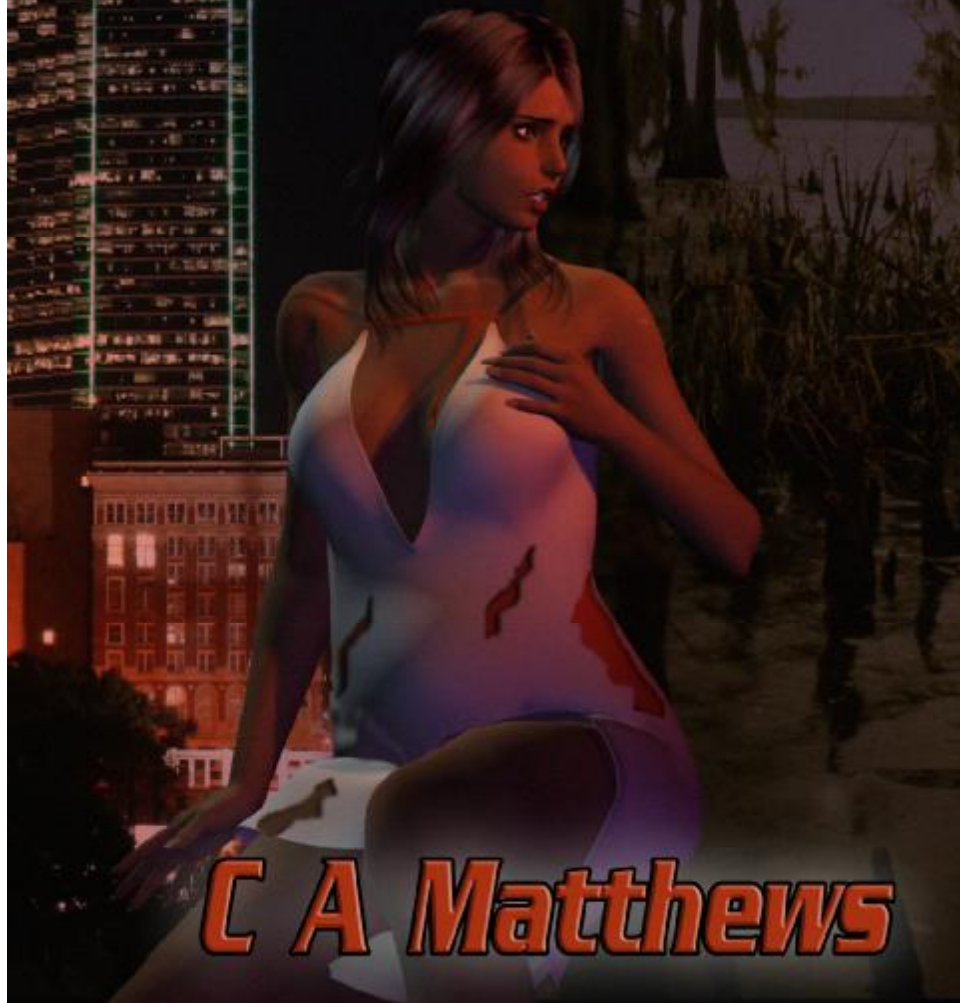


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Only Love and Evil are Eternal



C A Matthews

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**ONLY LOVE AND EVIL
ARE ETERNAL**

BY

C.A. MATTHEWS

Venus Press LLC

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Dedication:

To Sharon, who encouraged me to put pen to paper yet again;
To Luisa, who polished up the rough edges of the story;
And to any reader, if you enjoyed this story, I'd love to hear from you. This story was
written with you in mind.

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Prologue

The noise of insects was replaced by the sounds of early morning birds hunting those same bugs through the great mangrove swamps of southern 17th century Louisiana.

Caroline's hands slid down the sleeping sheriff's stomach and caressed his flaccid member. Slowly she began to tease the heavy flesh until it began to swell under her touch. The early morning light forced its way through the cracks and gaps of the crudely constructed shack. It touched here and there, almost at random in the one room shanty. Falling on rough earthen pots and dead creatures from the swamps that were suspended from the rafters. It poured like honey across coarse clothing discarded on the rough planking of the floor, and laid heavy on the dusky limbs of the Witch of the Swamps, as she knelt naked beside her most recent lover.

As his cock began to twitch once more in engorged excitement, she struck Sheriff Marcille once, very hard across the face. The stinging slap so fierce, her own palm sang with the pain of it. The imprint of her fingers stood out on his tanned flesh even through the thick, greasy stubble on his cheeks. Fat in both waist and thigh, chest broad and filthy with stale sweat, he roared into sudden awareness and, grasping her slim wrists in his bear-like hands, he threw her back onto the rough pallet beneath them. The cot groaned as he hurled his weight on top of her. Held down and crushed, she laughed coarsely in his face.

"Thou art awake then my stallion? Me thought thou had no manliness left in thee!"

"I will show thee manliness, slut." Spittle flew from his mouth, inches above her wild, dark eyes as his knees spread her thighs apart. A momentary show of resistance from her, just to show him that she was in control, and then she parted her legs wide, raising her pelvis to meet his initial thrusts. With her heels pressed against the back of his thighs, finally he found her entrance. The path was already wet and slippery.

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She had woken before him and feeling her needs upon her, she had already prepared the way. With a spittle-wet finger, she had teased her bud until her passage ran with her juices. She had used those same juices, so pleasantly produced, to lubricate his shaft as she played with his sleeping body. The room now stank of her sex in a way she found very satisfying. Sex was her power and she reveled in it.

Marcille threw himself against her again and again, his huge, swollen cock filling her, making her groan. Each crash against her body made her back arch and she moaned wildly. As he fucked her, she drove him on with filthy words screamed aloud and with nails like talons scoring his hairy back and ass. From the stink on him and the claw marks on his back, his goodwife would know that again he had been with Caroline the Witch, and known the animal pleasures of the flesh that she, his wife, failed to provide him. Caroline got well-used by a huge cock and in the same breath she had her own revenge on one of the townswomen who reviled her and accused her of witchery.

Caroline laughed, and not pleasantly, as Marcille roared to climax, his fluids spurting from his throbbing cock deep inside her eager belly. Her own climax matched pace with his and, as her naked breasts thrashed against his hairy chest, the sensations leaped from her swollen nipples to equally engorged pussy lips. Caroline first cried out, and then sank her sharp teeth into his huge bicep as her body over-reached her ability to control it. Twitching in the aftershocks of her animal lusts, she collapsed beneath Marcille's restraining mass.

The flimsy door of the simple shack was thrown open with a suddenness that made Marcille leap to his feet. Pulled so suddenly free from Caroline's enfolding nether lips, his swollen manhood was already deflating flesh against his thigh, shrinking to an uninspiring maggot-like thing. Men and women from the wooden shanties of Isle D'Orleans forced themselves inside the cramped hut or pressed close upon the muddy bank outside. Men shouted and women stood at the back waving sticks. Frere Albere forced his way past the few men who had managed to enter the shack, crushing Caroline's few possessions beneath their uncaring booted feet.

He laid one hand upon Marcille's bare shoulder and gripping his crude wooden crucifix with the other, and delivered a brief benediction in Latin.

"My son, the Lord frees you now from the spells cast upon your immortal soul by the harlot of Lucifer. Do you repent your fall from the path of Grace, my son?"

"I do, Frere Albere!" Sheriff Marcille dropped to his knees before the friar.

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“I was bewitched and freed now by the Lord, of her foul enchantments. I do name Caroline of Isle D'Orleans, a witch and consorter with demons. She took from me my mind and I had no power but to do her evil will!” A wild fervor caused less by any holy conversion and more by a desire to save his own neck even at the expense of Caroline's, caused yet more spittle to fly from his gross pig-like lips.

Frere Albere averted his eyes from the sight of Caroline's swollen pussy lips, still running with Marcille's fluid, as he attempted to address her, still sprawled naked and spread wide upon the wooden cot as she was.

She drew her knees up and spat at him.

“Child of Satan, thou has been accused of witchcraft. As is thy right, thou shall be put to the torture to prove thy guilt.” A cry for an immediate hanging of the whore came from a female voice within the gathered crowd, but Frere Albere shouted down the interruption.

“We are no heathens to send a soul to the Lord unshriven. We shall put her to the question, so that she may have a chance to recant her sins, and then we shall purify her soul with fire at the stake. This is the Lord's will. I have spoken. Let it be done.” A grumbling of amen's met his pronouncement, and strong hands dragged a spitting and cursing Caroline from her home to face the mercies of the Church.

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Chapter One

A polite cough interrupted Richard Machin as he sat in the University library. Out side of term time, as it was now, the library was a quiet place to get some work done un-interrupted, and Richard very nearly had the place to himself. Richard closed the history text on the founding of New Orleans in the early 17th hundreds, that he had been reading. The French king had provided cheap labor for the building of the town by emptying Parisian prisons' of murderers, thieves and rapists, and sending them to the new world. Few others would have willingly wanted to brave the hurricanes, venomous snakes and yellow fever to tame the swamps of the Mississippi estuary.

He turned over his notes and looked up at the person that had attracted his attention. As he replaced the cap on his fountain pen, a broad shouldered black man in a business-like gray suit sat down at the table in the seat opposite Richard. The stranger smiled, showing strong white teeth. With a large, square hand, he put a small leather wallet on the table between them.

"Mr. Machin." It was a statement more that a question, and when Richard did not correct him the man continued. "My name is Webber. I represent one of the government departments that was originally responsible for loaning you, or rather your University, the PEFL. The Positive Emotional Feedback Loop." Again the statement ended in a raised tone and this time Richard responded.

"We just call it the Loop. Less of a mouthful to use in conversation." Richard smiled.

"The Loop." The agent considered the term for a moment as though trying it out to see how it fit.

"Anyway, the Loop as you call it, is still the property of the US government. While we were unable to make it work satisfactorily, we have been keeping a close eye on your experiments and it seems you have had more success."

Richard scowled, his forehead creasing just below the line of his close-cut blond

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hair. His blue eyes, normally warm and smiling, regarded the man from the Government steadily.

"No notes have been published and I haven't discussed this outside of the History department. How do you know about it?"

"The University has applied for additional funding from us to maintain the project. Not that we object at all over any of your experiments. We simply want the opportunity to direct the course of a number of your tests. As you can imagine, remote viewing would have interesting applications for national security."

"I don't think I want to be a spy, Mr. Webber. *For anyone.*"

"Not a spy, Richard." Mr. Webber used Richard's forename without invitation, a subtle stressing of the fact that they knew a lot about him. Not that there was very much to hide; some youthful high jinks but little more.

"Not a spy. We will supply the additional funding you require to keep control of the project and in turn, we will ask you from time to time to carry out certain tests for us and report back the results. You might even learn new techniques from the experiments that we request. There is no need to decide right this moment. Have a think about it and call me tomorrow at this number." Mr. Webber borrowed Richard's fountain pen and with strong, carefully drawn numerals he wrote down a telephone number on the back of Richard's notes.

Richard looked at the number and then at Webber. "I think I'd like to see some ID, Mr. Webber."

"Certainly." The large black man flipped open the leather wallet that he had put on the tabletop when he first sat down and passed it to Richard.

Richard studied the card inside. After a moment, he closed it again with a snap and passed it back to the agent. "Didn't that used to stand for No Such Agency?" Richard asked.

Mr. Webber smiled broadly, showing his large white teeth again.

"I think I like you, Mr. Machin. Please don't forget to call me tomorrow. I'd hate to be forced to call on you to get your answer. I always get lost driving around the suburbs." With a laugh, he left Richard sitting at the table. Richard's eyes followed him as he walked out through the main doors without a backward glance.

Rebecca lounged on the sofa as she chatted with Rachel back in England. The

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house she shared with Richard in America was a far cry from the tiny, two bedroom apartment that the two girls had shared back home in the UK. Rebecca lay relaxed, dressed in tee shirt and sweatpants. Her old friend's call had been a welcome excuse to cut short her morning exercise. She kicked off her trainers and lay back amongst the cushions.

"The house is beautiful, Rachel. You'd love it. Lots of light and air, and the University is just down the road. He's got me using different antiques to try and focus onto specific periods and places. Richard's even built our own Loop down in the basement. The University is close enough that Richard runs to work. That's why I'm working out. I want to be able to keep up with him!"

Rachel laughed at the other end of the phone. "Remember I slept in the room next to you two," she reminded Rebecca, "Richard didn't seem to have any trouble with a lack of stamina then...and nether did you!"

"We still don't!" Rebecca laughed and then paused as a soft moan came down the telephone line. Rebecca frowned for a brief moment, puzzled.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

Rachel laughed into the receiver. "Ed stayed over last night and he just woke up," she grunted once, an inarticulate noise, and then a little more breathlessly, she continued, "And how! He is definitely a morning person!"

"Do you want me to call you back?" Rebecca offered.

"Oh no. I think he likes it like this anyway. I belive Ed has an exhibitionist...streak!" Another lustful groan made her pause between the last two words. Her breath roared down the receiver and along the telephone wire to Rebecca's ear.

"Mmmmm," Rebecca murmured.

"The sound of you fucking is making me wet, Rach." Rebecca's free hand had slipped inside the loose waist of the sweatpants and she slowly caressed her tingling clitoris. She ran a finger up and down her slit, using the moisture from her now aroused vagina to wet her clit, her fingertip rubbing the swollen nub until her nipples were hard and her own breathing was shallow.

"Fuck, Becky!" Rachel swore. "He's thrown me on my knees and he's ramming into me! God, he's huge!" Her voice was hoarse with panting, and across in America Rebecca could hear Ed's hips slapping against Rachel's ass as he fucked her harder and

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harder.

“Will call you back, hun!” Rachel gasped. “Think Eddie needs my full attention now!”

“Go get him girl!” Rebecca laughingly encouraged her as Rachel broke the connection.

Rebecca dropped the receiver back into its cradle on the little coffee table beside the sofa and, like Rachel, gave her full attention to what she was doing. With her tee shirt pulled up, her hands squeezed and kneaded her full breasts. Her fingertips pinched her nipples, rolling them between finger and thumb. Little jolts of sexual lightning ran from her nipples in a straight line to her pussy, the material of the sweat pants becoming damp at her crotch. Rebecca groaned and pushed the trousers down over her hips and slid the material from under her ass. With the sweatpants holding her ankles together, she widened her knees.

Warm, silky fingers spread her cunt lips wide apart and she twisted on the sofa so that one hand could rub her hot, aching clit and the other could force one, two, three fingers into the wet and eager entrance to her vagina. Slick digits thrust in and out as her other hand teased and caressed, rubbed and rolled her clit. It felt enormous under her touch, and then with a hoarse groan from deep within her throat, she felt the wetness of her climax gush over her. Rigid, she held herself perfectly still for a moment, prolonging the instant, and then jerking out of control she gasped and groaned as a powerful orgasm rolled over her senses.

Expend, sated, she collapsed back onto the sofa, pussy-slick fingers resting on her thighs, her breasts heaving with the pleasurable exertions. Exercising was one thing, but a good workout was something else. She smiled happily and could hardly wait for Richard to get home.

Richard's house was a very successful mixture of the old and the new. Old maps of early America hung on the walls in the dining room over a heavy oak table and solid wooden chairs. The kitchen was all new styling, in chrome and light colored wood, the family room was different, bright with glass shelves and glass coffee table, low comfortable sofas and recliner chairs.

Rebecca was in the kitchen at the sink washing the salad ready for dinner when Richard came home. As she pulled apart the fresh, green leaves of the lettuce, Richard

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came up behind her and wrapped his arms around her waist, nuzzling her neck. Still sensitive from Rachel's telephone call earlier, Rebecca felt her nipples swell as his biceps brushed the sides of her breasts through the thin blouse she had changed into. She leaned back and rubbed her behind teasingly against his groin and was rewarded by the exciting feel of an erection pressing back against her. She turned in his arms and ran her wet hands through his short, blond crew cut. Droplets of water from her hands clung to his hair and sparkled in the sunlight pouring in through the windows. They kissed and hugged each other closer still, two becoming one for a delightful space.

Richard looked seriously at her and drew her to one of the chairs beside the kitchen table. He sat her down and stood in front of her, holding one of her hands in one of his own.

"The government want me to use the Loop to do some experiments for them," he told her.

"Can they make you do them?" she asked.

"I won't get any funding if I don't," he replied. "The idea worries me."

Rebecca smiled up at him and stroked his hand as she held it in hers. "We can't reproduce the same results even when we have made the same preparations each time. We're having more luck using items from the desired historical periods to focus on but the government will want more specific results than just vaguely the right century and continent. When they realize that even we are having no more success than they were, they'll forget about us again for a while. Don't worry." She patted his hand reassuringly, "And the extra funding means you can pursue the research and not have to give up part of your time to take on students."

She smiled up at him again. "Rach called, by the way."

"Oh? What is she up to now?"

"I think she mostly rang up so her boyfriend could have sex with her while she was on the phone." Rebecca started to tell Richard about the telephone conversation earlier and, as she did so, she ran her fingers up and down Richard's thighs.

Slowly, with Richard standing close in front of her, she began to unfasten his trousers, slipping the belt from the loops and dropping it to the floor. Pulling his shirt from the waistband, she kissed at the tanned muscles of his stomach as her hands slid down his zip and tugged his trousers down over his strong hips.

In between each kiss, she continued telling him about Rachel and Eddie and how

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much it had turned her on too. Her hands freed his hard erection from the restraining fly of his boxer shorts and with slow strokes of fingertips and nails, she teased him as she told him about her playing with her wet pussy on the sofa, wanting and needing him all the while. Standing over her, Richard groaned his need for her and smiling she closed her warm lips over the swollen head of his cock.

With his gentle hands on her head dictating the pace he loved, she began to suck on his shaft. Her warm saliva running down and lubricating her hands as they kept a matching rhythm on the root of his manhood. With his heat in her mouth, huge and hot, Rebecca slowly worked Richard to a frenzy of desire. Her own pussy throbbed to the same wild heartbeat and she squeezed her thighs together. Her juices ran within her but she could wait. She wanted to give her man pleasure; to feel him huge in her hands and to feel him lose control, thrusting and spurting in her mouth.

Guided by his touch, her rhythm became faster, her hands worked to the same beat on his shaft as she stroked his heavy balls in her palms. As the heat and the pace worked its magic on his senses, Richard couldn't hold back any longer and, with a cry of release, he came in Rebecca's mouth, flooding her throat as she tasted and swallowed him. He pressed her head against his tight belly as her lips drew the last of his juices from him, the warmth of her mouth soothing the fire in his cock.

“Ah, Becky,” he moaned. “I love you.”

“I love you too, Richard,” she whispered for his ears alone.

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Chapter Two

Richard dimmed the lights in the basement and Rebecca settled back onto the couch. Her hands caressed the rusted iron loops of chain hanging from an old manacle that had been bent and forced open at some point. The machinery of the home-made Loop device sat patiently around her. Little lights glowed here and there in the gloom.

The Loop had originally been intended as an aid for remote viewing or psychic spying by the government. At the end of the Cold War, it had fallen out of favor and had never produced repeatable successes. Finally it had been donated to universities for them to make of it what they could.

Rebecca had had some success with the machine when she had been first introduced to it back in England, and she was still the most receptive subject Richard had found. She had been able to enter the minds of people in the past and experience their lives as they experienced them. Unfortunately, such successful experiments were by no means a sure thing.

It had been the Loop that had brought them together in the first place, while it and Richard had been on loan to a UK university. She knew how important this project was to him. If they could prove consistent results, the machine would open whole vistas of new historical research beyond anything that the government could have originally imagined.

“Just close your eyes and try to give me your impressions of where this chain comes from, Rebecca. I've done some research on the period, but see if you can tell me where it is from, and then we'll match your sensations to what we already know and see if we can get close to the target this time.”

Rebecca knew that if they use a focus to locate a correct period or place in time, the usefulness of the device would be proven. She relaxed back onto the firm surface, she tried to clear her thoughts and let her mind roam free.

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The change in temperature was her first indication of success. Wherever she was the air was humid and close; sweat stood out on her naked skin. She realized suddenly that she was naked, stretched out across a wooden bench or table and chained at both wrists and ankles. Rebecca's breath caught in her throat, her mouth suddenly dry. During the experiments, she had never entered the mind of anyone who was in serious danger before. She could feel the rough boards under her naked back, the tension in the chains pulled her tight, stretching uncomfortably the muscles in her shoulders and thighs. The room was dark and hot. It was not the oppressive heat that caused the sudden cold sweat on her skin. Her stomach fluttered with fear. She was chained alone here in the dark.

No! Not alone. As she fought to steady her breathing, she became more aware of her surroundings. She could hear the sound of feet shuffling to one side of her. Before in successful experiments, she had been aware that she was a passenger in the head of another, but this time she couldn't feel the consciousness of another sharing the same mind. The body she was in now responded to *her thoughts and feelings* as much as her own did, and she worried. *Had the other personality withdrawn in shock or stupor?*

"Hello?" The voice she spoke with sounded deeper than her own natural voice. It was still female but with an accent full of rich, low tones.

"She is awake, Frere Albere. Should I strike her unconscious?" The first voice was tremulous; the one that replied to it was much stronger and more confident.

"No. But you are right to worry lest she call sorcery down upon our heads, may the Lord protect us. Bind her mouth securely and mind that she does not bite thee!" warned the voice.

Strong hands fumbled at her face in the dark and Rebecca recoiled in shock, pulling futilely on the unrelenting chains, as a thick wad of dirty cloth was forced between her jaws, stifling any scream.

"Why so dark, Father?" asked the first voice, still weak and low and frightened.

"As is oft repeated in that wisest of tomes, the *Malleus Maleficarum*, 'all witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which in women is insatiable.' If you were to see her entirely naked and at your mercy, you may yet succumb to her base sorcery and seek to slake your desires upon her, and thus condemn your soul to her foul command. Never let there be less than two strong men with her at all times, lest she bewitch a man alone. Now, bring me the book. I have marked the page."

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A bull-eye lantern was opened at one side of the room, but there was enough reflected light for Rebecca to stare around wildly at her surroundings. A raft of crude, wooden logs formed the ceiling of the cell, supported by round logs set upright into the floor. The walls were of thick, brown earth and here and there braced with similarly coarse wooden planking. A ladder rested to one side beneath a small trap door.

The entire room was perhaps no larger than thirty or forty feet square, and hessian sacks of vegetables took up most of the wall to her right. She was held prisoner in a root cellar, turned over to temporary use as a makeshift dungeon. To her left, a large monk or friar was bent over a book that rested on a wooden table; though smaller, she suspected that it was of similar crude construction as the one that she was chained across. By his side, a young boy perhaps only a teenager, in similar monkish robes and with the same shaved pate, stole secretive glances across at her, his eyes wide with what she supposed must be a mix of fear of her and craving to see more of her naked body.

"Ah," exclaimed the older priest. "We must look for witches' marks upon her flesh. Brown marks or such that feel no pain from pin or needle. I have a bodkin for just such a purpose." Both men, turned towards her but the darkness hid their faces and made them more figures of menace than they would have been in the light.

Rebecca's eyes went wide. They meant to torture her by sticking needles in her while she lay chained helpless in the dark. She thrashed wildly as much as she was able to, held in the iron grip of the chains. The older priest addressed the young man sternly. "You must hold her steady, young Thomas, while I examine her nakedness."

In the dim light that escaped from the lantern still beside the book on the side table, the monk bent over her. Afraid to work on her in the light, he had to peer closely at her skin, his left hand stretching and smoothing her flesh while the right held the sharp steel bodkin, its needle point ready to prick her. The stray light that glittered from the menacing metal pin transfixed Rebecca's eyes and she squirmed on the tabletop, uncaring of the scratches of wooden splinters on her naked back.

"Hold her, boy!" The friar snapped and returned to his examinations. The young man pushed his hands down on Rebecca's hips and pressed the weight of his young body against her thighs and knees, almost lying across her. For a moment, she felt his hands recoil in shock as his thumbs made electric contact with her pubic hair, and then when he was struck neither dead nor blind, he slid them back, pushing across the creases where her thighs met her lower belly, until again they lost themselves in the tangle of

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hair. Looking past the monk's shoulder, Rebecca caught his eyes and held them in the half-light of the dungeon.

Frere Albere continued his inch-by-inch examination of her naked chest, his calloused hands brushing over breast and nipple, exciting both. Each time he found a mole or blemish to put to his test, it wasn't the deep stab of a dagger that she had feared but a brief pricking, as if he was unsure of what he was searching for himself. Young Thomas continued to stare at Rebecca's eyes, occasionally flicking a glance at his master to make sure he wasn't observed. His thumbs had begun to describe small circles through the hairs over her mound. No, not circles but spirals, for each turn brought the digits closer to her swelling lips. Against any desire, against any reason, she could feel the excitement building in this foreign body she was in. Perhaps it was because she would soon be free, back in her own time, that she felt no immediate threat from these men.

Thomas's thumbs finally made contact with her swollen lips. Staring at her, he licked his thin lips nervously, and with a quick look to make sure that Frere Albere was still engrossed, his digits parted those lips. Rebecca could feel the slick wetness run from her as Thomas's thumbs traced around her gaping opening, first one and then the other slipping inside her and back out. Finally he plunged both together into her wet hole. Rebecca gasped and arched her body, pressing full, heavy breasts against Frere Albere's chest as he leaned over her.

To hide the forbidden movements of his hands inside her body, Thomas leaned more heavily across her and accident provided what she needed when his inexperience hadn't. As his hands continued to stretch her cunt wide, the rough hessian of his monkish robe brushed against her clit and sensation exploded in her head. Her wild thrashing almost threw both Thomas and Frere Albere to the floor as they strove to hold her down. Her wild screams of orgasm were stifled by the thick-wadded cloth in her mouth.

As her frenzied writhing subsided, both Thomas and Frere Albere lifted themselves from her exhausted body. Thomas guiltily moved his hands before he removed his weight off of her, hiding his actions from his superior.

Frere Albere seemed short of breath himself and was having a difficult time standing upright. Rebecca watched in relief as he retreated to the trapdoor, taking the book, Thomas and the lantern with him. "I think I must continue this examination another time. I need to go and pray for this lost soul."

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“Shall I accompany you?” asked young Thomas.

“No! No, my boy. I think I need be alone for a while, to meditate and such. Tell the guards to remove her from the table and chain her to the stone. I will question her again tomorrow.”

“Yes, Frere.” Thomas replied, with a backward glance at Rebecca, naked, sated and still gagged on the rough tabletop.

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Chapter Three

Richard dashed to Rebecca's side as she sat up suddenly on the couch, looking wild-eyed around her.

"Are you okay, Rebecca?" he asked, panicking in his concern for her.

Caroline stared at him and then returned to sweeping her uncomprehending glance around her surroundings. *Was she already in some heaven or hell? She must have time to gather her wits!*

"Aiee!" she cried out and swooned back onto the hard bed beneath her. The strange man who had leapt to her side caught her and gently laid her down. She let herself go limp in his arms.

Those same strong arms lifted her from the bed and carried her up the stairs. A scent, like warm summer clung to his skin. Soft, tanned skin and blonde hair, cut short as was common with transported prisoners to reduce the infestations of lice, but he wore such clothes as no prisoner wore. She was no longer in the earthen food cellar, dug to guard against hurricanes, instead harsh lights fell on her face, the glare produced neither by sunlight nor by any kind of oil lamp that she could see. The strong stranger carried her up a flight of stairs whispering sweet concerns all the while, but when she heard him mention a doctor, she became concerned herself. She lifted up a hand, but not *her hand*, and with this other woman's fingers, stroked his gentle face.

"A little sleep my darling and nothing more," she breathed in a low voice.

"I'm glad you're okay, Becky. I'll help you get undressed and then I'll let you sleep." He carried her into a light and airy room with windows so large and glass so perfect that she thought she must be in some fairy palace from folk tales told to children.

The man drew the curtains closed, reducing the bright sunlight to a butterscotch glow that softened the edges of the room and made him glow like an angel .

"My Prince Charming," Caroline whispered huskily as he began to open her blouse. That he should be so gentle yet so familiar shocked and thrilled her, and she felt

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a recognizable fire in the unfamiliar loins of this strange body. Perhaps she was his good-wife, yet she wore no rings on her hands. He helped her out of her clothes and strange undergarments and she growled throatily as his strong hands moved surely over her muscles.

“Don't flee from me just yet, my prince.” With all pretence of sleepiness swept away, she reached for his strong legs, gripping one muscled thigh in a vice-like grasp, and pulled herself to sit naked before him on the soft, soft blankets of this strange bed, made so obviously for two. She thrust her hand into the waistband of his trousers, and then struggled, tugged and snarled, failing to find either lacing or buttons for these strange breeches. The man put his hands gently on her shoulders and looked down at her, laughing.

“You're randy all of a sudden.”

Caroline pushed him backwards. He looked surprised and even more so when she sternly ordered him. “Strip for me. I am wet for you and need you now!”

Richard shook his head in mock disbelief. “That must have been a horny trip you just made. Do you want to tell me about it?”

“Later.” She realized she was brusque and softened her tone a little. “Strip for me first and fill me up.”

He grinned at her and Caroline knew that he was hers, at least for now.

Slowly he unbuttoned the strangely thin, linen shirt that he wore. As she watched his arms flex and the muscles move under his skin, her hands moved over her breasts. They were fuller than her own and heavy in her hands. While the golden stranger watched, she teased the nipples into aching hardness. They watched each other. She watching him as he teased his clothes from his strong, manly body, scrubbed so clean that it shone. He watched her as she ran her fingers over her belly down to her vulva. She looked down in wonder as her fingers ran over a silky-smooth mound, hairless as a girl's, but they were the lips of a grown woman that swelled and parted under her touch. The unfamiliar bud at the center of her being thrilled to her touch, and Caroline felt her woman's juices flow out of her.

“I love to watch you play with your clitoris.” The golden stranger interrupted her close attention to this strange vagina and she looked up to see that he had discarded the last of his clothing. His long manhood stood out proudly from a nest of blonde hair, the tip, broad as a large plum, throbbed and jerked to his burning pulse. Caroline groaned

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and curled down upon herself as an unexpected orgasm shook her. Not deep, not powerful, but sudden and irresistible. Her breasts flushed and her legs convulsed.

“Take me now!” she commanded and reaching out to him, grasped his member and drew him towards her and not gently either.

“Crush me, mount me, fill me!” Caroline hissed in his ear. Her legs spread wide to either side of him, her hand insistently guided him to the gates of her womb. He resisted her pull to tease her wet hole with the red-hot head of his cock, but Caroline refused to be denied. She dragged her sharp nails down his chest and smiled wickedly as his hot blood flooded the welts. In shock at the sudden pain, Richard was too stunned to stop this wild woman as she grasped him around his hips with her legs and, with her heels digging into his buttocks, pulled him into her. His hard cock penetrated her right up to the root. Her hands gripped his broad biceps and she dug her nails into the hard muscles, again drawing his blood to the surface.

“Now, be my prince no longer. Be my king and rule me with your iron rod. Beat my cunny into submission. Give me all of you!” The last words were screamed into his face from inches away.

Richard snarled back at her, breaking free of her grip, though her nails took tiny pieces of his bloody skin with them, pressing her hard back onto the bed.

“How rough do you want it, Rebecca?” He held her shoulders down as he drove solidly, fiercely, repeatedly into her struggling body. He slapped her face but held back his strength as he did so. He still thought that it was a game.

“Harder than that, you bastard!” she spat. “Again!”

Richard held her down by one shoulder but with her free hand she dragged her nails across his ribs, leaving yet more bloody furrows. He gasped at the pain and struck her again.

“Call me Richard! No, call me Master!” he was shouting now, too.

“Make me! Pull my hair. Be my Master if you think you can be. Strike me again and again. Fuck me harder! Make me beg for your seed!”

Richard transferred his grip from her shoulder to her hair, bunching his hand in the thick locks. He struck her face again and, as she screamed for more he slapped her hard enough to hurl frenzied spittle from her mouth across the covers as her head snapped to one side. Blood traced a scarlet line at the side of her lip as his hand threatened to pull her hair out by the roots. His other hand gripped and squeezed one

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heaving breast, pinching hard at the nipple.

Caroline screamed and thrashed under him, pulling his cock deeper and harder into her body with her long legs still locked around his waist. They groaned, shouted and panted as they climbed to a bloody climax together. His thrusts out of rhythm and out of control, Richard finally screamed and shuddered, releasing his spurting flood into Caroline's suddenly ravenous pussy. As he burst inside her, Caroline, too, bucked and screamed, losing all sensibility in that marvelous, longed for heated rush inside her, lines of hot fire running from her pussy to her nipples, to her out-stretched fingers and toes--to every part of her.

Exhausted, bloody, defeated by passion, both lovers collapsed onto the blood-flecked covers. Richard lay across her, and then with a mumbled apology he rolled his weight onto the bed beside her. Caroline's heavy, bruised breasts and Richard's broad muscular chest, marked in stark lines of red, rose and fell together as each panted and struggled to regain control of their breathing. Caroline rolled onto her side and gently traced the edges of the bloody trenches that she had left on his skin and, as Richard slipped into a drained slumber, she whispered a single word to him.

“Master.”

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Chapter Four

Rebecca lay on her side in the dirt of the root cellar. She had been released from the table after the monks had gone, the gag removed and she had been given a pan of stale water to drink from. Tormented by thirst, she had swallowed it eagerly. Rebecca was more frightened now. She was still in this strange body and hadn't returned home to the future, to the basement where Richard must be worried sick by her failure to re-awaken. Still naked, she had been given only a small piece of sacking as a blanket to cover herself. But was still chained by one ankle to a small millstone that lay beside her in the dirt. Small though it was, she doubted that she could have carried far even if she had had the chance to escape, but there was no chance of that. Two men had been with her since the hasty departure of the monks. They sat in a far corner with only a single candle for illumination. One was broad shouldered, with a narrow waist and long hair. Tall enough that he had to stoop slightly in this room where the monks and his current companion were able to walk upright. She had heard his fellow guard call him Daniel and he had treated her gently as he had helped lift her from the table to the floor.

The other man was very different. She feared him more than Daniel. Every time she looked in his direction, he was staring at her, almost naked on the hard floor in front of him. Naturally hunched forward, he had a gap-toothed, villainous smile and a ratty attempt at a goatee. His body had reeked of sweat and alcohol as he had helped her down and had not resisted the chance to rub filthy fingers over her mound, pushing one invading digit inside her, until noticed and reprimanded by Daniel. Even so, he had given Rebecca an evil look and licked his lips suggestively when he saw that she was watching him. His name was Meshach and Rebecca thought it a poor irony of life to give a biblical name to such a wicked individual.

Down here in the dark, Rebecca didn't know whether it was day or night outside. But as she listened to their hushed and earnest conversation, understanding only one word in three, she guessed that these two must have drawn the entirety of the night

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watch. Meshach leaned towards Daniel and Daniel repeatedly shook his head. Finally Daniel spoke more loudly. "It is a wicked thing, and I will have no part of it!" And with that brief speech, he turned his back on both her and Meshach, who scuttled over to Rebecca like a huge venomous spider in the dark room. Meshach grinned evilly at her and, though she shrank back as he reached out to her, his dirty nails snagged a corner of the simple blanket and tore the whole thing from her grasp.

"Shame to waste such a pretty piece on the fire, I says. You and me can have a little fun before morning, slut. You can give me some of what you were giving the Sheriff."

He grabbed hold of her and pulled her through the dirt towards him. Rebecca opened her mouth but Meshach hissed at her.

"One sound mistress, never mind a scream, and old Meshach will have to gag you again and I don't want to have to do that. Likes to hear a bit of the crying, does I." He cackled through dry, cracked lips and fumbled with a thick cord that held his lice-ridden breeches closed. As his trousers fell to his knees, his dark and dirty cock sprang forward like an eager predator. Thick veins stood out on the surface, the black hairs at its root were matted and greasy. Rebecca groped blindly behind her, driven into a black panic by this grotesque and stinking would-be rapist, and grasping the edge of something, she struck upwards at his leering face. Her arm describing a swinging arc from behind her head until the object met his thick skull.

She had been given a shallow pot to piss into, in full view of her captors, and it was this and its repellent contents that shattered over Meshach's face. Shards of pottery, foul smelling urine and blood, from where the blow had laid open a gash on Meshach's forehead, rained down over both of them.

"Bitch!" screamed Meshach and struck her full in the face with his fist crashing against her cheek.

"No!" shouted Daniel, as he leapt across the short distance that separated them, but not before Meshach had struck her a second time. Daniel grabbed hold of Meshach and hurled the smaller man across the floor.

"I'm sorry!" Daniel tried to see the harm Meshach had caused. With her hands clasped to her face, Rebecca pulled away to the entire reach of the chain. The sudden tightening of the links made them both look instinctively towards where the millstone sat, and it was not until then that they both realized that Meshach had made no sound

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after Daniel had tossed him aside. The villain lay against the millstone as though resting on a pillow, but even in the flickering light of the single candle, they could see instead of the pillow conforming to the sleeper's head, this sleeper's skull conformed to the shape of his pillow. Daniel took one step toward the body, but the spreading pool of gore on the dark ground was proof enough that Meshach was going nowhere except to his final judgment.

As Rebecca watched him drop to his knees in shock, she realized that this might be her only chance to escape. She didn't know how long it would be before she returned to her own body and she was deathly afraid of burning in this one. She retrieved the thin, sackcloth blanket, wrapped it around herself and moved over to where he knelt, rocking back and forth on his heels.

"They won't understand that it was an accident, Daniel." She stroked his hair soothingly. After a long moment, he turned his tear-swollen eyes to her.

"I didn't mean to do it." His voice cracked as he spoke.

"I know, I know," she soothed, and spoke to him as she would have to a child or pet. She needed him. Without his help, she might very likely die here.

"You should get away while you can, before the body is found."

He watched her like a huge puppy as he knelt in front of her in the dirt.

As the real possibility of escape dawned on her, Rebecca took stock of her surroundings.

"Can you get me out of this chain, Daniel?" she asked him, and as they both knelt to study the clasp that held it closed, Rebecca recognized it as the same shackle that she had held in her hand before she had started this adventure.

"Should I?" Daniel asked her, still obviously in shock at the death of Meshach.

"Please?" she wheedled, and Daniel turned back to study the strong metal. It was a simple strip of iron that had been hammered closed around the prisoner's ankle. Daniel pushed his strong fingers between her leg and the cold metal of the manacle. As he clenched his hands, his knuckles dug into her flesh, bruising the soft tissues, and she bit back a cry. Muscles bunched in his shoulders and his biceps stood out huge on his arms. He gave a long, drawn-out grunt and the iron, which had needed a blacksmith's hammer to bend it into shape, finally gave way under the desperate pressure of his grip.

Free of the discarded chain, Rebecca rubbed at her bruised ankle, the blanket unselfconsciously dropped forgotten to the floor. Daniel, seeing her suddenly naked

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again, incongruously turned away from her. When she was a prisoner, he had been able to look at her naked without shame but now that he saw her as another human being, his morals forced him to blush and avert his eyes. Rebecca shook her head in disbelief, and then bent over Meshach. Though the clothes were filthy and doubtless riddled with parasites, she couldn't very well escape naked. She took only Meshach's coat, breeches and boots. There was some blood on the collar but she rubbed that off with the piece of blanket that she no longer needed. The boots were thin and a size too large for her, but the breeches would stay up once she tied the simple cord as a rough belt.

"All right, you can look now," she told Daniel and smiled as he looked from her to Meshach's body, now naked from the waist down.

On the little table that held the candle, there was also a ratty straw hat that Rebecca snatched up. She twisted her hair up on her head and crushed the hat down on top to hide her long tresses. Daniel watched her as she finished and then she gestured to the trapdoor.

"Is there anyone likely to be upstairs?"

"No, Mistress Caroline. The storehouse above will be empty at this time of the night."

"Don't call me Caroline, Daniel. Please call me Becky. I don't know where your Caroline has gone, but I am not her."

"Chauchemar!" Daniel gasped, stepping back wide eyed.

"What?"

"Mistress Caroline is an evil witch. A Chauchemar is a nightmare hag that can send out her spirit to ride men in their dreams and allow them no rest. She must have swapped her evil spirit with yours. She means for you to burn for her sins!"

"No, I..." she paused. It was at least an explanation that this simple man could understand and it made as much sense as anything she could tell him.

"Yes, I think that must be what has happened, but we can talk about it more once we are both safe away from here."

"We can hide in the swamps and gather supplies from your--from Mistress Caroline's hut. There is none that I know of that is further away from here."

"Swamps? Where is here, Daniel?"

"Here, Mistress? You are in the French town of Isle D'Orleans, in the New World. Where did you think you be?"

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Isle D'Orleans? New Orleans maybe? Had the name changed in its early history? “We'll talk about that later too, Daniel. Come on, up the ladder. I'll follow you.”

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Chapter Five

It was dark when Caroline awoke. Richard lay next to her, one strong arm protectively curled around her shoulders. His soft, warm breath, slow and pleasant, brushed gently across her cheek. As she moved, he murmured softly in his sleep. Patiently, she stroked his soft hair and whispered strange, arcane phrases into his ear, in a mixture of pidgin Latin and French. Slowly his breathing became deeper, as his light sleep became a solid slumber.

Unafraid of waking him now, Caroline climbed over him and sprang to the floor. The bed bounced as she jumped from it, but even that didn't disturb its sole remaining occupant. Unable to fathom some of the garments in the pile on the floor, Caroline dressed in the long, white cotton skirt and cream linen blouse that she had been wearing when Richard carried her to bed. She discarded the flimsy-looking underwear in favor of wearing none at all. From beneath the bed, she retrieved a pair of light sandals with straps of the palest leather she had ever seen. The clothes were light and frothy against her skin, she almost felt more naked wearing them than she did without them. Dressed and unconcerned by her unwitting host, she prowled around the house.

In the strange kitchen, she came across an array of sharp knives standing upright in a wooden block. With a thoughtful glance to the doorway, she placed the longest, broadest straight-bladed knife she could find into the waistband of her skirt, where the loose hem of the blouse hid the projecting handle. Caroline discounted both the serrated blades and the cleaver as not suitable for her purposes, but all of them were as sharp as butchers' tools.

In a large room dominated by an enormous wooden table, obviously too large for a household of just two, her attention was drawn to a map, incongruously framed on the wall. Recognizing a name, she took the picture from the wall and hurled it onto the polished oak surface of the table. She carefully brushed away the pieces of glass and thin, broken wooden frame and lifted up the map. From the lack of familiar sounds and

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smells, Caroline knew she was far from home and that was where she needed to be. She must get her bearings, she decided, and there were things too that she would need from her home. She must be very far away but not so far that she couldn't retrace her path; then they would see that witch Caroline was no weak rabbit to ambush with impunity. She did not question why she was in the body of another, but would use well this sudden and unexpected gift of freedom. She chuckled nastily and decided that she must deal with each step in turn.

First, she must deal with the golden prince asleep in his bed. Such a stupor would not last forever. Though night had fallen, still the night outside was not as dark as she expected. The sky itself seemed to reflect a glow, and in this half-light, Caroline returned to the bedroom.

Richard lay naked on his back in the middle of the large, soft bed and he did not stir as she knelt on the thick mattress beside him. Caroline rested a hand on his flat stomach as she leaned across him, holding the long blade to his unresisting throat. The warmth of his flesh under her palm made her pause.

The smell of her pussy still clung to his skin from their earlier wrestling, adding a distinctive musk to his own rich scent. Caroline looked thoughtfully at his limp but not completely flaccid manhood. She brushed her hand across the soft flesh; it twitched against her touch and she squeezed her thighs together as her own flesh warmed and moistened in response. She had ridden stupefied victims before and the memory of her dominance of them made her breath shorten with excitement. She brushed her hair away from her face and leaned forwards over him, taking his soft penis into the warm interior of her mouth. Richard stirred as though in a dream or a nightmare and began to swell in her throat. She sucked and worked on him until his manhood was long and hard and stood up straight above his taut, belly.

In the dim light, her saliva glittered like frosting on the purple circumcised head of his cock. Her mouth drooling at the sight, she hitched up the hem of the long skirt tucking it into the waistband. She licked her fingers and as she straddled over him, used the wet fingers to part her cunt lips while her other hand steadied and guided his twitching erection. She looked down on her stupified prey and exhaled slowly, heavily as she slid down onto him, impaling her throbbing pussy on that long, hard flesh. Settling onto him, she began to ride, rolling her hips back and forth and feeling him fill

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and stretch her; her own hands worked on her breasts through the soft linen of the blouse, and then moved down to spread her nether lips wide apart so that she could rub her clitoris as she rode him.

She felt him throb inside her, felt the fire boiling up in her loins, a bonfire of lust that was stoked ever higher by her fingers caressing and teasing her button, hard as a nut under her touch. With a groan, she climaxed on her rubbing fingers and on the hard, solid cock.

Her need for release was temporarily satisfied but not her lusts, not the desire to dominate and possess. She lifted herself from him, letting the cunt-slick weapon slip from her grip and knelt at his side once more. She wrapped her fingers around the shaft and curled her tongue around the smooth, silky head, tasting the unfamiliar female juices that coated him. She began to work her mouth up and down on him, a steadily increasing rhythm that was matched by the golden stranger's increasing heat and hardness. One hand cupped the full balls, the hairs on them soft and so clean. She squeezed and released, squeezed and released them in her grip. The man began to groan in his sleep; unnoticed, sweat began to stand out on his forehead. His head rolled and tossed from side to side and his stomach clenched, but still she worked on him.

Eyes closed in his stupefied slumber, Richard's head reared up off the bed. Caroline heard his breath catch in his throat and then his body jerked and collapsed back onto the mattress as a fountain of semen leapt from the head of his cock, flooding her mouth, the excess escaping past her lips to run down his shaft and over her fingers as they gripped the trashing cock. Aftershocks shook his body and each one sent another smaller rush of semen onto her tongue until he finally collapsed, spent.

Caroline licked her lips and fingers, savoring his taste and wiped the excess from her hands using his shirt that she gathered up from the floor. She picked up the knife, and then changing her mind, she kissed his forehead, tasting the cooling sweat of sex, and left him to sleep as she left the house, only her destination now in mind.

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Chapter Six

Daniel held Rebecca tight as they spent the daylight hours hiding out in the barn of an outlying farm. He was the only friend she had met in this world of the past and it was fear of that world that made her cling onto him in return. She desperately wished that it was Richard that was holding her safe right at this moment. They had a close call in the early hours of the morning, as they escaped from the tiny wooden township. As they had passed through the gate of the wooden palisade, the guard had called to them, knowing both Daniel and Meshach. He had been the only living soul they had seen during their escape and Daniel rallied his confidence to give some excuse about checking animal traps before his and Meshach's next shift. Rebecca, dressed in Meshach's clothes had merely waved vaguely and her heart almost failed her as the guard waved back.

"Jacques," said Daniel, as though it were an explanation.

"What?"

"A stout lad but not blessed by God with the sharpest of wits. We are away now, but I think we will not make it to the witch's house before the dawn reveals us. I know a barn close by that we could hide in until night falls again."

Rebecca told him that she was in his hands, that she trusted his judgment, and he had led her here. True to his statement, they heard searchers out looking for them, but none had looked in the barn.

"There is a witches' mark on the barn door to protect the livestock from evil spells. Mistress Caroline could not have entered here and so the men will not think to search here either."

"And if I couldn't enter, you'd have known me for a witch too?" Rebecca suggested.

Daniel had the good grace to look shame-faced.

"I believe now that what thou told me be true. Art thou angry with me, Mistress

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Becky?”

Becky reached across and hugged him. She wasn't quite sure why she did. Perhaps she just wanted to be held and Daniel was certainly the least scary person she had met so far. The gesture seemed to surprise and shock him, but he quickly relaxed into the embrace. Throughout the day, they lay together in the hay and talked, both learning to relax and be comfortable in each other's company. Daniel told Becky about his wife Brigit, and about how she had died of the yellow fever last spring. He told her about how he had buried her in the town cemetery, in a hole that he had dug himself, the grave filling with water as he dug it until his frustration made him weep bitter tears. Telling the tale to her, perhaps for the first time to anyone, made him cry again and Becky held him tight to her breasts and spoke comforting words to him, stroking his long brown hair. His strong farmer arms encircled her waist and he held tight onto her.

As he cried himself out, he looked up into her face, and out of pity or to give him comfort, Becky bent forward and kissed him on the lips. The kiss became something more as Becky felt the heat and the passion just beneath the surface of this strong, yet vulnerable man. She ran her hands through his long hair and pulled him closer, feeling his hard, muscular body pressing against her. His strong hands opened her borrowed jacket and tenderly cupped her breasts. Electric sparks ran through her body as his rough thumbs brushed over the large nipples, already swollen and sensitive. Her lips skimmed across his throat as she kissed his neck, feeling the pulse and beat of his blood in the thick veins. Her hands lifted his coarse linen shirt over his head, pulling it from his arms, exposing his strong chest to her hands, eyes and lips. She closed her eyes and let her imagination convince her that this was not some stranger in a horrible nightmare but that it was really her own sweet Richard, comforting her fears and soothing her panic.

Daniel pressed her gently onto her back in the hay and lifted her legs high in the air. Kneeling before her and wrapping one firm arm around her calves, he reached under her bottom and slowly drew the rough breeches down her thighs and past her knees, finally tossing the unwanted clothes into the straw. With her ankles resting on either side of his broad neck and the back of her thighs pushed forwards by his weight against them, he used both hands to caress and stroke her buttocks. His fingers and thumbs moving smoothly over her cheeks and brushing almost casually against her swollen vulva. With just the tips of his fingers, he gently spread the engorged lips that hid the secret entrance to her body and she felt them become slick as he found and teased her

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vaginal hole. His hot, hard cock nudged against the top of her thighs and, with one hand at her opening and the other guiding the huge head of his manhood, Daniel slowly lowered himself into her.

Inch by inch he slid deeper into her, drawing out the moment when he filled her completely, and then he began to pump. Slowly at first, but as she clutched at his arms and rolled her head, moaning, he drove faster and faster. Stray pieces of hay and straw stuck to their sweaty bodies as Daniel continued to ride her, pushing her legs back towards her head, his cock driving ever deeper into her cunt until every slam against her thighs drew a cry from her. His eyes were closed as he held her thighs crushed to his heaving chest and lay over her, his weight slamming her back down into the straw and his manhood deep into her vagina. She felt the walls of her cunt begin to spasm and she urged him on, touching his face and grasping handfuls of his long hair, holding on to him as he surged towards climax for both of them. The sounds of Rebecca's orgasm taking control of her drove him over that last precipice.

"Brigit!" he cried in anguish and loss, missing his dead wife, his heart breaking into pieces inside him. With that single outburst, he gave her all his seed, flooding her womb as he shuddered and throbbed inside her. Rebecca held him tight to her naked body and cried softly herself as she missed her darling Richard. It had all gone so wrong and she would never get home to him again.

Releasing her legs, Daniel collapsed on top of her, his member still buried inside, weeping into her hair like a little boy as she held and comforted him. Like a wound being drained of infection, he let out all the grief that he had held and buried inside of him for so long.

Throughout the day, they talked and made love and talked some more. It wasn't passion that drove their lovemaking, but a deep-rooted need to be held and comforted. He, for his lost wife, Becky because of her fear of never seeing Richard again.

Perhaps neither understood everything that the other said, but to be heard by someone and to know that the other person empathized was enough, for now, for both of them.

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Chapter Seven

Caroline wasn't prepared for the city she found herself in. Strange lamps burned above every street, and so many people. They rushed about and dashed between swift carriages that roared and leapt without horse or coachman. She had not heard of such things even in the tales of Paris told by the transported convicts, though true enough, they had no reason to love that metropolis. Not knowing the danger, Caroline sought the quieter, darker, dirtier streets. Even here, the doorways were outlined in strange flashing lights and the women dressed in even less than she was, left her feeling disorientated. She must soon find an ally who knew this world and could guide her home.

A large black man with outlandish clothes and more jewelry of gold and precious gems than she had ever seen, grabbed her. When she failed to reply to his confusing speech, he hustled her into a filthy alley between two buildings where the lights and the sounds were equally muted. Caroline tried to struggle against his grip, but he leaned in towards her, his face inches from hers.

"You looking for trade on my streets, bitch? You just some lost rich girl? Either way you're in trouble now, honey. You're going to be real friendly to me and maybe you'll get to make it home in one piece." He grinned nastily at her, pulling out a small wicked looking knife and waving it in front of her face.

"We're going to have lots of fun, you and me," he said, licking his lips as he looked at her chest, the nipples already standing out because of the cool night air. He pressed against her and made a grab for those breasts, painfully squeezing the soft flesh that was naked under the thin material of her blouse.

She smiled at him and stroked his crotch, feeling his heavy balls and the tumescent swelling of an enormous erection through the heavy cloth of his breeches.

"Yes," she said huskily. "I think you and I can have some fun, as you say."

She was familiar with this kind of predator, despite his rich disguise. Many rapists had been sent as slave labor to Isle D'Orleans by the French king and the

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women-folk had to recognize the look of them and to stay close to their husbands. Caroline, however, neither asked nor needed the protection of any man. Those villains that had tried to take her against her will, had learned that she too was a dangerous predator in her own right until her reputation became her shield.

The large black man forced her against the filthy wall in the dark and stinking gap between two towering buildings, pushing her backwards with his large chest, his free hand fumbled with his trousers, pushing them down his broad thighs so that his swelling cock sprang forward to push against her too.

“Oh,” she breathed. “Oh, you are so huge.”

The man grinned at her.

“Oh, yeah, babe. Biggest you'll ever have, sugar.”

Her willingness surprised, but didn't deter him and as he whispered crude profanities in her ear, Caroline began to massage the hard flesh between his legs, sliding the thick foreskin back from the swollen head and stroking her firm fingers up and down the long, impressive shaft. She whispered soothing words to him as she worked on the solid bar of his manhood, quiet words in a baroque mixture of Latin and Old French. His strenuous breathing told her of his arousal, but the clouding of his eyes as she looked into his face from inches away also told her that her spell was having its desired effect on him. His huge hands had been pulling her skirt up over her naked hips but his movements became slowly, his voice dropping first to a whisper, and then finally fading into silence.

Caroline pulled her skirt free from his loosen grip as she stepped to the side of him, still caressing his testicles, thick with dark hair, and the heavy penis. She circled around him, all the while still whispering to him and continuing to stroke his groin. Light glinted on the long blade of the kitchen knife as she drew it from her skirt. She continued to circle and talk to him as she held the knife to his groin. She stood behind him and he stared stupefied straight ahead at the wall in front of him, she drew the blade across his crotch in one sure sweep, cutting his genitalia away from his body. His face crumpled in sudden pain but no sound except for a drawn out exhalation of air escaped his lips. His legs buckled and he fell slowly, as though sinking into molasses. On his knees on the wet tarmac, his lifeblood flooding the floor around him, he seemed to curl in upon himself, shrinking into a smaller man as he died without ever quite realizing he was dying. His corpse toppled to one side and he relaxed with a death rattle into the pool

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of his own blood.

Caroline stepped delicately away from the spreading puddle of gore and threw the handful of now useless offal in her hand onto the cold tarmac beside the body. As she wiped her hand on his fine coat, avoiding stepping in the blood, she heard a gasp and a smothered scream from behind her. She whipped around still crouched, holding the knife out aggressively in front of her. A young white woman, dressed in provocative and revealing clothes, stood looking horrified only half a dozen paces away from her. The woman had one hand pressed to her mouth and her eyes were wide in horror.

Caroline again spoke softly, soothingly. "Peace, girl, I am a friend. There, there, calm now. Relax. Just listen to me, listen to my voice. That's it. I am your friend. That's it, just breathe. Shush, shush there, girl."

"Mickey." The girl whispered, as if frightened to get a reply. "Are you okay, Mickey?"

"Mickey is fine." Caroline reassured her. "Mickey is sleeping right now. Is Mickey a friend of yours?"

"Yes, he's my...pimp." The girl paused before she finished the sentence, like she had tried to find a different word.

Slowly, as though approaching a frightened rabbit or doe, Caroline moved towards the woman one step at a time. As her voice caressed the girl's frightened mind, her arms reached out and enfolded her. The prostitute relaxed into her embrace and let Caroline stroke her hair and neck. Caroline's whispered words told her of friendship, of them united, allies, of their mutual search for home. And the girl's ears drank in the fantasies until her thoughts were only those that had been given to her and her own mind slept behind those beautiful open eyes.

Caroline gazed into the wide, blue eyes and held the soft face in her hands. She leaned forward and kissed the girl full on the lips.

"What is your name, little sister?"

"Beverley." The girl responded.

"Beverley. We need to get away from here, from this place. We need to go home. You want to go home don't you, Beverley? I have come to fetch you home, but now I need your help too. Help me to get us both home where it is safe. I need you to awaken now and remember. We are going home to this place." Caroline pulled the old print out of her waistband and showed it to her new companion.

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“Yes, safe,” Beverley repeated and her eyes regained their focus. “We will need money. Mickey has all the money.” She looked back up the alley and her eyes started to widen again. Caroline gently turned her face from the body on the floor.

“Remember, Mickey is sleeping. You don't want to waken him, do you? He would be angry if you woke him. You just wait here. I will ask Mickey for some money for our trip.”

Leaving Beverley standing submissively at the mouth of the alley, Caroline bent over Mickey's corpse and expertly searched the many pockets of his clothing, avoiding the blood as much as possible. She made a small pile of personal items beside the body and took only a roll of bills, unfamiliar in design, but obviously what she was looking for.

She went over to Beverley and handed them to her.

“You look after the money, dear Beverley.” That was the wisest idea until she was more familiar with the worth of each note.

“Now, we must leave and quickly.”

“My things?” Beverley queried.

“They have been sent on ahead. You remember packing them and sending them off, don't you?”

Beverley thought for a moment and replied, “Yes, I sent them on ahead.” Galvanized, she grasped Caroline's hand, “Come on, we can grab a taxi to the bus station!”

Hand in hand with Beverley, Caroline smiled as she followed her new friend into the belly of the huge city.

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Chapter Eight

Rebecca and Daniel huddled together on a dry levee, across from the small muddy island where Caroline's shack stood. They had left the barn after night-fall and through a swamp, lit only by fitful moonlight and alive with the sounds of insects and reptiles they had crawled, waded and slogged through waist high mud for most of the night to arrive at Caroline's demesne. The thin, wooden-slatted door hung loosely from the one remaining simple rope hinge and a lanky individual leaned on a rusty, iron pike, standing guard outside. The weapon was two feet taller than he was and looked cumbersome and heavy, but still vicious for all of that. The guard was dressed in the same type of simple farming clothes that seemed to Rebecca to be *de rigueur* for all the men. Only the monks had worn anything different. Daniel pointed out a broad sash that ran from the man's left shoulder to his right hip; it had originally been white but was now just a dirty rag.

"That marks him as one of the town's militia. They must have called out everyone for the search."

"Because of the death of Meshach?" Rebecca shuddered at the memory and with her mounting fear as they watched the guard.

Daniel looked directly at her.

"No. No one would care that much about him, but they are afraid of you. I don't think you'll get a fair trial if we are caught."

Rebecca bit her lip to stifle a waspish reply. From what little she knew of witch trials, fair wasn't a word she would have ever connected with them. Daniel looked back at the hut. The sounds of searching came from inside the little structure.

"We'll wait until they leave and, if they don't post a guard, we'll sneak inside and see if we can gather some supplies. It might also be a safe place to hide until dark, now that the militia have already searched here." He put a strong arm around her protectively and she cuddled into his side.

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“If God wills, we will survive this hunt.”

The sun was very high in the sky when the three searchers from the local militia finally left the island, having purloined several earthenware jars.

Daniel looked at her questioningly. “Strong spirits?” he asked.

“Don't ask me,” Rebecca replied. “I swear to you, I've never seen this place before in my life.”

The mismatched pair waded across the shallow moat and climbed up onto the bank. The midday heat was already baking the thick, brown mud on their limbs and clothes as they stood looking cautiously into the woods surrounding them and listened sharply for alarms warning of discovery. Only the sounds of birds and other bayou wildlife came back to their straining ears.

As Daniel started hunting through the interior of the hut, Rebecca looked around outside. Close to one side of the shack stood a huge tub of water; a simple barrel-like construction caulked with tar. It was covered with a wooden lid and had been cleverly constructed to catch the run-off from multiple wooden gullies on the roof of the shack. When Rebecca looked inside, it was almost full to the brim with fresh, sweet rainwater. She looked around and found a wooden bucket close by. Heavily laden with the bucket full of fresh water, she headed into the shack.

Daniel was searching through pots and jars on the many wooden shelves that lined the hut. Bundles of dried flowers and herbs hung from the rafters and scented the entire room. Rebecca snagged a simple blanket from the cot at one side of the room and tore a strip from one edge. Daniel's mouth dropped open in mute surprise as he turned to see what she was doing. Rebecca had quickly stripped the filthy clothes from her body and was bent over wringing out the piece of blanket. She looked at him and smiled broadly as she straightened and began to wash the mud and filth from her long limbs.

“Don't look so shocked, Daniel. You can scrub my back, and then it will be your turn to strip off and get clean.” She laughed as his eyes widened and he stuttered over some mumbled reply. The thick mud ran down her legs and she rinsed the last of the dirt away. It dripped through the planks of the floor and left the boards dirty, but quickly drying. Rebecca picked up the bucket and handed it to Daniel.

“Just pour it slowly over my head,” she told him.

Raising the bucket above her head, he slowly poured the cool water onto Rebecca's head and she ran her hands through the unfamiliar tresses, washing out all the

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accumulated dirt under the impromptu shower. The water also splashed down the front of Daniel's shirt and, either cold or his obvious arousal at seeing Rebecca naked, made his small nipples stand out through the rough material of his wet shirt.

“You are beautiful,” he whispered.

She looked up at his wondering face, water dripping from her long lashes.

“Fetch another bucket of water,” she whispered huskily and, as he went outside to do as she asked, she wrung the excess water from her hair, running her hands through the long tresses and letting the last droplets run down her wrists.

When Daniel returned with a fresh bucket, she started to peel his shirt off of him. Her deft fingers now practiced at lifting the rough shirt over his head, freeing his long, chestnut-brown hair so that it fell in soft waves against his naked skin. She ran her hands over his broad, manly chest and through the short, dark hairs there, pulling his shirt over the curve of his shoulders and down his muscular arms. Kneeling in front of him, she unfastened his laced trousers and stripped him naked. His legs were broad and muscular and she ran her hands up and down them through the thick, strong hairs.

She stood in front of him and, as he stood naked before her, unresisting and unashamed, she began to wash his body with the cool refreshing water. The dirt ran down his strong flesh in muddy rivulet. She kept rinsing the rough cloth and scrubbing his skin until it glowed a rich golden tan. Finally on tiptoes, she up-ended the bucket above his head and watched as Daniel washed his long, soft, chestnut-colored hair in the steady cascade.

Putting down the bucket, she stroked the droplets of water down his body as he wrung out his hair and, as she did so, her full, naked breasts brushed repeatedly across the coarse, clean hairs on his chest. Her skin felt alive and her hard nipples, stimulated by the friction, sent little electric lightening bolts down through her belly to her swelling vagina lips. She could feel the signs of her mounting arousal in the heat that centered in her clitoris and spread up through her stomach and down through her thighs. She felt the insistent hardness of his swollen manhood nudging against her hips and belly as she kissing her way down his chest, and dropped to her knees in front of him. The glorious length of his erection towered above her and she curled gentle fingers around its heat. Her soft hand pressed his rigid member back against his hard, tense belly as her lips and tongue began to caress his large testicles, licking stray droplets of water from the dark hairs covering his balls and leaving their own trail of saliva across the sensitive genitals.

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Daniel groaned throatily above her and his cock throbbed and twitched in her hand.

Rebecca gently drew his erection down, running her tongue over the rigid shaft that was both soft as silk and hard as iron. She drew the foreskin back from the purple, swollen head, fiery in its internal heat filled with his heart's blood. A thick pulse in his cock made it pull against her as she closed her lips over the globe and began to work her mouth and tongue back and forth, up and down on the huge member. Daniel groaned and gasped above her, his hands clutching her long, thick hair. His cock throbbed and Rebecca's saliva ran down the shaft making it slick in her grip as she drove him closer and closer towards his climax.

Before he reached his peak, Daniel forcibly withdrew his cock from her mouth and knelt down to level with her face. He kissed her softly on the lips, and then pressed her back onto the rough boards of the floor. His strong hands lowered her gently down until she lay on the wood with her hair spread out in a halo around her head and her knees in the air. She closed her eyes as Daniel pressed her legs apart and she waited for the expected weight of his body as he pressed his cock into her. When his lips touched her mound and his tongue lapped at her vulva, she gasped and almost came right then. His fingers parted her tumescent lips and the tip of his tongue sought out and caressed her swollen clitoris. Fingertips found the opening to her womb and slipped inside her, the juices flowing from her vagina provided all the lubrication his strong hands needed as they slid inside her. Two fingers, and then three stretched and filled her, preparing the way for that enormous rod that her body ached for, to make her whole and complete.

Rebecca gasped and writhed on that rough floor, coming to orgasm as his tongue stroked her clit, and then again as he drove his fingers in and out of her slick opening. One hand pressed on her belly as the other repeatedly thrust into her, forcing her again to climax, her body arched off the floor and her juices gushed out of her. Finally, his hands held her arms pressed back against the wooden planks as his cock throbbed and twitched at the soaking entrance to her deepest being. She moaned and pushed her pelvis up against his hard weapon, and then finally he made the long, slow slide deep inside her, his balls smacking against her ass as her legs locked around his thighs. Each drive was long and hard, the pace and rhythm increasing as both of them neared some hidden apex of desire and need. His breath came in grunts and guttural sounds, matched by her gasps and moans as he held her down and slammed into her harder, faster and deeper with each thrust, until shuddering and crying out, his orgasm burst inside her belly.

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Pushing hard against her, trying to reach the center of her womanhood, he held her and spurted inside her as her own orgasm robbed her of coherency and sent huge flashes of lightning throughout her shaking body.

As they lay together feeling the aftershocks shake their bodies, they kissed and hugged each other. Daniel told her that he loved her and that he would die for her. She didn't believe him. Words like that seemed to come easily to men no matter what century they lived in. She knew it for what it was. She was perhaps only the second woman he had ever made love to and he wasn't over his wife yet. He wasn't her man and she didn't feel, would never feel, the same way about him. Rebecca held him and stared at the ceiling.

If she was lost here forever, Daniel wouldn't be a bad choice for a protector. In fact, he might be her only choice. She hated to approach any possible relationship in such a calculating way, but she was trying to face her biggest fear; that she would be here for the rest of her life.

Rebecca wrapped her arms around Daniel's strong neck as he hugged her close and she tried to make some plan for her future.

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Chapter Nine

Someone pounded heavy hands against the front door and alternated by ringing the front doorbell repeatedly. Richard staggered to his feet and stumbled amongst the clothes still piled on the floor beside the bed. The room was dark, but Rebecca was not there with him. His head throbbed and, grabbing a dressing gown, pulled it on as he staggered to the door. He opened it and stared at Webber standing on the doorstep, his hand poised to knock again. Richard rubbed one eye and stared blearily at him.

Webber looked back at him. "Well, I guess that explains your absence from work today. You have a monster hangover?"

"What? No. I don't know? What time is it?" When Webber told him, Richard dragged a hand blearily across his face and invited him inside.

"I'll just find out where Becky is. Do you want to make a coffee? You'll find everything in the kitchen." Richard pointed him in the right direction and leaving him to it, went back to the bedroom to put some clothes and look for Rebecca.

Dressed in comfortable jeans and a clean, crisp, short-sleeved blue dress shirt, his face scrubbed and his teeth brushed, Richard wandered from room to room, calling out to Agent Webber as he went.

"I don't understand it. I got home from work yesterday afternoon and remember nothing from about six p.m. until I heard you knocking."

As he failed to find any trace of Rebecca and no note from her, he became more frantic. He ran from room to room, calling her name until Webber called him back into the dining room. A picture frame had been knocked from the wall and lay shattered on the tabletop. Richard looked puzzled at the debris. Webber then motioned him through into the kitchen.

"Everything has its place in your house, Mr. Machin. Were you missing a knife from that knife block before?"

Richard looked bemused and sat heavily into a one of the pinewood kitchen

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chairs.

“What's happened?”

Webber looked at him. “Did you tell her about our offer to fund your research?” he asked sternly.

“Yes, yes of course.”

“You are well aware that she is a foreign national. How well do you know her?”

“You think she's a spy, now?” Richard stumbled over the words in shock and disbelief.

“We can't discount even the most far-fetched possibilities. Perhaps someone has been bugging your property and, when they heard that we were interested they arranged to kidnap Rebecca.”

“You don't believe that!”

“You care about her. She would prove to be excellent leverage on you and they couldn't have expected me to be here when you awoke.”

He took out a small silver mobile phone and pressed a single speed-dial number. When the call was answered, he spoke rapidly. “Jason Webber. I need a description circulating to the police and I need a forensics team at the following address ASAP.”

He gave a concise description of Rebecca despite the fact, Richard realized, that Mr. Webber had supposedly never met her.

Webber crouched down in front of him and looked him straight in the eyes.

“Richard, I need you to keep yourself together. I don't want us to have gotten off on the wrong foot. My name is Jason and I promise you, we will find her. Very little can be hidden from modern forensics. If there have been strangers inside your house we'll know about it very soon. If Rebecca left on her own, the police will quickly find her and you and I *together*, can ask her why.” Jason put a strong hand on Richard's shoulder and nodded reassuringly at him, maintaining eye contact.

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Chapter Ten

Jason Webber brought two cups of coffee over to the table where Richard sat, still in shock. The house was full of men and women who dusted surfaces for fingerprints and took books from the bookshelves and shook them upside down.

Richard looked around. "There isn't anything to find."

Agent Webber looked at him over the rim of the coffee cup. "You never mentioned anything in your notes or to the senior staff at the University about having your own personal Loop here at home."

"I'm hardly unique in bringing my work home with me and the Loop isn't restricted technology. Last year the government was happy to loan it to the Brits, no questions asked."

"Last year," Agent Webber replied, "we didn't think it worked. If a foreign power is interested in it then we need to re-evaluate its potential."

"What foreign power?" Richard retorted.

Before the conversation could progress any further, Webber's mobile phone rang. He snapped open the little silver instrument, listened briefly, and then asked a few terse questions. He took out a ballpoint pen and scrawled on a kitchen notepad as he talked.

"Where? Uh hum. What time was that? Did you get the destination? Good. There are police at the scene? No, the alley. Yeah? Good. No, I'll go to the bus station first. Okay."

Webber snapped the phone shut, tore off the top leaf on the notepad and tucked it into the breast pocket of his jacket. Looking at Richard, he gave him a reassuring smile. "There's some good news for you, at least. And probably for us both. It seems Rebecca got caught up in the killing of a pimp downtown late last night and she and one of the working girls have hopped on a Greyhound bus."

"How is that good news for both of us?" Richard queried.

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"Perhaps she went out, was at the scene of the killing and is either too afraid to contact the police or is a hostage in some way of the other woman. Either way, it doesn't look like her disappearance has anything to do with the Loop. The forensics team can't find any sign of a break-in or a struggle and there are only Rebecca prints on the knife block and on the picture frame. What was in that frame?"

"A print of an old map, like most of the prints in the dining room."

"A map of where?" Webber asked him in return.

"I don't know, Louisiana I think. Maybe. I'm not sure. I didn't decorate this place, just paid a company to do the interior design and chose the kinds of styles I wanted in each room. The dining room is supposed to have a colonial feel. Why aren't you out looking for Becky?"

"That's my very next stop, Richard. You just relax. Wait right here, let the team finish up and I'll have her back to you before you know it. It helps to have friends in high places, Richard."

After Agent Webber left, Richard fretted and paced around the kitchen. Despite Webber's reassurances that Becky's disappearance had nothing to do with the Loop, the sounds of searching in the rest of the rooms continued. Finally, Richard had enough and went over to the back door. A young cop posted just outside the door stopped him as he tried to leave.

"Where you off to, sir?"

"I need a cigarette and the wife won't let me smoke inside the house. Do you know what I mean?" he improvised on the spot, nodding conspiratorially at the officer.

The young man grinned in a friendly way. "Yeah, my girlfriend is like that too, sir. Well, Mr. Webber didn't say anything about keeping you in, but I wouldn't wander off if I were you. He seems like he's kind of wound up tight at the moment."

"Don't worry. Jason and I are friends. I'll only be in the garage if anyone needs to have a word with me."

"Okay sir. If anyone asks, I'll give you a shout."

"Thanks, officer." Richard nodded and headed off in the direction of the garage.

They'd hear if he took the car, he reasoned and so as soon as he was out of sight, he headed for the street. Within a couple of blocks he was able to hail a passing taxi.

"Downtown please," he said to the driver.

"Sure, but we might have to take a bit of a detour. The police have a couple of

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vans backing up traffic not far from the cinema on there.”

“Oh?” Richard considered for a moment. “Well, drop me off just before the detour and I’ll walk the last bit.”

“Yeah, that’s fine with me.”

The trip didn’t take long and Richard pressed the driver for more information, but all that the guy knew was what he had heard on the news.

“Some guy got knifed. Stuff like that happens all the time, but for some reason the police are making a bit more fuss than usual. Found him sometime this afternoon.”

Richard checked the time. Agent Webber had been right about nearly sleeping through the whole day. It’d be getting dark soon.

When Richard could see where the police had taped off an alleyway when the taxi dropped him off. He paid and thanked the driver and then, as casually as he could, he sauntered towards the small group of bystanders that were watching the proceedings. The police seemed to be wrapping things up, packing things away into the back of a large, black van with police markings. One of the girls in the little crowd caught Richard’s eye. She seemed pale and kept peering around as though looking for someone. Richard approached her as nonchalantly as possible.

“Hello.” He opened the conversation.

She looked straight at him. “Sorry but I’m not working at the moment.”

“That’s okay. I just want to ask you what went on here.”

“Are you from the cops or press?” She asked suspiciously.

“No, neither,” he reassured her. “I think my girlfriend was here when whatever happened...happened,” he finished weakly.

“Dark hair, about five foot four?” she asked.

“You’ve seen her?” Richard questioned eagerly.

“No, but the police have been asking about her. They don’t seem to be quite as interested in looking for my friend.” The woman scowled.

Was the missing friend the same person that Jason Webber had mentioned had caught a bus with Becky?

“My name’s Richard. Would you like to grab a cup of coffee and tell me about your friend? Maybe we can help each other.”

The woman looked at him in an appraising fashion and then obviously came to an internal decision. She thrust out her hand. “Okay. My name is Jenny.”

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Across a plastic tabletop in a cheerless diner, the fluorescent strip lights glaring as night crept in outside, Richard and Jenny compared information.

“Beverley, that's my friend, was working last night. Mickey was hanging around as usual, but I didn't see him when I finished at the end of the night. I thought he must have been picked up by the cops or something. Nothing to worry about. He doesn't treat us girls too bad and the police don't tend to bother us that much.”

“And Mickey is?”

“Mickey is the guy that got knifed.”

She didn't look too upset about Mickey's sudden end, and Richard asked her about why not.

“Mickey knew that dying was an occupational hazard, but it means the rest of his girls are at the prey of whoever plans on taking over his patch. He's well out of it; we have to live with the fallout.”

“And you haven't seen Beverley since?”

Jenny shook her head and stared into her half empty coffee cup.

“Well, I don't know for sure that it was her, but I do know that a working girl was seen hopping on a Greyhound with Rebecca in tow. It would be a big coincidence though, if it wasn't Beverley.”

“Do you know where to?” Jenny looked up animatedly, hopefully.

“No but...” Richard paused.

Perhaps he did know more than he thought. The map was of Louisiana and specifically New Orleans, he remembered. Rebecca had been trying to focus using a manacle that had been originally used for a witch trial in early New Orleans. Richard had tracked the item down and done some research on it, so he could verify any details that Rebecca picked up while using the Loop. If Rebecca still thought she was... Richard struggled to put what he was thinking into any sensible format. He just couldn't get it straight in his head, but felt that he was somehow on the right track.

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Chapter Eleven

Caroline looked around the strange room. She had felt dizzy with the noise and the press of people, and finally Beverley had suggested taking a room for the night. Caroline had expected some kind of roadside tavern, but the motel that the bus had dropped them off at was quite unlike anything that she had expected. Beverley had gone off to book them a room while Caroline had waited in the unfamiliar bright and glaring sunshine. The journey, indeed everything about the last few days in this strange world had left her tense and stressed.

Beverley came in and locked the door behind them. "I'm going to run a shower, Caroline. Would you like one?" she asked her companion.

Caroline, unfamiliar with the term, made a non-committal noise that Beverley seemed to take as assent. While Caroline wandered around the main room, touching the large mirror and examining the furniture, Beverley disappeared into the bathroom. Soon the sound of running water and steam attracted Caroline's attention. As she stepped into the small room, she was struck dumb by the sight of Beverley, completely naked, as she stood inside a glass booth, under a steady stream of hot rain that fell from the ceiling. Water ran through her blonde hair, glittered under the artificial light as it poured in rivulets down her body and dripped from erect, darkly pink nipples.

"Ah, that feels nice." Beverley luxuriated under the hot shower. Pulling her long hair behind her head, she looked directly at Caroline.

"Join me?" she smiled.

Caroline followed Beverley's example and removed her clothes, letting the soft material fall to the floor around her feet. Naked, she stretched cat-like and Beverley opened the shower door, welcoming her inside. They stood so close together that breasts brushed against breasts and hips brushed against hips. Caroline's body was stockier than her petite companion's; her breasts were larger and heavier but they were well shaped and the large nipples were sensitive and already stood erect.

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Beverley's breasts were small but beautifully shaped, her nipples projecting straight ahead; her skin was pale and Caroline ran her fingers across the soft flesh. Beverley shivered slightly and once more in control, despite the strange circumstances, Caroline leaned into her, kissing her hard on the mouth. Beverley responded eagerly and the two women held each other, bodies and long legs pressed together.

Caroline parted her legs and allowed Beverley's thigh to slip between them. The muscular leg pressed against her mound and she held the smaller woman's waist as she began to grind her vulva against the strong flesh.

As Caroline began to work her body into a steady arousal, Beverley reached past her and tore open a silver packet. There was a feeling of some cold ointment being dripped onto her scalp and at once a sweet, flowery smell filled Caroline's nostrils. Beverley's hands began to work up a lather in her dark hair and she bent forward to reward the attention by sucking one of Beverley's large nipples into her hot mouth. The heat in her pussy and the heat in the booth made her head swim and she sucked more furiously on the woman's breasts as the strong fingers massaged her head. She moved one hand from Beverley's waist, sliding it down the smooth, wet belly of her lover until her fingers made contact with the briefest of hairs.

Did every woman in this strange world trim her pubic hair? Beverley shivered under her touch and pushed her hips forward, tipping her pelvis to give Caroline better access to her body.

Caroline's fingers found the nether lips already swollen and eager for her touch, parting willingly under her caresses. Making love to a woman was new to Caroline and she marveled that it came so naturally to her. She knew how to touch herself to bring arousal and release and the same strokes made Beverley groan and clutch at her shoulders. Her fingers drew the slick, wetness from her lover's vagina, so different in texture from the wetness of the shower as it still streamed over their thrusting bodies, and caressed the hugely, swollen clitoris with those fingers. Beverley slapped a hand against the transparent wall of the shower to brace herself as she bucked under Caroline's intuitive touch.

The last of the lather ran from their bodies, washing down the drain as they struggled together. Caroline bringing herself to a peak of need as her fingers worked magic on Beverley, sending jolts of electricity from pussy to nipples. Beverley broke free from her grasp, her pussy suddenly feeling abandoned, as the friction against her

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lover's thigh was lost. The smaller woman shook and pressed herself into the corner of the shower as a first orgasm made her body spasm and shake, her breasts flushed by the external heat of the water and the internal fire of her climax.

Denied, Caroline pushed open the door and grasped Beverley by the hair, pulling her out of the shower after her. Staggering, Beverley was thrust towards the big bed. Caroline threw her unceremoniously onto the floor at the foot of the bed.

"Do you think I am here just for your pleasure?" she demanded of the girl at her feet.

"No," Beverley sobbed.

Caroline still held a clump of her long hair, torn from her head by the roots. "No, what?" her harsh voice cracked.

"No, Mistress. Forgive me, Mistress."

"If you want to earn the right to sleep on this bed tonight, you will have to earn it. You will earn it, won't you, Beverley?"

"Yes, Mistress."

Caroline laid herself in the middle of the bed, her legs spread wide apart, the water on her skin wetting the bed covers and glistening on her flesh.

"You may begin to earn your keep." Her voice still hard.

Beverly got to her knees and put her hands on the end of the bed. Caroline ignored her and lay staring at the ceiling, squeezing her full breasts and pinching the unfamiliar nipples. This body was not her own and Caroline felt no compunction not to abuse it for her own pleasures. The skin was smooth and unblemished, the nerves sensitive to every touch. She shivered as Beverley's sensitive tongue brushed wetly across her bare ankle.

The prostitute was completely under Caroline's spell, unable to resist her, enslaved to her every whim. Cowed and bullied, she began to exercise her skills on the naked dominant. Soft hands stroked bare calves, a firm tongue traced wet paths across the skin; touch and tongue together worked their own magic, continually climbing higher up Caroline's strong legs.

Caroline's vulva swelled and parted as though alive with a consciousness of their own. Her hands gripped and tortured her own breasts more cruelly as Beverly excited her. At the first touch of the girl's breath across her naked pussy, she groaned and lifted her hips, desperate to feel the touch of a mouth on her now soaking center. She

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had never had a woman taste her before. Men had tried to please her in the same way, but the touch of her new slave was a revelation, confident and sure but sensitive and subtle too.

Fingers spread her vulva opening the way for the tongue to tease and caress the swelling bud of her clitoris. As Beverly sucked and rolled that sensitive flesh in her mouth, long skilled fingers pushed their way inside Caroline. She was so aroused that three and four fingers stretched and filled her and still she begged and demanded more. Beverley knelt over her now, her mouth still sucking on Caroline's clit.

One hand pushed against her mistress' belly holding her down against the bed while her other hand, slick with the juices running from Caroline's cunt, drove ever harder and faster into that gaping cleft. First, four fingers stretched her vagina, then the thumb tucked beside those fingers opened her wider. The knuckles of Beverley's hand hammered against the bruised and battered entrance until Caroline gasped and cried out loud. Her body finally couldn't resist the insistent drive any longer and gave in to the thrusts demanding entrance. Beverley's fist slid brutally past the walls of her entrance, filling her completely. Caroline arched forward and grasped the wrist where it disappeared inside her.

Holding onto that arm, she bucked and yelled, groaning incoherently as a hugely fierce orgasm like nothing she had every experienced broke through all her control, leaving her gasping and drained. The withdrawal of Beverley's hand left her pained with a strange mixture of fulfillment and emptiness.

"Mistress?" Beverly queried.

Caroline ruffled her hair, as someone might do with a pet.

"Sleep now. You have earned my forgiveness for earlier."

"But," she added, "you will have more work like that when I awake."

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Chapter Twelve

The bus passengers were lined up on the dry roadside, looking frightened as a female police officer walked down the row, checking papers, licenses and any other forms of identification. The afternoon temperature was merciless and the bright glare of sunlight was unrelenting. Webber had taken off his jacket and was sweating in his shirtsleeves. The dust thrown up by the police helicopter stuck to his clothes and ebony skin, turning the natural rich tones of his flesh dull with a patina of red dirt.

Two local police cars had stopped the Greyhound on the interstate and Jason's helicopter had arrived almost immediately. The officers had questioned the passengers and only a few vaguely remembered two female passengers who had shared the bus journey together. Webber had expected the driver to be more helpful, but even in this fate played against him.

"Like I told the officer, I don't know anything about the two women you're looking for."

Jason railed at him. "How can you not know? You're the driver of the bus, aren't you?"

"This bus," the driver stressed, "changed drivers at the last stop. You don't think one driver drives all the way across the country, do you?"

Jason dragged one weary hand across his face and glared at the workingman. "Don't get smart with me. I've had a hard day so far and you're not making it any easier."

Jason turned away from the bus driver with a dismissive wave of his hand. His shoulders slumped as he stalked across to the line of passengers. The woman officer turned towards him and he glanced down at her name badge. Her red hair was bleached almost blonde by long days spent in the sun. Her breasts were large and they swelled, stretching the crisp linen of her uniform.

How is she not sweating in this oppressive heat, Jason asked himself?

"What do we know, officer?" he asked her.

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As she answered, her eyes, hidden behind dark sunglasses looked up and down his body, confidently appraising him. “None of the passengers took any notice of where the women got off. Of those that did notice them, none are even sure at which rest stop they noticed them last.”

“So, we can't confirm their presence on the bus at any time between where they boarded and here?”

“Sorry, sir. Effectively, that is the summary of the situation.”

“Damn.” Jason, conscious of his upbringing seldom swore, but a minor job recruiting a pathetic junior scientist was turning into a fiasco and making him look bad to his own section head. He checked his phone and inwardly cursed again. Out here in the wilderness, he couldn't even get a signal for his cell phone.

“There is a telephone mast not far from the town, sir. I can drive you towards there until you're close enough to pick up a signal.”

“I've got the helicopter.”

“Which could refuel down at the airstrip and we could pick it up there.” Her posture challenged him.

Despite his frustration with the task in hand, he felt his blood beginning to pump into his manhood. “That sounds like a good plan. I need to get in contact with the office as soon as possible.” Jason looked around at the scene. “Get this bus out of here. I'll tell the pilot to meet us at the local airstrip.”

As the passengers got back on the vehicle and the other police car pulled away, Jason backed away from the helicopter as it climbed through a cloud of dust into the pristine, cloudless sky.

A thought occurred to Jason as he watched the bus pull away. He voiced it out loud, just to see how reasonable the idea sounded when he put it into words.

“Those women got on a bus for New Orleans for a reason. If their original destination was that city, what could have happened during the bus journey to make them change their mind?” Jason mulled over that thought for a moment.

“They didn't. They stopped to take a break in the trip and they're still heading there. If that's right, we can be waiting for them to arrive.”

The red-headed officer watched him as Jason thought the scenario through, his eyes vacantly looking at the horizon.

“Right,” he said decisively, getting into the car, “I need to get on the phone.”

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Chapter Thirteen

Richard had pulled the rented car over to the side of the road and both of them sat with the windows open, drinking warm cola. Jenny listening intently as Richard filled her in on Rebecca and how she had come to be missing.

“So you think she is heading for New Orleans? With Beverly?” Jenny asked.

“Yes, I do,” Richard replied.

“I am beginning to suspect that, after using the machine I told you about, she hasn't returned to her normal self and she thinks she is from that city, back in the seventeenth century.”

“Sounds a bit far fetched to me.”

“Think of it as more like a nervous breakdown. She thinks she is someone else for now, a witch from New Orleans back when that city was being founded with the help of the French.”

“Like a split personality?”

“Yes! Just like that!”

“Why go to New Orleans though?”

“That was where the manacle came from that she used.”

“She used that like psychics use things from crime scenes working with the police?”

“I think it is similar, yes. Actually, I never thought that Becky might be getting results with the machine because she is a latent psychic.”

“It seems a bit vague, just going on where this handcuff came from.”

“Well, I didn't tell that government guy, but I remembered what was in the frame that was broken in the dining room. It was a print of an old map of Louisiana, specifically the Mississippi delta.”

“Where New Orleans is!” Jenny interrupted.

“Yes, though they called it Isle D'Orleans then.”

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Richard paused and looked at the long road ahead of them.

"I hope we can find her and that she's safe," he whispered quietly, and then he looked at Jenny.

"That they are both safe," he said softly.

As he looked ahead again and stared wistfully through the dusty windshield, Jenny put a hand on his thigh and leaned across to kiss him gently on the mouth, her soft lips brushing sensuously across his own.

"You're worried about her, aren't you?" she whispered, her warm, sweet breath caressing the side of his face from only inches away. Richard turned his head towards her, his warm blue eyes met her gaze steadily. He didn't say anything and Jenny was acutely aware of how close they were to each other. As he moved in his seat to face her more easily, his shoulders and chest brushed across her breasts. Her nipples responded almost immediately to the casually intimate contact; she could feel the strong muscles in his thigh under her palm and her breath caught in her throat. Again she leaned closer and kissed him, and this time he responded to her. Strong arms wrapped around her slim shoulders and his kiss was strong and confident, his teeth grazing her lip as he nibbled at it.

Jenny leaned her head back and Richard's hands buried themselves in the soft locks of her hair, stroking the nape of her neck, his fingertips massaging her scalp. His mouth moved down to her neck, kissing and nibbling gently at the smooth flesh of her throat, making her even more aroused. He seemed to know where to touch without being guided and how to take each movement slowly to give her body time to respond. Jenny could feel her pussy becoming wet as he continued to pamper her. Her own hands quickly and skillfully slipped under Richards's shirt, passing lightly across the strong muscles that gave definition to his ribs. Her palms brushed over his tiny nipples and Richard gasped, his short breath hot against her neck.

Encouraged and intrigued, Jenny pulled his shirt over his head. His body was tanned, broad and muscular. She pushed him backwards in his seat to give her the space to bend forward and suck on the little nubs of sensitive flesh. Richard groaned, his strong hands alternately stroked her back and crushed her head to his chest as he moaned appreciatively, his body tense and his eyes closed.

Working between their excited bodies, Jenny unfastened Richard's jeans and smoothly slid open the zipper. Released, his boxer shorts failed to conceal or restrain his

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erection and Jenny slipped the fiercely hot glans free of his underwear. Her fingers caressed the smooth shaft, her nails teased the skin gently and expertly. Richard's own hands had found their way to Jenny's breasts and he squeezed and kneaded the firm flesh just the way she liked; not too hard to hurt her but hard enough to reveal how desperately he wanted her.

Suddenly, his body stiffened and Richard put his strong hands on her shoulders, gently pushing her away from him. Her hands still held his rigid cock, he leaned ever so slightly towards her and gave her a demure kiss on the lips, brief and gentle, all passion fiercely suppressed.

"You can tell that I want you," he began, "but it wouldn't be right. I love Becky and I just can't do this. I hope you understand. I haven't asked her yet and I don't know if she would want me, but if I get her back, I am going to ask her to marry me."

Jenny looked at him, and then impulsively wrapped her arms around him, hugging him happily.

"I understand," she said, "in my line of work, I never meet men that give their wives or girlfriends a moment's thought. I love you for that and I think Becky is very lucky."

"You don't mind?" Richard asked her.

"You are sweet." Jenny answered, helping him fasten his jeans despite the hard erection protesting at being let out and then confined again, unsatisfied.

"Of course, I don't mind."

They kissed again, lightly, gently, as friends and Richard started the car as Jenny put the bottle of cola away in the glove box and together they drove south into the fading daylight.

Chapter Fourteen

Daniel went rigid next to Rebecca and lay listening intently to the night sounds. Rebecca hadn't been asleep but she had been dozing lightly and as she lay in the crook of her lover's arm, she looked questioningly at him. He lightly put one finger to her lips and lifted himself away from her. Incongruously considering the life or death situation they were in, she found herself watching the way the strong muscles moved in his buttocks as he stepped lightly to the door of the shack. Her fingers still burned from the heat of his skin as she had pulled that strong bum down into her, feeling him drive his manhood into her pussy and into her soul. He didn't look anything like Richard but she could see the two of them superimposed in her mind's eye, both men strong and passionate, forceful and hard even, but both capable of being gentle lovers too.

With a loud cry, Daniel, still naked, kicked the door of the shack with such force that it flew outwards and Rebecca heard someone give a shout of pain and alarm outside.

“Run, Recky!” Daniel shouted, and then leapt out into the night.

In alarm, Rebecca quickly snatched up a thin blanket. The terrible fears from when she had been chained in the cellar crashed down over her again. She held the blanket to her naked breasts, her eyes wide and her mind numb with panic. The night outside was filled with the cries and shouts of men.

Dashing to the doorway on silent feet, she was just in time to see one man strike Daniel across the back of the skull as he wrestled on the ground with another assailant, rolling together in the mud of the little islet. A lantern was lit and she retreated back into the shadows of the hut. The simple lamp flooded the open space with cheap, yellow light. Frere Albere and the Sheriff stood there with a knot of militiamen around them. Even armed as they were with pikes and cutlasses, the simple men looked frightened of the girl who hid in the shadows from them, wrapped only in a little sacking blanket. Groggily Daniel was hauled to his feet, restrained by a man hanging on each arm.

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The Sheriff stepped forward. Of all the men here, he feared her the least. “We have you now, witch. Both you and your lover will burn.” He smiled evilly, and hissed nastily under his breath as he got closer to her. His breath stank like a sewer.

“I’m going to miss fucking your tight little ass, bitch, but this time you really are going to burn.” Spittle flew from his lips as he whispered his threats to her.

Rebecca's mind raced. Her terror threatened to overwhelm her, and then deep inside herself she found a core of icy calm. She was from a civilised world and had spent years studying the mindset of more primitive centuries. If she had to die, as far as she could manage it, it would be on her terms. She might be beyond rescue now, but maybe she could still save Daniel.

“Him? My lover?” Rebecca assumed a scoffing tone and stepped past the surprised Sheriff.

“Why, certainly, any man who has lain with you must be purged by the holy fire,” Frere Albere interrupted.

“Yes, I agree Father,” she nodded at the Sheriff. “Shall I give you a list?”

A number of the soldiers looked at the Sheriff and nudged each other, their pikes wavering. To Rebecca it appeared that Sheriff Marcille visibly blanched, even in the flickering light of the lantern as his mind struggled to keep up with the implications. It was obviously common knowledge that he was one of witch Caroline's lovers. If Daniel burned, his own life might well end on the stake next.

“That is what she wants, Father. She seeks to cast doubt on a man's redemption through confession. It is a spiteful, devils' trick. If Goodman Daniel will confess his sins, the Lord will surely lift the witch's curses from him.” Marcille grinned at her, thinking he had outwitted her simple verbal trap.

Frere Albere lifted the lantern higher so that he could see Daniel's face.

“Do you so confess, my son?”

Rebecca could see Daniel's desire to speak out for her, warring against the desire not to make her sacrifice a vain one. She nodded at him, her eyes never leaving his, just a brief gesture to tell him that it was what she wanted. Daniel's head fell and he visibly deflated between the two troops restraining his arms.

“I do so confess it, Frere Albere, and do humbly ask for penance in the Lord's name.” The words tumbled out of him, spilling from his lips and tinged with the bitterness of defeat. Rebecca smiled to herself, unseen in the shadows cast by the

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lantern. Strong arms grasped her, and she was wrapped about with thick ropes. She was pleased that he would live but, in some small way, she really had wanted him to prove that his words earlier had been true; that he loved her and that he would die for her. It was better this way though.

“We dare not risk holding you longer, vile witch.” Frere Albere addressed her vehemently, leaning aggressively into her face. “Tomorrow night, you will burn here in the swamp and your soul will go to a harsher judgment than mine.” Rebecca just smiled at him and the frightened man stepped backwards, crossing himself.

Unresisting, Rebecca let the militia drag her away, sparing a last loving glance for her noble Daniel who would have thrown himself into his own lion's den for her sake.

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Chapter Fifteen

Caroline looked around at the cheap little hotel room that she found herself in. Each place she had stayed in this new world had been worse than the one previous. The little motel room where she had spent the night teaching Beverley to obey had been far removed from the bedroom where she had romped with the blonde, tanned lover and this most recent place was a step down again. Shutters obscured the fiercest sunlight, casting bars of alternating light and dark across a double bed covered with an old and stained coverlet. The filtered light only served to show up the dust on the age-spotted mirror across from the bed. The bed and a single rickety chair were the only items of furniture.

“The bathroom is at the far end of the hall.” The sweating man at the reception desk had briefly informed them as they had collected the key for the room.

Rather than complete their journey on the long vehicle with many people that they had first ridden, Beverly had suggested asking a stranger to carry them the rest of the way. Partially convinced by the paper wealth that she had offered him and partly by her mouth working skillfully on his cock until she was swallowing his seed, Beverly had convinced a broad-built man, bald and muscular to bring them the rest of the way. He drove a vehicle much larger than the bus they had originally traveled on, and up close the sheer size of this 'truck' had caused Caroline some concern. It was he that had suggested this seedy hotel to rest after their journey, and the clerk behind a counter in the entrance hall had leered at the two women knowingly as Larry, their new companion, escorted them up to a small second floor room.

Beverly whispered to Caroline that he would expect similar payment now to what she had given him on her knees in the alley beside the motel many hours previously.

Caroline smiled at her evilly. “I think that we can make sure he is well paid for what services he has provided. He can provide us with some servicing of our own.”

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Larry opened the door and made a gentlemanly gesture of ushering the women into the room before him.

“Now ladies, I’m going to have to be on my way soon, but I am sure we can kill a little time before I have to be back on the road.” Confidently, he began to strip out of his shirt, his huge biceps flexing as he pulled the bundled up the checked material and casually tossed it to one side. His broad chest and heavy belly were covered in thick, dark hairs.

Caroline stepped up to his side, caressing his pelt appreciatively. He reached out to put a thick arm around her waist, but she stepped away from his grasp and smiled at him.

“Patience Lawrence and we’ll make sure you’re fully rewarded.” She used the full version of his name to reinforce her sense of being the dominant one and, condescendingly she stepped back up to his side and let him put one big hairy hand around her shoulder. She slipped one arm behind his back and with her other hand she began to rub at the swelling mound of his crotch and looked at Beverley.

“Strip for him, but slowly,” she both commanded and cautioned.

Beverly looked at her and nodded. Slowly she stood with the mattress against the back of her knees and began to teasingly remove each item of clothing. As her breasts were revealed, she rubbed them together and teased each dark, pink nipple into hardness as she watched the trucker watching her. Standing at his side, Caroline had teased his heavy cock from his zipper. Even not yet erect, it was still huge in her hand, and she rubbed it back and forth, drawing extra length from it as it swelled in her grip.

Larry’s free hand had found the front of Caroline’s blouse and he pulled one large breast out into the afternoon air. He squeezed and pinched at the soft flesh without a care that he was leaving bruises on her. His eyes were fixed on Beverley as she stripped away the last of her clothing. He tried to take a step towards her but Caroline held him back.

“There is more to come, Larry. Beverley, lie on the bed and spread your legs for him. Play with yourself and show him where he will be going soon. Very, very soon,” she said, addressing the last phrase to the panting truck driver.

Larry’s cock now throbbed and pulsed in her grip. Fully hard, she couldn’t close her hand around his huge erection. She pulled away from the grip on her breast to kneel in front of him.

“Let me make you wet, otherwise she’ll never manage such a huge man as

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yourself,” she crooned to him.

As Beverley stroked her clit and slid her fingers in and out of her soaking pussy, Larry watched her. Caroline pulled his trousers down his thighs holding his heavy balls in her hand as her mouth engulfed the swollen head of his enormous cock. She sucked and mumbled appreciatively. Behind her, watching them as she masturbated, Beverley moaned in mounting arousal and above her, Larry groaned and panted .

Standing up, Caroline drew him towards the woman spread on the bed. His heavy hands gripped Beverley's spread legs, stretching them wider apart and the crushing grasp of his fingers turned her flesh white. Caroline guided the huge glans till it pressed against the wet, greedily, waiting entrance to Beverley's dripping vagina, and then she stared straight into his face.

“Hurt her!” she demanded. “Fuck her hard! Make her scream! If you can. If you're man enough!”

Larry roared in fury and pushed hard, plunging deep and sudden into Beverley, his thrust not stopping until his heavy belly crashed against her and shook the whole bed. Harder and faster he thrust, continually spurred to more furious efforts by Caroline's foul mouthed encouragements.

Caroline stood by his side, one hand on his buttocks, feeling them clench as Larry repeatedly mounted the other woman. Her other hand holding his heavy ball sack, thick with stiff, black hair, as his balls tightened. Judging the prelude to his climax perfectly, she pulled him suddenly free of Beverley's cunt and both of them groaned with the denial of their mutual orgasms. Caroline vigorously rubbed the thick shaft, slick with Beverley's juice.

“Lift her legs higher.” she ordered and, as he did so, she pressed that hot and huge cock against Beverley's sphincter. Beverley's eyes widened in shock and Larry grinned nastily, his expression matched by Caroline's. She locked and held her submissive's gaze as she held that huge cock pressed against the entrance of her ass.

“Now,” Caroline said slowly, all the while watching Beverley's frightened eyes. “Now, really show us how much of a man you are!”

Larry pressed his huge bulk forward and his glans began to stretch the tight ring of muscles. Beverley grimaced, her white teeth showed as she bit her lip. Caroline's eyes remained locked on hers and Beverley couldn't break away from that stare; she felt like a rabbit fascinated by a snake.

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Larry grunted and Beverley groaned out loud as that enormous head finally pushed past her tight ring and his cock slid much more smoothly deep into her, the thick shaft keeping her stretched, but there was no longer the pain of being split apart, only a massive sense of being filled completely. Just as her body had accepted him being buried up to the hilt inside her ass, he started to withdraw, her internal muscles clenching on his shaft as he pulled back.

“Again!” Caroline demanded and again he drove into Beverley. Again and again he dove into her, until she cried out at each thrust. Unable to help herself, used and brutalized, Beverley could only surrender to that driving piston of meat until grunting and collapsing onto her, Larry finally emptied his balls into her ass. The sensation of his spurting deep inside that most private and intimate part of her filled her senses until she became aware of him panting and rolling off of her onto the coverlet, already stained by many similar encounters. As his rapidly shrinking cock slipped out of her, Beverly curled herself into a tight ball around the fiery pain that remained in her brutally abused asshole.

One part of her mind wanted only to give herself, body and soul to Caroline's increasing demands, but another small part was beginning to awaken, as though from a long sleep, and also beginning to ask questions about how and why she was here with this woman in a strange city and in a strange hotel room with a naked stranger, lying sated beside her. As she fell into an exhausted doze, the last thing she was aware of was Caroline kneeling on the bed leaning over the semi-aware truck driver, whispering something over and over in his ear.

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Chapter Sixteen

Jason Webber looked around the dirty hotel room. It stank of sweat and there were other, less savory odors in the air too and overlaying all of that was the smell of blood. The greasy hotel clerk, his tee shirt stained with the remains of his lunch, stood in the hallway outside and gave descriptions to a uniformed officer. Agent Webber didn't need to listen to them. Their initial descriptions were what had drawn him here in the first place and, the kitchen knife that he held up to his eyes, protected inside its evidence bag, told him much more of the story. The handle was speckled with fingerprint dust and he waited while the attending coroner looked over the corpse.

"Well," the man began, when he had finished a first cursory inspection, "If he hadn't killed himself, I've no doubt that heart disease would have got him soon enough. He was a big guy."

Jason looked at him sharply.

"You're sure he killed himself? I know that's what the first attending officer said, but do you agree?"

The doctor looked towards the corpse and then back at the agent.

"If he didn't, it's been cleverly set up. No footprints in the spilled blood. There are other fingerprints on the knife but ones from both his right and left hands overlay them. I'd say that he wrote out that suicide note, cut one wrist and then transferred the knife to his other hand and cut that wrist, and then just stayed sitting in the chair until enough blood ran out of his brain to cause unconsciousness and he toppled onto the floor. No signs of restraint or coercion. He had sex with one or both prostitutes, was overcome with remorse, left a note for his wife and kids and slit his wrists. We'll probably find he was already suffering from depression."

"There is only one problem with that theory, Doctor." Jason looked steadily at him. "The note is addressed to his wife and the police have already tried to contact his next of kin, through his ID, driving license and through his place of work."

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Jason paused, partly because he liked the dramatic effect, partly because he didn't like the man's manner of assuming the validity of a theory from one brief examination.

"This man," Jason gestured at the corpse, "is *not* and has *never* been married. Nor does he have any children that either the government or his bosses know about. He might have written the suicide note, but everything in it is a complete fabrication."

A uniformed officer appeared in the doorway and coughed once to attract Agent Webber's attention.

"Excuse me, sir, but the clerk watched the two women leave, what with them both being good-looking and all. He says he heard them ask a taxi driver to take them out into the swamps."

"The swamps? What do they want out there?"

"One of them picked up a tourist leaflet off the desk, and then told the other one to take her there, sir. Seems odd that they'd go sightseeing if they'd just killed a guy."

"You don't need to have an opinion on it, officer," Jason relied harshly. "What attraction?"

"A ghost tour. Graveyards, witches, loup-garou. That sort of thing."

"Loop what?"

"Werewolves, sir. Another name for werewolves."

Jason snorted.

"Get onto the taxi firms. Find out where those two women went. And PDQ, got it?"

"Yes, sir!" The young officer disappeared back out the door.

Jason scowled and rubbed his temples with broad, black fingers.

What on Earth was this Rebecca up to? Nothing made any sense.

Werewolves? For heavens sake!

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Chapter Seventeen

Richard turned off the headlights of the rented car, and almost complete darkness fell around them. A pale moon loomed large in the night sky and cast thick shadows, hiding more than it illuminated. As they sat in the car, letting their eyes adjust to the dark, Jenny talked in hushed, nervous tones, interspersing her statements with sips from a small plastic bottle of spring water that she had bought the last time they had stopped for gas. As they had gotten closer to the climax of the chase, she had told Richard about Beverley, about their friendship and fun times the two of them had shared, skipping over the painful episodes as though they were inconsequential.

“How did you know where to come?” she asked.

“I did quite a bit of research before I chose what historical period to investigate. Also, and this is the kicker, this is the little tourist trap that loaned me that manacle. If Rebecca does believe she is really the witch in the legend, I can't imagine anywhere else in this town that she would aim to get to. Her psychosis will drive her here.”

“Do you think that Beverley will be all right?”

“I don't think, even if she has had a nervous breakdown, Rebecca would ever hurt anyone.”

“What about Mickey?”

“The news on the radio just said that a woman was wanted in connection with his death. She doesn't have it in her to really hurt anyone.”

Unconvinced, Jenny stared out into the silver-lit night. Richard had pulled over to the side of the road next to a large sign that read 'The Witches House, First Right, 100 yards.' Jenny slipped the water bottle into her shoulder bag and, with a worried silence between them, the two companions got out of the car and walked to the little turning. A dirt road ran off from the main highway, quickly disappearing between the black boles of the cypresses. A few yards in along the track, there was a simple ticket booth and bar gate, but this late at night the window was shuttered and the simple door fastened with a

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small but obviously serviceable padlock.

Richard held Jenny's hand reassuringly and the pair skirted the gate and followed the road, a moonlit path between swathes of forest that were as dark as death itself.

Rebecca, bound as she was, couldn't keep her footing in the back of the cart as it bounced along the long track out of New Orleans wooden-walled ancestor. The night had fallen quickly, and only the moonlight brightened the surreal scene around her. She leaned against the slatted side and struggled not to fall. Frere Albere's young acolyte, who had so sneakily fingered her during her examination days ago, led the mule that pulled the small cart. Men of the militia nervously walked alongside her, carrying simple reed torches, some amongst them touching rude crucifixes around their necks and mumbling childish prayers under their breath.

In the falling darkness, as the little entourage headed out of the town, the residents had come out of their houses and hovels to throw mud and howl catcalls at her. Mostly women, Becky noted; some of the men simply stood in the background and looked sheepish. Rebecca now suspected that she was to be burnt for being the town's most obvious whore rather than for any ridiculous claims of witchcraft.

As superstitious as these people were, the womenfolk believed that sorcery had tempted their men to stray rather than any lack in what they were providing in the marital bed. It was stupid for a woman to be tortured and burned to death for enjoying sex. Even Daniel had told frightened stories of Caroline purportedly controlling men's minds and he believed those stories himself. Becky shook her head at the unfairness of it all and felt like weeping in frustration. Instead, she held her head high and fought to keep on her feet as the little cart carried her back towards the shack where she and Daniel had been captured last night and to the stake that the Sheriff had maliciously described to her.

As the cart rattled across the uneven ground, Rebecca struggled to keep her sense of calm from earlier. Her stomach felt like it was tied in knots. She tried not to but her mind kept dragging up descriptions from her days as a history student. Burning of heretics, witch burnings. Her body seemed to have taken on an uncontrollable shuddering and her knees felt as though they wouldn't support her much longer. Burning was a slow way to die, the flesh blackening and charring on the feet and legs

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first, tongues of flame lapping over the victims tied hands, blistering the skin on the body and breasts. The condemned person's hair burst into sudden flame, burning and blazing around the tortured face. Rebecca shook her head wildly to drive away the visions. She hadn't had faith before but now, with all her heart, she believed that Richard would save her at the last moment. She had to believe it. Without that hope, she wouldn't even have been able to stand up any longer as the cart rattled on to its awful destination.

Jason answered the car radio, nodding as the information was relayed to him. The police car was parked off the highway, behind a small sedan without town plates.

"What is he doing here?" he mused out loud, and then turned to the officer who sat next to him.

"That car was rented out by our fugitive's boyfriend two days ago. The same night that the woman disappeared. I'm beginning to see a pattern here. With a boat from here, both of them could be out of the country without going through airport checks or anything else." He pointed belligerently at the young policeman, his eyes bright, the rest of his face lost in the darkness.

"You stay here and organize some back up, but don't come in until I call for you. I need to find out if they have arranged to meet someone."

Jason quietly opened the door and stepped out into the warm, southern night air. He drew an automatic from a concealed holster and quickly, expertly, checked it over before heading up the little dirt track. Moving quickly and very silently for such a large man, hunched over to hide his profile.

Caroline poked disconsolately around the dark interior of the hut. It looked like her home, but even in the thick darkness she could see that it wasn't. The shack was more sturdily built and larger now that it had ever been. Where there had been one door, there were two and parts of the room had been marked off with strange soft, red ropes. Most incongruously of all, someone had hung a small, stuffed alligator from the ceiling. Beverley whimpered beside her, frightened of the dark and the noises of the swamp. *Were all such city folk so weak spirited?* Caroline scowled in disgust.

She had been feeling unsure and concerned, ever since they had finally spotted the little islet. The swamp around it had been mostly drained and other small buildings

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had appeared. A shop selling cheap gifts and dolls, a stand advertising sausages in a bun and other hot food, a tiny building with two entrances marked one for women and one for men, and in the middle of all this, stood a stake such as was used for witch burnings, not that Caroline had ever actually known of a witch to be burnt.

The townsfolk usually just hanged undesirables. Only Frere Albere had such strange, foreign notions that he had brought with him from France. She picked up a cleaver from a table. It had been laid next to bunches of herbs, but no one cut herbs with such a knife. Everything just looked wrong. Her head hurt and she felt her eyes burning with frustration. She didn't understand this new world. She thought it would be different when she got home, but this wasn't her home. She wanted to run into the swamps and lose herself or else curl into a ball until it all went away.

A noise outside, people whispering in the dark, suddenly caught her attention. She gripped the handle of the rusty cleaver until her knuckles turned white and pushed an unresisting Beverley out into the night ahead of her.

Rebecca stood, outwardly defiant amongst the faggots of wood. They had been piled around the simple pole set upright in the muddy earth of the island. Inside, her stomach had turned to water. She felt like she desperately need to pee. Her hands shook and she could feel tears welling up at the edge of her eyes. Her hands were tied brutally tight around the stake behind her, and then the Sheriff had continued to wrap her in the heavy ropes until she was completely trussed to the wooden upright. In front of her, Frere Albere read aloud in Latin from a small well-worn Bible. The acolyte stood beside him and stared at her, his eyes wide. Between the flickering of torches and the steady silver of the moonlight, she saw Daniel watching her back and wringing his hands unconsciously in his own agony of tormented love. The Sheriff took a lit torch from one of the men and stepped towards her, taking pleasure in burning the last evidence of his own lust.

Jason crouched concealed beside the mossy trunk of a dying tree and watched the scene unfolding in front of him. Lit only by the pale light of the moon, the scene looked like a dramatic scene from a black and white movie. Rebecca, wild-eyed in the silver light, pushed a young woman, maybe the missing prostitute, ahead of her into the clear ground between the ramshackle tourist stands. Richard stood across the other side

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of the clearing with a female companion that Jason didn't recognize either. His pistol wavered between the two little groups as he tried to make sense of the confrontation.

Richard held out his hands in a wide, unthreatening gesture and tried to step towards Rebecca but as he did so, she grabbed Beverley's hair in one hand and twisted the girl's head backwards. With the cleaver threatening Beverley's neck, she hissed at the approaching pair.

In alarm, with only six paces separating them, Richard and Jenny froze in place.

"It's okay Becky, I'm here now, and it will all be okay." Richard spoke soothingly but Rebecca just laughed at him, spittle flecking her chin.

"Ignorant fool! Who do you think I am? I am not your true love. I am Caroline. This was my home but your Becky's body is now my new home!" Her eyes were wide in frenzy and she punctuated her words by shaking Beverley savagely by the hair. Jenny snatched something from the bag that hung over her shoulder and stepped around Richard's side, interrupting the exchange in an equally fierce and aggressive tone.

"We know you are a witch and brought our own cure for you. Holy water!" she shouted and hurled the contents of the plastic bottle straight at Caroline's face. The self-proclaimed witch screamed as though in pain and fright and, hurling her hostage to one side, she raised the cleaver above her head and made to rush towards a suddenly frightened Jenny. Richard stood in shock, his brain struggling to understand.

Jason watched the brief hostage scene play out in confusion, but his training made him respond almost instinctively to the sudden threat. A single shot rang out and the bullet reached the little tableau before the sound of the firing did. It passed cleanly through Caroline's upraised arm and she screamed a second time, this time in genuine pain. The knife tumbled forgotten through the air, arcing to splash into the mud at the bank of the levee.

Rebecca's arms ached from being so tightly bound behind her, a sudden fiery pain in her bicep made her strain against the ropes and cry out loud. Sheriff Marcille looked up at her in sudden alarm but her eyes were closed to him, to the torch he held and to the flames that leapt across the tinder at her feet. Her head swam with the shock and her heart threatened to beat its way out of her chest.

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Caroline's face visibly softened as blood ran from the sudden blossoming of the bullet wound. The bright red fluid splashed across the side of her face and other streams ran down the inside of her upraised arm. Her eyes refocused as she obviously wrestled with some internal struggle.

"Richard?" she queried tremulously, seeing his face lit by moonlight as though aware of it for the first time. Her legs, wobbly with shock, finally gave way beneath her and, with a little cry Rebecca fell to the ground, back in herself.

The woman at the stake shook her head and looked around in horror. Daniel watched fascinated as the soft face he knew became hard, the eyes evil and dark and his heart leapt. Caroline felt the heat of the fire beneath her and saw Sheriff Marcille staring at her. Frere Albere, familiar and hated, mumbled his pathetic and patronizing phrases, his eyes buried in the holy book.

As the flames leapt from her clothes to engulf her, Caroline cursed God and man alike. She spat savage words at all who could hear her voice and cried out for Beverley to save her, though no one there knew whom it was she meant. Daniel knew then that it wasn't Mistress Becky that stood in the terrible fire and he fell to his knees in relief, tears of joy running down his face. Caroline's screams tore at the night as she clung to life with a hate-driven tenacity. She took a long time to die.

Frere Albere shook his head as the foul woman finally expired and went to her last judgement.

"Even at the last, she did not repent, but called for her demons to provide her rescue. But the devil cares nothing for his disciples once they are discovered."

"Amen," breathed Daniel.

Jason waded out of the swamp training his gun on the scene but whatever was going on here, it wasn't spying. The tension had visibly drained out of the clustered group and he was pretty much ignored as he climbed up the bank.

"It's okay," he responded to the interrogative squawk of the two-way radio. "There's no rush for the back up but get an ambulance over here as soon as you can."

He rested a comforting hand on Richard's shoulder. "You can tell me what's been going on in the morning."

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Jenny wrapped her arms around her friend as Beverley alternately gulped and cried.

“Holy...water?” Beverley finally managed to stutter.

Jenny laughed in relief. “No, just water but she didn't know that. She thought she was a witch. Why shouldn't she believe in holy water too? At least it made her let go of you.” Jenny held her close again.

“I think it's time you and I went home.”

Rebecca groaned as Richard turned her over, cradling her gently in his arms.

“Richard?” she questioned and he stroked her hair in mute confirmation.

“You wouldn't believe what I have been through,” she said.

“Oh, I might,” he smiled. “I might.”

Sobbing together in relief, they hugged and held each other tight at last.

Epilogue

“We won’t support your research if you don’t agree to help us in return.” Jason sat at the dining table with Richard and Becky. Becky’s arm was in a sling but otherwise she looked perfectly well.

“Jenny made me realise why the machine didn’t work for very many other people,” Richard chuckled. “She watches more TV than you and I probably. She asked if Becky was a psychic like the ones that help the police find kidnap victims.”

Richard took a sip of his coffee. The steam from the three cups wreathed the faces of the talkers. Becky smiled and reached out with her good hand to rest it on Richard’s tanned, strong forearm. Having nearly lost him, she touched him at every opportunity now.

Richard looked up again. “The machine probably never worked. The subjects who got results with it, would have gotten the same results anyway.”

Jason looked thoughtful.

“We have overlooked or brushed away some serious charges so far. The murder of the pimp, kidnapping, the death of the truck driver.”

“The pimp was self-defence during a rape or attempted rape.” He looked at Becky who squeezed his arm reassuringly.

“I don’t think Beverly would want to press any charges. And as for the trucker, I thought that was suicide. Hypnosis can’t make you do anything you wouldn’t normally do.”

“It can if you are clever enough to construct a scenario in the head of the victim that would trigger that unusual behaviour.”

Becky interrupted the two men, cutting through the macho negotiating. “So what *do* you want in return?”

“My bosses would be more excited about getting their hands on a genuine psychic than they would have been if the machine really did work. We want to offer you

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a job. As a teacher. For young psychics.”

“As a teacher?” Rebecca looked puzzled and skeptical.

“I can’t tell you a lot about it because I haven’t been told very much, either. Very top secret but, essentially that is the offer. We will give you a new identity, relocate you, whatever you need. Or you take your chance with your day in court.”

Rebecca looked at Richard and then back at Jason. “I’ll think about it and we’ll let you know. Okay?”

“Fair enough, Rebecca. Don’t worry. We are not the villainous men in black that conspiracy nuts think we are. I think you’d like working for the Agency.”

He dropped a business card on the table as he stood up and looked frankly at her.

“I don’t know if I can quite believe everything I have heard over the last few days but,” he paused. “Welcome back home.”

C.A. Matthews

About the Author

C.A. Matthews began writing in April 2004. He started writing following a change in jobs last spring and, despite having a cat that likes to sit on his keyboard when he's typing, he is slowly getting the hang of this authoring lark. C.A. lives in a gray steel town in the north of England, with his cat, a rabbit and two guinea pigs, affectionately known as the Rock Band!

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