relationship the pair had. "I'd say they are back." She heard a slight chuckle come from Dr. Lindsey, obviously enjoying that his daughter still had that someone special in her life. She knew he was a widower, and he understood the love the two were expressing.

She then walked over as Yvette disengaged herself from Richard, and looked at Richard as the others, except for Amber Snow, entered the room. That started to worry her, but before she could ask, Richard answered the question. "Amber is alright. She helping Professor Marsh right now." She gave him a quizzical look, and Richard calmly said, "The artifact we found is just one of many. There is more to find. So what is this about a tunnel?"

She looked back at, but decided she needed to know about the mission first. "In a moment. First, I want to know what happened. How did you get through the portal? What else did you run into while in France?" They were both questions that needed an answer, especially if they now had two security risks, instead of one.

She was stunned when James Mulroy answered the questions she asked. "Well, Richard had fought the Gatekeeper that was aligned to Mantorok when we arrived. Apparently those things can turn invisible." She blinked at that, and then glanced at the tunnel, wondering if one of those Gatekeepers was in the tunnel.

As if to alleviate her fears, Richard said, "They are still accompanied by a colored mist. I see none of that in the tunnel." That relaxed her, until Richard said, "After we dealt with that, we made our way to the artifact. Once we grabbed it, Lucinda managed to teleport there. She killed a monk who went mad, and it wasn't pretty. We managed to escape, since the artifact seems to channel the Goddess. It was what opened the portal, and then closed it behind us. Next time we activate the portal, however, we will make sure those co-ordinates are out of the device."

Alexandra nodded, and then turned to face the tunnel. "Well, that just means we only have to worry about this tunnel. As you can see, it was in the basement of one of the buildings." She moved to the mouth of the tunnel, and pointed into it. "Most of where it goes is speculation, but regardless, we will need to secure it as far as possible. The magic will keep Mantorok's minions out, but he could use others, not magickally aligned to him."

She watched as Richard moved forward and looked into the gloom. "You may be right. I have heard of stuff that allows soldiers to see into the night. If one of the political leaders decide we a threat to national security, they would move in with the military." She saw Richard pause, and then she heard the sound. It was small squelching footsteps; the unmistakable sound of a Trapper.

She pulled out a revolver, and motioned everyone to be quiet. After everyone was quiet, she softly said, "Someone, bring a light. Anyone with a gun, follow me, and stay quiet. If the creature we hear is what I think it is, we need absolute quiet. The creature is blind, but has excellent hearing." She saw James pull out a gun, and noticed Yvette was now holding a revolver as well. It was Bishop Phillippe who grabbed a flashlight, and the small group started to advance.

Roberta Ossein had been trekking through the caverns for some time now. In the service of her, or at least they thought of themselves as her until they moved to a new host, lord, Mantorok, Roberta knew she had to find another way to Ehn'gha. She was already aware of the caverns in the mountains, and that one might lead to the underground city. She had been about to give up, until she heard the conversation echoing through.

She remained quiet as she heard about what had happened at Oublie Cathedral, and Mantorok's haven there. The first artifact had been hidden there, and now they would search for another one. The artifact also appeared to speed up their transportation process. She even heard about how they had defeated a Gatekeeper of Mantorok. It was all very disturbing. Mantorok's Gatekeepers remained invisible, until they struck.

She then heard the familiar noise of one of the zombies shuffling along. Those were the weakest of Mantorok's minions. There had been a few that had died in the cavern, and their corpses made find grunts. No doubt, however, their condition made them easy prey for flames. It did, however, give Roberta an idea.

No doubt, when they started claiming the tunnel, they would stop at each of Mantorok's symbols, and replace it with the Goddess's symbol. It would take time, but Roberta could wait. Not in the tunnel, of course, but somewhere else, and that would take two of the little things it had found. Since they were aligned to Mantorok, she could pick them up.

Roberta looked at the thing, a Mantorok Trapper, which had horns, and some bony shell. These were harder to kill, but they stayed hidden. She whispered to the creature, "I want you to head down the tunnel. Your job is simple, to be spotted, and to die. They will then start to claim this tunnel, and once they do, I can return, safely inside the barrier." The creature bobbed a bit, then jumped to the floor, making its way to the tunnel end.

Soon, she heard gunfire, and the creature's death squeal. That was her cue. She held the other Trapper, and started to antagonize it. As a rule, the little creatures would not use their suicide attack, unless provoked. Soon, the creature was squealing, which Roberta could tell made the advancers pause. It would be a short pause, since the creature finally did its suicide attack.

In a flash of purple light, everything changed. Instead of being in the tunnel, Roberta was on the floating islands of the Trapper dimension. It was, if you knew how to survive, a safe haven. She could even watch what happened at the point she entered from. It was the best place to hide in, and a perfect spy post. Roberta then made her way to the point that returned her to the dimension.

As Roberta expected, the group moved forward, but not extending the barrier yet. With the trapper, decaying, they would not know who, or what had been caught by it, or not. It could not hear them talk, however, but that was fine. All she would have to do was wait. In time, Roberta would return, but that would be after they secured more of the tunnel. Until then, she would wait, and plot the best way to take out the biggest threats to Mantorok.

Chapter 7: The Lost Shrine

Percival Marsh sat at the table in the room he had been given, mulling over the book Yvette Cale had brought back from his office. With him were Dr. Edwin Lindsey and Amber Snow, both of whom were looking at the glowing golden gauntlet she now wore. He had finished translating the runes that had appeared on the thing, but what they translated to were vague references about a lost shrine of The Goddess. While he researched this in secret for years, every shrine site he had located had been destroyed, as if forces had been working to hide her existence. Of course, he now knew this to be true, but still, he had kept searching.

With what the gauntlet provided, he was now closer to what he believed was the location. He had remembered reading that The Goddess, according to legend, had somehow inserted some followers into the religions so that every religion somehow had a creation myth. Of course, most got twisted so people forgot about her, or vilified her. He looked at the references to Gaia in Greek Mythology, or how most Christian beliefs seemed to vilify the female form. Still, the most discrete reference to the shrine was the story of Eden. Some people believed the mythical garden was in the Middle East, and he was certain that was the Lost Shrine.

He finally set down the book, and pointed to the passage that he felt confirmed it. "I think I found the location. The shrine where the next part of the artifact is hidden is in the Middle East." He watched as Edwin pulled out a map of the area, then looked from the map to the drawing, almost frowning. This caused Percival to become very concerned. "What's wrong?"

He watched as the archeologist placed the map down, pointing to the same spot on a modern map. "If that is the location, I fear it might be gone. Michael Edwards had found the necropolis, as well as the location where Pious Augustus had found the cursed artifacts at. It was a base of his power when he was the source of problems. Michael had bombed the place, and barely escaped."

For a minute, Percival seemed devastated by the news. That ended when Amber sat bolt upright. Her eyes glowed for a moment, and then she spoke in the ethereal voice of The Goddess. "*While the necropolis was destroyed, the location of the shrine was not. It still resides there, waiting for the rest to be restored to it.*" When the last word was uttered, Percival watched the young woman sagged, and then almost collapsed.

Before he could even react, Edwin had already rushed to the young girl's side to steady her. As he did so, he just said, "I think I may have an idea where that is. The way Richard described how the Goddess had save him from the explosion, I'm betting that the Goddess's shrine is right here." Percival watched as Edwin pulled out a map and pointed at a certain spot on it.

When Percival looked at the map, he realized the map had to be of the place they had to go to. It was near what had been marked as the location of a massive explosion, in the Middle East. Before he could ask about it, he heard the Goddess's ethereal voice. "*Yes, the shrine is there. When the necropolis was destroyed years ago, the shrine was left unscathed. Richard had ended up just inside its borders, which allowed me to get him safely back to where he belonged.*"

Percival nodded when he realized what that meant. The next relic they needed was there, and it should be a relatively safe place to go. He looked at the others, and said, "That has to be it. By the way, what used to be there?" He had a feeling he knew, especially as he recalled some of the old legends he had read over the years.

He saw Dr. Edwin Lindsey get up. "It had been the place where three Ancients had been imprisoned. Mantorok had allowed Pious Augustus to find the place millennia ago, and that led to them being freed, and then destroyed. I had never been there, but Richard had. We'll need to talk to him before he send anyone there." Percival nodded, and noticed Amber doing the same. With that, the three of them got up, and headed off to find the three leaders of the group.

Yvette Cale stood by her husband's side as the work progressed on securing the new tunnel. When they had found it, they hadn't had the time to start securing it with the runes of the Goddess. The appearance of the Trapper caused them to start doing so. It could be a time consuming process, taking the better part of a day. In the past, it had been just her, Richard and Alexandra doing it, but as more people arrived, they taught more how to do it.

Now, Richard was standing guard as one of the residents cast the spell to extend the barrier. As it was, the barrier progressed slowly, meaning that there were hidden runes throughout the area. As the latest barrier extension fizzled to a stop, she shook her head and said, "Damn. How many runes are in here?"

She watched as her husband walked to the latest spot, and stabbed at the spot with his sword, which glowed yellow. "A lot. It might be why this tunnel had been covered up." She nodded in understand, peering into the darkness that filled the tunnel. While her husband had gone down it first, she wondered how far the thing went. All they needed was to find one place that would allow anyone to find the place, without going near the mansion, and everyone was threatened.

She looked again at the progress that had been made, and then looked at Richard. She could see the concern on his face, and leaned into his side, hoping the proximity would relax him. "Hopefully, we can extend the barrier far enough to restore security here." She felt him put an arm around her, and she could tell that that simple motion made him feel better.

She remained like that until she heard more people approaching. She turned her head to look in the direction, and was surprised to see a small group coming. She straightened up, noticing that the group consisted of her father, Edwin Lindsey, Alexandra, Percival Marsh, and Amber Snow. Something in their pace told her that they had some good news about the other task they had to do.

When the others finally reached them, she heard her father give some very good news. "We figured out where the lost shrine is." She smiled at that news. The lost shrine of The Goddess was where they figured the next part of the artifact was, and with the portal device, they could get there both easily and safely.

It was Alexandra who delivered the bad part of the news, and Yvette could tell how bad it was when she felt her husband stiffen. "It's in the ruins in the Middle East." She noticed that Alexandra looked right at Richard when she said that, and she knew why. Richard had almost died in those ruins.

Yvette glanced at her husband as he nodded. "It must have been where the exit had been. That's where The Goddess extended her protection to. Do you want me to head this mission as well? I'm sure the portal will put us right at that point." She noticed that Richard had slowed his comments down when Alexandra had started shaking her head. It was obvious that Alexandra didn't want Richard heading this mission.

Yvette looked at her husband and said, "You have your hands full with this right now." She then turned to Alexandra, and asked, "Who did you have in mind to lead this mission?"

She watched as Alexandra nodded, and then pointed at her. "I was thinking both you and I head this mission. No doubt, it should be easy, unless one of Mantorok's minions managed to get into that sanctuary." For a moment, Yvette shuddered. She still remembered the Lesser Guardian of Mantorok that she had encountered. It had killed Michael Edwards, and was probably the inspiration of various creatures in one of those animation styles from the Japan.

As if her shudder had triggered it, she heard her husband start to protest. "Wait a moment. We've all seen the tricks that beings aligned with Mantorok can do. You two shouldn't go alone. Besides, Yvette still seems shook up after her encounter with the Lesser Guardian." She knew her husband was right, but right now, he was needed here. She knew she had to address this now, or else, all those aware of the danger the world faced would possibly end up in great danger.

Richard had noticed his wife shudder when she realized it was possible that there may be a chance that they would encounter what she encountered before. Some time ago, she had told him about something that scared her. It had been what appeared to be a cartoon, but some odd thing that had been a mass of tentacles was doing unspeakable things to her. From that point on, any time she saw something like that, she needed to be held, and only held. If there was a chance with another encounter with those minions of Mantorok, he was certain she'd want him along.

To his surprise, he saw her look at him. In her eyes, he saw that she was afraid of that, but there was a good degree of bravery there too. "Dear, I know you want to protect me, and Alexandra as well, but we need to do this, and you need to stay here. This tunnel needs to be secured. If you don't get it secured, it could mean disaster." Deep down, he knew she was right about that, and after the run in his group had with the Gatekeeper of Mantorok, security should be first and foremost.

He finally agreed, but offered his advice. "Fine, but you really need to be on your guard. Mantorok's Gatekeepers remain invisible until they are ready to strike. If you see purple mist on the floor, be ready." He saw both of the girls nod, and he felt a bit better. While he was certain they could both take care of themselves, he worried for both of them.

After a moment, he saw Alexandra look back towards the building where everyone resided, and said, "We better start preparing. I would not be surprised if it doesn't take long for the transporter to be calibrated." He saw Yvette nod, and then watched as the two headed off. Before they had left, though, he saw Alexandra turn and say, "By the way, don't forget to set up a few barriers. We had spotted a Trapper. That doesn't mean it was the only one." He nodded, understanding what the warning meant.

He turned around, and headed back into the tunnel, pausing only when he saw that James, who had been helping with the task, looked puzzled. Of all the things that James Mulroy had seen so far, the lad was either fortunate enough, or unfortunate enough to have seen what a Trapper can do. He beckoned the young man over to him, and said, "Wondering what that's about?" When he saw the man nod, he started to speak as they walked. "Let me explain then."

As they walked down the tunnel, towards the farthest point they had secured, he start to explain about the Trappers. "One of the creatures the Ancients have at their disposal is a Trapper. It's about the size of a small dog, looks a bit like a scorpion, and has the suicide attack that transports you to another dimension. They can't see, but have excellent hearing."

As they reached the midway point, he heard James ask an important question. "Can people survive there?" He nodded, and the college student let out a low whistle. "I guess you've experienced the place. Can one get lost in it?"

He glanced at James for a moment, and then answered. "Not at all. The only land in the place is five floating islands. On those islands are the things that have been transported by the Trappers. There is a special place there where anything that can get to it can return back to the world of the living, to the exact place they had been sent from." He paused a moment at that point, noticing a slight tingle in the air.

He wasn't the only one who noticed it, especially when James reached the spot and shivered for a moment. He even noticed the young man looking around, and backing up for a moment, as if he saw something. "Don't tell me that this spot is one of those spots?" When Richard just nodded, he heard James utter a small curse.

Richard then moved to the exact spot, and tried to judge the size of what had been transported to the Trapper Dimension. It had to be something human sized, and after a moment, he could have sworn he heard something, like a hiss, coming from the spot. Was it possible that someone, or something, had deliberately used a Trapper just so they could sneak past the barrier?

After a brief moment of doubt, he decided it was. There was only one safe course of action, and he stepped into the spot. Again, he felt the sensation, but he kept his wits as he cast the spell he was certain would be best. Soon, the area was surrounded by seven runes, and seven lines connecting those runes. While the lines disappeared, the walls were still present. Since he had been the one to cast the spell, he didn't hesitate passing the barriers, confident that they would remain.

Once he was out of the barrier, he heard James ask a question he figured was coming. "How is that going to be helpful? Is that going to make sure nothing can come back?" Richard started to nod, but then stopped. It wouldn't do exactly that, and he knew an explanation would be needed.

He started to walk away from the barrier, taking James with him. As he did, he explained what he had done. "We can't break off the connection with the Trapper Realm, unless the item is destroyed. If it is something hostile, going there to destroy it might not be best, since no magick can be used there. Our only option is to set up a barrier around it. That means that if something returns, it can't cross the lines unless it is aligned to the alignment of the barrier."

Richard saw James glance back at the barrier, and then heard him say, "Did you

really have to do that then, since you've been increasing the range of the Goddess's protection barrier?" Richard again understood the question, and he had the perfect response to the question. In fact, it was one he had seen many times.

He stopped, which caused James to stop as well. "Do you remember the movies, cartoons, and shows where someone was trying to sneak into a place? Many times, the infiltrator uses something like the old Trojan Horse to get in. They hide in an object, and wait for the foes to bring it inside. They then wait for the guard to be down before they sneak out."

He saw James's eyes go wide as the realization hit him. "So someone, or something, might be doing the same thing here. Using the Trapper dimension as a way to get past the protection." Richard nodded, and he took some happiness in the fact that James could make the next step. "So by putting up the barrier, you literally set it up so they return inside a trap. That's brilliant. You're foiling their attempt to infiltrate our ranks." Richard nodded, but since he knew that it might not just be infiltration, but also a way for Mantorok's forces to wipe them out. If that were to happen, humanity would be lost.

Marlene Jacobs walked through the streets of the underground city. It still marveled her that such a huge place was. It was still a lot to take in, but her gazing was in part to look for James. Before she had been attacked, she wouldn't have looked twice at him, but now, she had seen him in a different light. She saw that he was a better person than some of the guys she had one night stands with. She was actually developing feelings for her rescuer.

As she walked, she noticed a pair of familiar women walking, and talking. It was Yvette Cale and Alexandra Roivas. The redhead was always easy to pick out, since she had only seen one redhead in the underground city. The two seemed in conversation about something important, and she didn't want to interrupt, but at the same time, she wanted to find James.

She didn't have a hard time deciding what to do. This was something she had done many times. She was going to get what she wanted, the location of James. She walked up to the two women, and asked her question right away. "Have either of you seen James? I wanted to talk to him for a moment." She noticed that both of the women gave her a look that seemed to say they understood why she was looking for him.

Marlene was a bit grateful when Yvette answered the question. "He's back at the new tunnel that was found. He and Richard are busy trying to secure it. So far, the task seems to be going smoothly, so it might be safe to distract him." She didn't want to acknowledge the look in Yvette's eye, but she had the feeling Yvette understood her a bit more, or even a bit too much more.

She then heard Alexandra say, "Just be careful. We don't need to be so distracted that someone manages to sneak in. It would be the last thing we would need to happen while we are on our mission." Those were the kind of words that made Marlene pause in her tracks. While she was eager to go see James, the thought of being on a mission made her excited. It also made her feel important, and given her past, that was better than being promiscuous.

She turned to look at the two women again, and calmly said, "Mission? What

mission? Is it something that can help stop Mantorok?" That had been what the others had been going after on the last mission, and what Yvette had been after when she rushed back to the school to try and help Yvette.

To her delight, Yvette nodded, and even elaborated on the mission. "It seems that the prior mission gave us the means to get the next item we need. In fact, it pointed us to a location we didn't know existed. Alexandra and I are heading up that mission, with Amber, since she has the artifact." She remembered Amber, since she had arrived at Ehn'gha at the same time she had.

In that moment, without hardly any consideration of the risks, she made another decision. She looked at both of the women, and said, "I want to be a part of this mission. After finding everything my great-grandfather said was true, and living like I had been, I need to make up for it. I need to do this." It was the truth. While her great-grandfather's words made her think of just being reckless since it seemed there was no point, with this hope that mankind would make it through, and stop the dark forces, she wanted to make up for her mistakes.

To her shock, she saw Yvette shake her head. She was certain the redhead would be on her side. The woman hadn't seem to mind having to run around near topless after that thing attacked her at the college. "Normally, I'd say yes, but with you and James starting to..."

Marlene was thankful when Alexandra cut off Yvette. "You can come along. Trust me, I know more about what is going through your head than Yvette does. I know how important this is to you. I somewhat understand what she was going to say, but since you want to volunteer, it saves us asking around. Besides, time is of the essence. The sooner we are ready to depart, the better. I want you to get a few things together, since we don't know how long this will last."

She nodded to both of the women, and said, "Thank you. Are we assembling in that room where I first arrived?" She saw both women nod, and then she rushed off. She knew where the place was, and she was certain she didn't have much to get ready. She just wanted to let James know now what was going on.

She quickly moved her way through the underground city. It had gotten easier, especially since the new discovery had resulted in many people trekking to see it. That also meant that it didn't take long to memorize the route to the place. She moved faster, however, when she saw James and Richard leaving the entrance to the tunnel.

That sight made her run, and in almost no time at all, she had reached James, and embraced him in a hug. She saw he was surprised by the action, but she didn't care. She really was falling in love with him. She released him, realizing that he might not realize her actions were genuine. She was going to have to prove it, and do so over time. Right now, she wondered if James knew about the mission. She also wondered how he'd react to the news. It might tell her if he was having feelings for her as well.

James was amazed by the fact that Marlene hugged him. Part of this was because he knew of her reputation back at the school, but another part of it was that he was starting to have feelings for her. If she was still living up to her old ways in this new place, those feelings could be ignored, but something told him that the hug was genuine. He gave her a slight smile, and asked, "What was that for?"

He watched as she blushed, and then noticed she was turning her leg in some sort of nervous twitch. It was the kind of thing people associated with when someone had feelings about someone. Maybe there was something starting between them, and part of him liked that idea.

Marlene finally answered his question. "Just thought I would do that. You deserved it, especially after you risked your life to save mine. It's made me want to do things to make me a better person." For some reasons, something made James start to worry when he heard those last few words. Given her less than virtuous lifestyle, he had a feeling she was talking about doing something possibly reckless in the name of helping humanity.

At that moment, it hit him, and he looked at her. He had been present when Yvette Cale and Alexandra Roivas talked about the upcoming mission. His eyes were going wide as he realized it too. "You volunteered to go on the mission, didn't you?" When she nodded, he noticed a smile on her face. He wondered if she was seeking approval from him. It wasn't like they were a couple, although part of him wanted that now. If she died on this mission, however, he'd never have the chance of being in a relationship with her.

While he thought about that in his mind, he heard someone approach them from behind. There was only one person it could be, since there was only one other person who had been down there. He then heard Richard speak, as if he had heard part of the conversation. "I think I understand why you want to go, but you understand that this mission could be dangerous. You haven't had any combat experience, have you?"

As James figured, Marlene looked away, and quietly responded, "No, I haven't." He was about to say something in response, but she just looked back at both of them, and he swore he saw a fire in her eyes. "But how many of us here knew how to fight these things when we first saw them. None of us did. I'm betting even you learned to fight them with no prior experience." James saw she had pointed right at Richard when she said that.

He glanced over at Richard, and noticed that he didn't look shocked, or even ashamed. Richard just nodded and said, "Very true. Not many of us had any prior experience in fighting these things. Some of us have had experience in using weapons." He then saw a smile cross the man's face. "And you are like Alexandra. Your family has fought these things, and you didn't know. Now that you do know, you want to do the right thing." To his surprise, Richard then just looked at him. "Why don't you give her some pointers."

James blinked, and then watched as the older man walked away from them. He had a feeling that Richard had a reason for it. He looked at Marlene for a moment, and realized that Richard had some points. He smiled, thinking that maybe there were some bright points to this whole scenario. He put an arm around Marlene, and said, "He's right. Let me show you how to handle some of weapons. You can't fight these things with just your hands." The action made a smile cross Marlene's face, and that made him feel better. He had a feeling that if they made it through this rough time in humanity's history, they might make a very strong couple.

Roberta Ossein was upset. She had not known that any of The Goddess's chosen ones had been to the Trappers' Dimension. They would be aware of the feeling a link to this place was like. Unfortunately, the one who was aware of it also knew the perfect counter measure. Taking the link back would defeat the purpose of it now.

Luckily, the link did allow her to over hear things. She heard them speaking of a mission to a hidden shrine of The Goddess. What was even better was the fact of where it was located, as well as who was going there. That was a mixed blessing, however, since she would have enjoyed another shot at the redhead. Of course, if she couldn't get out of the Trapper Dimension, there was no way of getting vengeance. She needed a miracle of some sort, a blessing from Lord Mantorok.

At that moment, a small blessing appeared in the form of a Trapper. Roberta had never seen one of the creatures in their home dimension before, and she was surprised by the fact that they had eyes here. Did the strange creatures forfeit their eyesight to go to another realm?

She bent down to the creature, and said in the native tongue of those creatures aligned to Mantorok, "I have a mission for you. Can you deliver a message for me?" To her delight, the creature responded in the affirmative. She then told the creature its mission. "Find Lucinda Tepes. Once you find her, inform her that I am in the Trapper Dimension, and I have information for her. Then, transporter her here." After a moment, she added, "Regardless of what ever she is wearing." The creature chittered, and then disappeared from the dimension.

Once it was gone, Roberta sat on the ground, cross-legged, and focused on the link. While no one was near the link's point in the realm of Earth, if she concentrated, she could hear the people close to the tunnel entrance. Right now, she could only hear the occasional breath, but she had heard enough to know she had to inform Lucinda. Now she just had to wait.

While she waited, she started to ponder the process that would be needed for her to return to the other world. The barrier that was put up was a problem. It wouldn't keep her from returning, but it would keep her trapped; and that was the best case scenario. Odds were that if she returned, she would cross one of the barriers, and the magick of The Goddess would end her existence. It would be a folly to chance going back until that barrier got dispelled.

Now, if she could somehow find a way to trick someone into dispelling that barrier, that could work. The trick would be getting a message to someone that was in the underground city. It would take another Trapper to bring someone here. Once that happened, she could tell the person that she was trapped by Mantorok's forces. They would easily believe that, and then the barrier would be dispelled.

She was brought out of her thoughts when she heard a familiar voice say, "This had better be important." She turned and saw Lucinda Tepes had just arrived in the Trapper Dimension, and she was obviously brought here at an inopportune time. No doubt, she was preparing to speak with Mantorok in her shrine. Roberta was going to enjoy this.

Lucinda was pissed off at the situation. She had been preparing to go down to the

shrine under her building. Since she had locked her office door, she felt confident that she could have gotten in her priestess outfit without being bothered. To her shock, she was halfway in the outfit when the Trapper had appeared in the room, and brought her to the Trapper Dimension. Seeing Roberta with a smirk on her face just made her mood worse.

She then realized there had to be a reason for this inconvenience. The Bonethief would not have invoked such a method to communicate with her unless there was a barrier in place somewhere. She made her way to the Bonethief, and narrowed her eyes on her. "What has happened, and why haven't you gotten into Ehn'gha yet?"

She watched as Roberta motioned to the departure point of the Trapper Dimension. "Sadly, I was not informed that some of The Goddess's followers had been here as well. The man, I believe his name is Richard, knew about the link, and put up a barrier around the spot." Inwardly, Lucinda groaned. She had never considered that something like that might happen. While it was true that Mantorok had manipulated the Roivas family and their allies into helping his cause, she should have expected the odd chance that one of them would end up in this place.

She sighed then, and looked around. She didn't fully understand the facts about this place. It wasn't a place a creature should be able to survive in. She felt no connection to magick, and looking at the corpse of a human soldier, she realized that nothing seemed to change here. There was no food, or anything here. Maybe creatures that did not require any type of nourishment at all, like a Bonethief, and the Trappers, could survive for a long time away from the glowing spots.

She returned her attention to Roberta and calmly said, "I suppose you need a trip back to our realm then. I shall take you back..." She trailed off when Roberta just shook her head. Obviously, this was something she didn't know about the Trapper Dimension. She blinked and then asked, "I can't take you back with me?"

She was stunned when Roberta responded, explaining something she never knew. "It is part of the magic of the Trappers. Anything living that they transport here can only return to the point they were transported from. Dead, or inanimate things only get transported to near the portal out. We can, however, hear what goes on from those points. For example, I heard that they are heading to the lost shrine of the Goddess, which was next to one of Mantorok's places of power."

Immediately, Lucinda knew where that was. "Right near the old city in Persia. He knew there was a shrine there. Apparently, Richard Cale had found the location, since Mantorok had thought, like Pious Augustus, that Richard had been killed in the explosion back in the early nineties." After those words crossed her lips, a realization crossed her mind. "If that is the case, we need to get Mantorok's forces there as soon as possible. I will inform Mantorok, while you work on figuring out a way in there."

She started to head towards the portal out of the Trapper Dimension. As she did, she heard Roberta say, "The key is getting someone to remove the barrier. If we can convince one of the newer followers of The Goddess to remove the barrier, then I can do what I've been ordered to do.

She turned to look at her servant, and nodded. As she did, the magickal portal whisked her back to her office, causing the images of the Trapper Dimension and her office to blur, and shift. The nodding image of Roberta dissolved into her empty office, and in front of her now was the top part of her priestess outfit. She quickly put it on, and

then moved to the elevator to the shrine.

As it descended, she started wondering how she would be able to fool the followers of The Goddess. She wasn't sure if any of them knew that Roberta was the current body of the bonethief. Trying to trick them into believing that Roberta was a normal college girl might work, but it was not foolproof. She would have to ask Mantorok for advice, or for him to intercede.

When the elevator doors opened, she walked into the main part of the shrine, and kneeled at the altar. Before she could speak, she heard the Ancient's voice. *"So they venture to the lost shrine. There are a few of my minions wandering the area near there. They just need to get through the ruins of those ruins."* At that moment, she saw a few of Mantorok's snake like tendrils coming up from the depths. These were smaller than the normal ones she saw, and a part of her shuddered from a memory.

She took a deep breath, aware that her master was already anticipating her next words. Lucinda spoke, keeping her voice calm. "You know that I need to ask your help in getting someone inside the city of Ehn'gha. We need a way to fool them into think Roberta is not inhabited by a bonethief. You know that they know of the sounds the bonethieves make."

Some of the tendrils started to move towards her, and she knew what that meant. Countless ages ago, Mantorok had masqueraded as a fertility god. She understood that it meant that occasionally a priestess would have to pay for Mantorok's help in a way that reflected that claim. This wasn't the first time she had done this, and she did not hate it. As it was about to begin, she heard Mantorok say, *"I will make sure the Trappers have a special edge added to them. Anyone they send into their dimension won't hear the hiss."* She nodded, understanding what this would mean. Once one of the Goddess's followers appeared in the Trapper Dimension, they would not believe Roberta was a host for a Bonethief. She also made another request to Mantorok, one she hoped the Ancient would fulfill at the same time.

Alexandra Roivas entered the portal center with Yvette Cale and Marlene Jacobs. They were all prepared to do battle with anything that might be waiting for them at the shrine. She had her enchanted Gladius, while Yvette and Marlene both had guns, and hopefully enough ammo. She also hoped that Marlene had received a bit of training on how to use firearms. She really didn't want to fall victim to friendly fire with so much on the line.

She turned to look at the others, and then wondered where the last member of their mission was. They had taken some time to prepare and rest up. That had been Yvette's suggestions. Alexandra figured it was so her married friends could have some time together before they departed. She felt a little jealous about that, but then remembered how few married couples had made it down the Ehn'gha. It was wrong to feel jealous about that happiness they had, even though she longed to have someone in her life.

She sighed, and said to the others, "I hope Amber gets here soon. We can't wait too much longer. There is no telling if Mantorok is trying to find the place, has found it,

or has left the area alone." She honestly didn't think Mantorok would leave the area abandoned. They had to be aware that the Goddess had intervened at that location, saving Richard's life when he was transported to the past.

To her relief, she heard Yvette say, "Here she is now, with Professor Marsh." She turned and saw the two walking in. She noticed that Amber walked with a little more confidence than she had when they had found the gauntlet. Perhaps this connection to The Goddess was giving the Wiccan Priestess a boost in morale, or something.

When they had finally reached the group, she watched as Professor Marsh went over to the portal devices console, and started entering in co-ordinates. As he did so, Alexandra looked at their assembled group. "Alright. Here is the mission. We will be entering unknown territory for any of us. We can't assume it will be safe, so we should be on our guard at all times." She knew Yvette understood that point, but the other two might not be fully aware of what all they would be in for.

She looked at the redhead as she took over things. "I want you both to know that we will be entering an area that was literally destroyed by a bomb. It happened years ago, but some areas could be unstable. Hopefully, where we will arrive at, will be clear of debris." She watched as everyone seemed to nod, agreeing with the hope that it will be clear.

As they talked, the portal to the ruins opened, and Alexandra chose that moment to remind them of the minions of Mantorok. "Before we go, remember that Mantorok's minions seem to have new tricks. Watch for signs of them being around. While Mantorok's Gatekeepers are invisible, they are still going to have purple mist in the area. The Bonethieves are capable of speech outside of a host, and the Lesser Guardians are the stuff of nightmares."

She had seen them all nod, and was about to lead them into the portal when Yvette raised her hand. "You also need to be wary of the Trappers. They are blind, or at least they appear to be. They lock in on sounds very well, and if they zap you, you'll be sent to their dimension. We don't want that, since something is known to be waiting there." Alexandra remember what Richard had said before they were going to leave. Something had used a Trapper to enter that dimension, most likely as a way to get past The Goddess's barrier.

With that last bit of information in mind, she led them into the portal. It took only seconds, and as she walked through, she felt her body dissolve and reform in the matter of moments. It was obvious that the portal hadn't been used in a long time. She just hoped that didn't mean it would also fail as well. Once she was through, however, she turned to see the others appear. She saw both Amber and Marlene looking around in wonder. Yvette, who came through last, didn't look around as much, but visibly shivered.

Alexandra took a moment, and walked over to Yvette. She realized what the shiver had meant. She quietly said to her friend, "Was this were Richard had disappeared from?" When she saw Yvette nod, she looked around again. She was trying to pinpoint the exact spot Richard had to have disappeared from. She had a feeling that was the point were the Lost Shrine was located.

Before she knew it, Amber walked towards a spot, her gauntleted hand extended. It even had a yellow glow to it. The woman didn't even appear shocked as hand started to go into the wall, like it wasn't there. "It's this way. This wall must be an illusion."

She blinked at that comment, and then saw Yvette move in that direction. The redhead didn't even think to doubt the statement. Alexandra then remembered something when Yvette spoke. "I should have realize that when I saw you just look past this hall. The destruction from the bomb is opposite this hall." Yvette had the uncanny ability to see past all the illusions that hid the truth. Alexandra then hoped that this illusion would be affective against Mantorok's minions.

As she and Marlene entered the hall, she was amazed at the sight. The whole place was bright and spotless, as if no time had passed since the place was built. She could only imagine that this was how the whole area was supposed to look like. Even Marlene was impressed by the structure. The girl just marveled at the place, and it was evident in her voice. "This place is amazing."

Alexandra only nodded, and then started to follow Amber and Yvette. The pace had picked up, as if no threats could be in the area. She also had a feeling that the whole place might be a mirror of what Richard had gone through. It was amazing how much she had gotten from the Tome. Even as she ran, she felt as if she knew every corridor of the place.

Eventually, they all entered a room with a huge pit, and she knew exactly what this room was. It was just like the one were Michael had left the bomb that destroyed the other one. It was intact, a bridge suspended over the pit, but in this case, a warm glow came from the pit. She blinked twice, and then watched as Yvette managed to lower the bridge.

Once it was down, they all crossed. Once on the other side, Alexandra started having a feeling of unease. She started to look around, expecting to see some of Mantorok's creatures. It didn't seem likely, but she had learned not to ignore that feeling. She just said, "I have a feeling something is about."

As they reached the wall, she heard Yvette say, "You might be right. Something seems odd here. It's almost like the protection of the Goddess is getting thin near here." She then watched as Yvette pointed at the wall on the right hand side. "Does anyone see that hallway there?"

Alexandra shook her head, and noticed everyone else did the same. She also noticed that Amber just stepped towards the wall, and then through it. As the girl had done that, she heard her say, "We have to go this way, and not head to far down this hallway. The Goddess had a special illusion in place to keep the minions of the other Ancients out. If we go down it too far, Mantorok's minions might find out about it."

She nodded, and kept up with the others. As they neared a side path, she was able to see the hallway extended to a similar spot in a destroyed area. She managed, however, not to gasp when she saw something big moving about. It had to be a Horror, and the way it moved, she had a feeling that it suspected that a path was there. It was enough to make Alexandra back away, and then ran quickly to the others. She had a feeling that the safety of the Goddess here was about to be compromised.

End chapter.