

Sex & Drugs & Tentacles

*Everything in this story happened.
If you can't remember it, I guess you weren't really there.*

NOVELISATION BY NORA BLACK

With special thanks to Julian, Neil and both Johns.

*This book would not have been possible without the players.
We wrote the story, but you brought it to life.*

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Sex & Drugs & Tentacles

*I'll sing you a song of the worms of the earth
And a song, of iron and bone
Iron and bone*

*I'll sing you a song of the dark at the heart of all
Of blood, dripping onto the stone*

‘Worms of the Earth’ | Delta | 1971 (unreleased)

The Greatest Band in the World

Rolling Stone interview with John Markham, Dec 1969:

‘Neil and I met at Richmond Grammar in, must have been ‘56, ‘57? I remember he had this guitar that his Dad had made for him and we used to spend hours playing old blues covers in his room.

We were a good tight band – I remember us playing all the local scenes, then the Belgium tour... When *Travelling With The Bluesmen* came out we were given £50 pounds in advance royalties – which seemed like a fortune!

I remember Mick leaving for the Yardbirds. He only played two gigs of course and we never really got the same feel after that, then Rob’s girlfriend got pregnant so it was just Neil and I kicking around London and living off all these women that used to let us stay at their flats.

When we first got to America, it was just, like, wow – the whole Summer of Love thing was happening right there in the street. After a while we sort of gravitated to New York via Mexico. By this time Neil was writing again and we were doing sessions with anyone who wanted us – Lou, David, the whole scene was really close there and *Black Rainbow* just kind of came out of those sessions. It was like we’d seen the hippy dream, I mean we’d been there, and then this sort of very dark, heavy time – that winter in New York – had happened... I think Neil was just saying what we all felt. It could have been any band but it was us who got there first.’

***Delta: Dark Rainbow* by Tim Ashford, Melody Maker, May 1971**

Delta, in the form of Neil Fenn and John Markham, have come a long way from Eel Pie Island, Twickenham and days driving round Belgium packed into the back of a second-hand van. It's hard to believe that the Delta Bluesmen who impressed crowds back in '62 with their tight blues sound and Markham's driven guitar riffs nearly didn't make it into the Delta who rule the world of heavy music today.

After *Travelling With the Delta Bluesmen* hit number 22 it seemed they had everything going for them. Then in late '64 drummer Mick Shaw left after taking up an offer to join the Yardbirds and was killed after playing only two gigs when the van he was travelling in crashed on the M1. The Bluesmen never really recovered from losing Shaw and six months later bassist Rob Thomas decided to call it a day, leaving Neil and John drifting around London, playing session and living off a string of girlfriends.

By '65, with nothing but a bit of royalty money to their name they decided to head to America to see what might happen. After drifting around through the Summer of Love, Markham played hard blues with touring bands and tore up the bars with Jimmy Page and the Yardbirds, while Fenn found a new voice singing with a reclusive Dylan – a friend since they'd been introduced in London. Rumours still persist that Fenn was out riding with Dylan on July 29th, although as an ambulance was never called no hard evidence has ever been offered...

After the famous abortive ‘trip to Mexico’ the hard-drinking pair were pulled back again to New York, writing songs with Lou Reed and starting their infamous ‘conversation’ with Bowie... [until] they recorded their second album through the bitter winter and spring of ‘68. Under the new name Delta they pulled in favours, scraped together the cash for session musicians on borrowed studio time in filthy buildings and produced *Black Rainbow End*.

Hard, dirty, sleazy, full of energy, powerful and weird, it’s hard to imagine a world without the driving opening chords of *Blood & Iron* and the bitter lyrics as Fenn proclaims the death of the hippy era through bloody metaphor and the spine-chilling chorus of *Waking Hours*. Well, as Fenn might say, you know the rest, the platinum sales, the world tours where they say every story is true, the rows, the public violence – three drummers in nine months – the stadiums howling for more, the onstage rituals, the legal disasters.

So now, a year since they vanished into their own studio, from which nothing but rumours have emerged – the new recording processes, the obsessive secrecy, the otherworldly rites, the money problems, the midnight rows – are we finally due to hear Delta’s answer to the world? A defiant call to action for a new era or a bloated piece of rock excess? I for one can’t wait to find out....’

Radio interview with Neil Fenn, April 1971:

‘This is it, the new sound. No, I can’t say any more – it’s something special, something John and I have always wanted to work on and up here in Suffolk I think we’ve really tapped into something [...] In the end after all the legal stuff – and I’m just resigned to never seeing that money again – it was so important to us to have total creative control, for the music to come first.

After *Black Rainbow End* went platinum it was just really intense, really heavy, we’d been on tour 12 months straight – John had left his wife – whatever you’ve read, it was true – and more besides [...] Then the label start pushing you for the follow up and we were flying back to LA then trying to mix tracks we’d recorded on the road with Henry and it was clear that something was going to break.

[...] I’m always reading that, about how Neil Fenn is a Black Magic freak! About how I’m supposed to have all these books and spells and shit – but it’s all very cool, very real, just something that’s a big part of who I am now.’

Sex & Drugs & Tentacles

*You can lie and you can pretend
But it all comes down to blood and iron in the end*

Blood & Iron | Delta, 'Black Rainbow End' 1968

Come on baby, let's go and lose ourselves...
Come on baby, let's go and find ourselves...

In the darkness of the hall
Fire shadows on the wall
Marsh fire heavy in the air
Come on let me take you there

Feel the rushing in your blood
Sword hilt buried in the mud
Standing out against the light
Fall back with me in the night

Come to Heorot Hall, and show me
Come to Heorot Hall, we'll be free
Come to Heorot Hall, don't look back
Come to Heorot Hall, don't look back

Drinkin' till the sun comes up,
and tryin' to keep the dark at bay

Drownin' out the names of gods,
and waitin' till the end of days

Drinkin' with your eyes tight shut,
there's nothing more that you can say

Fire burnin' outside,
but you know that you will always stay

'Heorot Hall' | Delta | 1971 (unreleased)

Heorot Hall

24th September 1971

I could hear the two-tone wail of the sirens ahead of us as we legged it up the driveway to the house, past a handwritten cardboard sign announcing ‘Delta are NOT here’ and through trees draped with wind chimes and spinning pieces of wood.

‘Drugs Squad! Get down on the ground! This is the police!’

I burst out onto the gravel drive in front of the Sanctuary and into a scene of total chaos – coppers everywhere, a screaming woman being dragged into the back of a van, her face splashed with what looked like blood, a wild-eyed guy with long hair being held down by two constables in the doorway of the house, his legs thrashing and kicking.

‘Keep an eye on her! I saw that!’ ‘Don’t move!’

‘I know who you are! Stay on the fucking ground!’

A plain-clothes officer in sunglasses and a leather jacket was waving a sawn-off shotgun in one hand and screaming at the man on the floor. ‘What happened to Thompson, you bastard! What happened to him?’

He drew back his foot to deliver a kick but I got there first and dragged him away. ‘Jack! Jack – calm down! Talk to me, what’s going on? Where’s the band?’

As I pulled him away from the house a uniform stumbled past me to be violently sick in the bushes and I could hear the high, panicked wail of a WPC shouting, ‘There’s one dead out there, there’s one dead in here!’

‘You tell me, Shelton! I’ve got Danny Reece in the hallway with his pockets full of cash, more drugs than you’ve ever seen stuffed everywhere, I don’t even know how many fucking bodies, a dead copper, black magic shit all over the place. I don’t know what happened but it’s like a slaughterhouse in there. Best I can make out it’s some kind of acid trip gone bad, maybe a cult, a suicide pact, a new drug from the States?’

DI Jack Pryce scrubbed a hand through his hair. ‘Christ, George, I’ve not seen anything like this in 20 years on the force. There’s an unconscious teenage girl out there on the lawn next to a guy that Vice say is known to them as the owner of a string of sex clubs, with an axe in his back, and a hooker in a gold bikini upstairs next to a guy who’s had his eyes torn out. I knew they were into some dark stuff, but this is...’ He tailed off, as another body was carried past on a stretcher.

I wasn’t a fan of heavy music – jazz and early blues was more my thing – but in the year before Peter had left for university I’d been lucky to make it through the day without hearing *Blood and Iron* thundering from his bedroom. I’d bought him some headphones as a Christmas gift along with the Led Zeppelin LP he’d asked for. But even an ‘out-of-touch square’ like me had known about Delta, even before I’d been assigned to this job.

Six months of waiting, building the case, tracking suppliers from Felixstowe through the chain to London and back via tip-

offs, informants, late nights, budget meetings, hours in the van, a house rented down the road with three undercovers posing as birdwatchers, the call from our contact on Friday night lining up the raid for early this morning. We'd been expecting a house full of sleeping hippies, not whatever this was turning out to be.

'Do we have a list of names?'

'I'm working on it. Our undercover gave us a guest list for the weekend, but it's chaos in there. Look, George, I need to call in to HQ. All hell is going to break loose over this one. I don't even know whether we're still looking at a drugs case, a murder scene or fucking devil worshippers! Can you stay here until the crime scene guys arrive? We're keeping it as quiet as we can, but the press are going to have a fucking field day.'

There'd been a piece about Neil Fenn destroying a bar on a ferry in the News of the World last month, and a long exposé by a Sunday paper in May interviewing Delta's former drummer about scenes of black magic and debauchery on tour. Articles I had written off at the time as just gutter press rubbish, but this was horribly, shockingly real.

He strode away, barking orders at the shaken coppers who were helping load the ambulances that had arrived. I could see Danny Reece in handcuffs, being half-dragged between a couple of burly constables I didn't recognise and a guy in a leather jacket out cold on a stretcher with a bloody bandage pressed to his chest, a woman with blonde hair hanging down her face who seemed to be refusing to let anyone touch her and a younger woman with the most beautiful face I'd ever seen, screaming for 'John', over and over again.

I squared my shoulders and headed back to the house, putting on my best stony face. The one that said, DI George Shelton, Serious Crime Squad, 43 years of age, straight as a die (and that was rare enough nowadays to make me practically an endangered species), headed for Chief Inspector someday. Firm but fair, so what are you looking at, mate?

‘We don’t want another fucking Redlands, George. We go in hard this time and we make it stick. I’m getting a lot of pressure on this one. The Chief Constable is getting leaned on by MI5, he’s leaning on me and I’m leaning on you, son. You’ve got the reputation, you and Pryce have put in the hours. Get up there and bring ‘em in.’

Well I was here. But I wasn’t sure the Chief was going to like what I was going to bring in.

I skirted a body lying on its face on the drive. Heavysset man with long black greasy hair, an axe sticking out of his back. To the side of the house I could see a copper draping a white sheet over something red and hacked and torn-looking in a black uniform that I realised with a hideous lurch was the body of PC Thompson. Swallowed hard and kept going. The hallway was dark with a red tiled floor and a staircase heading up at one end. This house had been originally been a Georgian rectory, I recalled, and I wondered what those genteel rectors would have thought of the blood sprayed up the side of the door frame and the drag marks on the floor.

To the right was a sitting room, the curtains were drawn, but I could see a film projector and a sheet flung over a mirror, a smashed guitar, Indian fabric hanging from the walls. To the left

another room, this one thick with the smell of cannabis and the copper tang of blood sticking in the back of my throat. Smashed recording equipment, a cracked Dictaphone crunching underfoot. Broken glasses, overflowing ashtrays, and sticky puddles of booze. The coffee table was a litter of tobacco, papers, bloody cloths and an incongruous plate of biscuits with a bag of white powder spilling its contents everywhere. Where to begin?

Further down the hall was a dining room with leaded windows, a kitchen beyond. The remains of a meal strewn across the table, empty bottles and more piles of paperwork – old books, stuff that looked like occult paraphernalia, although I was no judge, handwritten notes in a binder that looked like Paul's university lecture notes. More bandages, a knife, spilled wine, broken crockery.

The air was thick here too, heavy with woodsmoke and something salty and damp, all mixed with stale tobacco and sour sweat and I longed to fling open a window.

Out again and up the stairs, a slick patch of blood halfway, the walls smeared with handprints, scratches on the bannisters, past a room on the first floor landing with a lump under the sheets, blood soaking through. A dark bedroom, a darker bathroom, a figure in a cowboy hat lying half propped up in a corner, syringes and spoons scattered on the ground around him and very, very dead.

Blonde hair glued to the newel post with blood and my head was starting to swim as I staggered into the final room on the first floor. It must have been a beautiful room once, with elegant furniture and that cool autumn morning light flooding in through the sash windows. The sheets were white on the bed, smooth as silk, yet not as white nor smooth as the skin of the woman who lay

there, untouched by the blood and horror of the house, a great spread of long black hair fanning out around her. Her blank eyes stared at the ceiling, thin hips lifting the gold lamé bikini she wore, slender arms like a porcelain figurine, one hand stretched towards the man sitting under the window with a burnt out candle on the floor in front of him and his eyes torn out.

Enough! I felt my head spinning and ran for the stairs, stumbling blindly from the house, from that god-awful wave of fear and horrible jarring wrongness that had haunted me since the minute we'd arrived.

'You alright, sir?'

'Yes, yes.' I was outside again, somehow, breathing in the air in great cold gasps and mopping my face with my handkerchief. 'Seal the place up. I don't want anyone in there or anything disturbed until the forensics team have been in.'

'Very good, sir.'

More police were arriving now, officers in protective suits with heavy black cases, pulling on wellington boots and talking to each other. I could see a line of uniforms starting a search across the grounds, what looked like the Suffolk Chief Constable's car was sweeping up the drive, half the bloody force must be heading up to Suffolk by now, I thought, and found myself laughing horribly at the thought of what I was going to tell them.

Clamping a hand over my mouth I stepped away for a moment. Looking out across the lawn I saw something pale on the ground under the huge oak tree that rose up next to the house. Walking over, I bent down to look at it and recoiled in sudden fresh horror.

HEOROT HALL

A hand, a severed hand, icy-cold and bloodless, with dirty nails and a frayed leather bracelet still hanging from its wrist.

I pulled out my handkerchief and wiped my face again.

‘What the hell happened here?’

*Leaves are falling all around
It's time I was on my way
Thanks to you, I'm much obliged
for such a pleasant stay*

*But now it's time for me to go
The autumn moon lights my way
For now I smell the rain, and with it pain
and it's headed my way*

'Ramble On' | Led Zeppelin | 1969

Sadie Starlight

Jobs for the Girls, The Observer, 18th August 1971

As we sit in her London apartment, surrounded by scented candles, drinking jasmine tea, which Sadie informs me is beneficial to both the crown and sacral chakras, *Sadie Starlight* tells me how her travel and studies in India have made her the person she is today.

The self-styled spiritual advisor has come a long way since her time following Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. As a disciple of the Indian Guru, Sadie was at the famous transcendental meditation seminar at his ashram in Rishikesh in early 1968, alongside The Beatles, The Beach Boys and Mick Fleetwood. She left a day after Lennon and Harrison, similarly disillusioned with the Maharishi's alleged behaviour, something that Sadie will not discuss to this day.

When, later that year, The Beatles released their eponymous album containing a rather uncomplimentary song entitled 'Sexy Sadie' written by the group while in India, Lennon claimed that it had originally been called 'Maharishi'. The name was later changed on Harrison's insistence, fearing expensive repercussions if the guru took exception, but the band's management claim that the name-check of a fellow student at Rishikesh in the replacement title was purely coincidental. However, Sadie herself is clear that the change was deliberate.

‘I had been critical of their last album cover (Sgt Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band). Putting Ringo in pink and John in yellow was a terrible move. Paul is clearly the spiritual leader in blue and George is strong in red. But the other choices implied that Ringo was weak and John deceitful. It would have been far more beneficial to put Ringo in orange and John in purple. They really didn’t like me pointing that out and the renaming of the song was clearly a dig.’

Faced with the suggestion that perhaps the colours were irrelevant given the success of the album, Sadie sighs. ‘I don’t dispute that musically it was genius. It wasn’t the album itself that was of concern,’ she explains, ‘But the frankly reckless selection of colours threatened the harmony of the band and their relationships with each other. And we all know how that turned out.’

Despite abandoning the Maharishi soon after the Beatles, Sadie still incorporates many Hindu methods into her current life and work. ‘I’m still vegetarian. I couldn’t go back to eating meat if I tried – it makes me ill just thinking about it. It disrupted my body’s balance.’

Balance is clearly important to Sadie and is the cornerstone of her spiritual advice and treatment. Through aromatherapy, meditation and crystals, Sadie helps her clients balance their ‘chakras’. But this isn’t the limit of her service. It’s not sufficient to ensure internal balance, her clients are also encouraged and assisted to find balance with the cosmos.

Proper expression through colour choice is one small part of this, astrology is another much larger one. ‘Astrology was my first passion. There is a perfect time for everything and the trick is to work out

what that is. I went to India to research Hindu Astrology. I ended up discovering much, much more, all of which I use in my work today.’

Sadie refers to her seemingly thriving business of providing spiritual advice to the rich and famous. Perhaps inspired by the Maharishi’s influence on the Fab Four, Sadie’s clients over the past couple of years have included many top bands and musicians, including Jethro Tull, Delta and David Bowie.

‘Creating music is a spiritual process. Musicians need spiritual balance to be at their most productive. My work can be as important to the quality of their music as that of any sound technician or instrument maker.’

I turned my eyes from the slightly tattered copy of the *Observer* magazine that one of the WPCs had produced for me, to the plump woman with bedraggled blonde hair, wearing only a ripped and bloodstained white slip who sat slumped in the plastic chair of the interview room at Ipswich, clutching a cup of instant coffee into which she had just spooned four sugars.

‘That’s Sadie Starlight?’

‘Definitely, sir. Well, I mean ‘Starlight’ isn’t her real name, but yes, Sadie Harris, 35. Found outside the house, uninjured, no drugs on her, no previous record.’

‘You couldn’t have found her something else to wear?’

‘She wouldn’t change, sir. Got quite upset at the idea – apparently the white’s important.’

I looked hard at WPC Simpson for a moment, before sighing and turning back to the interview room. Sadie Harris wasn’t my choice for a first interview, but seeing as she was the only survi-

vor from the house who wasn't currently in hospital... What a chilling word that was, *survivor*, conjuring up images of massacres and terrible natural disasters. For a moment the mauled and hacked body of PC Thompson swum up in front of my eyes and I shuddered and thrust the magazine back into Simpson's hands. Right, seeing as she was the only *suspect* from the house who seemed to be in any condition to speak to me, she was going to have to do.

I discovered quite a lot from Sadie in the first few moments of the interview, namely that she wasn't a 'colour consultant' so much as a 'holistic spiritual consultant'. Which seemed to be a fancy way of saying that she dabbled in a lot of stuff. A consultation from her might include aromatherapy, crystals, astrology and something I noted down as 'ayurvedic techniques', whatever the hell they were. She was quite keen that I get the spelling right, but then her hands started shaking again and I called Simpson in and asked her to get a blanket, preferably a white one.

'Are you sure we can't get you a change of clothes, Miss Harris?'

She clutched her torn slip to her again and shook her head violently. I met the duty solicitor's eye and shrugged as if to say I'd done all I could. Simpson reappeared with a slightly musty-smelling cream blanket and draped it over Sadie's unresponsive shoulders.

'So, obviously something went badly wrong this weekend, Sadie,' I began, with what was probably the understatement of the year. 'Would you like to talk to us about it?'

She gave a tiny nod and said something I couldn't quite make

out, but decided to take as confirmation. ‘Shall we start at the start then? I understand you arrived at the Sanctuary on Friday night?’

‘No. No, I arrived in July.’

‘July? I’m sorry, I’m talking about the party this weekend.’

‘Yes, but I was there in July, with Raina and...’ she swallowed hard. ‘And Margot and – and Ray.’

I made notes of the names, the owner of the house was listed as a Tamara Forwood, but in all honesty we had no idea who was living there and I realised for the first time that there might be staff or local people amongst the dead. I slid a note over to Simpson asking her to check it out. Perhaps she could find me another of her magazine articles.

Sadie had spent a very calm week at the Sanctuary in early July, along with another woman called Raina, who from the way Sadie’s voice shook whenever she mentioned her, I suspected may have been the woman in gold we’d found on the bed upstairs.

‘She was so balanced, so centred and at peace in the house – not like when Paul arrived and...’ Sadie began to mutter in that odd way again before pulling herself together enough to give me a rambling account of ‘mindful cookery’ with someone called Margot and the ‘spiritual revelations’ she’d enjoyed with Ray. I bit back questions, hoping that somewhere in the account of her ‘inner journey’ would be crucial information that could fill some of the gaps of what the hell had happened those two nights in Suffolk.

‘I found her treatments deeply calming, and of course I carried out a few therapy sessions of my own for other guests – for

Samantha. Oh God, Samantha! Has anyone told her?’

Samantha was apparently an American performance artist who was close to Neil Fenn, and yet another name to put on my list. ‘She was going over to Otten Farm to see them that last evening, she asked me, but I didn’t go and then the next morning I heard her crying.’

‘This is still in July?’

‘Yes, poor Sam, I heard her in her room – it was very early in the morning. She was throwing everything into her case, just hurling it all in and calling Julian Cavendish a bastard. I went in and she had a bruise on her face. I tried to find out what was wrong but she just wanted to get out as fast as she could. I was calling for Margot but Sam just ran down the stairs and I remember her standing in the hall for a minute against the light.

“‘Honey,’ she said,’ Sadie attempted an American accent, “‘Honey, from me to you – I’d stay well away from Delta!’ Then I heard a car outside and she was gone. The odd thing was ten minutes later Kenny McConnell turned up, I mean I didn’t know who Kenny was then, but I knew he was Delta security. He wanted to know where Sam was, but of course I never saw her after that. Can I have more coffee?’

After we’d found her another cup of sticky instant coffee with condensed milk, I pressed her on who exactly lived at the Sanctuary.

‘Well, Ray, who was local and was once a farmer before he became a guru – he can be a bit forbidding but if you get him talking about his childhood and the land he opens right up – and Margot who’s lovely but a little odd, I mean I’ve known her throw an entire meal onto the compost because the carrots felt

unhappy. She once found a guest sneaking in some white sliced bread and nearly had a breakdown... And Sandy, she stays at the house on and off – she’s some kind of archaeology student at the UEA, her room was full of books and bits of old pottery, and Tamara, but I’ve never actually met her. Her family have a long history in the area. And God. They’re all dead. They’re all dead.’

A tear slid down her grubby face, dripping from her nose and I felt suddenly sorry for her, sitting there looking like a fat, miserable child, with goosebumps coming up on her bare shoulders and her hair hanging across her face.

‘Sadie? Sadie? I know this is difficult. Sadie? We need to know what happened at the house. Here, take this tissue and have a good blow. Can you, do you think you can calm yourself down, love, and help us with that? Take a deep breath, that’s it. When did Delta arrive? Neil and John, when did they arrive?’

‘They, they were late. We were all there and Margot was starting to say we should eat, when I heard the car pull up. I could hear them shouting outside. You have no idea what they’re like when they’re together. Neil and John. That presence, it’s electric, you just feel like everything is more intense when they’re in the room. The front door suddenly burst open and they were right there. You know how tall they both were? They seemed even taller. Neil with this great mass of black hair and sunglasses, and John all long blond hair and those eyes. And Julian as well, of course. They’d all been drinking, and they came into the house on a great wave of noise, and the cold from the night air, woodsmoke and whisky and that power, male power, rolling off them. And happy, so happy. Neil was shouting at everyone and

John was just hugging Luna, and everyone was high. So high.'

'There were drugs being consumed at this point?'

'I don't know, I was just so happy in that moment. Vinnie, I think Vinnie was smoking some weed, but you see, I'd been so worried about them with everything I'd heard. Neil getting drunk on that boat and John going missing. To see them back together like that, the great wave of creative energy, it was amazing, and, and scary. They can be quite, intense, like I said, but the more I watched them the more I worried, something was off, something was out of balance. They wanted to be happy, they really wanted it, but something had gone wrong.'

'We had dinner. I could tell by this point Julian was very high, everyone was trying too hard, telling us how wonderful it was going to be. We went to the front room after that – I think I was trying to keep Sindy away from Paul Bronson.'

I had to interrupt her, 'This is Sindy Reynolds?'

Sadie shivered. 'She should never have been there. She won a competition, you know, 'Answer this question to meet Delta'. She came with Vinnie, but she should never have been there. None of us should have been there.'

'Neil suddenly said we should listen to the album, right there. They had a mix of it on tape, and we should be the first ones to hear the new sound. He loaded it up and I heard that awful song. The first time you see, we just thought maybe there was something wrong with the tape or it wasn't a very good mix. Julian was going on about how great it was and people were dancing to it but you could hear something was wrong. Suddenly Neil and John were fighting, someone threw a punch. Julian was saying

he had the master tapes in his car. John was shouting that he didn't, that Neil had destroyed everything else, that this was all they had left, that the album was ruined, and I mean, I've heard their stuff and this, wasn't right, it was unfinished, you could hear chanting, bits of guitar, I was telling them all to calm down, that it would be OK, that it might get better.'

'Julian did what he always does, he ran away. Sandy – the archaeology student – needed to leave to catch her train from Woodbridge and Julian said he'd give her a lift and that was the last we saw of him. They just ran off down the drive to his car, while John was screaming it was all Neil's fault, that he'd done something 'dark'. Oh and then the policeman arrived.'

'Policeman?' I struggled to keep the surprise out of my voice.

'Yes, the local constable. He said he'd heard noises, but he couldn't have done, really I think he just wanted an autograph or something. But of course people panicked, because, yes, there were drugs in the house. Well, it all calmed down after that. It wasn't foggy then. Strange how you remember. I was outside and it was so bright and clear. I remember thinking it felt like there could be a frost and the full moon was coming up.'

'John locked himself in his room. Luna was banging on the door, crying, trying to get him to let her in and Neil had gone up to the bathroom at the top of the house and barred the door. Kenny was really worried, I could tell. He was calling to Neil over and over and Neil was just telling him to fuck off. Sorry, that's what he was saying.'

'And nobody else left at this time?'

'Vinnie wanted to, he wanted to take Sindy home. I think he

was trying to steal the tapes actually, but Kenny was the only one with a car, and he wouldn't give him the keys. It was pretty late by then, the village doesn't have a taxi firm and this thick mist had rolled in from the sea, you could smell the salt, the marshes and the sea filling the house... and we went to bed, we...'

'And then what happened? Sadie?'

She looked at me through the curtain of hair, eyes stretched wide and blank, the blood smear on her forehead dark against white skin.

'Then the monster came.'

She turned to the side and suddenly vomited a spray of sugary coffee across the floor, before sliding from her chair, body shaking and convulsing, speaking some kind of language I had never heard before.

In the confusion that followed, Simpson calling for the doctor, the duty solicitor on hands and knees trying to hold Sadie still, all I could see was that blanket, wrapping around and over her like a shroud.

'Sir? Sir?' I was pulled out of my thoughts by the voice of the desk sergeant, to find myself leaning against the wall of the corridor outside the interview room, an unlit cigarette crushed between my fingers.

'They've bought in the evidence collected at the house. I think you're going to want to see this, sir.'

SADIE STARLIGHT

SEX & DRUGS & TENTACLES

*I come in the dark, driven from the light
I come in the dark, driven from the light*

*Night-stalker, night-stalker
Lurker at the threshold
Servant of the dead
Black at the heart*

*No spear shall pierce my heart
Ten drowned souls within me
Ten drowned souls within me
Walked out of the marsh*

*Blood spattered on the floor
Salt smell in the air
Gonna rip you to shreds cause
you ain't ever been there*

‘Lurker at the Threshold’ | Delta | 1971 (unreleased)

The Threshold

It would be some time before anyone was going to be questioning Sadie again. She'd been hauled off to hospital, still speaking that gibberish language. I'd have gone for German, but the desk sergeant, who had been in Berlin in 1945, assured me it wasn't and I was inclined to take his word for it. I had a pile of press clippings in front of me – anything to do with Delta or the Sanctuary from the last year, courtesy of WPC Simpson and the local library, most of which were proving utterly useless.

‘The music world was in uproar yesterday over rumours that Neil Fenn – front man of the global phenomena that is the rock band Delta – had fled the secret rural retreat that he and co-writer and band member John Markham have holed up in to write their new album.

According to sources, a man fitting Fenn's description narrowly missed crashing a top-of-the-range Ford Capri sports car into the sea at Felixstowe ferry port yesterday.

After abandoning the car on the dockside he attempted to board the Felixstowe to Zeebrugge ferry as a foot passenger without a ticket. When challenged by ferry inspectors, the man, described as being in a tired and emotional state, proceeded to shout ‘Do you know who I am? I'm **** Neil Fenn.’ After being told

that if he didn't calm down he would be removed from the ferry, Mr Fenn paid in cash and apparently moved straight to the bar.

Mr Dean Marsh, who works for the ferry line as a bar steward told our reporter, 'I knew it was him, my girlfriend is a big fan of Delta and we went to the Cambridge Corn Exchange on their last tour to see them. He ordered Jack Daniels and Cokes and told me to keep them coming. I asked him if he was OK and he said that no one understood what he was trying to do anymore and everyone wanted a piece of him and he needed space. I asked him if that was why he was going to Belgium. He got very annoyed shouting why would he want to go to Belgium and when I said that was where the ferry was going he threw five pounds on the bar and left, taking the bottle of Jack Daniels with him.'

The ferry security team, having been alerted to Mr Fenn's irrational behaviour by members of the crew, attempted to apprehend Mr Fenn who then appears to have somehow slipped past the crew and made it back to the dockside where he recovered the sports car and drove off at high speed. Suffolk constabulary are said to not be investigating the incident as no offence or damage was committed.

Delta's spokesman, Julian Cavendish of Atlantic Records, when asked for comment about the incident said: 'This is clearly some kind of hoax. Neil does not own a Capri sports car and he and John are devoting all their efforts to completing the new album.'

Whether this was a hoax or publicity stunt to deflect questions about the band in light of the persistent rumours of their jumping ship to another record label or just to portray Fenn as the unpre-

dictable wild man of rock and roll is a matter of speculation. What is clear to this reporter at least is, true or not, the reaction by both the music press and the Delta fans shows there is an appetite for any news about the band as they continue to work on their latest project.'

I crumpled the photocopy into a ball in frustration and flung it into the bin. Neil Fenn liked to drink and get angry, I thought. Tell me something I don't know. Marginally more useful was the piece on the Sanctuary itself, torn from a glossy magazine.

Already been to India? Tired of the south of France? Bored of Morocco? Where do the most jaded, the truly partied-out go to find themselves? Apparently to a little old rectory in Suffolk, near Alderton known only as the Sanctuary. And those who do come had better bring dungarees and wellington boots and be prepared to leave their egos at the door. So what's so special about this place? And what message do those who run it have for the rest of us searchers after inner balance? These are the questions that led to me sitting here at the well-scrubbed table in the simple kitchen, while Margot Harrison pours freshly-brewed ginger tea into my earthenware cup. 'Good health and happiness can only come from within,' she says. 'And from the things that surround us. You can't be truly happy living in a plastic house full of plastic things, eating supermarket slush and chemicals and tortured meat.' As you can no doubt tell, Margot believes passionately in the importance of good quality food, grown locally.

'We all ate well in the countryside during the war,' she remem-

bers, 'and we were healthy, because we only ate what we needed. But now food is just another commodity that can be used to make a profit. Big businesses don't care what they sell you, or how it is prepared, they just want to make money.' A radical point of view and chances are you've rarely felt this way before about food – most of us are liberated by convenience foods and freezers and sliced bread, aren't we?

Margot thinks not. 'Supermarket chains are going to kill small shops until we have no choice but to eat what they sell us, and what they're selling is just chemical junk that looks like food. Meat is pumped full of drugs and cereals are dripping with weedkiller that all ends up poisoning our bodies and our minds.' At the Sanctuary they grow all their own vegetables and keep chickens and goats for eggs, milk and cheese – and meat is rarely on the menu.

Sitting on colourful floor cushions in her 'meditation space' in bare feet and a bright kaftan, it's hard to envisage Margot as the banker's wife she once was. 'I was the typical suburban housewife,' she laughs. 'Tennis clubs, cocktail parties, amateur dramatics even... but that all started to change when I heard the Maharishi speak.' Mingled with the background noises of clucking chickens and gently chiming bells, I can hear a soft humming and seemingly chaotic chanting as the current guests go through their spiritual exercises on the front lawn.

Leading the group is Ray Dunn, who when I ask him what yogic practices they follow here, gives me a wry laugh before explaining, in a local accent, that they prefer a much more simple method of communion with the soul. Guests are invited to spend time in reflection, he continues, outdoors whatever the weather,

with the hands and feet firmly pressed into the soil, focusing their thoughts on their own bodies, their digestion, their energy sources and seeing themselves as ‘part of the cycle’. Meals here are always precluded by a similar period of reflection as guests consider the life cycle of the foods they are about to eat before allowing them to become part of their own system. Both Ray and Margot advocate physical work – never to be undertaken mindlessly. The object here, says Ray, is not to empty your mind, but to fill it with every detail from the world around you.

Margot believes strongly in the influence of emotions ‘in the grain’ of objects – in the difference between sleeping in a bed made from ‘abused trees’ by an unhappy worker in a factory, not giving it their full attention, compared to one made lovingly and attentively. She will not allow negative emotions in her kitchen in case they ‘seep’ into the food and the thought of eating an animal which might have experienced any kind of suffering in its life is anathema to her – a spiritual poison equal to the chemical toxins she suspects we consume daily.

A little eccentric, perhaps, but with previous guests including some of the most well-known figures in fashion and music, perhaps there is something in it. With Delta living just down the road I ask Ray if Neil or John ever visit the house? There is a brief misunderstanding and it transpires that the Sanctuary building is actually owned by Tamara Forwood – it’s her family home – and hence her godson, Delta manager Julian Cavendish, was a semi-regular visitor. But Neil and John don’t come here? Ray begins to say something about John being interested in nature when a gentle chime of the gong calls the house to the dining room,

where a simple Moroccan-style supper awaits them.

Taking my leave I almost wish I could stay myself – and the processed cheese in my sandwich looks less appealing than ever. Emotional toxins in food? I'm not so sure, but as Margot says – with a touch of the Surrey housewife showing through – 'Have you ever tried to cook a soufflé in a bad mood?'

It sounded wonderful, I thought bitterly to myself. I wonder how happy the fucking carrots are now? Pryce and I had returned to the house, which was now covered in fingerprint powder but smelling no better, blood stains darker but still present, and worked our way through the report from the scene of crime officer. I pulled the evidence list across in front of me.

'*Runic paperwork and occult books.*' I wasn't sure whether the officer had really known what runes were, but a bit of research had confirmed it, Anglo-Saxon runes apparently. Piles of the stuff, currently waiting for someone suitably expert to evaluate it all. Occult books, hell yes. I'd seen my fair share of weirdness over the years, but this stuff was dark. Most of it seemed to have the stamp of a bookshop called *The Equinox* and the address 4, Holland Street in west London. We'd also found a stained and tattered blue diary, mostly filled with scribbles in biro that appeared to be 'spells', as well as random lyrics and what seemed to be Neil Fenn's record of his dreams. I'd started reading it, but it was hard going, the man had the handwriting of a drunken child and his spelling was worse. It seemed full of references to 'Sam': '*Think I scared Sam – she kept trying to pull me out and I'm trying to go deeper. I told her too much. Things I need to do if I'm going to*

break through. Thought she was J. Thought she might be dead. Had to make her forget, afterwards. Faces shifting. Audience roar, I AM A GOD. She was pissed with me but she doesn't understand – this is an atom bomb under her little magicks. This is real power.'

Sickened by the drug-fuelled ramblings I'd passed it over to the transcription team at HQ to see what they could make of it.

'Smashed window in the meditation room.' That was the first room on the right downstairs, what I'd called a sitting room, but a hand-painted sign on the door had indeed read 'meditation room'. Once the curtains had been opened it was clear the window had been smashed from the outside and from the splinters and blood it looked as though someone might have been dragged through it. Bronson? Ray? The rest of the room hadn't been in a much better state. According to the report the projector I had seen on the table had caught fire at some point but a reel of tape had been taken to the photographic lab to see what could be salvaged.

'Recording equipment and hi-fi system.' That would be from the front lounge. When we'd ventured over, past the slippery piles of LPs and the broken glass, we'd found the hi-fi in bits. Literally. It looked as if someone had taken a sledgehammer to it. I remembered Sadie's testimony that Neil and John had argued over the sound of the new album and wondered if one of them had smashed the hi-fi to stop it playing? It was a top quality system according to the report. A specialist tech from the audio department had scooped up all the tapes, including the ones that Sadie had said contained the album and taken them away to process.

'Weapons including two shotguns, a sword, an axe, several knives and a Browning Hi-Power Mark I handgun. Ammunition, spent and live.' That had been a surprise. The shotguns apparently belonged to Ray and were quite legitimate, but I wasn't sure who had brought the handgun. It was current army issue, but my money would be on Danny Reece, the dealer, although Paul Bronson apparently also had potential form for firearms offences. The axe could have been from the property but the sword was something else. Who brings a sword to a party? A lot of other items in the house seemed to have been pressed into service as weapons, we'd found a bloodstained poker, a chair leg and even a heavy pan that had clearly been used to attack someone. Not for the first time I tried to work out how the violence had exploded. The place looked like it had been the scene of a battle, but had they turned on each other or could they have come under attack? Was there a gang element here we'd missed? Had someone owed money? Had they been attacked by Hells Angels, outraged villagers? Or was this just the aftermath of the worst trip ever?

'Evidence of sexual activity.' Somewhere in all the insanity it seemed persons unknown had managed to engage in intimacy. I saw the woman's thin form stretched out on the bed again and shivered. She would be examined for evidence of assault, but the stained sheet on the floor in that room had already provided evidence that sex, drugs and rock n' roll had all been taking place.

The list went on and on, trowels, tape, trundle wheel and other archaeological items as well as a trench dug in the garden. I'd written that off as being related to the missing archaeology student, Sandy, but apparently there were traces of blood in the soil so

that was another thing to investigate. I felt exhausted. *‘An assortment of coins, pottery, small ornamental objects etc.’*

‘Photographic developing equipment found in the bathroom on the first floor.’ Yes, it looked as if someone had turned it into a makeshift darkroom to develop something, although I had no idea what, as we’d not found many photos. I realised I was avoiding thinking about the upper rooms. That god-awful bathroom at the top of the house, with the bath and tiles stained with blood, an empty syringe, spoon, foil and traces of heroin, voids in the blood spatter that suggested there had been papers on the floor and a Super8 camera sat on the shelf under the spotted glass of the bathroom mirror. Perhaps they hadn’t been developing photos at all. I made a note to chase up the lab for the film from the projector.

The third bathroom had contained the man in the cowboy hat, who it turned out was also the owner of the hand I’d found in the garden, unless anyone else was wandering around Suffolk missing a limb. He’d been badly injured in several other places too but seemed to have been semi-professionally bandaged and stitched up before dying slumped in a corner by the toilet, a pile of drugs and ripped up sheets beside him.

‘Artwork and letters from Klaxon Travesty’. I dragged my mind away from the horrors of the ‘red room’ as I was calling the charnel house on the third floor with its unrecognisable corpse hacked to pieces and the body of the woman with the blonde curls, her head placed several feet from her body. This was insanity. This was England, Suffolk, an autumn Sunday. Something had happened in that house. Something so bad that I wasn’t sure we shouldn’t just burn it to the ground, salt the earth and

walk away and never look back.

‘Artwork and letters from Klaxon Travesty’. Focus. I told myself. You’ve seen death, you know exactly what people can do to each other, even in their right minds. You’ve seen bodies dismembered and hidden in car boots, and women raped with garden tools and a Glasgow smile cut into the face of a 17-year-old boy. The occult stuff is just getting to you, but it’s the drugs, it’s always the drugs that lead to this. Neil Fenn probably snapped and killed the lot of them.

‘Artwork and letters from Klaxon Travesty’. An artist apparently, commissioned to create the album cover artwork, which we had now, carefully wrapped in the evidence room on two huge canvases. I needed to speak to ‘Travesty’, whoever he, she or it was, but that could wait. Jack had gone back to London to start trying to roll up all the other strands of the case, pulling in everyone along the chain until we found someone we could pin this on.

I leaned back in the chair, stretching aching and cramped shoulders and considered a cigarette. I’d promised Jeanette I was cutting back, but a case like this... well, she’d understand.

Simpson popped her head round the door and I groaned. ‘No more news clippings please, Barbara. If I have to read one more piece about ‘MARKHAM’S MIDSUMMER MADNESS’ I shan’t be held responsible for the consequences.’

I flourished one of the more bizarre articles at her and read aloud: *‘Following speculation in the music press about the increasingly bizarre antics of members of the rock band Delta, the News of the World can exclusively reveal that lead guitarist John*

Markham was arrested last weekend for alleged indecent exposure. Markham, 29, was, according to sources close to Suffolk police, discovered early on the morning of the 21st of June standing naked on a sandbar of the RSPB nature reserve at Minsmere by warden Simon Piper. Mr Markham claimed that he was not intending to offend anyone but was observing the ancient festival of the summer solstice. Speaking on behalf of Markham, the band's spokesperson, Julian Cavendish said: 'John is a deeply spiritual person and seeks comfort and inspiration by connecting back to nature. The suggestion of indecent exposure is completely unfounded'.

‘Have you quite finished, guv? Only the guy who was on the stairs. He’s awake, and he says he’s a copper.’

*I need someone to show me
the things in life that I can't find*

*I can't see the things that make
true happiness, I must be blind*

*Make a joke and I will sigh and
you will laugh and I will cry*

*Happiness I cannot feel and
love to me is so unreal*

*And so as you hear these words
telling you now of my state*

*I tell you to enjoy life
I wish I could but it's too late*

‘Paranoid’ | Black Sabbath | 1970

Andy Took

The Unknown Soldier, Earl Levy, NME January 1971.

It has amused this reporter to hear that Andy Took, once dubbed 'the eternal session bassist', has apparently been connected to the new Delta project. The height of Took's career was once playing the Marquee Club on Wardour Street in '66 where his own (failed) project 'Took of the Tzars' supported The Yardbirds after the original support act dropped out.

However it is this journalist's belief that this brief moment in the (candle) light brought Mr Took's career as a session musician some stability. He has been quietly eeking out a living helping on those early albums for budding musicians whose egos would not share a credit list. It is rumoured that the Stone's nearly split in '64 due to the alleged discovery of Took's overdubbing of Bill Wyman's original bass lines on their cover of Chuck Berry's *Come On*. A song which to date has never been played live by the band... Nonetheless this single proved effective and the rest, predictably for them, is history.

Mr Took's efforts as a bass player have since passed unremarked and no one seems to have noticed his footsteps, tip-toeing into Mordor. And now his reputation as an easy going, 'will work with anyone' kind of guy, has led him into the Delta fold for this latest trip. Have they finally run out of bass players who will work with these virtuosos? Only Andy Took knows.'

It hadn't been easy, finding a policeman who was also a guitar player. Scratch that, it hadn't been easy finding a policeman who was a *good* guitar player. But we'd finally found one, in the shape of Andy Took, Hertfordshire CID and part-time session bassist. We'd put him into place with the Stones after the Redlands bust and afterwards decided not to blow his cover, but keep him in. Just in case he came in handy. He'd been useful, bringing in a regular stream of tip-offs, and, I suspected, living his personal dream as a bass-player-for-hire. The background was legit, OK we'd pushed the NME article, but he really had had his own band back in the day and when he was approached by Delta's management it had given us the inside contact we'd been after.

Unfortunately we hadn't bargained on the band's bizarre and secretive working practices. Took had never even met them, recording his parts at Abbey Road and in various other studios with just a few guide tracks and scribbled notes from John Markham. He'd pushed, gently, then harder, to meet the band to get a better feel for the tracks, but the label had shut down all his attempts to get closer in. They'd made him sign a raft of confidentiality agreements before so much as giving him the chords. I'd written him off as a decent source, until he'd managed to get himself invited to a party in Notting Hill earlier in the month, hosted by Blake Markham, John's ex-wife, and from there an invite up to the Sanctuary for the weekend.

I looked over his last report. He'd met a 'Doctor Danny' at the party, who we'd then flagged up as Danny Reece, a well-known dealer, and who he'd described as having '*a fuckin' briefcase full of all the colours of the rainbow*' and apparently supplying

Julian Cavendish with whatever the band asked for. We knew Cavendish was a user, but he was small fry, a spoilt record-label exec at Atlantic with a public school background, big debts and an expensive habit, and we'd been holding off on bringing him in. So Cavendish and Danny were in cahoots, according to Took, and Danny was making regular trips to Otten Farm in Suffolk where the band were staying. It had been the break we'd been looking for.

Took had suggested that Henry St. George, music producer and the owner of one of the studios he'd been sent to, was a link in the chain, but we'd checked him over at the time and he was clean. And he'd crashed his car on the way home from the party while under the influence and had been off the scene ever since.

Apparently Danny Reece had made a call during the party to what sounded like a supplier, talking about a shipment and referring to a meet-up in Suffolk, which was why we'd picked this weekend for the raid, on the hope that his boss would be there.

I flicked through the report. References to 'security' at Otten Farm and someone called Kenny, who could be the Kenny that Sadie had mentioned and a Samantha Vilhalmsdottir, who was listed as a friend of 'Suzie Q'. I detected from Took's report that he'd struck up rather more conversations with Suzie than strictly necessary. Samantha we'd identified as American, although I hadn't made the connection to Neil Fenn. After Sadie's interview I'd made the link and was waiting on the US Embassy to get back to us on that one, but she seemed like another dead end for now.

'I want to take a shooter to the launch party of Delta's new album. I wouldn't put it past a head case like the 'Doctor' to try

and take out anyone who he was even slightly suspicious of. It may get nasty, so please have a squad of lads nearby in case I need busting out.’ I couldn’t find a reference for a weapon being approved for Took, but wondered if the handgun we’d found might have been his.

The file confirmed that Took had met with his handler two days later in Camden in a greasy spoon café and been told to carry on and go to the party to see what was going on and try and link the supply back to Felixstowe. He’d arranged to make a call from the house on Friday night to confirm all the key players were present and that was the last time we’d heard from him. Scene of crime had confirmed the phone line was working, so why hadn’t he called in again when it all started to go wrong, or left the house? Perhaps he’d been injured early on, or the violence had begun before he had a chance to warn us.

A note stuck to the back of report identified ‘Suzie Q’ as Freda Susannah Queripel, a writer and photographer from Liverpool. A weary-looking Simpson had directed me to yet another clipping from *Sounds Magazine* which described Miss Queripel as currently working on a piece about the differences between the British and American music scene. She’d been on the last Delta tour and arrested once in New York at an avant-garde warehouse ‘happening’, but otherwise seemed clean.

‘I’ve been living a charmed life. I get to follow music around and I love it! I met some amazing people in America but it was time to come back and I’m glad. There are some serious bands making amazing music in England right now; Pink Floyd, The Rolling

Stones, Delta. So it's an exciting time to be in London – it's buzzing! This is just one of those special moments and it's great to be part of it!'

'I think there's something darker and more truthful about music now than there was before. Delta and Sabbath are really showing that side, and it's real. Music can't all be about love and parties when we know that life isn't like that. We all have a darkness inside us, bad things happen and bands like Delta really know that. They've seen what's happening in America, how the world is changing and they've tapped into it. Music has to feel truthful to be loved.'

There had been a photo of Suzie in the article. Blue eyes, lovely smile, blonde curls tumbling over her shoulders. A face I had seen before, in the red room on the upper floor at the Sanctuary, on a severed head lying next to a hacked and dismembered body whom we now suspected to be Neil Fenn.

A nurse beckoned me along the corridor to the room where Andy Took was recovering from surgery.

'How's he doing?' I asked.

'The doctor is very pleased with him. He woke up this morning and we should be able to move him down to the ward tomorrow. We're monitoring him for any more internal bleeding, but he should make a full recovery. He was more worried about whether we'd had to cut his jacket than anything else.'

She flashed me a bright smile and I wondered what she'd been told. The first officer on the scene had found Took lying in a

pool of his own blood on the stairway, his side cut to ribbons and with someone else's blood spattered across his face. We'd recovered part of the tape in the smashed Dictaphone and I was pretty sure his voice featured in the chaos, calling for a gun. Andy Took had some serious questions to answer.

I entered the private room with my best professional smile fixed firmly on my face. Andy was sat propped up against starched pillows, his skin grey, eyes haunted and red-rimmed.

'DS Took. Good to see you back with us.'

'Guv.'

There was an awkward silence. I crossed the room and pulled up a plastic chair next to his bed.

'So, Andy. The doc says you're ready to talk to us. I think you'll understand we have a few questions... namely what the fucking hell happened in that house?'

Took flinched and looked away.

'I, I'd like to make a full report, sir. To you, sir. Just you.'

I sat back and looked at him. 'Go on.'

He shuffled slightly and winced as the movement pulled at his injuries, before starting to speak in a flat, emotionless voice. He'd had a gentle voice, solid, dependable. I'd heard it enough times on the tapes to realise with a chill that something had died inside Andy Took this weekend.

He covered Friday evening, his story essentially agreeing with Sadie's, with the addition of the moment when he'd nipped out into the hallway after dinner to place the call to us, letting us know everyone was there.

'Blamed it on the vegetarian food, stomach playing up and

all that.'

Took smiled weakly and I raised an eyebrow, indicating he should go on.

'Well, John and Neil had a real punch up in the hallway. I was trying to keep Sindy away from it all, and away from Bronson. She should never have been there, and Vinnie, the DJ, was no use, he'd been smoking grass since lunchtime and Danny Reece was handing out all sorts. John locked himself in one room and Neil locked himself in the bathroom upstairs. It wasn't a good vibe.'

'Did you hear the album?' I wasn't sure why I'd asked, it was hardly the most pressing question, but somehow I thought it might be important.

'Yeah. And I wish I'd never been part of it.' He looked away for a moment, clearly exhausted.

'I talked it over with John. He pretty much told me it was over. Delta, the band, the whole thing. He said Neil had betrayed him, that all of this was something Neil had done with his 'magic'. I knew the recording hadn't been easy, but I had no idea they'd fallen out so badly. John, he looked like he hated Neil. Really hated him. And he was afraid.'

'The party kind of died then. We went to bed in the end, I was sharing a room with Archie – Julian's uncle. Paul Bronson was sharing with Xander, with Vinnie in a side room off them. Suzie and Luna were on the first floor too. Sindy, Raina and Sadie were all up at the top of the house together and Kenny and Danny were next to us. I tried to swap with Kenny to find out more about what Danny was up to, but Kenny had heard that Archie

snored and wouldn't move. He did too, the bastard.'

He paused and looked at me. 'Listen, guv. What I'm going to say from now on. It, well it might sound crazy, but I swear on my life, on anything you want, anything, that it's the truth.'

He looked desperately at me until I nodded.

'Right. Right. OK. Well I managed to get off to sleep in the end, and the next thing I knew there were these awful screams in the house. I mean really, someone screaming like they were being ripped... Oh God. OK, I leapt out of bed, ran downstairs and all the lights were flickering on and off, the record player in the lounge was going full volume, Zeppelin playing, I think. Kenny tried to turn it off, but it wouldn't, it wouldn't stop and then a spark shot out and hit him. Xander was shouting that he'd seen something outside and that Kenny should get the sword, everyone was in the hall shouting. Luna was just slamming her hands on John's door and someone was trying to get to Neil upstairs. That was where the screaming was coming from.'

'I think it was Vinnie who got the door open and I swear to you, I swear to you on my life that we'd *heard* Neil in the bathroom. Fuck knows what he was saying, but I knew his voice and it was him, guv. He was *in there*.'

'OK Andy, calm down. Neil was in the bathroom. I believe you.'

'Yeah, but he *wasn't*. That's what I'm telling you. We got the door open and there was no-one there. Just a bath full of blood, papers everywhere, a knife, syringes, heroin and this camera, still running, candles everywhere. It was, shit, it was fucking *wrong*. And the feel in there. It was bad. It was...'

‘The camera was still running?’

‘What? Yes. It was a little Super8 number. He must have set it going before he started. Suzie took the tape...’

‘What happened next?’

‘I didn’t know what to do, sir. Show them my badge and take control of the situation or stay in. I managed to get Luna out of the hall so I could try and call in, but someone had cut the phone line.’

‘We checked the telephone, Took. It was working perfectly.’

‘What? No, sir, it was dead, completely dead. The whole place was still going crazy, fuses blowing. There must have been a power surge or something. I swear to you the phone was dead.’

‘We couldn’t hear anything from John and then Ray came back in the house saying the window had been smashed and they’d seen something outside. So we got that door open too, and John wasn’t in there. But he’d clearly been dragged out of the window, there’d been a struggle, blood on the windowsill and drag marks going down towards the pond in front of the house.’

‘You’re telling me John and Neil were both missing at this point? What time was this.’

‘It must have been one, two o’clock. And yes. At first I thought it was Neil, that he’d climbed down out of the bathroom, gone outside and smashed the window, that he’d maybe taken something and then killed Neil. They, they really hated each other.’

‘But you don’t think that now?’

‘No, sir.’

I studied the figure in the bed. Took didn’t look good, his hands twisting in the sheets, one leg twitching. A grimace of pain

flashed across his face and I wondered whether I should continue. I was aware I was on shaky ground and that this wasn't the ideal way to be taking his statement, but he took a deep breath and carried on talking.

'I tried to leave, guv. I said we should all just get away. Kenny had a car, and Ray had a battered old Landrover. I thought I could get them away down to the village and get word to you without blowing my cover, but the cars wouldn't start and this thick fog had come in. It, it wasn't normal fog. I walked out into it and I was choking. I got this slimy stuff on my face, we were sure there were figures in the mist, people moving... I, I couldn't see, couldn't hear. Just that reek of the marsh and the salt. You *have* to believe me, guv. We couldn't leave. *We couldn't leave*. And I was thinking 'the moment they make me as a copper I've had it'. I had to just play along, try and keep everyone safe.'

'The cars wouldn't start.'

'Everything electrical was fried, sir.'

I made a note to see whether forensics had tried starting either vehicle.

'You don't believe me, do you, sir?'

'Let's just say I'm keeping an open mind, Took.'

But, no, I didn't believe that was what had happened. Oh, Andy certainly believed it. You could see it in every line of his face, sweat dripping from his white forehead. Something had happened to these people, but I doubted they'd been attacked by a violent mist, or stabbed to death by fog. I was pretty sure they'd all been spiked that Friday night, though by whom and for what purpose I didn't yet know.

‘I searched the house, sir’

‘You searched the house.’

‘Yes, well to be honest we all searched the house. Luna was pretty hysterical and Vinnie was coming down badly, he kept going on about how Sindy’s parents were going to sue him. Kenny and I went through John’s room and Sandy’s. Found a lot of things, diaries – John’s and Neil’s –’

‘You found John’s diary?’ I had Neil Fenn’s book of spells but nothing belonging to John Markham, who I subconsciously thought of as the more sensible of the pair.

‘Yes, sir. It’s in my jacket pocket.’

‘Christ, Took.’ I got to my feet and rummaged in the pockets of a battered and blood-stained leather jacket that hung from the door in the room, finding a tatty exercise book and a little silver amulet that looked like a boat. I pocketed both and turned back to the man in the bed.

‘Got anything else stashed away, Took?’

‘No, sir. But there was a lot of it. Books about the history of the area, a map of the grounds – that’s how we knew where to dig the trench, bits of pottery, song lyrics...’

‘Hang on, the trench? *You* dug the trench?’

‘Yes, Danny and I. Saturday morning, or afternoon. I started digging and then the blood came out. Blood all over my hands.’

He was gasping slightly, eyes looking into the far distance.

‘Took! Andy! Can you hear me? Get a grip, sergeant! I need you to go back for me. What about PC Thompson?’

‘I don’t know, I don’t know what you’re talking about.’

‘PC Thompson, Took. Local lad, nice boy. Came up to the

house on Friday night and we found him in bits on Sunday morning. What happened to him?’

‘I don’t, I never saw him. He was never there!’

I pulled the cassette player from my pocket, placed it on the bed and held my finger over the play button.

‘This is from the Dictaphone we found at the house, Took. Are you sure you don’t remember PC Thompson?’

He shook his head, eyes wild, lips clamped together. I pressed play and listened as the sound of whimpers and agonised breathing came tinnily out the little speaker. I’d examined the transcript given to me by the audio department earlier, but some of it was still unintelligible.

Male Voice 1: Come on!

Male Voice 2: Where was he? Where’d it attack?

Male Voice 3: Thompson, Thompson, it’s me, it’s Took.

[Sound of PC Thompson coughing]

Male Voice 2: Get me a blanket, hot water.

Male Voice 1: Oi, Andy. Andy, get him up!

Get him out of the way.

Male Voice 3: Right.

Male Voice 1: Andy, get away from him, mate.

Female Voice: I think PC Thompson’s hurt.

Muffled Voice: Right, here we are.

[Sounds of movement]

Male Voice 2: Get him a blanket, get a blanket there.

[Sound of a man moaning]

Male Voice 1: Keep him warm! Where are they?

Male Voice 2: Press on that wound!

Female Voice: You've got to stop it, put something on it!

I clicked the pause button. 'Not much to listen to, but that's you, Took. That's you right there on tape and PC Thompson, and I think Daniel Reece in the background. Now stop messing me around and tell me what the hell happened. Look, there were drugs, I get that. You know what I think happened? I think Danny Reece or Neil Fenn spiked your drinks and some bad things happened. I understand that, Took. I understand what undercover sometimes need to do. But what I don't understand is you sitting there lying to me about the death of a young police officer. He was 24, Andy. He went up to that house because you'd given us the nod and now he's dead.' I leaned in. 'What are you hiding, Andy? Was it you? Did you attack him, or are you protecting someone else?'

'No!'

The cry burst from him. 'Nurse! I, I think I need a glass of water. Nurse! Nurse!'

I stood over him. 'No nurse, Andy. No bunches of grapes, or visits from concerned friends and colleagues until you tell me how that officer ended up dead!'

'He wasn't dead!'

'He was hacked to pieces!'

'We had to! He wasn't dead! He kept coming back, oh Jesus, he kept coming back. They all did, Margot, Ray, Suzie. They wouldn't stay dead. So I took her head off, I finished her. I had to. You see that don't you? I had to!'

As I stood back in stunned amazement, he coughed, a thin line of blood running from his mouth and clutched his side where a slow red stain was spreading across the white sheets.

‘Nurse! Nurse!’ I flung open the door and bellowed down the corridor. ‘We need a doctor in here!’

Driving back from the hospital I struggled to pull my thoughts in to some kind of order. First Sadie, now Took, their minds completely gone. The docs said there was nothing in their blood, no signs of recent drug use but I was at a loss how to explain what had happened to them, or the other snippet of tape, recorded earlier than the piece I’d played Andy.

Male Voice 1: What the fuck is that!?

Male Voice 2: Green eyes!

[Sounds of a scream]

Male Voice 2: He’s coming back, he was getting the sword...
Kenny, maybe just keep that with you, yeah?

Male Voice 1: Yeah.

Male Voice 3: I can’t see nothing out here.

Male Voice 2: A, a, a creature. Not, not, it was.

Male Voice 3: What, where?

Male Voice 2: It was like, all I was able to see was the eyes,
then it turned sideways and it was like some
[...] ah, I don’t, bear, ox, thing.

Male Voice 1: Yeah, all right.

Male Voice 2: Fuck, fuck, fuck, oh my fucking god, oh my
fucking god.

ANDY TOOK

Whatever they'd all taken it was strong stuff. I decided it was time to talk to Daniel Reece.

SEX & DRUGS & TENTACLES

Danny: Don't get uptight with me, man. Cos if you do, I'll have to give you a dose of medicine. And if I spike you, you'll know you've been spoken to.

Withnail: You wouldn't spike me, you're too mean. Beside there's nothing invented I couldn't take.

Danny: If I medicined you, you'd think a brain tumour was a birthday present.

‘Withnail & I’ | Bruce Robinson

‘Doctor’ Danny

Spotlight Rider, Bike Magazine, April 1970

In this month’s ‘Spotlight Rider’ we meet ‘Doctor’ Daniel Reece, founder member of the Highwaymen MC, UK. Danny is an enterprising and, to some, controversial chap and perhaps one of the more unusual ‘Outlaw’ motorcycle club members to be found this side of the Atlantic. Pete Bell caught up with him at this year’s Dragon Rally at Glyn Padarn in North Wales.

Pete Bell: So first question Danny – what do you ride?

Danny Reece: (Laughing) Right now a VW Beetle! My ride is usually a 1948 seven-fifty BMW, but we’re taking our turn to help run the rally this year, which means a lot of gear had to be brought up on four wheels and I was one of the guys who drew the short straw!

PB: Have you been involved in organising Dragon Rally before? How’s it gone this year, do you think?

DR: Well I have been here the last three times, helping out a bit here and there, watching the scene develop, it’s good to get out of London and see what other people are up to, enjoy some good music and better beer. Last year I was running some of the entertainment and this year we are assisting the Angels with the security; things do tend to get a little out of hand sometimes. This year has been good, little in the way of real trouble and I think everyone has had a cracking good time.

PB: What do you say to the criticism that this year’s Rally has

attracted from some of the Press?

DR: Well, you shouldn't believe everything you read in the papers, you know? There's fewer arrests here than at most footie matches and for the most part the police let us organise ourselves, ask the locals if you want a second opinion. As for the whole 'Outlaw Biker' thing – I think it's just a bit of a myth, this isn't America and we don't have the same kind of trouble, some of the nicest, gentlest guys I know wear a patch, you know?

PB: But it's true to say that you've had your problems with the law in the past? Not many people can say that they've been arrested alongside the Rolling Stones!

DR: Yeah, that gets brought up a lot. But the Redlands bust was a long time ago and I suppose you could say I learned my lesson with that one. I was younger and perhaps a bit star-struck, you make your mistakes. I was convicted and it cost me a year and my medical career but I think it's taught me never to take anything for granted. There's a lot of rubbish that gets talked about regarding drugs and bikers, when really it's only a tiny minority who are causing a problem. I wouldn't touch the stuff myself and part of our job here is to make sure that the strongest stuff on site is what we're selling at the bar!

PB: So it's true that you originally planned to become a doctor! What are your long term plans now?

DR: Well I have really found my true family with the Highwaymen and we are working on founding a second Chapter up in Birmingham. And we're in talks with the Angels Chapters in London to organise a large bike rally, perhaps next year, somewhere in England. We can't let the Welsh have all the fun! I've been getting a little involved in the music business over the last year or so, organising promotions

and tours for some small bands, plus we have a growing custom bike business in Wood Green. So I keep busy.

PB: Do you have anything else you’d like to add for our readers?

DR: Yeah, I’d just like to say that despite our reputation British Motorcycle Clubs are good for biking in general. Come along to the rallies and meet us, come for a ride – what’s the worst that could happen? And stay safe.

‘You see, we know you, you little shit. We know all about who you are and what you do. When we arrested you, you had £300 cash in your pockets, there’s a houseful of bodies up the road, most of them drugged to the gills, according to the coroner, and I’ve got an undercover copper who saw you handing it all out. I’ve got a 16-year-old in a coma, two dead or missing rock stars, a murdered policeman and the press banging on my door and I’m more than happy to lay all of that in your greasy lap and see you in prison for a very long time.’

‘I want to confess. It was me. I did it all. It’s all my fault.’

The problem with Danny Reece, it turned out, wasn’t making him talk, it was making him stop.

‘Look, man, I’d been going up to Otten Farm to see the band and deliver orders on and off since the spring. It was Julian, Julian Cavendish – he used to get me to score coke for him, but then he was asking for more and more stuff. For the most part I just used to take them weed, a bit of acid, a few pills up every now and again – it’s a nice break from the city, you know?’

‘The first couple of months it looked like they were having a great time up there – the guys loved being off the road, every-

one's going on about how the countryside is beautiful, everyone was keeping healthy, making music, living the dream, man!'

As the tape recorder slowly hissed, Danny continued, twitching and shuffling in his chair, hands tapping out a nervous staccato on the interview room table, explaining how things had 'got dark'. Financial and legal issues which couldn't be left behind but Neil and John didn't want to deal with, problems with the music.

'You were in the studio with them?'

'No, no way, no seriously, no-one was allowed in there. John was trying to get some kind of perfect sound, he said he had to get the atmosphere right. I mean, Jesus, it was tense up there, you know what I mean? Julian told me John kept ordering more and more instruments and doing all these endless adjustments and Neil, well he wasn't finding his vibe. And he's asking me for harder drugs. I was scared, Christ, I mean, I knew by this point he was going to start asking me for heroin and seriously, I don't want all this, I just wanted... Can I, can I smoke here, yeah?'

I nodded to the Sergeant to slide over a pack of cigarettes and a lighter. It took Danny three attempts to light up, and for a moment I thought he was going to burst into tears, but the nicotine seemed to calm him enough to carry on speaking. He dragged a shaky hand through his long hair and picked up the story again.

'So, like I said, it's mostly just Neil, John, Julian and Kenny up at the farm.'

'Kenny?'

'Kenny McConnell, he was security. He was, oh God, Kenny, I'm so sorry. Is he dead? Is Kenny dead?'

I didn’t answer, and Danny bit his lip and turned his head away for a moment.

‘Look, I don’t know what the fuck was going on up there, OK? Even now with everything that’s happened, I still don’t. Like this American woman, Samantha would turn up and give Neil peyote and I thought he’d lost the plot, shouting about hundreds of mouths and I was just thinking, I seriously need to get out of this situation. She was at Notting Hill as well, at the party, but she didn’t trust me and I didn’t trust her. Then around mid-summer I suddenly get this phone call from Julian to ‘get the fuck up to the farm, now!’ and to bring everything I’ve got. And I don’t want to go, but it’s Julian, you know – he’s got things on me now, and you don’t go against Delta.’

He shuddered, his left arm spasming, teeth chattering. ‘I went. That is, I went up to Suffolk and I found Neil utterly irrational – according to Kenny he’s not sleeping, seems to be in a world of his own, has been taking more and more hallucinogens and is convinced he can reach ‘another level’.

Danny paused for a moment, before fixing me with a surprisingly level stare. ‘Look, I did train to be a doctor, all right? And it was my my medical opinion he was in the middle of a complete nervous breakdown and ought to go to hospital.’

‘But he didn’t.’

‘No, and I wish he fucking had, but Julian was panicking and he slammed me up against the wall, I mean really pushed me and snarled at me to: ‘Just fucking fix him’. That’s what he was shouting: ‘I don’t care what you give him, just fix him!’”

I made a mental note to step up the search for Cavendish as

Danny explained there was a third man present, a book dealer called Xander Black. The name didn't sound familiar and I scribbled it down to check later. According to Danny, he had no idea why Black was there, or what his connection to the band was but he and Neil were doing some 'weird chanting and Xander's got his top off and is prancing around the room like a lunatic'.

'I wanted to get out of there. I wanted to run away and never come back. But Julian shoved me in and locked the door behind me. Neil came at me like he was possessed and started going through my bag, demanding I give him acid – he wanted something to 'take him deeper – got to go deeper – got to get to the place – got to hear it.' I thought he was going to kill me. Make a note of that, yeah? If I hadn't given him what he wanted they would have killed me. So I gave them the acid, so he and Xander could carry on with whatever it was they were trying to do, trying to get to some kind of different 'astral level' – whatever the fuck that is...'

'I know what I'm doing, you know. With drugs I mean. I gave him some diazepam to try and calm him down and the next thing I know he's just freaked out on me and all I can think is, Jesus, this is such a bad idea, and I swore an oath, and he probably needs to be sectioned but every time I try and suggest that to him or Xander, I'm shouting at them 'For God's sake, this has to stop!' but they just shout me down – at one point Neil put his hands round my throat and I was sure he was going to strangle me... Then he's speaking some kind of gibberish that hurts my ears, can't explain that one, sorry, and he's trying to draw this shape in the air and...'

Danny’s voice broke and he made a dry sobbing sound, clamping his hands down on the table to stop the shaking. ‘So. He asked me to give him more LSD and I told him I’d only got liquid and palm a dose of tranquilliser into the syringe. Somehow the minute I’d injected it he knew, he just knew and he started shouting and swearing ‘Fuck you, take me back there!’ ‘Don’t you dare take me out now, you cunt!’

From what I could make out from his increasingly agitated testimony, after that Danny gave up arguing and spent the next couple of hours trying to keep Neil stable, giving him whatever he asked for and trying to ignore the apparently by now completely naked Xander who was alternately reading from some ‘really old books and trying to scribble down everything Neil was saying’.

I sat back and looked at the figure before me. Ripped denim, long hair, nails bitten to the quick, eyes darting endlessly around the room. ‘Doctor’ Danny Reece was starting to sweat now and I wondered how much longer he would make it without some of his own medicine. I slid him another cigarette and filled a paper cup with water from the jug on the table, which he gulped down greedily.

‘When was all this, Danny?’

‘Midsummer, I told you. Look, eventually it all calmed down, Neil passed out and I fell asleep. When I woke up Xander had gone and Neil was writing in his notebook, his dream diary, he called it. When I tried to leave the door was locked and Neil said I couldn’t leave yet. Someone brought up some food and shoved it through the door and I waited a couple of hours until suddenly Neil stops writing, throws me the key and I legged it.’

I interrupted him. ‘Danny, you need to tell us about what happened *this* weekend. What did you do to the people at the house?’

‘I’m telling you man! Look, after all that I stayed away from the farm, but Julian was buying a lot of stuff and at the end of July I got another phone call to go back to the farm.’

He looked up at me with eyes full of genuine fear. ‘I didn’t want to go. Did not want. You get me? But Julian said that Neil was in a bad place and that if I didn’t get up there pretty fucking fast he would get me arrested. So.’

‘This weekend, Danny. The house. Sindy Reynolds. PC Thompson. What did you do?’

‘Neil was in a terrible state, he was sleep deprived, underweight, begging me to give him something ‘to keep the darkness away’. He kept telling me his ‘powers’ weren’t working any more, that the drugs weren’t working any more, that John was trying to kill him, that he couldn’t stop hearing ‘it’. And that cunt Xander Black was there again. I don’t, I can’t even. He didn’t know what to do either, kept telling Neil he was putting up some kind of protection for him, Julian’s telling him it’s all OK, but nothing any of us do is calming him down.’

Danny was crying now, tears sliding down his face, mixing with the sweat, his voice coming in gasps. ‘He’s threatening me, then apologising, then begging me not to leave him. I gave him morphine, Jesus, I didn’t know what else to do, he’s not calming down. Do you understand? It should have calmed him down and whatever Xander read to Neil he just waved his hands and shouted that it’s not working. I thought they wanted more acid and I go for that, but then Neil’s panicking again, shouting ‘No,

no, no, no, no – this isn’t what I wanted from you! Don’t take me back there!... Why aren’t you listening? I’ve told you already it doesn’t fucking work any more!”

Danny giggled hysterically, banging the table with his hand. ‘He kept demanding over and over that I ‘turn it all off’, he, I was scared, man, scared! He told me I had to ‘turn it all off, now!’ ‘You made me see it, you can fucking well take it away!’”

‘I made him see it! I made him see it! Oh, God, Jesus, what did I do?’

For a moment I thought he was going to pass out, his hands were clenching the table so hard they were white, his eyes rolling up. I could feel the Sergeant moving towards the tape recorder to end the interview, but waved him off.

‘Danny. What happened? Danny!’

‘OK, OK, so I worked on trying to sedate him. Everything I gave him seemed to have almost no effect, at one point he started, he started banging his head against the table, I, I... I think he was trying to, to knock himself out. I gave him more morphine, more tranquillisers. Xander was encouraging me, going on about severing a connection and I got pissed off and started shouting back at him about what a bad fucking idea all this was and trying to get out of the door, but Julian was holding it shut from the other side... I knew this was madness now, that they were all insane but then Neil starts speaking clearly, begging me not to stop – that he’s almost free. I told Xander if I gave Neil any more morphine it’ll kill him and that I couldn’t do it. He shouted back that if I won’t he will and started trying to go through my bag, and we end up fighting over a syringe and he shouted ‘Just do it!’

Right in my face. And I did. I did it.'

Danny had stopped crying now, his voice down to a whisper.

'Neil just smiled and thanked me. And stopped breathing. I couldn't, I couldn't leave him like that. I was going to be a doctor. I don't kill people. I got him back, chest compressions, injected him with the closest I had to adrenaline, I was shouting at him not to be dead, not to die. Three minutes. He was out for three minutes. Then he's breathing again and the next thing I know Kenny is dragging me out of the room and kicking me off the farm, and John's there, with a, with a fucking sword!' He began to giggle again, legs twitching, sweat running off his face.

My patience gone, I interrupted him, slamming a hand down on the table.

'Enough! I don't care about your little drug games with Neil Fenn, Danny. This is months ago, old news – I've got a pile of corpses at a country retreat and you're giving me nothing. What happened at the house, Danny? I'm waiting on your full confession and it had better start becoming relevant right about fucking now. You said this was all your fault, but all you've told us so far is how you *heroically*,' I spat out the word, 'saved Neil Fenn's life.'

He looked at me with a face like death. Eyes like black pits.

'That's why it's my fault. I should have let the bastard die.'

‘DOCTOR’ DANNY

SEX & DRUGS & TENTACLES

If I called to you would you answer me?

If I called to you would you come?

Standing shoulder to shoulder

An old debt waiting to be paid

Call of the journey over sea

Memories of summer long gone

Tell me what is in your heart

Brothers raise your spears up with me

Stand shoulder to shoulder

Brothers raise your spears up with me

Stand shoulder to shoulder

If I called to you would you answer me?

Standing shoulder to shoulder

Brothers raise your spears with me!

‘If I Called To You’ | Delta | 1971 (unreleased)

Stand Shoulder To Shoulder

I accelerated hard up the A12, past the lorry that had blocked me for the last ten miles.

I'd carried on pushing Danny hard, but he'd lost it, and then his new brief had turned up courtesy of Atlantic Records and interview time was over. Delayed shock, withdrawal, poor boy, my heart bled for him, but I wasn't going to be able to pin all this on him just yet.

They were waiting for me in the coroner's office in Woodbridge. I'd thankfully managed to miss the autopsies. I can handle them, but no one in their right mind attends if they don't have to and I'd seen enough death on this case to last the rest of my career.

'George,' Chief Superintendent Bernard Davies shook me warmly by the hand. 'Glad you could make it. They treating you alright up here in the sticks?'

Behind him I could see Jack looking shifty. He rolled his eyes and gave me the look that meant 'I need to speak to you later'.

'No complaints.' I said, putting on my own best 'warm-yet-professional' tone and trying not to look as exhausted as I felt.

'Wanted to get the bodies moved down to the Yard, but the Chief Constable insisted on using the local coroner. Still, not much we need to know is there. Acid trip gone wrong I'd say. Hmm?'

I caught Jack's eye. So that's how it was going to play out.

'Shall we?' Davies indicated a door and we followed him into a long, cold room where the nine bodies from the house lay on stark metal trolleys. The room smelt of death, despite the refrigeration and I could hear a tap dripping insistently somewhere nearby.

'Gentlemen.'

The coroner had a gentle Suffolk accent and a swollen ruddy nose and face that suggested a serious drinking habit, but his eyes were sharp and his hand steady as he pulled back the first sheet.

'Paul Bronson, 42. Known to you gentlemen I believe. Found outside the property with this,' he indicated a large photograph of a bloodstained axe, 'sticking out of his back.'

'A straightforward assault. He had additional wounds, almost certainly from the same weapon, to his torso and forehead. Probably killed by the second blow. He hadn't been dead long when you arrived, I'd say an hour or so at most.'

'Can you tell us anything about the weapon?' asked Davies.

'Your common or garden axe. Well-used, no rust on the blade, fairly recently sharpened, handle worn smooth. I'd say it was in regular use at the property, probably for chopping wood.'

I stared at the man on the trolley. Even in life I suspected it would not have been a pleasant face. The hair was long and lank, slicked back from his forehead and falling below his shoulders and the mouth was cruel.

'He was brought in wearing a black sweater and suit and these.' The coroner indicated a metal tray containing as good

a collection of occult jewellery as I'd ever seen, including an exceptionally tasteless medallion.

'Bronson was a serious thorn in our side,' murmured Jack to me. 'Vice practically opened the champagne when they heard he'd been done in. He ran a string of brothels in Soho. The kind where anything goes. They'd investigated him at one time over allegations that he'd been procuring under-age girls and boys for some sex cult but nothing was ever proved – he had connections, and well, it was always pretty far-fetched stuff. Apparently he'd just started a record label, Baphomet, or something like that and that's how he got his invite to the party.'

I nodded. Both Sadie and Andy Took had mentioned trying to 'protect' Sindy Reynolds from Bronson and I wondered how far they'd been prepared to go.

The second sheet was removed to reveal the body of a large man, with a round, slightly cherubic face.

'Archibald Pillory-Smyth.'

'I know him.' I said. 'Is he an actor?'

'Yes, stage actor, most recently in something called *Wise Child* at the Fortune Theatre.'

I'd seen it, Jeanette was keen on the theatre and we'd gone in June. It had been an odd production, not really my cup of tea. A man wanted by the police had dressed up as a woman, someone else had dressed up as his son, there'd been a menacingly camp boarding-house keeper and, well the rest of it had been rather lost on me, but I remembered Pillory-Smyth's presence on stage. His comic timing, harsh, tough and pointed had been deadly. And there had been a savagery and observation that was

somehow tragic.

‘Better know to us, of course, as a practising homosexual and frequenter of certain of London’s more notorious public lavatories,’ remarked Davies.

I found myself irritated at the comment. Let the man have a moment of dignity, I thought to myself, at least in death if not in life.

‘Rather an interesting one, though,’ continued the coroner. ‘Multiple injuries, all of which had been stitched and bandaged. Good work as well, he probably would have made it.’

I thought of Danny’s level stare, ‘*Look, I did train to be a doctor, all right?*’

‘What sort of injuries?’ I asked.

‘Well that’s the odd part. Initially I’d thought knife wounds, but really they’re more like claw marks. Look, you can see where he’s been raked across the chest here. I’d have said a large animal, but there’s nothing native to the UK that would do something like this. You haven’t had any escapes from private zoos have you? Thought not. And there were no animal hairs on the victims. Best I can suggest then would be some kind of farming implement, but nothing came in from the crime scene that would support that.’

‘It was like, all I was able to see was the eyes, then it turned sideways and it was like some [...] ah, I don’t, bear, ox, thing.’

I shook my head abruptly. ‘So he did die from his injuries?’

‘No, actually. Someone stabbed him with a long sharp blade, maybe a very large knife, right through the stitches of the original wound. He bled out on the bed where he was found. The

original injuries were maybe a day old when we got him, the stabbing happened afterwards.

A long, sharp blade. *'He's coming back, he was getting the sword... Kenny, maybe just keep that with you, yeah?'*

'They'd eaten the same meal, the night before. Some kind of vegetable stew. I'll have to wait for the results to know if drugs were involved, but Pillory-Smyth had certainly consumed a large amount of whisky prior to his death.'

They'd eaten, I thought. They'd stayed in the house, eating meals together and bandaging wounds, despite being in fear of their lives if Took's statement was anything to go by. And then on Sunday they'd turned on each other?

'These three were found outside the house.' I had to fight not to turn away. PC Thompson, an older woman and bearded man. Or what was left of them.

'Killed by repeated blows to the head and then dismembered with a sharp blade. Oh and the man also sustained injuries to the chest that I've identified as caused by a shotgun fired at close range.'

'He wasn't dead! He kept coming back, oh Jesus, he kept coming back. They all did, Margot, Ray, Suzie.'

'PC Thompson had injuries to his stomach that are similar to Mr Pillory-Smyth's. Are you sure you didn't have anything else at the scene that could have caused them?'

I shook my head mutely.

'We've identified the man as Ray Dunn, and the woman as Margot Harrison, the owners of the Sanctuary. And of course PC Thompson.'

We stood in silence looking at the wreckage before us.

‘Bronson had gunshot residue on his hands, as did Ray Dunn. We believe they may have tried to defend themselves against their attackers. PC Thompson died on Saturday, before lunch I estimate, and Margot not long afterwards. Ray also died on Saturday – I’d be lying if I said I could provide an accurate time of death with the bodies in this state but I’d say he was later.’

Thompson, then Margot, then Ray later, Smyth and finally Bronson. Not one attack but multiple. What had they been doing in the intervening time? Smoking pot? Listening to the album? Digging trenches in the garden?

We’d moved on. Another body, this one male, slightly younger with a trimmed pointed beard and long flowing hair.

‘Vinnie Diamond. Well-known late-night DJ. Found in the bathroom on the second floor.’

The man in the cowboy hat, slumped next to the toilet.

‘As I explained, I can’t tell you everything he’d taken yet, but the track marks and fresh injection sites on his arms as well as the large numbers of syringes in the crime scene photographs would suggest heroin, although I wondered...’

‘Yes?’ Davies prompted.

‘Well, he also had a number of injuries, a serious wound to the leg and there’s this.’ He pulled back the sheet further to reveal a skinny tattooed chest and an arm that ended in a bloody stump.

‘He’d lost a hand, which I understand you found in the grounds, DI Shelton? But it seemed to have been removed with a certain amount of expertise – you can see the bruises from the tourniquet, here. And I wondered if the heroin had possibly been

used aa pain relief, a sort of field hospital? Crazy, I know, but...'

I thought of the piles of ripped sheets, and the syringes lined up and silently agreed that was exactly what it looked like.

'He also died on Saturday, probably quite late at night, while these two were certainly Sunday morning.'

The next victim was the woman from the bed. Her skin still had that perfect sheen like the finest bone china, but now I could see she was freckled, her hair washed and lying in long black strings alongside her shoulders.

'Lorraine 'Raina' Weston,' said Jack. 'When you mentioned the name 'Raina' to me I knew it rang a bell and Paul Bronson gave me the link. She was an orphan, parents killed in a car crash, adopted by a posh family in Chelsea. She had it all, but she was unstable as a teenager, borderline schizophrenic. Visits to Harley Street, Swiss clinics, you name it, Mummy and Daddy tried it. Then she got into the occult scene, left home and the first time we have a record of her is being picked up in a raid on an 'exclusive' club run by Paul Bronson. I've checked the file – she had bruises all over her from restraints, but she was either too scared or in too deep to want to go home.'

'Sadie said she was 'at peace' at the Sanctuary,' I said.

'She had oils on her hands,' offered the coroner. 'Massage oils, I imagine. You know, essential oils for aromatherapy. Bergamot and lemon, I think.'

I stared at him blankly for a moment, wondering how this red-faced Suffolk doctor knew about aromatherapy massages. Still, I supposed, it took all sorts.

'Definite evidence of sexual activity. I couldn't tell you if it

was willing or not, but it happened not long before her death. How she died I can't tell you, not a mark on her, apart from grass stains on her knees and the soles of her feet. Could have been smothered, or injected with something, but there are no needle marks. We've also a sheet from the room with semen on it, but no way to know who that belonged to, although my money would be on this one.'

The next body was another man, this one with a near-shaven head and thick moustache. 'We identified him by his business card. Xander Black of Equinox Books. Possible associate of Paul Bronson, which would link him to Miss Weston here, but no criminal record.'

'And Xander's got his top off and is prancing around the room like a lunatic... I told Xander if I gave Neil any more morphine it'll kill him and that I couldn't do it. He shouted back that if I won't he will and started trying to go through my bag, and we end up fighting over a syringe.'

I didn't want to see any more bodies today. Distantly I could hear Jack asking about the cause of death. Gunshot to the chest apparently. Oh and from the marks on his hands and the manner of their removal, it appeared he'd tried to gouge out his own eyes.

Had Raina been awake for that, I wondered. Had she lain there in that ridiculous bikini and watched him do it, or had he raped her, smothered her and then been overcome at the sight of her.

'And finally these two.'

I opened my eyes and found myself looking at a man and a woman. They'd put her head back on then, I thought to myself,

and felt a hysterical giggle rising in my chest.

‘Freda Queripel and what appears to be Neil Fenn,’ said the coroner, with a slight flourish, as if he’d been saving the best for last. Killed on Saturday night, or in the early hours of Sunday morning. Cause of death wasn’t the beheading, although that occurred peri-mortem. She had the same injuries as Smyth and Thompson. Mr Fenn here, well it’s difficult to say what killed him.’

Neil Fenn had been shockingly attractive in life. Paul had once had a poster of the band on his wall and I’d grown used to that intense stare under the shock of black hair. *‘You have no idea what they’re like when they’re together. Neil and John. That presence, it’s electric, you just feel like everything is more intense when they’re in the room.’*

Girls and women had screamed his name, fainted at a look from him, left boyfriends to fling themselves at his feet. But they’d never see the maimed and mutilated corpse that lay before us, face streaked with rivers of blood. Someone had wanted Neil Fenn very dead indeed.

‘And John, he looked like he hated Neil. Really hated him. And he was afraid.’

I stood outside the building, smoking a much needed cigarette, waiting for Jack to come out.

‘Have you had the talk yet from Bernard?’

‘No, I think he’s waiting until you’re gone. Why have we still got this case, Jack? This goes well beyond tracking heroin shipments, this is, I don’t even know what this is.’ I flung my half-smoked cigarette on the floor.

‘Ah.’ Jack gave me that shifty look again. ‘I’m already off the case.’

‘What?’

‘Reassigned to Operation Duchess, I’m going back down to London tonight.’

‘But, all the hours we spent? And that house, Jack, you were there, don’t tell me you don’t want to find out what went on?’

He looked at me angrily before dragging a pair of sunglasses out of his pocket and ramming them onto his face.

‘I’ve been reassigned. I’ll see you around, George.’

‘George.’ If Chief Inspector Davies’ smile had been any warmer it could have lit my cigarette. ‘Sterling work you and Pryce have done, excellent raid. I can see a promotion in your near future.’

‘Sir’

‘I expect you’re wondering why you still have this case, eh?’

I gave a non-committal shrug.

‘You’ve got this case for now, George, because no other bugger wants it. There’s a lot of high-level stuff going on right now, that I am protecting you from, as is my duty as your superior officer.’

‘Sir.’

‘I’m going to tell you what happened at the Sanctuary, George. Delta and their hippy mates took some very bad acid, overdosed and died, killed a copper, tried to take advantage of a teenage girl and helpfully removed a number of very nasty men while they were at it. It will be a salutatory and unpleasant tale to the nation’s youth, with the added fringe benefit of putting Mr Daniel Reece in prison for a number of years.’

‘I see.’

‘We’ve managed to keep the press away from it so far, and God knows who’s pulled those strings but they have some serious influence. Most of the country doesn’t even know this has happened yet and it’s going to stay that way until we have a story ready for the press, from just the right sources. You’re going to investigate this until the end of the week, George, and then you’ll have your pick of assignments.’

‘You’re really going to cover this up?’

Davies looked deeply offended. ‘Cover up what, George? I told you what happened. There will be no unpleasant detail left unreported, I assure you. It’s just what we needed to wake people up to the dangers of drugs and the sordid goings-on of their so-called heroes.’

He paused for a moment. ‘Have you ever met the Department of Special Circumstances, DI Shelton?’

‘No – is that another MI5 euphemism?’

‘Then you’re a lucky bastard.’

He drained his pint and rose from the table in the little pub we’d retired to for this enlightening meeting.

‘Nine dead, sir,’ I said. ‘Nine dead, one locked up, one in the loony bin and four still in hospital. What do I tell Sindy Reynolds’s parents?’

‘If she doesn’t wake up, which I hear is looking more likely by the day, you tell them Delta killed their daughter.’

I bit my tongue.

‘You look tired, George, Too many nights in the B&B. Why don’t you go home tonight? Catch up with that lovely wife of

SEX & DRUGS & TENTACLES

yours. And then tomorrow you can drive down to the hotel we've found Julian Cavendish in and persuade the bastard to play ball.'

STAND SHOULDER TO SHOULDER

SEX & DRUGS & TENTACLES

*The fear is coming
The fear is coming (the fear)*

*The fear is coming
The fear is coming (it's here)*

*Paint the corner of your eye
Do not ever leave the light*

*And the creatures that exist
Will get you in the mist*

*The worms of the earth are coming
The devourer is rising up
You better get ready, baby
Before you meet Black Shuck*

*Give me something, keep the darkness away
Got no rhythm or feeling today
Give me something, keep the darkness away
Give me something, keep the darkness away
Gotta give me something, keep the darkness at bay*

‘The Fear Is Coming’ | Delta | 1971 (unreleased)

Julian & Sandy

Who's Running the Show? Jerry Moore | Melody Maker, 9th July 1971

In this week's insider view of the industry we ask 'Just who is managing elusive rock duo Delta?' But before we try to answer that question, let's go back to the beginning...

Back in those far-flung days when they were known as the Delta Bluesmen, they were managed by school friend Pete Herrington. Pete looked after the band and drove them to gigs through the touring years from '61 to '64, but when everything went wrong at the disastrous Cardiff show that left Neil with a broken hand, Pete and the band parted company.

The Deltas continued on – supposedly self-managed by Neil and John for the rest of the '64 tour, although rumour has it that John's wife, Blake, took on the challenge of running the band for those last few months.

No-one knows who, if anyone, managed the lads through the 'wilderness years', until the day that Terry 'Tez' Williams came onto the scene – signing the boys to Atlantic Records in the legendary New York deal. Williams managed the boys through the first few months with Atlantic as they got ready to launch the new album.

In '68 and early '69 another face appeared onto the scene in the form of one of Atlantic's up-and-coming new talents – Julian Cavendish. Cavendish, sometime described as William's protégé, was well-known by then in the industry as the go-to-guy for getting bands working, getting them into the studio and pushing them to record. Cavendish spent a lot of time with the band in New York and on their return to England. Rumour has it that he was behind time spent in the studio in England with renowned producer Henry St. George to finish up some overdubs and polish the finished Black Rainbow LP. The band and Atlantic records have always denied these sessions were significant – preferring the more romantic tale of an album scraped together on the streets of New York in crumbling warehouses and rat-infested studios. What we do know is that the band worked extensively with St. George on their tour recordings and may even have laid down new tracks during '69 at his Camden studio.

Just when things were looking good between Atlantic and Delta the romance came to an abrupt end last year when the tour ended and Fenn and Markham walked away, to 'do our own thing, and find our own way', as John said in an interview at the time.

But were they really going their own way or just going the Blacklight way? Blacklight Records is the new label owned and managed by the now ex-Atlantic Terry Williams. In Terry's words to this very paper, 'With Delta on board there's no way it could fail'. Surely that meant the Delta boys were going to sign to Tez? But then what? For a while it all looked good for Delta and Blacklight – then everything went quiet. Have the lads actually signed to Blacklight or are they still going it alone in their studio in Suf-

folk, where they have been locked away for nearly half a year.

Or maybe they are going another way? We can exclusively reveal that Atlantic's young talent Cavendish is back on the scene once more and has been seen coming and going from the studio in Suffolk over the past few months. With their one-album contract at a natural end, surely they would sign up again? Or do the frenzied legal teams on both sides know something we don't? When Williams left Atlantic there are reports that he asked Cavendish to come with him, but to date there is no sign that the 'Dish' has taken the offer. So does this mean that Atlantic and Delta are feeling the vibe again? We caught up with Cavendish outside the Atlantic offices in London and although happy to talk to us about the many new and great things coming out of Atlantic from Zeppelin and others, he would not be drawn on the subject of Delta and their love-hate relationship with the label.

So who is managing Delta? Is it Cavendish and his friends at Atlantic, or are they really still going it alone? We here at Melody Maker don't yet know the answer to that question— although we wish we did! We'll leave it to you to decide for now, but be assured as soon as we know more, so will you.'

Julian Cavendish hadn't been that hard to track down. I'd half expected he'd turn up dead somewhere, a car overturned on the Woodbridge road, more inexplicable injuries, more tales of figures in the mist, but I'd had a hunch he would go back to London and the Met had found him, holed up in an expensive hotel behind Marble Arch. He hadn't left his room since arriving, or made any calls, but he'd apparently ordered a lot of booze from

room service and put a do-not-disturb sign on the door. I was looking at it now, as well as a pile of sheets and a dirty tray that had been shoved outside the door.

I knocked on the door and got no response.

‘Mr Cavendish, this is the police. I need you to open the door.’

I heard a sound in the room, a woman’s voice and a man swearing and what sounded like a slap and a muffled crash.

‘Mr Cavendish. I need you to open this door.’ I turned to look at the two uniforms standing behind me, ready to tell them to break the door down, but it opened suddenly and the sweaty figure of Julian Cavendish stuck his head out.

‘What do you want?’

I could smell the alcohol on him from here and his voice was hoarse, his pupils dilated, skin pasty-looking, eyes filled with fear.

‘I’m DI Shelton, sir. Drugs Squad. I need to talk to you about the events of Friday evening.’

For a moment I thought he was going to slam the door in my face, but he stayed there, eyes darting up and down the hallway.

‘Mr Cavendish, I can come back with a warrant for your arrest, but I suggest you let me in and we can have a little talk.’

At the word ‘arrest’ his face turned a slightly green colour and he swallowed heavily.

‘OK, OK. Bit of a misunderstanding, yeah. Come in. Not them though.’

I nodded at the two uniforms and they stationed themselves outside the door as I made my way into the hotel room.

The curtains were pulled and the room was thick with ciga-

rette smoke and the sour smell of unwashed clothes. There were overflowing ashtrays and glasses on every surface and a half-full bottle of Campari rolling on the floor. A stain on the wall and a smashed glass lying by the skirting board suggested the last few days hadn't been pretty. The bed was unmade and occupied by a slim young woman wearing only a sheet. She looked down at the floor when I came in, clutching the sheet around her, her hair falling over her eyes.

'Sandy! Put some clothes on for Christ's sake,' said Julian and the girl got up and slipped silently into the bathroom.

He noticed the bag of white power and business card lying on the bedside table at the same moment I did and tried to sweep it away under the pillow.

I decided to ignore it for the moment. Julian was afraid of more than being arrested for possession. I could smell it, feel the fear rolling off him in waves as he picked up an overturned chair and sat down, trying to appear casual. 'Bit of a long night, Inspector. You know how it is.'

He laughed, high and strained and I stood in silence, letting him speak.

'Look, if this is about damage to the house the label will pay for everything.'

I turned over in my mind the information the hotel had given me. He'd made no calls and received no visitors. It was entirely possible, it suddenly dawned on me, that he had no idea about what had happened. But why hadn't he gone back to the house?

'Mr Cavendish,' I began. 'Are you aware of the events of the past weekend at the Sanctuary?'

He looked at me in abject misery. 'Oh God. What have they done? You have no idea, it's a nightmare. I, I'm through with them, and you can tell John and Neil it's over.'

'Neil Fenn is dead, and John Markham as well, as far as we can tell.'

I've had to deliver the news of sudden death a few times, but I have to confess I almost enjoyed it this time. Julian sat there for a moment, clearly struggling to take in what I'd said.

'Dead. I, Jesus. Dead? Oh God, I think I'm going to...'

He got up and flung himself into the bathroom, knocking Sandy out of the way on her way back to the bed and we both sat and awkwardly listened to the sound of him being violently sick.

Sandy had changed into a pair of torn jeans and a Black Rainbow End t-shirt and perched nervously on the end of the bed staring resolutely at her feet.

Julian emerged from the bathroom, looking slightly more sober, but about ten years older. He staggered back over to the chair and collapsed into it, lighting a cigarette with trembling hands. Sandy moved over to put a hand on his shoulder but he shoved her away.

'OK, OK. So Neil and John are... what was it, an overdose? Car crash?'

'That's what we're trying to find out, Sir. We found a number of bodies at the house. Vinnie Diamond, Paul Bronson, Xander Black, Freda 'Suzie' Queripel, Ray Dunn, Margot Harrison, Archie Pillory-Smyth, Lorraine Weston, Neil Fenn and PC Stewart Thompson, plus remains that may be John Markham's.'

I recited the names, trying not to see them lying on the trolleys

in that cold room in Woodbridge. When I'd finished I thought he was going to be sick again.

'But that, that's not even. I mean, Jesus, that's everyone, that's insane! Was it Neil, did he? I mean – look you have no idea what I've been through the last six months. Both of them, they're insane. Insane.'

He clamped a hand over his mouth again. 'Archie?'

We'd established Archie was Julian's uncle and I felt the tiniest bit of sympathy for him.

'Obviously this has come as a shock to you, Mr Cavendish.'

He laughed hysterically. 'You know, by this point with Delta I don't think anything could come as a shock any more! A massacre, that's a fucking massacre. 'The Sanctuary Massacre'. Good album title.' He giggled some more and closed his eyes.

'We have witness reports that the two of you left the house around midnight on Friday,' I continued.

'Witnesses? You mean some of them are still alive?'

'Andy Took, Daniel Reece, Sadie Harris, an unidentified man we think may be a Kenny McConnell, a woman we know to be Luna Jones and Sindy Reynolds. Aged 16,' I added, pointedly.

'She was nothing to do with me! Vinnie ran some kind of competition without asking permission and just turned up with a girl in tow. He said she was 18!'

'She's in a coma.'

'Oh Christ. Shit.'

'We understand there had been a falling out between John and Neil earlier in the evening?'

'A fight, yeah, they had a fight. The album. I don't know what

happened. I really thought they'd finally got it together and then Neil played the tapes and it was awful, just rubbish, and I could see it all falling to pieces. Do you know how much they'd cost me? 18 fucking mandolins! Who needs 18 different mandolins 'cause the sound isn't 'right'? And drugs, whatever Neil wanted, I got for him. I did everything for those guys. Everything. I've been through hell this year and now there's nothing to show for it. Nothing.'

I thought he might burst into tears. Then his eyes narrowed and he looked back up at me.

'Daniel Reece? Danny?'

'Yes. We have him in custody at this time.'

'It's all his fault! He must have given them something, spiked them. He's a little shit.'

'We're investigating that as a possibility. Atlantic have provided him with a lawyer, though...'

'Oh have they? I'll sort that out right now.'

He moved towards the phone, but then hesitated, drawing his hand back.

'Don't fancy calling into the office, Mr Cavendish?'

He slumped against the wall, rubbing a shaky hand across his face, then poured himself another drink.

I sat and waited for him to talk, and it all came out, the pressure he'd been under from the label. His personal reputation on the line to get an album out. He had debts, big debts from an expensive habit and he was running out of favours to pull in. He taken Neil and John up to Suffolk in a last desperate attempt to get them cleaned up and in the studio and try and keep them

away from Tez Williams and others, like Bronson's new Baphomet label. He'd put in the work over the years, he said, there'd have been no Black Rainbow without him, no-one was going to take it from him now.

His account agreed with Danny's. The first couple of months were really 'chilled' – the guys loved being off the road, he had the finances under control (I didn't believe that for a minute but let it slide). Then things started to go wrong, they wouldn't let him hear anything, John was spending hours locked in the studio, kept ordering more and more equipment. Neil was sliding back into bad habits, and his obsession with the occult was starting to take over.

'The drugs, I could deal with that. I'm used to that – whatever they need, you know. But he was ordering books from universities, packages from book dealers, Xander Black must have had hundreds of pounds off of him. And who pays the bills? And I've promised, I've promised so many things to so many people and there's no fucking album in sight.'

He dropped his head into his hands.

'John was no better, wandering around the countryside – you have no idea the stories I had to get dropped, I'm literally running behind him with chequebook, begging them to record something, anything, but they can barely speak to each other. And then John bought this sword from somewhere...'

'John bought a sword?'

'Yeah, like an actual fucking sword. He was keeping it in his guitar case.'

Well that explained where the sword had come from.

‘Midsummer. That was the worst. Danny and Xander were there. Neil and John were both. Oh God, I had no idea what to do. But then it seemed to get better, but I was under so much pressure by then. The men I owe money to, they, let’s just say getting Delta signed and the album in the can was top of my priority list.’

‘I went to a party at Blake’s in Notting Hill, and well, I’d had a bit to drink and I told everyone it was ready. Invited them up to the Sanctuary for a launch. I didn’t know what I was doing...’

‘What did the band say about that.’

‘Well, actually they were OK about it.’ He laughed suddenly. ‘I drove straight back up to Otten Farm after the party, called an emergency meeting. Told them album by the end of September or it was over. No more drugs, no more special books, no more ancient shit until we had 12 tracks on tape, and that it had better be something pretty fucking special. And they were good, keen again, in the studio every day, late into the night. Wouldn’t let me hear anything and Neil insisted they destroy everything but the master tapes, but I just thought. I thought it would be OK.’

He tailed off, staring at the glass in his hand. ‘But it wasn’t.’

As soon as he’d heard the tapes, he said, he knew it was over. And then Sandy had needed a lift to Woodbridge and he’d put her in his car, driven away from the house and they’d come straight down to London so he could ‘think things through’.

‘Did you have any problems with the car, or the fog?’

‘Fog? What? It was a clear night. I remember I hardly needed the headlights getting back over to Woodbridge. Fuck. I covered for them so many times. But this, what am I going to do? The

press. Oh Jesus, has it been in the press yet?’

‘We’ve released very little so far. Why did you choose the Sanctuary?’

‘The Sanctuary? Oh, it’s my godmother’s house, Tamara. I didn’t know it had turned into a hippy health retreat! I remember thinking how the hell was I going to explain that to the guys, but they were cool, until the tapes...’

He looked up at me suddenly, eyes sharp.

‘You have the tapes?’

‘We have what we think may be the album. The hi-fi was smashed and there seems to have been some kind of electrical fire.’

‘OK, OK, right, because I mean, it wasn’t a *good* album, but now, if they’re dead, and with all this, I mean we’re talking cult status, Delta’s last recording, that would sell a lot of copies, it’s rock history...’

He was sitting up straighter, eyes brightening, pouring another shot into his glass. ‘Sandy, get my address book from the table...’

‘Did you ever get them to sign, Mr Cavendish?’

‘What?’

‘I read an article recently. In *Melody Maker*. It seemed as if there was some uncertainty as to whether Delta had signed with Atlantic again or...’

He stared at me.

‘So, did you have a contract with them?’

I turned away as the glass smashed against the wall and made my way to the door. I thought about having him arrested for pos-

session, but decided that there was probably no way I could really make life worse for him than it already was.

I was walking away down the corridor, when I felt a small hand grab at my arm and I turned to see Sandy. She slipped a piece of paper into my hand before running back into the hotel room and shutting the door.

JULIAN & SANDY

SEX & DRUGS & TENTACLES

*With fire I make this sacred site
And call my warriors to life*

*Step you forward one by one
And tell the night your mighty song*

‘Summoning Song’ | Delta | 1971 (unreleased)

I'll sing you a song

Television would have you believe that we coppers have miserable home lives, or live in rented rooms where we drink whisky and brood over our failed marriages. *Z-Cars* and *Special Branch* have a lot of answer for. As it happens I have a very nice three-bed detached house on a new estate out at Goff's Oak. We're thinking of having a conservatory built next year if I get the promotion. I parked up outside and let myself in the side door. Jeanette was out – she teaches a pottery class at the local school in the evenings, but Peter was sat at the kitchen table eating cold shepherd's pie out of a Pyrex dish.

'Don't let your Mother see you doing that.'

He gave me a wry smile. 'She left a note. Said we were to heat it up in the oven, but it's just as good cold. Especially knowing what I'll get in digs.'

Peter had left home for university last year, and was due to go back and start his second year next week. Manchester, studying physics. He was a bright lad, grammar school, sixth form... although his taste in music left a little to be desired and his current long hair didn't suit him.

We'd only been able to have the one, but we'd been blessed with a good one. Peter had always been quiet, caring. The kind of boy who likes to think things through and go his own way. We'd

made it through the teenage years without too many major rows and I'd missed him when he left.

I pulled up a chair and grabbed a fork from the kitchen drawer. Fitted kitchen. Hygena, actually, in a mustard colour I wasn't especially fond of, but Jeanette had picked out. I dug in to the pie, he was right, it was just as good cold.

We ate in companionable silence for a while and I was just think of opening a tin of lager when he asked me a question.

'Dad – I know you probably can't say anything, but, do you know about what's happened to Delta?'

I nearly spat pie across the table.

'I heard from a mate, who knows someone who's in the bike club that there'd been a raid up in Suffolk at their studio.'

'We've managed to keep the press away from it so far, and God knows who's pulled those strings but they have some serious influence. Most of the country doesn't even know this has happened yet.'

Well done, Bernard, I thought. No-one knows a thing, apart from half the teenagers in the country.

'Dad? What's so funny?'

'Nothing, Peter. Just take from me that, yes, something has happened, and, no, I'm not going to tell you what it is. And believe me, you're better off not knowing.'

Let him keep his idols a little while longer, I thought, getting up to wash the dish and forks in the sink.

'I'm going to listen to some music in the lounge,' I said. 'You going out?'

'I thought I'd call Mandy,' he said, blushing slightly.

I'LL SING YOU A SONG

Mandy was Peter's current 'steady' and had contributed to my escalating telephone bill this summer.

'Fine,' I said, 'Maybe we can watch something together later. Your mother won't be back 'til ten.'

I paused for a moment. 'Can I borrow your headphones?'

Half an hour later I'd settled myself in my armchair with the electric fire on, a can of lager, Peter's bulky headphones and the tape I'd picked up from the audio department at the Yard on my way back to the house. They were still working on the mangled remains of the Dictaphone, but had been able to hand over what was apparently Delta's final album. I'd signed the tapes out as evidence and carried them carefully home in my briefcase, aware that most of the music industry would have cheerfully killed me for them.

Part of my brain told me this probably wasn't the way the band had intended it to be heard. I should probably align my chakras or smoke some weed first. I undid my tie.

There was a hiss of static, a mumbling voice counting the track in and then an eerie, slightly Indian tune, played on a single electric guitar, with drums and what sounded like the sea underneath. I could hear Neil Fenn chanting something but had no idea what. Then his voice came through clearly suddenly, a great rock voice, sounding a little strained maybe, but the quality of the recording was so poor it was hard to tell.

*I'll sing you a song of the worms of the earth
And a song, of iron and bone
Iron and bone*

*I'll sing you a song of the dark at the heart of all
Of blood, dripping onto the stone*

I had a notebook and pencil to hand, but had already decided to just listen this time, to try and get the feel of that evening at the Sanctuary, experiencing the album the way the party had.

Neil had stopped singing now and the riff was taken up by Markham presumably, on acoustic, warming it, making it flower into two guitars. A lovely lilting melody suddenly, rising above the sound of the wind, or the sea or whatever that was supposed to be. It stopped suddenly and the track disintegrated into a series of noises. Bass guitar, something that sounded like it had been reversed, more chanting. And the recording quality was awful. I could see why Cavendish had panicked.

Track two began with a rousing burst of something folky on a mandolin. *'Who needs 18 different mandolins 'cause the sound isn't 'right'?*' Neil singing slowly over it, *'Come on baby, let's go and lose ourselves, come on baby, let's go and find ourselves.'*

Then a burst of drums and Andy Took's solid bass kicking in and swinging the song away into a rocky, driving R&B track that seemed to be about something called 'Herriot Hall'. I could feel my foot tapping. Now this, this would have been good stuff.

Then back to the mandolin and Neil's voice soaring up *'Drinkin' till the sun comes up, and waiting for the end of days'* and a woman's voice singing backing vocals, high and pure. The song tailed off, melancholy and suddenly I had a flash of flickering candles, woodsmoke, warriors drinking in a hall, cold night outside. *'They'd all been drinking, and they came into the house on a great wave of noise, and the cold from the night air, woodsmoke*

I'LL SING YOU A SONG

and whisky and that power, male power, rolling off them.'

I shivered for a moment and considered turning up the fire. Track 3 started with more heavy static, what sounded like deep rumblings, and Neil's voice coming through in the distance as though it was underwater, guitars heavily distorted. Something had got out of sync on the recording, there were odd noises and the overdubbing was all wrong. I imagined the looks on people's faces at the launch. The forced smiles, the attempts to pass it off as a 'new sound.' I could barely tell what the tune was – some kind of slow, low, menacing bass riff and heavy, rhythmic drums. I'd have made a terrible music reviewer.

An electric guitar cut through the mud suddenly, a dirty rock lick ringing out as Neil sang '*Blood spattered on the floor. Salt smell in the air. Gonna rip you to shreds like you ain't ever been there.*'

I hit pause. Rewound the tape, played it again. What the hell? There were no more lyrics after that on the track, just a long guitar solo before it trailed off into a confused clatter of drums. Shaken, I resolved to carry on to the end.

Track 4 was a complete contrast. Gentle acoustic guitar intro, warm and mellow. Not too slow and quite clear on the recording. There was that sound of the sea again and Neil singing something about 'spear-brothers' and '*If I called to you would you answer me?*' The female voice was back again with a high harmony before the whole song vanished under the sound of the sea after less than a minute. It all sounded a bit more familiar, more like one of the slower tracks on *Black Rainbow End*.

Track 5 was almost non-existent. There was a very folk intro

of a couple of bars on what sounded like a recorder piping away and Neil singing *'With fire I make this sacred site. And call my warriors to life. Step you forward one by one. And tell the night your mighty song.'* After that there was just a lot of static. Audio had told me parts of the tape were damaged beyond repair. They'd said it looked as if someone had already had a go at it, splicing and re-cutting and some parts were simply missing.

I pressed fast forward and then had to back up to catch the beginning of the next track. I was starting to detect a bit of a theme. John had said in interview that they'd been inspired by the countryside and I wondered if this album had been some kind of attempt to capture an English occult mood. We'll make a reviewer of you yet, I thought.

Track 6 was another odd one. Terrible production again, a thick soupy mix of low tones and that underwater feeling, with sudden bursts of drumming and a tiny delicate piece of acoustic guitar that kept surfacing until it was drowned out by a serious heavy guitar solo, John Markham giving it all he had. I could hear Neil moaning something about *'The fear is coming'* and the ominous line *'And the creatures that exist. Will get you in the mist.'* The whole track was less than a minute from start to finish. I was halfway through the album and I'd barely listened to ten minutes of actual music. There was no way they could have released it. What had they been doing for all those months up at the studio?

I was struggling through Track 7 when Peter knocked on the door. This one was a chaotic mess of stompy bass, jagged angry guitars, that endless driving bass and a bleak undertone that

pulled at something in the pit of my stomach. Anxious, that was how this made me feel. And the lyrics were getting more and more ominous '*Raise him up! Raise him up!*' screamed Fenn. '*Get ready for the demon's kiss!*'. Hammond organ on this track as well, I noted, trying to stay objective.

'Dad? I thought I'd pop out to the pub for a bit. D'you want to come along?'

'No. I better finish listening to this.'

A thought struck me. I was getting nowhere. It all sounded awful to me. I felt as though if I'd known the band better, I might have had some idea of what they were trying to do, other than destroy their careers.

'Would you say you were an expert on Delta, Peter?'

Ten minutes later I had Peter set up with the headphones, notepad and pencil. I hadn't told him why I had a copy of Delta's new 'album' and he'd been sensible enough not to ask.

'Are you sure this is OK, Dad? I mean, shouldn't I sign something? Or maybe you should have a policeman listening to this?'

'You're a bona-fide civilian expert, Peter. And quite frankly I don't think I can listen to any more of it. Consider yourself sworn to secrecy.' I gave him my serious police face and he nodded vigorously before reaching out to reverently press play.

For a split second I wondered if maybe this was a bad idea. What if it was the album itself that drove people to attack each other. Some kind of subliminal message recorded out of the range of human hearing. A black magic spell recorded backwards. I didn't feel like murdering anything apart from maybe a cup of

tea, but I hadn't listened all the way to the end. Don't be stupid, I told myself, it's just music.

By the time Jeanette got home, we were both stretched out on the living room floor, listening to what Peter had titled 'Worms of the Earth' at full volume, swapping scribbled notes, with several empty cans of lager that had been pressed into service as ashtrays.

'What is that god-awful noise?' she asked, as she took off her coat and pointedly opened the window. We looked at each other and laughed out loud.

'It doesn't match up,' said Peter.

I looked at him. We'd been made to tidy up and were now sitting at the kitchen table.

'Some of it sounds like old Delta – that guitar on *If I Called To You*, that's a classic bit of Markham. You can hear almost exactly the same chord sequence on *Ground Zero*, the song about Samantha on *Black Rainbow*, but a lot of it sounds like they're fighting each other, not working together, like there are two albums, two sounds they're trying to make. You can hear on some of the tracks that John doesn't *want* to be playing on them, that it's not flowing for him, or he's trying to take the song in a different direction, and on *Sacrifice* you can hear in Neil's voice that he doesn't agree, that those lyrics are all wrong for him.'

I waited, letting him work it through.

'Seriously, Dad. I'm pretty sure it's meant to be some kind of concept album – with the references to Heorot Hall and warriors

and everything. But I don't know why they would be falling out so badly over that.'

'Herriot Hall?'

'Heorot Hall, Dad.' He pointed to where he'd written it down. 'You know, like Beowulf?'

My blank expression must have spoken volumes, because he made an exasperated noise and disappeared upstairs, returning with a slim Puffin paperback called 'Dragonslayer: The Story of Beowulf' by Rosemary Sutcliffe. The cover showed what looked to me like a Viking, fighting a huge beast with long claw-like hands. For a moment my world spun horribly and I saw the raked wounds on Archie's chest. *'Initially I'd thought knife wounds, but really they're more like claw marks... I'd have said a large animal, but there's nothing native to the UK that would do something like this.'*

'That's not a dragon,' I said, keeping my voice deliberately steady.

'Well no, he has to fight Grendel first. We did it for O-Levels. The warriors are all in the feasting hall, and Grendel comes out of the night and rips them all to shreds, and keeps coming back until Beowulf turns up and kills him. Listen *'In the darkest hour of the night Grendel came to Heorot. Up from his lair and over the high moors, through the mists that seemed to travel with him; Grendel, the Night Stalker, the Death Shadow. He came to the foreporch and snuffed about it, and smelled the man-smell, and found that the door was barred and bolted. Snarling in rage he set the flat of his talon-tipped hands against the timbers and burst them in. Dark as it was, the hall seemed to fill with a mon-*

strous shadow at his coming; a shadow in which Beowulf could make out no shape or shadow save two eyes filled with a wavering greenish flame... Laughing in his throat, he reached out and almost before his victim had time to cry out, tore him limb from limb and drank the warm blood.' Dad? Dad! Are you OK?

'Fine. I'm fine. Bit too much to drink.'

'I had wondered if that was why they've gone up to Suffolk, you know.'

'Suffolk?'

'Well, I'd read in a fanzine that Neil and John have a thing about Beowulf, that they'd been in a school play or something, and Suffolk is where Sutton Hoo is. The ship burial, the Saxon Hoard. Wow, what a concept... Dad? Dad? I'm getting Mum!'

We'd ended up with ten tracks, if you included the mostly-missing Track 5. Not even the 12 tracks Julian had demanded, and as Peter said, 'I don't think this would be a hit.' Between us we'd deciphered most of the lyrics and I'd transferred them to my notebook. I was exhausted, head aching from the lager and sleep dragged me down almost as soon as my head touched the pillow.

I dreamt I was on stage, making incredible music. The audience were just a dark shape but I could feel their adoration pouring over me like a wave, filling me with power. I was underground somehow, it was damp and black and there was something here that made me uneasy, but I kept singing and they were loving me, the crowd heaving, their shapes deformed, the angles wrong – huge and far away – hundreds of mouths all singing together.

I'LL SING YOU A SONG

Sound was vision, smell, taste and now the audience was sucking at me, taking it all, and now the coils weren't sound, they were worms and I was sliding through worms. I could feel them inside me, dead but still moving. '*Nameless cults and sucking mouths, trapped underground, older than stars,*' sang Neil Fenn in my head.

I woke up with a stifled yell, brushing frantically at the bed-clothes, cold sweat covering me. Beside me, in the orange glow of the streetlight, Jeanette muttered something.

'Just a bad dream, love,' I said. 'I'm going to get a glass of water.'

I made my way carefully downstairs, jumping at shadows, to find Peter in the kitchen pouring himself a glass of milk. He looked as shaken as I felt.

'Couldn't sleep?'

'Bad dreams. All about being buried alive, trapped inside a stone with these ghost warriors watching over my body, stabbing me in the heart. And then a wolf bit off my hand and ran off with it and I was looking down at my hand in the moonlight, bleeding on the floor. Horrible.'

He shivered. 'Too much music before bed.'

I ran myself a glass of water from the tap and resisted the urge to hug him. 'Probably just anxiety dreams,' I said. 'Start of the new term and all that.'

We looked at each other for a minute in the dark kitchen.

'Dad,' he asked, 'has anything *bad* happened to Delta?'

After I'd seen Peter back to bed I picked up my suit jacket from

the chair next to the dressing table and looked at the piece of paper that Sandy had slipped to me earlier that day.

Professor Snow
Institute of Archaeology
University College London

I'LL SING YOU A SONG

SEX & DRUGS & TENTACLES

*Ancient noble sacrifice
An army left behind*

*Fairest and the brightest of you
Waiting for your time*

*Let them judge you, do you have what it takes?
Rip your heart out, show me every mistake*

*Pour your heart out to the candle flame
Lay it bare now, there can be no shame*

*Blood poured on the judging stones
Eternal sleep of time*

*Lay yourself down in the earth
Let go of your mind*

*Look into the candle, let it burn your eyes out
My heart is full of music but I'm tainted inside*

*I was never one of you, never been so pure
The candle will never burn for me*

‘Guardians’ | Delta | 1971 (unreleased)

Guardians

I'd arranged to meet Professor Snow at the British Museum the next day, but first I had to make a trip to see Blake Markham and break the news of her husband's death. We'd finally dredged the pond outside the Sanctuary and found the mangled body of a young man with long blonde hair. There hadn't been much left to identify him from, but the fingerprints matched those on Markham's guitar case and who else was it going to be?

An interview with Blake Markham, Cosmopolitan, **4th April 1971**

Seated in the kitchen of her beautiful home in the Cotswolds, Blake Markham cuts an elegant figure in a delicate chiffon and velvet trouser suit – a recent gift from her stylist and personal friend Sheila Cohen. The one and only Mrs Markham pours coffee as she talks to us exclusively about her spiritual 'rebirth', her passion for environmental causes and her estrangement from John Markham.

We move into the drawing room, where a photo of the couple sits on a walnut bureau. The bright double height space here effortlessly combines classic pieces with a striking modernist art collection and rare Japanese prints. I ask her about the early days of the relationship, and smiling gently she recalls how she met

John at the Railway Inn in Richmond when he was just another struggling R&B guitarist in a little-known band called the Delta Bluesmen. Following the band to Belgium she acted as their unofficial manager until Decca signed them in '64 and she and John got married. I ask her if she ever regretted marrying so young and she pauses for a moment, then replies:

'I'm at a place in my life where I've learnt how meaningless the idea of regret is. John and I were very much in love – soul mates in many ways – and that love sustains us even now, regardless of where our own journeys have taken us.'

Coffee finished, Blake takes me on a tour of the house, from the entrance hall with its dark woodblock floor and simple sliding screens, to the deep red 're-birthing room', adorned only with a small shrine and photograph of her spiritual guru, who she refuses to name. 'I spent three of the most beautiful months of my life on the ashram, it was a very personal, inner journey – full of love and life – but a very private time.'

She confesses she 'rattles' around the six bedroom house – and spends more time at her London pied-à-terre. Managing her investments at Atlantic has become a full-time job, as has her passionate commitment to Gaia First – for whom she has become a prominent spokeswoman in recent months. 'Meat is murder,' she declares passionately, her whole figure becoming animated as she describes her trip to Japan to witness first hand the slaughter of whales for meat. 'It's utter barbarism – those beautiful wise creatures, so unique, so intelligent – butchered in the name of profit and human greed.'

But back to that famously on-again-off-again relationship. A

collection of photos from the Black Rainbow tour are mounted in the dining room – an odd choice considering it was the tour that broke up the couple for the second time. I ask Blake why the reminder of what must surely have been a very dark time and she surprises me with a candid acknowledgement of the level of betrayal she felt on the tour – witnessing the rock and roll lifestyle first hand, but, as she confesses to me, ‘Perhaps I was naive to imagine it wasn’t all still going on. After all, I’d been on tour before – I know what the guys are like. After John left the first time, to go to America, I’d sworn never to be hurt in that way again – but we’re all fools to the men we love.’

The break gave her the chance to pursue her own interests, and take advantage of the many exciting new opportunities that came her way. ‘I was alone and free, for the first time in years, in America, which I still find a wonderfully vibrant place – so full of positivity and open to ideas.’

We walk through into the stylish entertainment area with its mirrored alcoves, low lounging areas and hand-crafted Moroccan leather wall panels and I can’t resist asking Blake if she’s heard the new Delta album. She pauses for a while before telling me that she’s ‘very, very excited about the new material the guys are developing, Neil is a creative genius, and with this sound, they’ve tapped into something very old – traditional almost – something to truly awaken the soul.’

I leave her bathed in the warm early spring sunlight, a picture of serenity – a woman very much at peace with her world.

‘Look, I think I have a right... yes, actually I do have a fucking

right! ...Well you explain it to me then, because I'm obviously missing something here... why the hell wouldn't I?... Screw you, Julian. No, you listen to me, I am not going to be pushed out like this and if you think I... No, no I won't! And you can tell Atlantic the same... that is pathetic Julian pathetic! Fuck you, Cavendish – if you won't talk to me you can talk to my lawyers! I don't even know who you are any more!

Blake Markham slammed down the phone and swore at it while WPC Simpson and I stood in awkward silence in the hall of her Notting Hill house. She was an attractive woman, in a pale blue silk blouse and white flares with bleached blonde hair and a hard face.

I'd bought Simpson along with me in case Blake had taken the news badly, to make cups of tea and do whatever it is that women do in these circumstances, but something told me Mrs Markham wasn't the tea and sympathy kind.

She turned to face us. 'Inspector, what can I do for you? You must excuse my outburst there. I've just had some rather bad news.'

It seemed we were not the first people to break the news of John Markham's death to Blake. She led us through to the back room, which opened onto a small paved area which seemed to have been turned into one of those Japanese pebble gardens, carefully raked into spirals. The effect was rather spoilt by a collection of cigarette butts that had been stubbed out in the gravel.

The room was already occupied. An older man with a large beard and long blonde hair tied back at the nape of his neck sat fiddling with a pen and notepad. He looked more like a university professor than a music industry type. Another man, with an

unfortunate haircut and a paunch that ruined the line of his flared brown suit was leaning on the mantelpiece with a glass of whisky while a third figure loomed at me from next to the window – a big, bulky man with longish black hair, wearing a military cap and a ripped t-shirt that showed off his tattoos, including a rather badly done Delta one that covered most of his right bicep.

‘Gentlemen, this is Detective Inspector George Shelton. George, you don’t mind if I call you George, do you? This is Henry St. George, Tez Williams and Lard. Can I get you a drink?’

She flashed me a winning smile as I politely declined. I could see Simpson seating herself quietly in the corner of the room as I went over the names in my head. Henry St. George was the producer who’d apparently been working on the album, Tez was Julian’s competition and the man I was sure she’d introduced as ‘Lard’ looked like he might be some kind of security, or a maybe a roadie. Did Blake need security at her home?

‘So, Inspector, how can we help you?’ Blake perched herself on the sofa next to Henry and crossed her legs, leaning forward to pour herself a drink, giving me a flash of her breasts under the tight satin of her blouse. ‘If you’re here to tell me that Neil and John are dead, I’m afraid that *honour*,’ her voice hardened, ‘went to Julian Cavendish last night.’

‘I’m very sorry for your loss,’ I began. ‘I’m not sure what Julian told you, but I received confirmation this morning that a body found at the Sanctuary in Suffolk has been identified as your ex-husband. I understand you had been estranged from Mr Markham for some time?’

She laughed, brittle and loud. She’d been drinking heavily,

I realised. ‘Estranged? Oh yes, you could say that. John owed me money, Inspector, a lot of money. They owed me everything, those boys. They’d have been *nothing* if I hadn’t pushed them, managed them, fed them, got them over to the States, booked their gigs, dealt with the label, and all the time he was sleeping with that slut Luna Jones. So, yes, we were *estranged*.’

‘Blake...’ The older man tried to take her hand.

‘Shut up, Henry. You know what they were like. So now they’re dead. Took a really bad trip and took some others out with them. Well, I’m not surprised. They were tainted, Delta. Everything they touched was spoiled. They destroyed me once, but not this time. Not now I’m the grieving widow and the rightful owner of those tapes, no matter what Cavendish thinks.’

‘You have every right to release that album,’ said the man Blake had introduced as Tez Williams. ‘We can put it out on Blacklight, the buzz around it is going to be huge – I’m seeing a double LP, session recordings, previously unreleased material.’

So this was a war council meeting, I realised. The vultures circling already to establish ownership and maximise the profits from what Delta had left behind.

‘Have you heard the album, Mrs Markham?’

‘Of course I’ve heard it. John shared everything with me, musically speaking we *connected*. Obviously I’ve not heard all of it, they were quite secretive the last few months and I didn’t want to interrupt the flow... but it’s Delta, it’s. Well I don’t know how to describe it, but it’s such an incredible direction for them.’

You lying bitch, I thought.

‘Besides, Henry worked on it extensively, and he has the

master tapes, don't you, Henry.'

I looked at Henry and he refused to meet my eye. I was pretty sure the master tapes were still sealed in an evidence bag in my lounge in Goff's Oak. Oh ho, I thought. So that's what you've told her is it?

'I have a great deal of *material*,' St. George began carefully. I noticed a crutch leaning beside the sofa, and the fading remains of a black eye on his face and remembered that he'd crashed his car after leaving a party at this house a week or so before the launch and been charged with driving under the influence. 'Studio recordings, session musicians. John and I shared a passion for Pierre Schaeffer's work and 'musique concrète' – that is found sounds from the environment that have their own natural state of musicality, without artifice. The sounds of man made objects and naturally occurring noise beyond the human hearing range that can be recorded and processed to be audible electronically. John especially liked voices, not as conventional vocals, rather as inclusions within the ambient background to the Delta soundscape. I always have used a lot of found sounds to enhance a score, but John was a real aficionado of the art, always bringing new and fresh tapes into the studio for me to work into tracks or to simply enjoy for what they are. As he once said 'if somebody having an orgasm in the background is used as part of one of the waveforms, it makes the sound more interesting, without the listener actually knowing what they're hearing'. I could not have put it better myself...' He tailed off, aware that everyone in the room was watching him.

'But you have the master tapes?' Blake asked again, through

gritted teeth.

‘It was a very odd recording process, you know that, Blake! I was sent tracks to listen to and instructions from the band and booked session musicians to record in isolation. Everything was biked down to MUIRS – that’s my studio in Camden, Inspector – then the tapes were biked back again at the end of the day. Security was very tight, especially after the break-in.’

‘Break-in?’

‘Yes, we had an attempted burglary at the studio in June, what we thought might have been a rival label’s attempt to steal some of the work in progress.’ He glared pointedly at Tez Williams.

‘So you don’t actually have the album?’ Blake’s voice was dangerously quiet now.

‘Not as such, but...’

‘Shit. Fucking shit.’ Tez Williams stalked out into the garden and punched the wall.

‘I have bits and pieces of recordings hanging around on spool ends, unused takes, pieces awaiting overwrite – I’m sure we can recreate the sound...’

‘You fucking idiot, Henry.’ Blake slumped back on the sofa.

St. George turned to me. ‘Inspector, I would like to state for the record that despite such an inauspicious start and subsequent stories in the press surrounding the band and controlled substances I never saw any member of Delta take anything stronger than a few bottles of beer after a recording session. They were hounded by the gutter press, stalked by obsessive fans and obstructed by both local and federal law enforcement agencies, it seemed that everyone had an axe to grind. The state injunctions

banning entry into Utah, Arkansas and Texas on the grounds of ‘moral turpitude’ after New York were quite simply knee-jerk reactions to minor incidents that the press blew out of all proportion. It is a testament to Terry’s managerial skill that the band remained together both on tour and upon their return home.’

Outside I could hear Terry giving what sounded like an anguished wail.

‘So if Henry doesn’t have the tapes, and Atlantic doesn’t have them, who does? Inspector?’

I spoke carefully. ‘We have retrieved a great deal of evidence from the house in Suffolk, Mrs Markham. Among which are a number of tape recordings which are currently being held as evidence as part of our ongoing enquiry.’

‘Those are *my* tapes.’

‘When the enquiry is over, you may of course submit your claim to any item you feel you are legally entitled to.’

‘You smug bastard. Everything John owned is mine. Everything.’

‘Neil Fenn’s estate may also have a claim on any items recovered, if ownership can be proved.’

‘Neil Fenn? Neil Fenn was an evil bastard, a naughty little boy playing with things he didn’t understand. You didn’t know them like I did, Inspector. Everything that went wrong was Neil’s fault, always Neil, dragging John down with him, getting between us when I was the one who really *understood* John. He killed John. He killed John and he probably killed all those other people too. He had a demon inside him, Inspector. I saw it. I hope he burns in hell.’

‘Shut up!’

The man called Lard slammed his hand into the chair.

‘Don’t you dare speak like that about Neil!’ He had a strong Birmingham accent, I realised. ‘You don’t know shit about them, Blake Markham. They were my brothers, my fucking brothers, man! All those years on tour – I knew them like no-one else did. I wasn’t there to protect them. I wasn’t there!’

To my surprise he burst into tears and slid down the wall to collapse in a shaking heap. ‘I should have been there,’ he sobbed. ‘I would never have let it happen.’

Blake gave a shriek of fury and stalked into the kitchen, leaving Henry St. George cringing awkwardly on the sofa. Of all the things I’d expected today to include, I hadn’t imagined WPC Simpson patting the back of a giant like Lard, offering him her hankie and suggesting she make them a cup of tea. It occurred to me that Delta’s old roadie was the first person I’d met connected with the band who seemed genuinely upset by their deaths.

I could see Tez Williams standing outside, shoulders slumped, and went out to join him as he flicked another cigarette into the zen garden.

‘She’ll get those tapes you know. What Blake wants, she gets.’

I shrugged. It wasn’t my concern.

He turned back to me and I saw the naked desperation in his eyes. He reached out suddenly, clutching at my suit. ‘Look, George, Inspector, I’m begging you here. I owe money, £25K to the Yardies. £20K back on 1st June, another £20K end of this month. Delta were going to sign to me. I’ve got a verbal agreement. It was all set up. It couldn’t fail, it couldn’t fail!’

I shook him off in disgust and went back into the house. Blake

had disappeared and Lard was sniffing gently into a tissue while Simpson held his hand.

‘I think perhaps you’d better leave, Inspector,’ said Henry. ‘Blake has just lost her husband after all, she’s in shock, doesn’t know what she’s saying.’

I seriously doubted Blake Markham had ever been in shock, but I allowed Henry to escort us to the door. He was still limping quite badly, I noticed.

‘Nasty crash, you had, Henry,’ I commented, indicating his leg. He reddened in embarrassment.

‘Yes, er, your colleagues on the Force were most understanding. I’ve learned my lesson, I can assure you.’

‘Still, the black eye seems to be going down.’

‘Black eye? Oh, that was Xander Black. We had a little argument at the party. I felt he was leading the boys astray, Neil in particular. It’s not necessary, the occult stuff. He, well let’s just say he disagreed.’ He handed me my coat, clearly eager to get us out of the house. I could hear what sounded like Tez and Blake’s voices raised in anger in the back garden.

‘One more thing,’ I asked. ‘I know Andy Took played bass, but the woman singing the high harmony, who was that?’

‘Oh, Lesley Duncan. She sang backing vocals on the Black Rainbow tour and they asked for her.’ He broke off, a look of shock on his face. ‘You’ve heard the album?’ he whispered.

I nodded.

‘What’s it like?’

‘It’s a whole new sound, Henry.’

‘We had no doubt whatever that what we saw was the track of a bare foot, and one that showed more bones than flesh... how the thing he was following might stop suddenly and turn round on him, and what sort of face it would show, half-seen at first in the mist – which all the while was getting thicker and thicker.’

‘A Warning to the Curious’ | M R James | 1925

Fairest and the Brightest

'In 1939 Mrs Edith Pretty, a landowner at Sutton Hoo, Suffolk, asked archaeologist Basil Brown to investigate the largest of many Anglo-Saxon burial mounds on her property. Inside, he made one of the most spectacular archaeological discoveries of all time.

Beneath the mound was the imprint of a 27-metre-long ship. At its centre was a ruined burial chamber packed with treasures: Byzantine silverware, sumptuous gold jewellery, a lavish feasting set, and most famously, an ornate iron helmet. Tiny fragments showed that rich textiles once adorned the walls and floor, along with piles of clothes ranging from fine linen overshirts to shaggy woollen cloaks and caps trimmed with fur. The dead man's body had dissolved in the acidic soil, but he was clearly a person of great standing in the kingdom of East Anglia. He may even have been a king.

The Sutton Hoo ship burial provides remarkable insights into early Anglo-Saxon England. It reveals a place of exquisite craftsmanship and extensive international connections, spanning Europe and beyond. It also shows that the world of great halls, glittering treasures and formidable warriors described in Anglo-Saxon poetry was not a myth.'

I peered through the glass at the iron and copper helmet in its glass display case at the British Museum. ‘*The Sutton Hoo helmet, Anglo-Saxon, early 7th century AD. From Mound 1, Sutton Hoo, Suffolk, England 1939, 1010.93, Department of Britain, Europe and Prehistory, Gift of Mrs E.M. Pretty,*’ read the card pinned carefully to the cloth behind it. The helmet design featured what was either a dragon, or bird flying upwards, or a man’s face with bushy eyebrows and a moustache. It reminded me slightly of Bernard.

Professor Snow had suggested we meet here and I was using the time before he arrived to attempt to educate myself on Sutton Hoo and the Anglo-Saxons. I wondered if Neil and John had visited the same exhibition. After Peter had told me about the connection, I’d had Simpson trawl through old fanzines and confirm that, yes, the band had mentioned their love of Beowulf on more than one occasion. A quick look at a map had shown me just how close the Sanctuary was to Sutton Hoo, barely five miles down the road.

‘Inspector Shelton?’

I turned to see a short man, in a powder blue suit with a rather flamboyant cravat holding out his hand to me. I wasn’t sure what I’d been expecting Professor Snow to look like, but this wasn’t what I’d pictured.

‘Professor Snow? Thank you for taking the time to meet with me.’

‘Not at all! Always happy to help an officer of the law going about his vital business. Stunning, isn’t it.’ He waved a hand towards the helmet.

‘Amazing.’

‘Quite wrong of course. Oh the dating is correct and so on, but the *interpretation*... well I’m sure you’re not here to hear my pet theories.’

I wasn’t sure why I was here, in all honesty. Just a note from Sandy and a hunch that there was an answer here, amongst the glitter of the hoard.

I’d spoken to Chief Inspector Davies that morning and it had been made clear to me that my time for investigating the case was almost up. The house had been cleared, all evidence removed, next-of-kin had been informed and a press conference was planned for next week. I’d protested that I’d like to keep the case open, at least until I’d had a chance to interview the remaining victims who were still in hospital, and possibly squeeze some more information out of Danny Reece and Davies had grudgingly agreed that it ‘wouldn’t do to look as though we were sweeping this under the carpet’.

I had to know. My dreams were full of blood spattered screams as I watched the party fall prey one by one to a dark, featureless beast that stalked the rooms at the Sanctuary, pulling them from their beds and ripping them into pieces, limb from limb, before sniffing the air and turning to look at me with the face of Neil Fenn.

I dragged my attention back to Professor Snow.

‘Well, Professor, actually I’d be interested in anything you could tell me about the area. We have a current case running involving possible illegal digging and the smuggling of artefacts.’

I’d spent the drive over trying to think of a good cover story.

I'd toyed with the idea of a fake, or a theft from a private collection, but didn't think I'd have the background knowledge to carry off the role of a member of the Arts & Antiquities division. An Anglo-Saxon cult sounded too ominous and a bit lurid and Christ knew I couldn't tell him the real reason I was there.

'Well, I'm sure I'm honoured. I'd be interested to know how you got my name? I'm slightly persona non grata at the moment within these walls.' He smiled cheerfully at me, as if this didn't bother him one bit.

'A, ah, colleague mentioned you. Thought a fresh mind might be helpful to the case. I'm afraid I can't tell you much about the details – I'm sure you understand.' I didn't think Sandy would thank me for dragging her into all this. As far as I was concerned she was an innocent bystander and I was going to leave it up to her to get on with her life. A police case, especially one that involved hotel rooms and Julian Cavendish and nine deaths at a Delta party would have ended her university career.

He gave me a piercing look, head tilted to one side, before adjusting his cravat and nodding.

'Well then, shall I give you the tour?'

We made our way between groups of uniformed school children clutching clipboards and earnest-looking students as he pointed out the most interesting of the finds.

'The Sutton Hoo site is, of course, known for its ship burials – that's high status burials, with grave goods – personal belongings and treasures – placed in wooden ship along with kings, war leaders and so forth and buried in mounds, and it's clearly a very important site for these reasons alone, but what many people

aren't aware of is that there is a great deal more to Sutton Hoo and the area than simply what the Saxons left behind.'

Making notes and nodding in what I hoped was a knowledgeable fashion, I learned that two years ago in the summer of 1969 a team led by someone called Paul Ashbee had carried out a number of surveys and begun a new dig, which looked deeper and further back in time.

'Of course, there are still extensive investigations underway, Inspector. These things take years, but the preliminary conclusions show clear evidence of Roman activity in the area. At that time Sutton Hoo itself and the surrounding land was along a peninsular of raised land in low expanse of what would have been tidal marshes alongside the River Deben – clearly an important location to control the coast. Roman artefacts, including late Roman belt pieces, and some truly beautiful early continental brooches, have already been found nearby at Shottisham, but Paul's findings so far suggest a religious as well as military significance to the site.'

'Like a temple?' I asked, in an attempt to look as if I knew what he was talking about. I was on slightly firmer ground with the Romans. We'd done them at school and I'd had to sit through a slide show at one of Jeanette's evening classes on the history of pottery that had included a section on Roman oil lamps and their use in temples.

'Well, they've yet to find any evidence, as such, but Tacitus' description of the shorefront says 'across the river and north we have the sacred twin opposing temples of Silvanus'. Still, if we believed everything we read in Tacitus, where would we be?'

He laughed and I smiled along in slight bewilderment.

‘Of course the Romans are not where the story of this site really begins.’ Damn. I was good at Romans.

‘Before the Roman invasion, Suffolk as we know it now was divided between two large and powerful tribes – the Iceni, with lands stretching north over Norfolk and south Lincolnshire and the Trinavantes, with lands in south Suffolk, Essex and Cambridgeshire. What we’re finding now is some evidence suggesting activity on the Sutton Hoo site and south towards Alderton stretching back a hundred years before the Roman invasion. A great deal more work is required to build any kind of coherent picture of what this activity was, but I believe it will prove to be religious in nature. Where did you say people were digging?’

‘I’m afraid that’s confidential information.’

‘Ah. I only wondered, because there have also been Neolithic finds on the site, pre-dating the Saxon burials by thousands of years, and that’s an area of great interest to Ashbee’s team. Albert Matthews found cup and ring markings on stones north of Ipswich back in the ‘20s, so we have long established that there was Neolithic activity in Suffolk.’

‘Cup and ring markings? I’m afraid you’ll have to enlighten me on that one.’

‘Oh, they’re carvings on rocks, typically a concave depression, no more than a few centimetres across, pecked into a rock surface and often surrounded by concentric circles also etched into the stone. Sometimes a linear channel called a gutter leads out from the middle. They occur as petroglyphs on natural boulders and outcrops and also as an element of megalithic art on

purposely worked megaliths such as the slab cists of the Food Vessel culture, some stone circles and passage graves such as the Clava tombs and on the capstones at the Newgrange cave system.'

My stunned expression made him burst out laughing. 'You're really not an archaeological expert are you, Inspector. You must excuse my running off into such obscure detail. Essentially cup and ring markings indicate prehistoric settlements, and what Ashbee has found that is so interesting are similar markings at the Sutton Hoo site in base rocks found beneath three of the ship burial sites, which suggest the site has been sacred for a very long time.'

'What do they mean?'

'If only we knew, Inspector. Waddington suggests the initial early Neolithic impetus to create the marks was forgotten and its symbolism was reinterpreted by later Neolithic and early Bronze Age people. They are commonly linked to underground chambers, which lead to suggestions that this could be the case at Sutton Hoo – a network of tunnels or caves in the hill below the site, but that doesn't appear to be the case. There is clearly some sort of religious purpose to the carvings but as we know so little of the nature of Neolithic religion it is hard to be certain what their purpose was. Is any of this useful to you?'

I couldn't see how it was and for a moment a wave of despair washed over me. What was I doing talking to this strange little man about neolithic carvings. Whatever answer I was looking for, it wasn't going to be found here. I stumbled slightly, exhaustion catching up with me again and I felt Snow putting a

concerned hand on my arm.

‘Inspector? Should we sit here for a moment?’

He guided me to a bench and we sat amongst the exhibits. It was lunchtime and the room was quieter now as teachers herded the last of their pupils out to the front steps of the museum to eat packed lunches and feed the pigeons.

‘Shall I tell you what I think about Sutton Hoo, Inspector?’

I nodded dully.

‘The conventional view of Sutton Hoo is, as I said, that it was a site for the burials of high status warriors, possibly even a king of East Anglia. People have suggested Raedwald, but he was almost certainly cremated. Aethelhere and Aethelwald were christened and unlikely to be buried in this way, at least according to my good friend Professor Tyler M. Freeborn at Miskatonic University. Bernice Grohskopf suggests Sigebrht or Ecric as other possible candidates... any of these are possible but I do not believe this site was simply created to honour a king and I firmly believe there is more to Sutton Hoo. Are you familiar with the story of Beowulf?’

I looked up at him sharply and he gave me a knowing smile.

‘Sam Newton’s work drew together the Sutton Hoo and Beowulf links with the idea of King Raedwald, using genealogical data to argue that the Wuffing dynasty was derived from the Geatish Wulfing house mentioned in Beowulf. He suggests that the oral materials from which Beowulf was assembled belonged to East Anglian royal tradition and that the ship-burials took shape as heroic restatements of migration-age origins.’

He’d lost me again.

‘There may be some merit in what Newton has said, and the link to Beowulf is likely in my opinion. But there are some aspects of the burial which simply do not add up. Even if it were to be proved as the origins of the ship burial described in Beowulf, there is, to my mind, another meaning beyond the simple honouring of a great warrior.’

He looked out across the exhibition hall, ticking off his points on his fingers. ‘The location: a place for defence, somewhere you would normally consider building a fort to defend the river rather than a burial of honoured warriors. The boats: why were the boats used on top of a hill? You find boat burials in Sweden, Denmark and Norway, on the island of Funen, Gokstad, Ohthetere, Anund, Salme, even Snape, just along the coast from Sutton Hoo, but always on the shore, next to the water, never on high ground.’

‘Weapons and armour: compared to every other burial of this sort, not one has nearly the number of weapons at Sutton Hoo. Oh there are other items, spoons, bowls, horns, game pieces, coins and so on but they are far outweighed by weapons and armour. There are dozens of swords, dozens! Axes, scores of spears, hundreds of arrows, shields. Weapons like this were of great value – we know they would normally be passed down to the next generation to use.’

He had become animated, eyes sparkling as he outlined his theory. ‘There are enough weapons for an entire army buried at Sutton Hoo! An army! But who buried them, and why? I considered the captured weapons of a defeated force, but they would never have been so honoured. And then I thought, could it be that

an army of actual warriors had been buried along with them... It's not unknown – there are tales of Persian armies buried alive in the deserts to fight the Greek Titans, slaves and warrior buried with Pharaohs in ancient Egypt.'

'I'm afraid my theories are not supported by the academic community here. Only my colleagues across the Atlantic think I may be on to something. The Saxons honoured their dead with gifts for the next life, but there are no records of them killing the warband to guard a king in the next life... But think of it, a buried army, armed and ready to fight on in the next life. To fight a darker enemy than on any earthly battlefield. To defend the land against something only the dead can fight, killed in sacrifice; the best of their warriors giving their lives willingly to face a great battle in the world beyond!'

'Ancient noble sacrifice, An army left behind, Fairest and the brightest of you, Waiting for your time.'

'Did you know Neil Fenn?' I managed to ask, feeling that nauseating edge of insanity again touching my weary brain.

'What?' It was obvious my question had totally perplexed Professor Snow.

'Neil Fenn the singer? Delta? Good Lord, no. Is that what this is about? I'd heard they were recording in Suffolk, my daughter's a fan. Oh my, have they found something? But why you? Why the police?'

I stared back at him blankly, at a loss as to what to say.

'Are you quite sure you're alright, Inspector? Perhaps you'd like a glass of water. You stay here and I'll see if I can bring you something.'

He bustled off across the hall while I sat slumped on the hard bench, my head resting on my chest, too tired to move. Come on, George, I thought. You know Neil was capable of finding all this out for himself. Professor Snow must have published, there must have been other articles. *'He was ordering books from universities, packages from book dealers.'*

I pulled myself to my feet and walked over to the nearest display board. It was titled 'Folklore' and informed me that folk tales can give clues to the past of an area. 'There are many different ghost tales and folklore found in South East Anglia. In Orford there are tales of a headless soldier with sword and shield in hand wandering lost on the dunes, two warrior ghosts at Felixstowe who have been seen many times over the years fighting an eternal battle, the Roman ghost tale of Walton shore fort, the Saxon boy of Woolpit and Black Shuck with his green eyes skulking the night.'

'The worms of the earth are coming, The devourer is rising up, You better get ready, baby, Before you meet Black Shuck'

Professor Snow returned with a paper cup full of water and hovered over me while I drank it. 'You went white as a sheet, Inspector. Overworked, that's what you are.'

He walked with me to the door, assuring me he'd be more than happy to help identify anything that might have been found up in Suffolk and promising his utmost discretion. I had a sneaking suspicion that I'd just inadvertently planted another seed in the mythology of Delta's final days. As far as I knew the band hadn't been digging up artefacts at Otten Farm, but it didn't sound impossible with everything else I knew about them.

‘Oh, this is lovely,’ commented Professor Snow as we passed a tiny display case in the corner by the door. ‘My very favourite piece.’

I looked down to see a little silver amulet, a beautifully worked prow of a ship, lines curving up to the centre.’

‘The only one of its kind,’ he continued. ‘Also found in the area, although not at Sutton Hoo itself. Donated by Tamara Forwood, one of our benefactors. We call it the *Guardian* amulet because there was a pottery shard found with it with ‘guardian’ carved into the rim in Saxon runes.’

In my pocket I felt my hand close around the amulet I’d taken from Andy Took’s jacket. ‘*If I called to you would you answer me? If I called to you would you come?*’

FAIREST AND THE BRIGHTEST

*I'm closer to the Golden Dawn
Immersed in Crowley's uniform
Of imagery*

*I'm living in a silent film
Portraying Himmler's sacred realm
Of dream reality*

*I'm frightened by the total goal
Drawing to the ragged hole*

*And I ain't got the power anymore
No I ain't got the power anymore*

‘Quicksand’ | David Bowie | 1971

Equinox

Extract from *The Occult Observer*, 1st August 1971

Ever since its first radio broadcast on 4th April, heated speculation has continued as to the occult symbolism that is said to pervade the lyrics of Led Zeppelin's astonishing new song *Stairway to Heaven*. Fevered anticipation – and wild rumours – are building as fans eagerly await the band's fourth album, due to be released later this autumn.

A much less reported piece of Zeppelin news is the fact that lead guitarist and songwriter Jimmy Page is responsible for the recent opening of The Equinox, a bookshop specialising in the occult, located at 4 Holland Street in London.

Its new manager, Xander Black of the Priory of Thelema, is an old friend of this journal, and your editor was granted an exclusive interview with him at the store's opening last week.

So why did you decide to enter the bookselling business?

Well frankly there isn't one bookshop in London with a really good collection of occult books. The Equinox is not going to be a normal bookshop like Atlantis or Watkins; it will largely be open by appointment only as I have other responsibilities which occupy far more of my time. It will very much operate as a publishing

house too, to enable us to produce new editions of rare and incredibly important old works which are now out-of-print and almost impossible to acquire.

Is it true that the Equinox is going to specialise in the works of Aleister Crowley?

The shop is named after one of his books. I feel Crowley's a misunderstood genius of the twentieth century because his whole thing was liberation of the person, and that restriction will foul you up, will lead to frustration which leads to violence, crime, mental breakdown, whatever, depending on what sort of make-up you have underneath. The further this age we're in now gets into technology and alienation, a lot of the points he made seem to manifest themselves all down the line and his work is more relevant now than ever.

Crowley of course received a lot of very bad press during his lifetime.

Yes, because his message was one of total freedom and really getting down to the part you play in the world and discovering your destiny, your True Will. What you want to do, do it – and do it with love. And that was just one of the things they couldn't come to terms with back then. Saying there would be equality of the sexes too for instance: in the Edwardian age that just wasn't on. He wasn't necessarily waving a banner, but he knew it was going to happen. He was a visionary and he didn't break them in gently. *Would you say his doctrine of 'Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law' has been misinterpreted?*

Definitely. The complete version of that continues: 'Love is the law, love under will. There is no law but Do what thou wilt'. That

was never meant to be a licence to act selfishly and wantonly; to Crowley one's will was one's Thelema – the fulfilment of one's universal destiny. While he wasn't exactly an advocate of 'turning the other cheek,' he never implied that it was okay to do whatever your impulses lead you to do – that would in fact be the opposite of the Law of Thelema, which requires one to aspire to absolute self-realisation.

Is it true Mr Black that you've been working with some well-known musicians recently?

Yes. Many great artists have come to the same profound revelation about the power of the Magus' occult works and practices, and I've spent some time with Delta, David Bowie and Graham Bond these last few months. You may have seen the results in Bond's sublime new album *Holy Magick* but – before you ask – I can't tell you anything about what I've worked on with the others! That's for them to reveal when they will it.

I'd left the museum and stumbled back to my car, where I'd sat for half an hour staring at the darkening sky over London before driving down to Kensington, parking up just off the High Street and walking round to Holland Street, looking for Equinox Books.

I passed a gallery displaying giant blown-up photographs of the war in Vietnam, an exhibition by someone called Catherine LeRoy. At the back of the gallery a woman in a suede miniskirt with flicked hair and a camera round her neck was talking animatedly to a man in a burgundy leather jacket and a white Stetson. The central image in the window showed a medic tending to a wounded soldier in a landscape of dead, broken trees and mud,

with the title '*Corpsman in Anguish*'. Next to it was an image of a young face with piercing eyes looking up at me from under a helmet with the words 'war is hell' written on it. I looked again at the couple, the man was smiling now, and I wondered if he'd been to Vietnam, and whether what he'd seen there was worse than what we'd found at the house.

Two doors down I found Equinox Books. The window was dark and a handwritten sign on the door said 'Closed', but peering through the glass I could see a girl in a crochet waistcoat and a baker boy cap talking on the phone at the back of the shop.

I banged on the door and showed her my warrant card. She looked nervous, but let me in. The shop was dimly light, with books in heavy cases around the walls and stacked neatly on tables covered with velvet cloths. There was a heavy layer of incense, overlaying a foetid, musky smell, and various symbols painted on the black walls in gold.

'Detective Inspector George Shelton. Do you work here?'

'I, I'm not sure. I came down today to try and get paid, but everything was locked up and Xander's not here. I was just calling round, trying to find out where he was – he goes away sometimes. Look if this is about the books, we've been raided before and it's not pornography, it's erotic magical commentary...'

'I'm afraid I have to inform you that Mr Black died last weekend, Miss...?'

'Maclean. Annabell Maclean. He's dead? Oh my God, that's awful. I should, I should call people.'

I'd seen it though, that tell-tale flicker of relief on her face at the news.

‘When was the last time you saw Mr Black?’

‘Last week, Thursday, no, Friday morning. He came into the shop to pick up some things for the weekend, he was going to a party in Suffolk.’ She pressed a hand to her mouth, eyes like saucers.

‘Oh my! The Delta party! I’d heard that something had happened there....Was he? Have people died?’

She had an innocence to her, Annabell did. A touching gentleness that was very different to Blake’s brittle high-maintenance beauty or Sadie’s muddled appearance.

‘Our enquiries are ongoing. Perhaps you could give me some information on Mr Black? Next-of-kin and so forth.’

‘I don’t, I’m not sure if Xander *had* any family.’

I already knew that he didn’t. Suffolk CID had established that his parents were deceased. His father had been a Doctor of Theology at King’s College London and I struggled to imagine how he would have felt about his son’s reinvention as the Grand Master of something called the *Ordo Templi Orientis*. He’d used his inheritance to turn the family’s country home into a ‘Priory of Thelema.’ There had been complaints, files full of them, from outraged locals and two investigations by Hertfordshire Police into allegations of sex cults and Satanists running around at midnight in the grounds, and women abducted and held there against their will, but Xander had always come up clean.

‘He was anxious all that week because he’d been to Blake Markham’s party and got in a fight and then hadn’t got an invite to some thing up in Suffolk. He wanted me to ring Neil at the farm, but I told him I hadn’t got a number.’

‘You knew Neil Fenn?’

‘We were married. Well, he called me his wife. In 1969, at Woodstock. I was drawn to him after their concert in the Boston Garden. It was literally electric, incredible, the sound lighting up my mind, sending colours raging through it. But then he explained to me that he couldn’t be tied down to one woman.’

I boggled at her slightly. ‘You’re still married to him?’

‘Well, it was a pagan ceremony. I’m a white witch, you see. I’m not sure you’d consider it married, but I carry a piece of him in my heart.’

I had no idea where to go with this.

‘When did you last see Neil Fenn?’

‘About a year ago, at a party in Highgate. He, he didn’t seem to recognise me.’ She looked away, embarrassed.

‘I think that’s why Xander gave me the job here. I’m not very good at working in the shop. I have problems with the till, but he wanted anything that had been close to Delta. He was working with Neil, you know, helping him find a higher awareness, working on ideas for the album, empowering the studio, that sort of thing,

‘If I hadn’t given him what he wanted they would have killed me. So I gave them the acid, so he and Xander could carry on with whatever it was they were trying to do, trying to get to some kind of different ‘astral level’ – whatever the fuck that is...’

Annabell was asking me what had happened at the party, and I suddenly realised I didn’t care. I didn’t care what had happened to any of them with their sordid little cults and drug-taking and lies and selfishness. They’d all played with fire and they’d been

burned. I wanted to get out of this horrible shop before it tainted me the same way it had them.

‘I’m afraid I can’t tell you much more while our investigation is ongoing, Miss Maclean.’ For a wonderful moment I considered telling her to make a claim on Neil’s estate as his common-law wife, just to piss off Blake Markham, but I suspected if you lined up all the women Neil had ‘married’ they’d be queuing round the block. I looked back at my notebook.

‘Did you know a Lorraine Weston or a Paul Bronson?’

‘Raina! Oh, oh, no. Not Raina. Did he? Was it him?’ Tears had sprung to her eyes and she made some kind of gesture in the air that I didn’t understand, before dropping down to sit on the stool by the shop counter.

‘We found the body of Miss Weston alongside that of Mr Black. Were they in a relationship, do you know?’

I didn’t think she was going to answer, but she looked back up at me, eyes shining with tears and nodded.

‘You think I’m naive, Inspector. It’s OK. People do. But Xander Black was a bad man and nothing he did with all his magic could hide that from me. Raina, she was his slave. I mean willing slave, at first anyway. She told me what turned Xander on was for people, women, men, to be so drawn to his power, his *charisma*, that they willingly, adoringly and devotedly gave themselves to him.’

‘He asked her to give her body to him, the way a devoted initiate would sacrifice to his or her god or High Priest. He told her she was ‘special’, that she had an innate spirituality, a gift. There was something strange about her, that she didn’t under-

stand or know how to control. Raina was damaged, Inspector, and Xander told her she needed a teacher, a guide, to bring out her power. Someone to have power over her. She was so submissive, so perfect for him to mould and shape, and so willing to try everything.'

'I think she'd had some bad experiences before. She was scared of men. I know she came to Xander from Paul Bronson. I tried to help her, to show her the true acceptance and love that comes with Wicca, but she was more and more involved with Xander's ceremonies. He was obsessed with her, at least until Neil Fenn came along. She said he made her feel special, wanted, desired, in control.'

'Paul Bronson?'

'Yes. He and Xander were linked in some way, something to do with the clubs. It's not my scene. Is he dead too?'

'Yes.'

There was no mistaking the look of relief on her face now.

'Good.'

She leant across the counter and lit a small candle that was standing by the till, murmuring soft words that I couldn't make out.

'For Raina, Inspector. May the Blessed Mother care for her now.'

She closed her eyes for a moment and breathed deeply, humming low in her throat, before frowning and looking back at me.

'But how did she, they? She left him, got away from it all. Told me she'd found an amazing place, somewhere in the country where she could make a fresh start, embrace nature, find her-

self again. Oh!’

Her hand pressed to her mouth again. ‘Poor Raina.’

‘From what I understand Neil Fenn was interested in the occult?’ I didn’t want to think about Raina any more.

‘What? Oh, yes. He bought a lot of books from here. Xander was teaching him things.’

‘Could you tell me which books, what kind of things?’

‘Honestly? I could find the order book for you, Inspector, but I don’t think you’ll find the answers you’re looking for in anything we sell here.’

She looked right into my eyes.

‘Get away, Inspector. Get away. While you still can. There are miracles and love and joy in the world outside, in the workings of the mother *‘an it harm none, do what ye will’*. Do you know the Law of Threefold Return, Inspector? Do good, and it shall return to you three times. Do evil and it will be revisited upon you threefold. That’s karma, Inspector. And she’s a bitch.’

I had one more thing to do that day. Back at my desk at the Yard I called the number the MUIRS studio had found for me.

‘Hello?’ A beautiful voice answered the phone.

‘Is that Lesley Duncan?’

‘Speaking.’ I could hear what sounded like a very young baby crying in the background.

‘Lesley Duncan, the singer?’

‘Yes. I’m sorry are you selling something, because I’m quite busy at the moment.’ The baby was crying more loudly now.

‘I’m a policeman, Mrs Duncan. Detective Inspector Shelton.’

I need to ask you a couple of questions.'

'Oh. Oh, sorry, Inspector, let me just pick up my baby.'

There was a shuffling noise and a muffled shushing on the other end of the line.

'Right, there we are. How can I help you?'

'I understand you recently recorded vocals for Delta?'

'Well, not that recently, it was back in June, but yes, at MUIRS with Henry St. George. Is this about the break in?'

'It may be something connected, yes. Mrs Duncan have you had recent contact with Delta? Were you in Suffolk last weekend?'

She laughed, a gentle sound like spring rain.

'Last weekend? Oh goodness no! I was having a baby, Inspector! This little one was born last Friday night. We just brought her home today.' She made a cooing noise and I could imagine the tiny warm bundle in her arms as she propped the phone on her shoulder.

'I'm not sure how I can help you? I gave a statement at the time about the burglary. Have you recovered one of my recordings? I know Henry was terribly worried.'

I wasn't quite sure how to ask her what I needed know, so I decided to just come straight out with it.

'Mrs Duncan, this might sound a bit odd, but, can you remember what you sang for them?'

'Yes, yes of course.'

'Could you sing it for me?'

I'd realised after I left Blake's house that if Lesley was singing on the intro to the missing Track 5, she might have sung the

rest of the song too.

‘Well, I’m not sure I should...’

A note of suspicion had crept into her voice and I suddenly realised I must sound like an unscrupulous record label spy, someone like Tez Williams, trying to get access to Delta’s secret material.

‘Oh, I assure you it’s all quite above board, Mrs Duncan,’ I began hastily, scrabbling through my notebook. ‘If it makes you feel more comfortable, please call Henry first and check. I, er, I have a tape here that starts ‘With fire I make this sacred site, and call my warriors to life?’ labelled as your recording and I wasn’t sure if it was genuine.’

My knowledge of the lyrics seemed to reassure her. ‘Oh, well, as long as Henry knows about it. I thought it was a beautiful song that. Different to anything they’d done, but very *John*, if you know what I mean... Shall I just sing it to you now?’

‘If you would.’ I made sure the recorder was running.

I heard her take a deeper breath and then the most beautiful melody flooded down the phone to me. An old English dance, a song to sing under a full moon, a haunting call to something I’d never understand.

*With fire I make this sacred site
And call my warriors to life
Step you forward one by one
And tell the night your mighty song*

*Lead on out the sacrifice
Swear your oaths by full moonlight
Hallowed mead and offered food*

SEX & DRUGS & TENTACLES

*Make your prayers to the God in you
Over earth and under stars
Blood magic in the sacred grove
Over earth and under stars
Blood magic calls the hunt tonight*

*The Wild Hunt rides tonight
The moon is full and the stars are right
The Wild Hunt rides tonight
Take care your sacrifice is right
The Wild Hunt rides tonight, my dear*

*What will you give me? The hunt calls for blood
How will you prove to me the strength of your will?*

*Would you cut off your hand?
Leave it bleeding on the floor?
Would you give away a little of
what makes you what you are?*

She finished and I realised the baby had stopped crying.

‘That child will never be short of a lullaby,’ I joked and heard Lesley laugh again, and coo at the baby with the wonderful sound of a newly-proud mother.

‘Is there anything else I can help you with? Only I really ought to be putting Emma down for her nap.’

‘No, no, you’ve been most helpful Mrs Duncan. Thank you, and, er congratulations.’

EQUINOX

After I'd hung up I made careful notes of the lyrics and sat, smiling out of the window at the black sky, feeling obscurely cheerful that not every life that Delta had touched had been destroyed. Good luck to Lesley, I thought, and little Emma and all the normal people still out there in the world.

*Fire I bear around this sacred site
And bid all men make peace*

*Flame I bear to enclose
And bid evil spirits to flee*

*Thor make sacred
Thor make sacred
Thor make sacred this holy site*

*Fire I bear around this sacred site
And bid all men make peace*

*Flame I bear to enclose
And bid outlaws fare away*

*Thor make sacred
Thor make sacred
Thor make sacred this holy site*

‘The Wéonede Song’ | (Trans. Professor Snow, UCL)

Luna

***The girl with butterflies in her hair* | We meet Luna Jones, stylist to the bad boys of rock**

Ever since Delta's *Black Rainbow* tour, the elegant silhouettes of Markham and Fenn are engraved on our collective consciousness – synonymous with cutting-edge rock music and the lifestyle that goes with it. Maybe we imagine that John and Neil just roll out of bed and naturally dress in a style that matches their gritty music, but it seems their iconic stage image has a little helping hand – that of 'Luna' Jones.

On first meeting Luna, I was struck by how her calm, sunny disposition seems to contrast with the heavy music and dark stage shows in which her designs feature. She is petite, with blond dread-locked hair cascading around her face, interspersed with the flowers and butterflies she has clipped amongst her locks. In a floaty summer dress she seems very far removed from the darker side of Delta.

She laughs when I mention this: 'Well, the clothes aren't inspired by me, they're inspired by the music. Music creates a world in your mind, and I try to capture images that bring that world to life on stage. If Delta played their music with butterflies in their hair, it might have a bit of a different impact, don't you think?'

Well, there's an interesting image.

So where has this girl come from? She met the band in the US back in '66 whilst travelling with her brother, David. 'He and the boys hit it off right away, we would stay up all night talking about the world, and music, and where it was all going [...] I'd always had a bit of a passion for design, and had been styling things for a while. As we spent more time together I started doing it for the Delta boys too, but when *Black Rainbow End* got big it just got crazy for all of us.' As she describes it, she was just in the right place at the right time: 'one of the many happy coincidences in the world.'

Happy coincidence maybe, however she shared her own portion of the scandal and stress that followed Delta on their US tour, after photographs taken of her outside Markham's apartment sparked rumours that she was involved in the breakup of his marriage. When this topic is raised her smile flickers. 'That was sad, I would never want to intentionally cause someone pain... what was happening between those two should have been left alone, the press were never going to help by reporting like that.'

Is she going to be involved in their next look, their next album, their next tour? 'Well, I don't know... you'll just have to watch this space.'

Luna Jones had been unconscious for a full day, following an over-enthusiastic truncheon blow from a detective constable during the raid at the Sanctuary, when she had refused to get in the back of the van. She was the beautiful woman I'd seen screaming for John when I'd arrived, which was apparently what

she'd gone straight back to doing as soon as she regained consciousness. She'd been sedated and sectioned and this was the first time I'd had a chance to interview her, nearly a week after she'd arrived at the private clinic her brother was paying for.

A serious-looking nurse showed me into a pleasant sitting room, with long windows overlooking the grounds. They hadn't wanted to move her far and the hospital had suggested Seckford Grange, a Tudor manor house near Woodbridge that catered for the wealthy and disturbed.

Luna was escorted in and carefully placed in the chair opposite me, while a brisk-looking young woman in a cashmere sweater, tweed skirt and knee-high boots shook my hand and introduced herself as Dr Thomas.

'Luna, this is Detective Inspector Shelton. He needs to talk to you about what's happened.'

Luna stared dreamily out of the window and I wondered if there was anyone in that beautiful head any more.

'I want to go to John.'

Dr Thomas gave me a look as if to say, 'I told you so.'

'Luna, can you tell me about the Sanctuary? About what happened at the party?'

'I want to go to John.'

This wasn't getting us anywhere. I turned to Dr Thomas, who had a resigned expression on her face. 'I'm sorry, Inspector, but it's all she'll say. She just seems completely fixated on him.'

I sat there for a moment, watching Luna's hands pick idly at the dress she was wearing, wondering how to break through.

'Luna, would you like to tell me about John? I'd love to hear

about him.'

She turned to me and a smile broke out on her face that was like the sun coming out.

'I was a little bit scared of him, you know. When I first met him. It was 1967 and I was at a party in New York and this man came over to me, with hair like the sun and these incredible eyes... he was with Neil and Neil was so charismatic, sexual. But John, John was so gentle. Then I lost him for a while, until it was the winter. In an apartment with rats everywhere.'

She shivered and wrapped her arms tight around her body. 'They were trying to put together this idea for an album that they'd had in New Mexico. They were so full of passion, writing music all night and selling everything they had for just one more hour in the studio. I was his 'butterfly girl.' He said I was everything the music wasn't. Everything he and Neil could never be.'

'We were in love. He loved me. We were never apart, and then he invited me to the Sanctuary and I knew everything was going to be OK.'

I knew this wasn't a strictly true summary of events. I was quite the expert on Delta now and the press had been full of Luna and John's clandestine and troubled relationship. She'd been on tour with them some of the time, but as her own career took off she'd spent time away in New York and the gossip columns had been full of the stories of what John Markham got up to when she wasn't there. There had been public rows, then the reappearance of Blake Markham, swiftly followed by a messy break-up. One columnist had described John as sleeping with 'anything in

a skirt' and as far as we could tell Luna hadn't had any contact with him for over a year until the party.

'He wrote that song for me. *'If I called to you, would you answer me...'* Her voice was sweet and clear. 'That was my tune, he used to play it to me in New York.'

'It must have been a wonderful moment when you heard it.'

'Yes, yes,' she looked away, gaze drifting into the distance. 'I knew then he was trying to tell me something. Everything on the album was a message from him. I just had to separate John's message from Neil's.'

'A lot of it sounds like they're fighting each other, not working together, like there are two albums, two sounds they're trying to make. You can hear on some of the tracks that John doesn't want to be playing on them, that it's not flowing for him.'

'It was such a beautiful place. I knew we'd be happy there, under the stars.'

'Over earth and under stars,' I said, on impulse.

'Blood magic in the sacred grove,' she replied, before gasping and clamping her mouth firmly closed.

'Was John in the grove with you?'

'I want to go to John.'

'Was he there with you?'

'No!' The denial was ripped from her and I felt Dr Thomas twitch at my side. I waved at her to let me continue.

'Where was he?'

'It took him! It came to the house and it took him!'

'What took him?'

She shook her head violently.

‘I have to go back.’

‘To the Sanctuary? John’s not there you know.’

‘He is!’

‘Calm down, Luna,’ interrupted Dr Thomas. ‘It’s OK, it’s OK. We’ve talked about this.’

‘What does the song mean, Luna?’ I had to know.

‘I can’t tell you.’

‘You can. You said it was a message from John.’

She bit her lip and looked away.

‘Luna, tell me John’s message.’

‘With fire I make this sacred site,’ I began. ‘And call my warriors to life.’

‘It was his way of saving us from what Neil had done. You have to understand, we needed help. It was killing us, one by one, all of us, we had to ask for help, whatever the cost.’

‘Why didn’t you just leave, call someone?’

‘The mist,’ she whispered, her eyes glazed with terror. ‘Sandy’s notes explained how to do it. The ritual. We didn’t have mead, but we found honey in the pantry.’

I’d sent Sandy’s notes to Professor Snow for him to look over. Most of them had been in shorthand, and what wasn’t in shorthand was in the depressingly familiar Anglo-Saxon.

‘How could you read them?’

‘Sadie. She translated them. There was a dictionary.’

There had been photocopied dictionary pages in the ring binder I remembered. But they’d been the wrong way round – English into Anglo-Saxon not Saxon into English. I couldn’t imagine how she’d managed it, she must have spent hours at that

table, working frantically while the fight raged around her. On the other hand it did explain why she was now only speaking some kind of garbled version of the language.

‘We stood in full moonlight. Wore white – Sadie said white was important. Made our prayers to the gods in us. The wild hunt rides tonight!’

‘What was the sacrifice, Luna?’

‘The wild hunt rides tonight!’

‘What did you sacrifice, Luna?’

‘Take care your sacrifice is right!’

‘Would you cut off your hand?’ I asked, ‘Leave it bleeding on the floor?’

‘No! No!’

‘I saw it, Luna, I saw the hand.’

‘Vinnie! It was Vinnie, he said he’d do it. He said if that’s what it took to summon them then he’d do it. Danny helped him. He said John had been a coward, that he couldn’t go through with it, but that he would. To save us.’

‘What happened, Luna? What happened afterwards? What happened to Suzie, to Raina, to Cindy?’

‘I want to go to John. I want to go to John!’

‘Inspector Shelton, I think that’s enough. Luna is becoming distressed.’

I knew when I was beaten. The serious nurse appeared again to take the sobbing Luna back to her room and Dr Thomas walked me back to my car.

‘What were you saying to her, those words? Were they lyrics? It sounded like some kind of song? A Delta song?’

I hesitated.

‘I understand if you can’t tell me, but that’s been the most she’s said since she came here. If you have a way to get through to her, to help her confront what happened... what did happen, Inspector?’

‘I wish I knew. How long will she be here.’

‘Until she improves. Do you know what she says when we ask her what she’d do if we let her go?’

I shook my head.

‘She’s quite calm, but she’ll tell you she intends to go back to the Sanctuary and walk into the lake to be with John. She knows he’s dead, Inspector. She just wants to be with him.’

I returned to the station in Ipswich to be informed by WPC Simpson that I had a visitor waiting in my office. ‘A Ms Forwood, sir. Emphasis on the *Ms*’ and her, er, partner.’

I’d been expecting her, although not the partner, whoever he was. We’d contacted her via her solicitors, who had confirmed she’d been in Paris for the past six months. Ms Forwood was a patron of the arts, as well as renowned photographer in her own right, mostly for her series of images of the bebop and cool jazz scenes in the ‘40s and ‘50s. I was on much firmer ground with jazz. I had a book of her photos, actually, featuring the Swedish saxophonist Lars Gullin, Miles Davies and Lee Konitz. By the ‘60s she was heavily involved in the contemporary art scene and had become a collector and supporter of young artists.

The woman who sat in my office was the wrong side of middle age, but still slim and attractive in a dark velvet trouser suit,

eyes heavily rimmed with Kohl, her voice husky from years of heavy smoking. She got straight to the point.

‘When can I have my house back, Inspector?’

‘Ms Forwood, thank you for coming to see me. And this is?’

The partner hadn’t been a man, after all, but a tall woman with a smooth face and a long fall of straight black hair nearly to her waist. Her arms were bare, slender, but muscled. She regarded me flatly from incurious eyes, like a cat, ready to pounce.

‘This is Sky. She’s a drummer, and my... companion.’

I couldn’t picture Sky sitting behind a drum kit. But she made no response other than to incline her head slightly. I felt oddly as if she ought to have been wearing a sword on her back.

‘My house, Inspector?’

‘Yes. Of course. The Chief Constable has informed me that we should be wrapping up our investigations at the Sanctuary very soon.’

‘Herot House.’

‘I beg your pardon?’

‘The Sanctuary was what Ray and Margot called it, poor things. It’s not a name I wish to continue with. It would seem in rather poor taste. The property is called Herot House, always has been since the dawn of time.’ She waved a ringed hand vaguely at me. ‘Oh, obviously the current house is Georgian with some early Victorian additions, but there’s been a building on the site since before the Domesday Book and it’s recorded even then as Herot Hall.’

‘Heorot Hall.’

‘Heorot? Oh, yes, as in Beowulf. We’ve often wondered if

there was a connection – as a child I thought it was terribly significant, especially with Sutton Hoo so close, but I’m afraid ‘heorot’ just means ‘stag’. Half the villages and estates in the area have Saxon names; Framlingham, Saxmundham, Ingoldsthorpe. I’m sorry, Inspector, is this relevant?’

‘Oh, just a passing interest in local history,’ I managed to force out. ‘I was at the British Museum recently and saw your piece.’

‘The guardian amulet? That belonged to my mother. Edith Pretty gave it to her. It’s supposed to protect the wearer, but as my mother was killed in the Blitz by a direct hit I’d have to say I’m a little sceptical of that.’

‘You knew Mrs Pretty?’

‘Well, my mother did, she was an old lady by the time I was living here. She was a spiritualist you know, or something of that sort. A friend of hers saw a ghost of a warrior on the mound before anyone knew there was anything there, and her nephew went over the area with dowsing rods looking for gold or ley-lines, I forget which. And then it was excavated in ‘39, which I recall clearly and Basil Brown found the ship, quite undisturbed. Edith was always sure there were more.’

‘Heorot Hall, though, the resting place of warriors. Yes, I think maybe I’ll change the name back in honour of my very own warrior.’ She turned to reach a hand towards Sky’s face. I kept my face carefully blank. The movement had caused the loose sleeve of her jacket to fall back, showing the track marks on her arms.

‘She was raised in Japan, you know.’

‘Edith Pretty?’

‘Sky. Weren’t you darling. Trained by Buddhist monks in the art of Taiko, until her village was burnt down and she left her little valley to find me.’

Sky stared at me steadily.

‘You should hear her drumming, it’s incandescent. My stupid little fucker of a godson, Julian, was supposed to be arranging a recording session for her, but he’s been as useless as always.’

Japanese drumming lesbians was way out of my area of expertise but from a long way away I heard my voice ask a question that swam up from my subconscious mind.

‘And are you a warrior, Sky?’

‘That’s what the training is for. That is the very essence of everything. The life that beats through the rice in the fields, the rhythms of the air and water that tell the cherry blossom to open and to fall. Everything and nothingness are different sides of the same coin, for how can you have the beat without the silence that surrounds it?’ Her voice was gentle, but grounded in absolute belief. She sounded foreign, but I couldn’t have placed her accent.

‘Did you know the silence *completely* surrounds the sound, like a stone thrown into a pond? The surface ripples are there and mostly all you think of because that’s the first level of perception, but the trouble caused beneath the water is far more interesting. The displacement changes the shape of everything – for ever.’

‘What if we could change the shape of everything by altering the rhythm, the speed that the stone is thrown? What if I could cause you to believe something just because it sounded right, or the beat agreed with the one pounding in your ears whilst

you sleep on the chest of your lover. You wouldn't know, you wouldn't perceive it and you'd blindly follow like rats following the tune of the piper...'

'The sound is everything, the rhythm is everything and the movements change the shape of all that we know and understand. This is why I drum, this is why I play and this is why I fight – because there's no choice. Better to call the tune than to become enslaved to its rhythm.'

LUNA

SEX & DRUGS & TENTACLES

*He's coming back, he's coming back
He's coming back, he's coming back*

*Shadows aren't safe
Gonna sniff out your blood
Stalking the halls
Gonna drag you in the mud*

*Once he's got a taste of you
Ain't never gonna stop
Gonna rip your heart out
Gonna make your spine crack*

*Stay down, honey
Don't you believe
Stay down, honey
Cause you ain't too sweet*

*Gonna bring an army
Gonna raise them from the dead
Gonna rip the thoughts from out of your head*

*Hold me tight now, baby
Stay in the light
Let me hear you breathing
Let me know you're alive*

'Grendel II' | Delta | 1971 (unreleased)

Grendel

‘I’ve done you a disservice, Danny. I had you down as the villain of the piece when it seems you were the hero of the hour.’

A week in custody had done Danny no favours. It must have been a blow when his lawyer from Atlantic had deserted him and left him to the tender mercies of Her Majesty’s Prison Service. He’d been charged with a long string of drug-related offences, but we were holding off on manslaughter until the powers that be decided how many deaths to lay at his door. He looked like shit, strung out and twitchy and hollow-eyed. I’d heard reports he was on suicide watch and had been held in solitary confinement for his own safety. A lot of inmates were Delta fans and word travels fast.

‘I don’t know what you’re talking about.’

I reached over to the cassette player sitting on the table in front of us. I’d requested no prison officers be present in the interview due to the ‘sensitive nature’ of the case, although I couldn’t stop them listening outside the door. Danny’s eyes widened as I pressed play and the sounds of running footsteps and shouting scratched out into the room.

Male voice: Raina!

Male voice: The green eyes!

A Pillory-Smyth: I think I ought to go upstairs now...

Male voice: Yes, yes you do.

V Diamond: FUCK ME! IT'S IN! IT'S IN! HOLY SHIT!

D Reece: Who opened the door?!

V Diamond: Where is everyone!

[Deep sounds. Dripping noises?]

V Diamond: WHAT THE FUCK IS IT?!

[Woman screams]

Female voice: Sadie! Run upstairs now!

V Diamond: Now? Now would be good. Now would be really fucking. Fuck, its coming, fuck, it's coming!

[Strange noises]

Male voice: GET BACK! GET BACK

Female voice: (Screams) LEAVE HER ALONE!

Male voice: Sadie! Pick her up! Pick her up!

Female voice: (Screams) LEAVE HER ALONE! GET OFF HER! GET OFF HER!

A Took: Who's got a torch, give me the torch!

Male voice: Stand. There.

V Diamond: Yes, yes, yes!

[Loud snarl]

[Screams]

V Diamond: Get back, you fuck! Fucking hell! (Sobbing)
Shit. Shit. Shit.

Male voice: Have you got the weapons there?

Male voice: Danny! Danny, where the fuck are you man?
We've got injured here!

Male voice: Get back. No, he's not fucking in there.

[Loud roar]

[Screams. Sounds of a fight. Gunshots.]

V Diamond: Get in here! Get in here! IN the corner. Get
 behind the, get behind it!

Male voice: Danny! We need you!

Male voice: You're pouring fucking blood!

Male voice: I'm fucking serious!

Male voice: Can anyone fix his leg? Danny!

The tech working on the Dictaphone had identified Diamond's voice – apparently she was a fan of Vinnie's late-night radio show *The Graveyard Shift* – and Pillory-Smyth's RADA-trained tones were unmistakeable.

‘That's you Danny. And Vinnie and Andy and probably Suzie and what I imagine is Kenny McConnell. Fighting for your lives. And you were right in there, weren't you? Patching them up, stitching Archie, bandaging the wounded in your little field hospital in the bathroom with your ripped up sheets and spoonfuls of heroin. Even helping Vinnie cut his hand off.’

Danny's eyes were wide, his mouth opening and closing as he struggled to work out what to say.

‘How did you know? About, about Vinnie's hand?’

‘Luna.’

‘Luna's OK? Oh, thank God. And the others? No-one will tell me anything.’

No, I thought, I don't imagine they will, just in case you say

something you shouldn't and mess up what they have planned for you.

'I've found out a lot since we last spoke,' I said, looking directly into his eyes. 'I know Neil and John fought on Friday night over the album, that Julian left with Sandy and the band locked themselves in their rooms. I know PC Thompson came up to the house, and that you all went to bed. I know Neil vanished and something pulled John out of the window. I know the cars wouldn't start and the fog came down and you saw something outside with green eyes... I know John kept a sword in his guitar case and all Neil left behind was a bath full of blood. I know about *Beowulf*.'

He was staring at me in horror.

Yes, I thought. I know a lot more than you realise. But I still don't know why you stayed there, or what you dug up in the garden, or what was on that film, or why Vinnie cut his own hand off in the moonlight. What were you doing all of you? Slaves to the song, '*blindly following it like rats following the tune of the piper*.'

I could see them all in my mind's eye now. The cool autumn evening, Margot in the kitchen leaning over the Aga, guests drifting from room to room through a haze of incense and the heavy smell of Vinnie's weed. The hi-fi would have been playing. Zep-pelin maybe, or the Stones or maybe Creedence Clearwater singing *Suzie Q*. I could see Sindy Reynolds sitting nervously on the sofa next to Paul Bronson as he poured her a glass of vodka and told her to loosen up a little. Xander, one hand lying possessively on Raina's white shoulder, discussing the new Bowie album with

Henry St. George. No, that wasn't right, Henry hadn't been there. But in my mind they were all there, Tez Williams leaning on the mantelpiece, talking to Blake. Suzie and Luna and Annabell Maclean giggling on the floor cushions, Andy Took strumming guitar to Vinnie while Sky drummed on the table. Even the couple I'd seen in the art gallery were there, the woman taking photos while the man awkwardly accepted a joint. I could see Tamara, up in her bedroom, oh so slowly injecting herself with sister morphine. Kenny and Lard would have been drinking beer, cracking open a Party 7 and spraying foam across Sandy's notes while Sadie shrieked in horror. I could hear Lesley singing, voice drifting through the house to where Ray, chopping wood outside the kitchen with a well-worn axe paused for a moment to stare up at the full moon. And then the crunch of the car wheels on the gravel and a burst of cold night air and whisky and Delta were in the building, bringing death over the threshold with them.

'What happened on Saturday, Danny? What happened when you woke up.'

'I can't remember.'

'PC Thompson got hurt, didn't he, Danny? I've heard the tape, you were helping him, getting a bandage, trying to save the life of that young copper.'

'I can't remember.'

'He was ripped to pieces, Danny. I've seen the body. I've seen *claw* marks.'

He said nothing.

I wondered when it had happened. Had they been sleeping still, hungover and coming down? Awoken by Thompson banging des-

perately on the door, slumping on the doorstep, blood welling up through his fingers as he tried to hold his side together.

‘What did you give them on Friday night? What did you give Neil?’

‘I didn’t give him anything! None of that, none of what he did was anything to do with me. Look, I’ll take the fall for a lot things, but not what he did.’

‘Then tell me!’

‘There was something outside on Friday night. In the fog.’

‘The bloody fog again! We’ve checked, Danny. Local weather stations, everything. Julian Cavendish didn’t even need his headlights on the way back to Woodbridge, it was such a bright night!’

‘I don’t care. It was foggy, thick, horrible, slimy. Got all over you, there were sounds in it, shapes. If you stayed in it too long you went blind, deaf...And it was still there on Saturday.’

I could see them, staggering around, lost and afraid, wet liquid on their faces, their hands. Suzie calling out to Andy that she was lost and alone.

‘Thompson, I don’t know what he was doing, he should have just stayed at home! He turned up first thing, injured, just gasping and bleeding out all over the fucking doorway. I tried to save him, but, but he died. Shock. Massive blood loss.’

‘And then you cut his body into pieces? I don’t believe you, Danny.’

He just shook his head, mutely. I tried another tack.

‘Tell me about the trench.’

‘Trench?’

‘The dig in the garden.’

‘I started digging and then the blood came out. Blood all over my hands.’

Danny rocked back and forwards in his chair.

‘You knew where to dig from Sandy’s notes, didn’t you? There was a map of the grounds in the folder. She’d already started digging, hadn’t she?’

‘We just carried on. Andy found it in the grounds. We were out looking for John. You could go a little way, just as far as the trees, and it was right there. We found a shovel in the shed, a trowel, one of those brush things she used.’

‘What did you dig up?’

‘Stuff, you know? Old stuff. Bits of pot, rocks, a broken plate, a little cup, and...’

‘And?’

In my mind I saw the two of them. Danny crouched in the mud, a cigarette in one hand, trowel in the other, scrabbling through the dirt, pulling out shards of something ancient and passing them to Took, wet clay sticking to his jeans.

‘Nothing.’

‘That’s not what Andy Took says.’

‘Andy... he said there was blood coming out of the trench. I stuck my trowel in and it just bubbled out.’ He laughed, high and hysterical. ‘It was in a little cup, just a little thing, but there was so much blood. I don’t know where it was coming from. And a little silver pendant thing, a boat.’

I reached into my pocket and placed the amulet I had taken from Andy Took’s jacket on the table.

‘You’ve got it?’ whispered Danny. ‘But, you have to – you shouldn’t have that, man!’ He ran a shaking hand through his hair.

‘If I called to you, would you answer me?’ I sang, gently.

‘Shut up! Don’t you fucking sing that at me! Don’t you fucking sing a word of it. I never want to hear that again!’

He was panting, staring at me with wild eyes. Not a fan, then. Had it been him who’d smashed the hi-fi?

‘OK. OK. What did you do with the things you dug up?’

‘Gave them to the birds, the girls. Sadie was doing all this stuff with Sandy’s notes. She was sure there was a way there, a way for us to get out.’

‘Then what? You were there all day, Danny? You ate meals together, and what? Sat around listening to music? Chatting up the birds? Having a lovely weekend in the country?’

‘Christ, man. You have no fucking idea! It was... people were seeing things, visions, worms and, and mouths. Suzie was developing that film, and they were locked in there screaming. We thought she’d spilled chemicals, breathed something in, but... look, man, it was a bad place to be. Xander was trying to read Neil’s diary and going on about all this really dark shit and telling us how all the answers were in the paintings. And then we watched the film, and I don’t know, everyone went kind of crazy for a while. I thought there were angels coming after me?’

‘Angels? You don’t strike me as the religious type.’

‘Not angels, *Angels*, Hell’s Angels. I could see them, clear as day, coming for me. But it wasn’t real, none of it was fucking real.’

‘So you admit it was the drugs?’

‘What? No! I mean, yeah, we took a lot of stuff... but that was to make it go away.’

According to Danny they’d found a casserole in the pantry for dinner because Margot was ‘gone’. He point blank refused to discuss what had happened to her, and, not wanting to stop the flow, I let the subject drop. The meal was tense, the lights in the house unreliable ‘and we could hear the sound of the sea, like, washing through the house, rolling in with the fog’.

You could see the sea in the distance from the bedroom windows at Alderton, but I wouldn’t have thought you could hear it unless maybe somehow the wind was blowing just right.

They’d eaten by candlelight, not trusting the electrics, talking, planning, wondering what would happen when true darkness fell and whatever was out there came for them.

‘Sadie had a plan, she said there was a way we could get out, but I didn’t understand it, we had to go somewhere else first, but Xander said he was working on that.’

So Xander had been reading Neil’s books while Andy Took taught Sadie shorthand and she taught herself Anglo-Saxon. Suzie had developed the film, Archie had ‘slept mostly, I dunno, man, he was no help, except he could do Latin’ and Raina had looked at the paintings while Danny and Kenny barricaded doors, doled out weapons and ammunition, ripped up bandages and talked Ray into handing over his shotgun.

‘What were Paul and Vinnie doing while this was going on?’

‘The album. They’d locked themselves away in the lounge with all the equipment. Vinnie was cutting up the tapes, editing it, he thought he could hear how it was supposed to be, that it had

all the answers. He found bits that were, I dunno, backwards and flipped them, stuff like that. Just with a razor blade and a bit of tape, trying to make a clean copy. They had Cindy in there with them, making her listen to it over and over and over again. Poor kid. Because she had the best ear for music, and she knew Delta. Knew their voices, their style. She was a massive fan, had heard everything they'd ever done, so they said she would be best at working out what they were trying to say.'

I thought of myself handing over the tapes to Peter. '*You're a bona fide civilian expert.*'

'Did they finish?'

'I think so. Suddenly they were cheering, shouting... they'd been getting more and more worked up all afternoon and then they were leaping around, going on about how it was the greatest album ever made, how no-one should ever listen to anything else. And then Vinnie went kind of crazy and smashed up the speakers. So that was it.'

'We knew it was coming back. We just knew it. And then it did.'

That was what I'd heard on the tape. Somehow the front door had been opened and 'then it was in, it was in the fucking house!'

'You couldn't stop it, man! Jesus, it was, eyes in the dark and this dripping noise like we were deep underground and then it would come at you. It was fast, yeah, really fucking fast. And the others, as well. They wouldn't stay dead, they wouldn't stay dead!'

'Everyone was screaming and screaming, we couldn't hurt it, we just had no fucking chance. Except to stay in the light. Stay in the light. It doesn't like the light! It took Suzie, it, it just, I, oh Jesus, there was nothing we could do! Vinnie was losing it big

time, he got hurt and he was really fucking scared, man, really scared. And then it was gone again.'

I wasn't sure how much more of this Danny could take. Reliving the horror was starting to take its toll. He'd chain-smoked most of the pack I'd given him, hands juddering on the table. He'd bitten one nail until it was bleeding and kept scrubbing at his hands.

'There was so much blood everywhere. So much. Upstairs. Kenny was dealing with it.'

I imagined the house that night, the sound of people sobbing, Kenny shouting orders, blood sprayed up the wall of the stairs, slippery on the third floor, drugs and guns and ripped pieces of paper lying amongst wine bottles and coffee cups in the dining room, fog tendrils curling at the door. They would have been carrying candles from room to room – scurrying from the bathroom where Danny had set up his makeshift hospital to the back bedroom where Sadie was poring over her notes. Then outside into the night, breath smoking in the cold air, a procession dressed in white, carrying candles, knives, honey from the pantry, white wine and biscuits, standing barefoot in the wet grass under the oak tree while the full moon sailed above them and something dark growled and snuffled in the shadows.

I saw them shouting their prayers to the Gods, staking their claim, their desperate pleas for help, Xander chanting something and striding around the circle.

Thor make sacred

Thor make sacred

Thor make sacred this holy site

Then the scream in the night as Vinnie Diamond cut off his own hand.

‘Sadie said we had to do it, she said John should have done it but he wouldn’t, couldn’t go through with it. We had to prove we were worthy, ‘make sure your sacrifice is right’, she found this ritual on the broken plate to Odin or Nodens or something... Look, he wanted to do it, he was begging me, we had no choice! He was coming back! *He was coming back!*’

‘Who was coming back, Danny? Danny!’

‘Grendel! Grendel was coming back! We could hear him in the fog! And afterwards, we all went kind of insane, people were running, screaming, Xander fucking Black appears in these wizard’s robe shouting ‘Abracadabra!’ – don’t look at me like that, I fucking swear it’s the truth!’ He giggled hysterically, breathing hard, rocking in his chair, ‘And that was when it all really went to shit.’

‘Danny! Look at me! No more of this.’

I could feel the fear leaking into my own mind, trapped in that house with them, fighting blindly to get out, get free of the horrible darkness rising in my chest. I had to break out before they dragged me down with them.

‘It was Neil wasn’t it? I’ve heard the album, Danny, I’ve read *Beowulf*. Heorot House, the Sanctuary, Neil and John. You all took something on Friday – I don’t know if it came from you or someone else, but we know people were taking acid. The blood tests came back – Suzie, Vinnie, Xander, Raina – they all had LSD in their systems. Neil had some kind of episode and killed

John, then came after the rest of you until you killed him. He killed them all didn't he? Ripped them to shreds, thought he was Grendel. And you all went along with it – Neil had green eyes, but when he came in the house and attacked you, you thought it was Grendel, you saw the beast not the man! Sandy's notes, the dig, the music... John bought a sword, thought he was Beowulf, and Neil became the monster!'

And you were trapped like rats, I thought, enslaved to the rhythm, believing something that wasn't real because it sounded right.

Danny was making a horrible wheezing, gasping noise, tears running down his white face. I panicked, thinking I'd pushed him over the edge and leapt to my feet, grabbing at his sleeve.

'Danny! Danny! Talk to me.'

He was laughing, the bastard was laughing, sobs and hiccups forcing their way out of his throat.

'Grendel was N-N-Neil Fenn?' He could barely get the words out. 'You think Grendel was Neil Fenn? I fucking *wish*! You've got no fucking idea at all have you?'

He wheezed and coughed, hacking until the tears came again.

'You didn't see the film, Inspector. You watch that and then tell me about what you think you know!'

SEX & DRUGS & TENTACLES

*Over the sea and under the stone
Way down waiting there in his tomb
Abomination, sealed away
The dead will rise at the end of the day*

*Raise him up, raise him up
Pour your blood upon the floor
Raise him up, raise him up
Let vengeance walk, through the hall*

*Nameless cults and sucking mouths
Trapped underground, older than stars
Draugr serve your master now
And Vortigern's Curse will take us all*

*Tomb-herders, in the mist
Get ready for the demon's kiss!
Tomb-herders, in the mist
Get ready for the demon's kiss!
Come on!*

‘The Great Devourer’ | Delta | 1971 (unreleased)

The Great Devourer

‘Inspector Shelton?’

I looked up from my notes to see a pretty-looking receptionist in a short purple corduroy skirt and knee-high boots smiling down at me.

‘Mr Fisher will see you now.’

I followed her down the wood-panelled corridor, past dull paintings of pompous-looking men in wigs, until she stopped in front of a polished oak door.

‘Enter,’ came a voice from the other side, and she indicated I should let myself in and walked briskly away back to the foyer of St James’ House.

I opened the door and stepped into a bright, airy room with classical mouldings, a high ceiling and double-height sash windows that looked out over St James’ Park. Pieces of modern art hung on the wall, and a low chrome and white leather sofa stood in front of a glass coffee table. It wasn’t what I’d expected.

A trim, well-dressed man in a light-coloured suit stepped out from behind a walnut desk to take my hand.

‘Not quite what you expected, DI Shelton?’

‘Ah, sorry, not really... How did you know?’

‘People always rather seem to anticipate candles, velvet, maybe a skull or two, but we move with the times, Inspector, we

move with the times. Which is rather why I think you're here.'

I looked at Anthony Fisher appraisingly. It had taken a while, but the Yard had finally found me an approved occult expert and I'd been summoned to an appointment at his office in Whitehall. All I knew was that he was some kind of 'government advisor'.

He ushered me over to the sofa, which turned out to be surprisingly comfortable. 'It's a Corbusier,' he said. Which I vaguely knew meant expensive. 'Some strange ideas about Pythagoreanism and dimensions, but he made jolly good furniture. Have you read *Towards a New Architecture*? No, I don't suppose you have... Sorry, I'm rambling, I do apologise. I've just been quite beside myself since they sent me the book.'

The book in question was Neil Fenn's tatty diary, not much more than an exercise book, with blue covers on which he had scribbled various symbols in Biro around a large, heavily drawn triangle.

'I understand Mr Fenn is dead?'

'Extremely.'

'Well that's probably for the best. Poor boy, so misguided.'

'What can you tell me about the book?'

'It's a terrible mish-mash really, a sort of hodge-podge, if you will, of occult dabbings, cod-mysticism, Kabbalah, eastern meditations, pseudo-Satanist practices, a letter from someone claiming to be Jimmy Page – although I have no way of verifying it – claiming to give instructions on how to teleport, and *Wicca*.'

He said the last word as if it pained him.

'So it's just rubbish?'

‘Oh my, no! Are you a believer, Inspector?’

‘Probably not in the way you mean, no.’

‘There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy. Which is to say, Inspector, are you prepared to accept there may be things in this world, hidden things, powerful forces that manifest in ways we cannot fully comprehend? In short, what you would call the occult.’

‘Listen, guv. What I’m going to say from now on. It, well it might sound crazy, but I swear on my life, on anything you want, anything, that it’s the truth.’

I nodded cautiously.

‘I don’t know where he got it all from, but there are things in this book that speak of power, real power.’

‘He was ordering books from universities, packages from book dealers, Xander Black must have had hundreds of pounds off of him.’ ‘Oh, yes. He bought a lot of books from here. Xander was teaching him things.’

‘And all mixed together with his dreams, and what I assume to be song lyrics – and such insight! Let me read this to you: ‘In the Dream I can bend the walls, move through coils of sound, and control reality’.’

‘You’d consider that insightful?’

‘Oh yes, he had clearly accessed one of the higher planes, and independently too! And there are spells in here that I know to be quite legitimate. *To Augur, To Become Spectral*, listen: ‘The gestures are performed with the left hand. You will need a piece of vellum, black ink and a red ribbon. Stand facing North, after completing the circle about the place of working. Ensure that

everyone who needs to be is within the circle before joining it. Mark your face and the face of the one on whom you wish to cast the spell with the rune Uruz in red ochre. The one who is to be made spectral must stand facing North. If you are casting this on another, you must stand facing them with your back to the Northwest and they must face North. Begin to make Odin's Illusionary rune on the vellum with black ink. Draw it slowly and carefully' ... You see Inspector, this is quite advanced magickal knowledge.'

I could hear him pronounce the 'k'. But something else had caught my ear. 'Odin?'

'She found this ritual on the broken plate to Odin or Nodens or something...'

'Oh yes, the Norse God – I imagine you're looking for the *Beowulf* connection?'

'How? How did you know?'

'And I quote: 'John is seriously trying to kill me – he's obsessed with this fucking Saxon stuff – He thinks he's some kind of warrior. He just came at me today – with a SWORD. I should call the police. I am going to call the police. It's shitting Midsummer Day and I'm being chased by a deranged guitarist with a sword who thinks he's fucking Beowulf. I should fucking kill him'.'

'That's in the diary?'

'Oh yes, along with several references to wolves, tomb-herders, Black Shuck, ghost warriors and the entry: 'Dreamt I was back at school. John was Beowulf and I was Grendel.' Bit of a give-away, that last one.' Fisher's lips twitched slightly.

I felt dizzy. It had been there all along, in the diary that I'd picked up on the first day of the investigation and thrown aside because the handwriting was too difficult to read.

'Why don't you have a read now, Inspector?'

He passed me the book and I skimmed a few lines: 'J is losing it. Keeps going on about a sodding mandolin. Why won't he just play what I'm showing him – he's so CLOSED DOWN. Really strong energy here, can feel it down in the earth – standing in the moonlight. Yeah – we really need another fucking lute. There are other ways to do this – the music is there, just gotta dig it up. I am floating in the dark, above a hill of serpents.'

My eyes slid away from the page, the handwriting was abysmal, the words nonsensical, a grubby pointless little book that would tell me nothing and I didn't want to read anyway.

I moved to fling it away from me in disgust and suddenly found Fisher's hand on my wrist, his face close to mine, violet eyes staring right into mine.

'Why don't you want to read it, Inspector?'

'It's pointless! Useless! And I can't read it properly, it's... it's all blurry.'

'Are you sure?' His grip was relentless and I could feel my fingers twitching, my palm itching as my desire to put down the book intensified.

'Yes! I don't want it. I, what is this? What are you doing?' The room swam about me, strange shapes in the air.

'Look at me!'

'What's happening?' My vision was darkening, ultraviolet shapes swimming at the corners of my eyes and then a horrifying

vision of hundreds of sucking mouths before I gave a strangled cry and found myself slumped in the corner of the sofa with my head in my hands, the book lying between us on the floor.

‘Bewitched, Inspector.’

I didn’t trust my voice.

‘Bewitched, clouded, *Órin’fíer gurán*, a spell to confuse the mind, to convince someone of something, say, for example, that a very powerful and important book was just a tatty little diary that should be ignored. Painful to resist without proper training.’

I felt shaky and slightly sick.

‘Just one of several spells of that type contained here – *Soul Singing* – that will cause whoever you cast it on to see and hear only what you desire, *Bind* – to ensure someone obeys your command – glamour spells, enhancements. I hear Neil Fenn was a very attractive man?’

‘That presence, it’s electric, you just feel like everything is more intense when they’re in the room.’

‘All this was because Neil Fenn wanted to get women?’

‘Oh no, well possibly at first, but no. Mr Fenn was searching for something. See here the *Demon’s Eye* and *Demon’s Ear* spells. Flawed, I’m afraid, but if they were correct they would have allowed him to sense things beyond the mundane, hear sounds from other worlds. Spells for more power and then blessings, protection spells, a great many of them:

All Powers in the Heights

All Powers in the Depths

All Powers of the Horizon

*Ye Watchers and ye Spirits all
I bind ye all unto the One Circle of the Arte Magical
Attend and bear witness. Guard and protect.'*

'And then we see all these spells to create or destroy magical seals. Neil had stumbled upon something, or maybe something stumbled upon him. You see, he shouldn't have been able to do any of this. Power comes from the practitioner, Inspector. The words are simply a focus. And to develop real power requires years of training, understanding and certain personal sacrifices. Neil had none of that, and yet somehow he was tapping into something.'

'Do you know Xander Black?'

Fisher's mouth twisted in distaste. 'Such an arrogant man, and a Crowleian to boot. But yes, he would be capable of understanding much of this, although I don't believe he has achieved the personal power necessary to successfully carry out most of these spells. Was he teaching Neil?'

'I'd thought so. Although now I wonder if it was the other way around.'

'How perceptive of you, Inspector. Yes... Xander would have been drawn to Neil like a moth to a flame, desperate to get his hands on whatever Neil had. He was sure rock music was where the next great wave of occultism was going to be found, you know. I'm afraid I sneered a little, but it seems he may have been right.'

'What else do the diaries say?'

I couldn't bring myself to pick up the book again, even though

I suspected its power over me had been broken now. Knowing it had been ‘enchanted’ in some way, that my own senses had been bent to another’s will was abhorrent to me.

Fisher gave me a sympathetic look before turning to a notepad on his desk.

‘Well, as far as I can tell, whatever happened, happened in the last six months – I believe that’s when the band moved up to Otten Farm? Here we are in late February: ‘Same dream again – making incredible music – adoration/audience – unseen – just dark shapes.’ Then again week or so later: ‘Same dream – going deeper – more control. Glory. Performing – my voice controlling people. Singing to souls. Audience unseen – power coming back to me.’ He carries on having the dream all the way until... Inspector? What is it?’

‘I’d dreamt I was on stage, making incredible music. The audience were just a dark shape but I could feel their adoration pouring over me like a wave, filling me with power. I was underground somehow, it was damp and black and there was something here that made me uneasy, but I kept singing and they were loving me, the crowd heaving, their shapes deformed, the angles wrong.’

‘I, I’ve had that dream.’ My voice was a whisper.

There was silence in the room.

‘Carry on,’ I croaked.

‘If you’re sure? Yes? So, he carries on having that dream all the way until the spring equinox.’

‘Equinox?’ I automatically thought of Xander’s bookshop.

‘Ah, an equinox is when the imaginary plane of Earth’s equa-

tor passes the centre of the Sun, making night and day the same length all across the planet. The spring, or vernal, equinox is generally around the 21st of March, and then we have the autumnal equinox on the 23rd of September, or thereabouts. Of course to those of us who are practitioners they are quite a significant time, a time of thresholds, an edge between light and dark, life and death...'

The party had started on the 22nd of September, I thought. It would have been the time of the equinox when Neil vanished.

'As I was saying, he seems to be discovering something: 'My control is improving, trying to bring the music back with me', 'This shit is working like never before.' Then the first mention that he's tried to share some of this with John, here on the 15th of March: 'There's something about this place – can feel the energy in the air – misty spirals in the corner of my eye. Crackling. John can't see it – I played it to him – he doesn't get it. There is something fucking important going on here and it's chosen me.' It gets a little repetitive, he seems to be frustrated by his experiences: 'Definitely underground – damp/liquid? – black. Something very powerful down here. Showed me a way to get more power – need more power to see more. Can hear the music but can't bring it back with me.' Then a day later: 'I need to find a way to break the wall – let the music through. Tell Julian to bring more acid. Keep waking up too soon – can't bring enough with me – need more time.' It seems he was attempting to use LSD as a way to open himself to the experience, it's not unheard of, and really very much in the shamanistic tradition...'

He caught my eye and hastily returned to his notes.

‘So, at the equinox he seems to have made a breakthrough: ‘Primitive worshippers, marks on the walls, deformed shapes. It is a stage, a sort of cavern, with an opening and I’m singing to it while the crowd heaves below me – can’t see their faces, getting so much power from somewhere – I wish J could hear this – want to bring him here.’ You say you had this dream too?’

‘Yes. Or something like it. After I’d heard their album, but then if that’s what he was singing about, maybe I picked up the imagery from there.’

‘Maybe.’

‘From April it becomes darker. Neil Fenn, as I said, was not a trained practitioner. Oh, he had power now, yes, but not the training that would have allowed him to control it. It’s what happens so often in these cases, people are consumed by the power they tap into, burnt out, lost. He even says here: ‘Got lost, the walls are all wrong,’ and then there’s a reference to having taken peyote. I wonder where he got that idea from? Then: ‘Hard to focus, angles wrong – huge and far away – hundreds of mouths – all singing together. What is it? A liquid kiss, the drowner.’ Which was what gave me my first clue.’

‘By the end of April he’s clearly struggling – it seems he’s unable to return to the dream: ‘Can’t get there any more on my own. Can’t hear the sounds – I need this to work,’ and then: ‘Need to get back to the place and be able to hear it – got to go down further. If you could hear it you’d understand. And they worship me.’ Lots of references to someone called ‘Sam’ who was either helping or hindering him, I’m not sure which.’

‘Think I scared Sam – she kept trying to pull me out and I’m

trying to go deeper. I told her too much. Things I need to do if I'm going to break through. Thought she was J. Thought she might be dead. Had to make her forget, afterwards. Faces shifting. Audience roar, I AM A GOD. She was pissed with me but she doesn't understand – this is an atom bomb under her little magicks. This is real power.'

'I'd be interested to talk to this Sam, whoever she is.'

'An American woman, some kind of performance artist. We're still trying to make contact with her.'

'There seems to have been a crisis in early May: 'The coils aren't sound, Jesus, they're worms, I'm sliding through worms, I can feel them inside me, I'm dead and I'm still moving, I'm, I can see the invisible. Sound is vision, smell, taste. Audience are feeding me. I will slay the gods and become reality. I will need nothing. I will be released.' As you can see he's becoming delusional at this point, and if, as you say, Xander Black was teaching him about Thelema and destiny and goodness know what else... well I can hardly imagine the state his mind must have been in by this point.'

'Neil came at me like he was possessed and started going through my bag, demanding I give him acid – he wanted something to 'take him deeper – got to go deeper – got to get to the place – got to hear it.' I thought he was going to kill me. Make a note of that, yeah? If I hadn't given him what he wanted they would have killed me. So I gave them the acid, so he and Xander could carry on with whatever it was they're trying to do.'

'Not good.'

'Quite. There are some interesting entries here about how

‘It’s been out before,’ he says: ‘it used to echo through the forests – worshippers of the true song. Been trapped in the dark too long. Showed me how they forced it into the stone with iron and blood and cold, cold bones.’ And then his breakthrough at the end of May. Let me read this to you: ‘I know how to let it out – it showed me and I found it in Nameless Cults’, and that was my second clue, Inspector. ‘It’s so fucking simple – but got to get there. Got to free the energy, the power – the world is thin, broken – true music trapped – driving me insane, can hear it but can’t make it. Keep trying – no-one else can hear. I know its name and how to call it.’

He paused and started contemplatively out of the window at the gloomy skies over the park. ‘I’d never considered that before, how, to a singer, especially these young people, how significant sound could be to them. Imagine that, to take the sound of another world, a noise we are trained to endure, to resist, and want to put it into a piece of rock music. I shall have to write a paper.’

‘You said that gave you a second clue? A clue to what?’ I wasn’t sure how much longer I could sit here with this sleek and self-contained man, discussing the brutal insanity of what had happened at Herot House as though it were an interesting academic theory.

‘I’m just coming to that. Throughout June his grip on reality is slipping away. We have his nightmares: ‘The audience turned to me and they weren’t people, weren’t anything, were so wrong, obscene, too many, too much and all mouths, not cheering, but sucking’, then dreams about breaking bonds, releasing something: ‘It’s all starting to unravel, the power is slipping out, the seal is un-

guarded now. I don't know which of us is the audience and which is the singer – they're sucking at me, they want it all, you sing and they devour you.' And a series of references to a candle that he can't look at, but I'm afraid I'm not sure what that's about.'

'Look into the candle, let it burn your eyes out, my heart is full of music, but I'm tainted inside. I was never one of you, never been so pure, the candle will never burn for me'

'As we approach the midsummer solstice – that's the longest day of the year, Inspector, the 21st of June – he seems to have completely lost what little control he had.'

'Then around midsummer I suddenly get this phone call from Julian to 'get the fuck up to the farm, now!' and to bring everything I've got... It was my medical opinion he was in the middle of a complete nervous breakdown.'

'I can't imagine what life at the farm must have been like by then. Of course, had he been an ordinary person, people would have noticed, I daresay. A wife, his work. He would have been sectioned under the 1959 Mental Health Act and probably eventually been passed over to us. But a rock star, a celebrity, someone from whom bizarre behaviour is almost expected, to whom the rules of society do not apply. Again, it's something we shall need to consider more carefully in future. It seems he was unable to sleep. At all. For days. The human brain can't survive without sleep, Inspector, we tested it in the war. But he'd been locked out of the Dreamworld, no longer in control of his own mind: 'Can't take much more of this, I'm dreaming in the daylight but I CAN'T SLEEP. God, I can't take much more of this. The dark in the corner of my eye, it's coming for me, coming all the time.

Dimensions are all wrong. IT'S FAR TOO BIG. Got to keep the darkness away before it takes me down there.' And then rather pitifully on the 19th of June: 'How long will it take me to die if I don't sleep? I can see two worlds. Took all the Valium in the house. Why am I not dead? Maybe I am dead? Please – I'm begging you. Let me sleep. Are you doing this John? Is this how you're going to kill me?'

And then Danny and Xander arrived on Midsummer's Day, I thought, and killed him between them, and then brought him back and everything was apparently OK. Except it obviously hadn't been.

'You kept talking about clues?'

'Of course! Well, this is the reason you sent this all to me – to find out what it was down there in the dark.'

I had no idea at all any more why we'd sent the thing to him. The fact that Neil Fenn had thought he was going on astral voyages while doing magic mixed with hard drugs, and had gone insane and thought he was dead... all this was doing was adding to my belief that he'd had a psychotic episode at the party, believed himself to be Grendel, strapped some claws to his hands, murdered his best friend and then gone on a killing spree amongst a group of stoned hippies.

Fisher got up and crossed over to a locked bookcase, produced a small key on a chain from around his neck, unlocked the glass doors and reverently took down a large leather-bound volume from the top shelf.

'I have it here in *Unaussprechlichen Kulten* – Nameless Cults – not an original of course, but a very fine copy. An inheritance

from my old master, Devlin. One of the last remaining books from the Keepsake project, but I shan't bore you with that now. Here, I've marked the passage. It was the sucking mouths that suggested it to me.'

He cleared his throat and read aloud: 'Creeping up on all sides, to the very line of the chalked circle, the Thing came: a glistening, shuddering wall of jelly-like ooze in which many mouths gaped and just as many eyes monstrosly ogled. This was Bugg-Shash the Drowner, The Black One, The Filler of Space... The eyes were beyond words, but worse still were those mouths. Sucking and whistling with thickly viscous lips, the mouths glistened and slobbered and from out of those gluttonous orifices poured the lunatic chitterings of alien song – the Song of Bugg-Shash!'

He looked at me in delight as I struggled to comprehend what he was talking about.

'Bugsash?'

'Bugg-Shash, Inspector. An extremely unpleasant being indeed. Unlike many of the Great Old Ones he has no organised cult, at least not one that I'm aware of. He tends to be sought out by 'lone sorcerers and madmen for purposes of grim vengeance and murder'. He looked at the book again. 'It's reported his servants fear light and that he has the ability to animate corpses by immersing them in some kind of slimy excretion until he tires of them and allows them to die. According to this text, he attacks by enveloping his victims, then bestowing what is only described as a kiss.'

'Tomb herders, in the mist, get ready for the demon's kiss.'

‘Terribly dangerous though – once you’ve called him or his servants they will not rest until their victim is destroyed. And successfully summoning him is nearly impossible. You would require a specially-enchanted pentagram, preferably with your intended victim already in it, and incredible personal strength of will, or the protection would fail and well, the results would probably be messy. I’ve never seen anyone attempt it. I’m not sure anyone ever *has* attempted it.’

I reached down to where my briefcase sat on the floor next to the sofa. ‘Do you have a projector, Mr Fisher?’

We’d found Suzie’s fingerprints all over the developing equipment. She’d somehow managed to rig up a studio in the bathroom and process the film from the Super8 camera. The projector in the meditation room had caught fire, but the film obviously hadn’t been in it at the time, and bar some smoke damage it apparently worked fine. The technician’s report had included the comment, underlined several times, that the recording had not been tampered with in any way. I’d called the department to check what they meant by that, but had been told the person responsible had gone off sick and might not be back for a while. All I knew was that the recording was 9 minutes and 21 seconds long and potentially the last known images of Neil Fenn.

Fisher did have a film projector, and a proper pull-down screen, unlike the sheet they’d used in the Sanctuary, and while I worked out how to thread the film he closed the heavy shutters until the room was in darkness save for the square of light on one wall and the dust motes glinting in the air. I started the tape.

There was no sound, just the clicking whir of the projector and the faint sound of traffic outside. A white screen, with scratches and grey splotches, then suddenly a dark room, too dark to make out much more than the flickering lights of more than a dozen candles near the bottom of the screen, red gold against the dark blue shadows. Pale hands, moving in the middle of the screen. You could barely see him, just a glimpse of a white bare chest as he moved, then arms being raised up and slowly lowered. I realised I was holding my breath and let it out with a sudden sigh.

The hands reached forward, picked up what looked like a knife and suddenly we were watching Neil Fenn slowly slicing into first his left, then, awkwardly, his right arm. The light flashed brighter somehow and I saw his face fully for the first time, a hollow-eyed ghost grimacing in pain.

The tape jumped, or flickered, and he was on his knees in what I realised was the bath. He was looking at the camera, talking, his lips moving but there was no sound. He seemed to be reading from a piece of paper and then he suddenly flung up one arm in the air as light blossomed in the bath tub, cool, blueish light that revealed the beams on the ceiling and the dark blood running down his arms.

I felt Fisher twitch beside me, leaning forward to stare at the screen. Neil was looking at the paper again, before taking up the knife, this time to slice his chest. The light flashed and for a split second the entire scene was upside down, Neil clinging to the ceiling with a look of panic, before suddenly returning to normal, dark rivulets of blood snaking their way down the muscles of his chest and stomach. There was blood on his face too,

somehow, around his mouth and leaking from his nose. Fisher had a hand to his mouth, staring at the screen in fascinated horror. Neil was swaying, drawing symbols in the air with the knife before picking up another piece of paper and stabbing it through, clutching and crumpling it to his chest. We'd found a torn and blood soaked photograph of John Markham with a hole pierced in its centre in the house and I suddenly realised who Neil was trying to summon vengeance upon.

He seemed confused now, scrabbling around for his paper. Eyes glazed, pupils blown, more blood dripping from his eyes and mouth and sliding down his neck. He held up the photo again, shouting something, body jerking and then suddenly he seemed to lift up, arms flung back and wide, neck tilted, head flung back in a great silent scream, jerking like a puppet. The film drifted in and out of focus, lights flashing from somewhere. The electrics in the house? He was trying to wipe blood out of his eyes now, then shouting again and clutching at his chest and giving what looked like a great cry of anguish as something seemed to be ripped from him. Then he vanished.

For a split second, he was just gone. Then he reappeared, vanished again and flickered in and out of vision on the screen, moving too fast, with unnatural, stiff movements. Everything seemed to slow down and I realised I was leaning in towards the glowing image as he reached out a bloody hand, coming oh so horribly slowly towards me, through the screen and into the room, that bloody mask coming closer and closer, glittering eyes staring right into mine, closer, closer and then gone.

I heard a voice screaming, realised I was pounding on a wall,

blood on my own hands, desperate to get out, blackness lapping at my vision, drowning in slime and blood, my lungs filled with it, my eyes dimming, fingers clawing, hands dragging at me, holding me back.

‘Inspector! Inspector! George!’ I felt firm hands taking my shoulders, pulling my hands away from the shutters I’d been pounding on, light filling the room again, saw Fisher’s concerned face close to my own, leading me back to the sofa and bringing me a glass of brandy.

‘And then we watched the film, and I don’t know, everyone went kind of crazy for a while.’

‘Better?’ It had been ten minutes since the film had finished and I was coming back to myself. I put down the brandy glass and looked Fisher in the eye.

‘The official line is going to be that they were making a horror film. Would you say that was a horror film, Mr Fisher?’

‘I would say that was a man carrying out the rite of Bugg-Shash. Extremely badly.’

Fisher had insisted I stay for a while, talking about psychic shock and the resilience of the human mind, flinging open the windows to let the damp rainy air into the room and making his secretary bring me a cup of strong, sweet tea. I felt like a witness to a terrible event, the kind of person we’d have given a blanket to and sent a WPC to sit with until they’d had a good cry.

‘Someone could have stopped and started the camera, made him vanish that way.’ I said.

‘They could. Is that what you really believe, Inspector?’

‘What did he do wrong?’

‘No pentagram, the wrong kind of knife, he hadn’t remembered the words, I don’t think he was facing East, the symbols were badly drawn, but none of that really matters when you get right down to it. I can tell you quite simply why it went wrong, Inspector. He didn’t really want to kill him. John, that is. Power like that comes only with strength of will. To kill his best friend, his band-mate, his brother? No, Neil Fenn just didn’t have it in him.’

I stayed a little longer while Fisher fussed over me. I felt numb, unable to process the latest horror of these few weeks. I was tainted now, like they were, no longer a part of the normal world and the black despair made me want to lay my head down and moan.

I’d asked him one more question before I left. ‘Is there anything in that book about Nodens?’

‘Nodens? Not in that book, no, but then Nodens is what you’d call one of the good guys, Inspector. An Elder God, possibly linked to, or the same essential being as Odin – a hunter, connected to the sea. In myth he chases down evil creatures in the Dreamlands, hunting the servants of the Great Old Ones for sport, sometimes protecting or aiding men’

‘So why would you summon him? Can you summon him?’

‘Honestly, Inspector? Nodens is who I’d call if I needed something hunted, something killed. Something really bad.’

THE GREAT DEVOURER

*Deep under earth and sea, lies sleeping still
The eater of all, devourer of minds
Long a captive kept, sealed in the dark
Till spiteful vengeance, split open the door*

*Many the warrior, brave-hearted and bold
Ripped down from this world, by the stealer of souls
Night terrors creeping, into the mead-hall
And Vortigern's curse, shall hunt down us all*

*Fairest and brightest, bravest and bold
Go down in the dark, where the shadows still call
Blood on the black stone, and three lives given freely
Star-made swords, and brooches of silver*

*Walking in mist, this land to keep safe
Guardians now, of iron and bone
Marked by the sign, of the sea and the stone.*

‘Noden’s Song’ | From Bawdesy Churchyard, Suffolk
(Trans. Professor Snow, UCL)

Vortigern's Curse

I'd checked into a hotel for the night, unable to face going home. Jeanette had understood, she knew how it could be while I was working a case, but I knew she could hear the distance in my voice. 'I love you, darling,' she had said, twice, and my heart had ached with cold. I could feel the gap widening, as the normal world seemed to drift further and further away, like a distant shore that I couldn't seem to find a way to get back to. I remembered how something seemed to have died in Andy Took and numbly wondered if the same thing was happening to me.

I arrived at the Yard to find a swarm of photographers and journalists outside. The story had finally been broken to the press. 'Nine dead in Delta tragedy' was probably the kindest of the headlines, and by tomorrow morning the tabloids would be full of lurid stories of drug overdoses, orgies, black magic and God knows what. They hadn't released the actual location of the party but I didn't imagine it would be long before Fleet Street's finest were knocking on Tamara's door. The official line still seemed to be that the party-goers had tried either a new drug, or something contaminated, that had led to their deaths, and that of a 'brave young police officer'.

I'd been summoned to Chief Inspector Davies' office as soon as I'd arrived, been thanked for my 'sterling work' and told in

no uncertain terms that the case was closed. Sindy Reynolds was unlikely to ever regain consciousness and whatever Kenny McConnell had to say was considered irrelevant. Danny Reece was going down for manslaughter, Delta's name was mud and there was to be a funeral for PC Thompson next Wednesday with a full police escort and which I was expected to attend. Bernard himself would be reading the eulogy, presumably while Thompson's wife and 2-year-old son looked on. A press conference was scheduled for later in the day, which I was not expected to attend and Bernard suggested I take some time off before being reassigned. 'Perhaps you'd like to join Jack again? I hear Operation Duchess has hit a dead end – could do with a man of your calibre, George.'

I slumped in my chair, looking out across the haze of cigarette smoke that already filled the office by mid-morning. A stack of paperwork, files starting to gather dust, a memo telling me the American Embassy had found Samantha Vilhalmsdottir for me, a cup of cold tea, and a note from one of the DCs that said someone called Timothy Chester had been arrested in King's Lynn with a scribbled phone number underneath.

I called across the room, 'Tom! What's this for? I don't know a Timothy Chester.'

DC Tom Simms looked up from his work and frowned at me. 'That's the artist you wanted us to track down, Travesty something-or-another. Turns out his real name is Timothy Chester and he attacked his assistant last week, or the week before. Charges were dropped, I expect he's home again by now – that's the number of his studio.'

The case was closed, I told myself firmly. Nothing to be gained by investigating any further. I should get up, put on my coat, go home, or maybe call Jeanette and have her come into town, take her for dinner, see a play, walk along the river. Normal things. Real world things where people laughed and loved and ate food that didn't taste of ashes and had dreams that didn't end in blood. I picked up the phone and asked the operator for King's Lynn police station.

Timothy Ezekiel Chester was born in 1936 to Mary Chester, an unmarried teenager in Islington. He had been brought up by his grandmother until she had been killed and her house destroyed in the Blitz, during a daytime raid in which the sirens had failed to sound, dubbed by the papers the 'Klaxon Travesty'.

Timothy had apparently been a strange child, raised by a series of deeply religious aunts and a next-door neighbour who had been the surrealist painter Conroy Maddox. He'd first shown his work in the Birmingham Surrealists exhibition under the pseudonym Klaus Traveller and then left for Paris with a small inheritance and girlfriend in tow. After several years as a struggling artist he'd found fame with his brutal portraits, building up a clientele of increasingly famous celebrities – apparently you weren't anyone unless you had a Klaxon Travesty tucked away somewhere, savaging whatever you liked about yourself. Tamara Forwood had become his patron, introducing him to major galleries in London and New York where he became part of Andy Warhol's 'factory' scene until 1966 when he'd fled the States and returned home. He'd bought a studio in King's Lynn where

he focused on sculptures made from twisted pieces of driftwood and fallen branches while continuing to paint and produce offensive murals, commissions for science fiction book covers and private artworks for, amongst others, Bowie, Judas Priest, Deep Purple, Black Sabbath, Hendrix and Dylan. And of course Delta.

I'd been told all of this by his personal assistant, Lucinda Hal-lowthwaite, an attractive brunette whose throat still bore faint finger-shaped bruises from Klaxon's attack on her two weeks previously.

'I didn't want to press charges, Inspector. One of his students called the police and made it all seem much worse than it was. You see Klaxon is an *artist*.'

According to the police report, they'd arrived to find Lucinda hysterical from being half-strangled and with a shallow wound to her arm caused by one of Klaxon's sculpture tools. He'd locked himself in his studio for three days after being seen behaving 'erratically' in a number of public houses, and when she'd finally forced the lock out of concern for his mental well-being he'd flown at her 'like a wild animal'.

We were sitting in an office in the former stable block that had been converted into artists' studios, waiting for Travesty to feel ready to speak to us. I was drinking coffee from a rustic-looking and slightly impractical mug that Lucinda informed me had been made at Cley-Next-The-Sea, just along the coast.

'A local connection, the feel of the landscape, is very important to Klaxon,' she'd told me as she passed it to me.

I'd been quite keen to see the inside of the studio, but Klaxon

swept out suddenly, an energetic, bounding figure with a quizzical, pointed face, wearing heavy make-up and wide flares with a thick hand-knitted scarf and insisted we walk down to the beach to talk because, 'I think better when I'm moving.'

'I have a song to sing to the worms of the earth,' that's what Neil said when we first spoke about the concept.'

Klaxon hadn't been lying when he said he liked to move. He raced up and down the beach, leaping up and down to walk along the sea wall, picking up pebbles and skimming them into the grey North Sea. If he'd suddenly run into the water on an impulse to see how it felt it wouldn't have surprised me.

I'd told him I was involved with the now-public Delta case. Just as it had with Annabell at the news of Xander's death, a flicker of relief had crossed his face when I confirmed the band were dead and that his artwork was in police custody. I'd explained my presence here as having come to arrange its return, but he seemed disinclined to take it back.

'It gave me dreams, George.' He'd insisted on calling me George from the start, or occasionally 'Mr-Policeman-Man'.

'I often dream about my work, but these dreams weren't mine. They were coming from somewhere else. I was thinking of abandoning the project, calling Neil and John and telling them I couldn't do what they wanted, but...'

What they'd wanted had been artwork for their new album, double-gatefold, inside and outside showing Grendel attacking a mysterious warrior standing guard in some kind of underground barrow. 'With a whole load of other things thrown in – runic

symbols, these concentric ring patterns, ghostly shapes, drowned and slimy figures, all walking into a giant mouth. Well, that's what Neil wanted anyway, but then John would phone up or write and want something different again.'

He'd initially been approached by Julian Cavendish, who took him for a rather excellent long lunch and outlined what they were looking for. 'He said they were both big fans of my work and felt I was the only one who could really show what they were trying to do. I have to confess I was flattered'. Julian had explained how important creative control was to John and Neil and the absolute secrecy of the project and Klaxon had signed a number of very serious legal documents. He'd named a mildly extravagant sum as a fee and then the two had retired to his London studio where Julian had laid out the concept, explaining how the brand's retreat in Suffolk had helped them feel a deep connection with the ancient warrior spirit. A few days later a battered children's edition of *Beowulf* had arrived in the post, along with the first cheque for initial payment.

'Two nights after that Neil Fenn called me at three in the morning to spend an hour talking about the importance of depicting things that can't be seen – or that can only be seen out of the corner of your eye – or when elevated to the correct state of consciousness and how this could be achieved using materials of this world and we discussed something he called 'psycho-sexual archaeology,' the representation of sound in art, oh, and candles. Although I didn't use the candle idea in the end.'

'The problem was they couldn't agree. Neil would phone or write wanting things and then John would get in touch wanting

something different, they were contradicting each other, sometimes Neil would want all the warrior imagery and John wanted something in the dark watching, and then it would be the other way around. They'd call any time, day or night and I was sending sketches back and forth, 10, 20 versions, lithographs, water-colours... it just went on and on. Then the dreams started.'

'Hundreds of mouths and eyes, sucking at me, or this dream of an oak tree in the moonlight with something stirring in the shadows, or a dark space somewhere with a shining black rock and a candle burning.' He threw another pebble into the sea before blowing out hard and walking backwards, seemingly propelling himself along the beach on each breath, as he called to me, 'I made two versions in the end, of the cover, you know! Sent them off the day before the party to Julian to take with him. One with two mighty heroes emerging from a dark cave bearing Grendel's severed arm, with a wonderful dragonship on the beach, then another with a hero's blade in the foreground and these two warriors standing proudly over the broken body of a monster, while a horde of otherworldly creatures poured down the hillside out of the cave... see, look, like this!'

He ran back and drew enthusiastically in the sand at our feet, until a wave washed in and smoothed his scribbles away.

'So which one was John's idea and which was Neil's?'

Klaxon laughed and span around on the beach again.

'Oh it's never that simple, Mr Policeman! John was Neil and Neil was John and I was both of them and the paintings were neither. They couldn't decide, never would have done. But at least now I'm free!'

I'd started driving back down the A10 to London before finding myself pulling off the main road and stopping in the car park of the Rose & Crown in Hillgay, on the banks of the River Wissey. I knew I should turn the key in the ignition again and drive on, but somehow instead I'd walked into the pub, booked a room for the night, gone upstairs and slept for three hours straight. It was late afternoon now, the sky warm and dark, the pub half empty but glowing with polished brass and wood gleaming in the firelight as I sat and nursed a pint of bitter and gently turned the little ship amulet over and over in my hand. There was no reason to carry on with the investigation. Klaxon had been one of my last leads and all he'd given me were things I already knew. I'd done all this in the wrong order – if I'd spoken to him or Anthony Fisher first I'd have had the Beowulf connection from the start and, no... I slammed my hand down on the amulet, feeling it pierce the skin of my palm. The case was closed. They'd got high and killed each other, what did it matter why they thought they were doing it, what they'd seen in the dark, what I'd seen on that film. You're done, George, I said to myself. Time to wrap it all up and move on. I pulled my notebook out of my pocket, tore out the pages from the last two weeks and spread them out in front of me on the table, then shuffled them together to drop into the bright fire beside me. A name caught my eye, Professor Snow. I should call him back, tell him to ignore and pack up the notes I'd sent him to look at – Sandy's notes scribbled in shorthand on neatly hole-punched pages in her UEA ring binder. I made a note of the number and fished around for a coin for the public telephone at the end of the bar. What was it they took now, two pence pieces?

Or a an old halfpenny sometimes, if you were in luck.

‘Professor Small? This is DI Shelton, I’m sorry to call you so late in the day. I just wanted to let you know that...’

‘Inspector! I’ve been trying to get hold of you all day – the documents you sent me, well, they’re revelatory, incendiary! You must put me in touch with the source, obviously, we’ll have to authenticate everything, but if this is true, well, it changes our whole understanding of the site, of...’

‘Professor, sorry, I don’t think you understood me. The case is closed, I need you to send those notes back and...’

‘Send them back? Oh no, no! They shed an entirely new light on the entire chapter and our interpretation of Vortigern himself as a historical figure! I’m travelling to Bury St Edmunds next week to view the originals, but if they are genuine then my theories are vindicated. ‘And the guardians were left that the land be made safe. And the best and the brightest; the fairest warriors of Esc, then left there to guard against a future rising’ – it’s all right here!’

‘Professor Snow,’ I began and then the line went dead. I pressed the switch hook a couple of times, then jabbed at Button B in annoyance and swore when the phone refused to return my coins. After a trip to the bar for more change I managed to place the call again and got a faint and crackling connection.

‘Inspector? Is that you again? Sorry, it’s a terrible line. As I was saying, Vortigern was a 5th-century warlord – a leading ruler among the Britons. I don’t know why I never considered him before – after all, his existence is considered likely, though information about him is shrouded in legend. He is said to have invited the Saxons to settle in Kent as mercenaries to aid him

in fighting the Picts beyond Hadrian's Wall. Unfortunately they revolted, killing his son in the process and adding Sussex and Essex to their own kingdom. You see, because of this he is remembered as a terrible King, one of their worst leaders, because of that decision, and he's often described as 'cursed' but this discovery throws new light on the whole legend!

'Professor,' I had to interrupt him. 'I have no idea what you're talking about.'

'A new version of the Saxon Chronicles that doesn't match any other! This student claims to have found it in the archives at Bury St Edmunds. The original, or what we thought was the original, is held at the Bodleian, but if this one is real it confirms all my theories! It's in Latin of course, a copy made at some point, possibly a copy of an earlier manuscript, or with additions made, or, well, the possibilities are endless. This could open up a whole new area of study. I should very much like to meet this Sandy of yours, Inspector.'

I didn't have the heart to tell him she'd probably run off with a record label executive with a cocaine habit and a violent temper.

'Listen to this for A.D. 449: 'This year Marcian and Valentinian assumed the empire, and reigned seven winters. In their days Hengest and Horsa, invited by Vortigern, King of the Britons, to his assistance, landed in Britain in a place that is called Ipwinest-fleet where the sacrifice was made; first of all to support the Britons, but they afterwards fought against them and Vortigern did curse them and open the Seal at Aelwartone and release those abominations held below. Hengest then sent to the Angles, and desired them to send more assistance. They described the worth-

lessness of the Britons, and the richness of the land. They then sent them greater support. Then came the men from three powers of Germany; the Old Saxons, the Angles, and the Jutes. From the Jutes are descended the men of Kent, the Wightwarians (that is, the tribe that now dwelleth in the Isle of Wight), and that kindred in Wessex that men yet call the kindred of the Jutes. From the Old Saxons came the people of Essex and Sussex and Wessex. From Anglia, which has ever since remained waste between the Jutes and the Saxons, came the East Angles, the Middle Angles, the Mercians, and all of those north of the Humber. Their leaders were two brothers, Hengest and Horsa; who were the sons of Wihtgils; Wihtgils was the son of Witta, Witta of Wecta, Wecta of Woden. From this Woden arose all our royal kindred, and that of the Southumbrians also...'

'Professor!' I'd been trying to get a word in for some time. 'I'm delighted for you, but I really need those notes back and I don't see how any of this relates to the, er, investigation I'm working on. So if you could just have your secretary...'

'Aelwartone, Inspector! That's Alderton – just down the road from Sutton Hoo! It says here again for A.D. 455: 'This year Hengest and Horsa fought with Vortigern the King on the spot that is called Aelwartone, the ancient place of the Britons. Many being slain there in the night by Vortigern's Curse, Hengest afterwards took to the kingdom with his son Esc.' So there was a battle on that site that obviously had some kind of magical or religious significance to them!'

'And Vortigern's Curse will take us all.'

'And this isn't something you've come across before?'

‘That’s exactly what I’m telling you!’

I could hear the pips, the phone demanding I feed more coins into it and I fumbled for the change as Snow continued with his excited description of the Chronicle. ‘We have more references here in A.D. 457, 465 and 473 of battles on and around the Deben and the Saxons taking losses from something referred to as the ‘Stalker in the Night’ and trying to close some kind of seal. ‘And the Britons fled from the English like fire, to the place of the Black Stone where the curse is found,’ ‘This year Hengest and Esc fought with the Britons, nigh Ippesfleet and the Stalker in the Night there slew twelve leaders,’ I mean, this is clearly influenced by many of the heroic sagas, a reinterpretation if you will of an older culture that...’

‘Professor!’

‘Sorry, sorry. Then we have: ‘This year Hengest and Esc fought with the Britons on the Deben, and there slew four thousand men, yet the darkness remained and the seal still open.’

‘It’s all starting to unravel, the power is slipping out, the seal is unguarded now.’

‘What’s that, Inspector? I can barely hear you.’

A noisy crowd of locals had entered the pub, placing orders at the bar, laughing and joking. I cradled the receiver close to my ear, hunched around the phone, trying to make out the crackling words.

‘Then in A. D. 477 we have the arrival of Ella – another Saxon leader, ‘with his three sons, Cymen, and Wlenking, and Cissa, in three ships; landing at a place that is called Cymenshore. There they slew many of the Britons; and some in flight they drove into

the sacred grove of Nuada. And from the men of the Isle learnt of the Drowner and his servants and spoke with Nodens for his aid in the hunt.' I mean this is fantastic – we're actually establishing here the concept of an opposing religious conflict, with the Saxons and their Gods on one side, versus what seem to be Druidic beliefs, or possibly something shamanistic or rooted in the landscape... and the reference to Odin/Nodens. As I said, whole new areas of study! Then we have nothing of special relevance until A.D. 488 when Esc ascends to the throne and becomes King of the men of Kent and we hear that: 'Again Draugr came in the night and the binding was incomplete.'

'Draugr?'

'It's an old Norse word – strictly speaking it means something like 'again-walker' – an un-dead creature. In the stories they live in their graves, guarding treasure buried with them in their mound.'

'Ghosts?'

'Well, more like animated corpses, they have a physical body and similar physical abilities as in life and could die a 'second death' when their bodies decayed, were burned, dismembered or otherwise destroyed... I have a most fascinating volume on the subject that I can send you, Inspector! But, yes, if they thought the Britons had turned an army of the dead upon them, then of course, it all fits!'

'What fits?' The pips were sounding again and I had no more money to feed into the phone.

'My theory about the purpose of Sutton Hoo, of course! It's right here in A.D. 490: 'This year Ella and Cissa besieged the

temple at Aelwartone, and slew all that were therein; nor was one Briton left there afterwards and Vortigern's Curse ended by the sealing of the Stone. And the Guardians were left that the land be made safe. And the best and the brightest; the fairest warriors of Esc, then left there to guard against a future rising. Let their ships be covered, the army safe in the earth, undisturbed.'

VORTIGERN'S CURSE

Strange brew, kill what's inside of you

*She's a witch of trouble in electric blue
In her own mad mind she's in love with you*

With you

Now what you gonna do?

Strange brew, kill what's inside of you

*She's some kind of demon messing in the glue
If you don't watch out it'll stick to you*

To you

What kind of fool are you?

Strange brew, kill what's inside of you

*On a boat in the middle of a raging sea
She would make a scene for it all to be*

Ignored

And wouldn't you be bored?

Strange brew, kill what's inside of you

‘Strange Brew’ | Cream | 1967

Stay In The Light

Vinnie cupped his hand around the Zippo, its flame lighting up his pinched face and ragged beard under the brim of his cowboy hat. They were huddled around the glowing embers of the fire in the lounge, whispering to each other in the darkness.

‘Her parents are going to fucking kill me.’

‘Shut up, Vinnie.’

‘They’re gonna kill me!’

‘Shut up, Vinnie. And pass that over.’

They’d been sat there for an hour, passing joints back and forth and trying to think what the hell to do.

‘What did you have to give her acid for anyway?’

‘I said SHUT UP!’

Kenny McConnell pushed himself away from the fire and paced around the mess in the lounge, staring out into the darkness beyond the torn red curtains. ‘I need to think. There’s got to be a way out of this, a way to beat it.’

‘Have you fucking seen it, man? It nearly took my leg off!’ Vinnie winced as he looked down at the bloodstained bandage wrapped around his thigh. ‘Good job we’ve got Danny.’ He paused to relight the joint, coughed. ‘Anyway, you’re the one with the sword.’

‘You’ve got Ray’s axe.’

‘Andy’s got a gun.’

‘Yeah, and why’s he got a gun? How many bass players do you know that carry a gun?’

Vinnie shrugged and Kenny growled in exasperation and picked up the nearly empty bottle of whisky from the fireside, kicking a spark on the rug back into the hearth. ‘I’m going to see what the birds have worked out. You’ll be alright here?’

‘Her parents are going to *kill* me.’

Kenny walked out into the cold dim hallway, stone tiles underfoot where the rug had been shoved to one side, muddy footprints scuffed around the door. The phone was still hanging off the hook, bloody fingerprints on the receiver. Through the door to the dining room he could see Sadie hunched over a pile of notes, muttering quietly to herself, hair tucked firmly back behind her ears. The remains of dinner were still on the table along with several half empty coffee cups, an overflowing ashtray and two flickering candles. The broken muddy pieces of the plate that Danny and Andy had pulled out of the trench lay on the table, pushed together in a crude reconstruction.

‘*Sige goldgiefa sóþe fæder, Ánhonde metod, Æwe metod. Metod* is God, I’ve already got that, and I’m sure *fæder* msut be father, I’ll just find *sóþe* and then I’ll look for *goldgiefa*.’

‘How’s it going?’

Sadie jumped. ‘Oh, it’s you, Kenny!’

‘Found anything useful? Anything I can do to help?’

‘I’m trying very hard to concentrate and you’re all making me flustered! It’s destroying my *balance*.’ She sniffed and rubbed at

her nose, eyes wide, pupils huge. 'It's all so... aha! Here we are, victory, write that down, write that down.'

'What's that?'

'The plate? I think it's some kind of Saxon ritual, a sacrifice to Odin, a way to ask for aid from the Gods.'

'Can we do it?'

'Oh my, oh, I don't know. You see the picture on the plate, the warriors? And the man in between?'

'It looks like he's, fuck, are they cutting off his hand?'

'Hand! *Hand* of course, I knew I'd seen that earlier! *Eower hond he nóme*, 'your hand he took'! Thank you Kenny!'

'Hey, no problem. Tell you what, Sadie, you keep doing, whatever it is you're doing, and I'm going to check on the others.'

He moved to walk away, then turned back, his eye caught by a glint of silver in the pile of pottery fragments. 'What's that?'

'An amulet. Andy found it. Look, Kenny I'm really in the zone here! Everyone leave me alone! Leave me alone!'

'OK, Sadie, it's OK. I'm, er, I'm just gonna take that though, alright?'

'Dém gód úrum dædum ond úrum heargwearde!'

The little amulet felt heavy in his hand. A drop of silver worked into the shape of a tiny dragon boat by ancient hands. Let fall into the dirt and buried underground, waiting. Waiting for him. No. He shivered, that was ridiculous. He slipped it into his shirt pocket, cold next to his heart.

The front door was still shut tight, the blank fog pressed up against the glass, nothing out there. Nothing yet. But it would

come back. He could still smell the sea in the air, licked the back of his hand and tasted the salt on his skin. Maybe a ship would be useful after all, if the sea rolled all the way up to the house and took them far away home. *'An old debt waiting to be paid, Call of the journey over sea, Memories of summer long gone.'*

'What the fuck are you trying to tell me, John?'

Up the stairs, splinters on the banister under his fingers and into the little bathroom on the first floor. Sindy and Danny were huddled over a torch in one corner, a pile of ripped up sheets next to them, Danny's bag open with its contents spilling out across his lap, teaspoons in a mug on Sindy's knees.

'So if it's a very small shot of pure-ish stuff, cooking it isn't really necessary, but it'll generally to help the dope dissolve faster.'

'So that's what the spoons are for? I hold the lighter underneath until it boils?'

'Good girl.'

'What the fuck are you doing!'

'Kenny, Jesus, you nearly gave me a heart attack!'

'Get the fuck away from her. Sindy, get out of here. Go find Suzie, anyone. Christ, Danny, she's 16!'

'Yeah, she's 16 and she wants to help when *it* comes back. I need a nurse, Kenny. She's – she's got her First Aider's badge from the Guides!'

'You have got to be fucking kidding me!'

'I want to help!'

'You don't know what you're saying! You, Sindy, look love, you should never have been here. We need to keep you safe. Just

get out of here and...'

'Oh and that was you *keeping her safe* last night, was it? I know what I am, OK, I know, but at least I don't lie about it.'

'Shut up!'

'What are you going to do, Kenny? What are you going to do without Neil and John to tell you anymore? Delta's dog you are. Wagging your tail and waiting for them to tell you you're a good boy. I remember the farm, yeah! I fucking remember. So piss off and leave us alone if you want me to patch you up again.'

'Screw you, Danny.'

Back out onto the landing, a single candle sitting at the turn of the stairs. Archie slumped on his bed drinking whisky in the dark and sobbing gently, Xander and Paul's door was shut, raised voices inside. Giggles upstairs on the second floor, torchlight shafting down through the banisters. 'Is that you, Kenny? Come up here.'

'Suzie? What are you all doing up there?'

'Raina's teaching us how to give massages!' More giggles.

'Are you fucking high?'

'Come on, Kenny, come up and see us!'

'Is Andy up there with you?'

He was. Lying on the bed strumming a guitar. 'And this is an old one, ladies, something from Took of the Tzars, just for you.'

'I need to talk to you, Andy.'

'Go ahead, man, go ahead. I'm all ears... pass that joint, Luna, love.'

'Seriously. This is what you're all doing?'

‘Relax, Kenny. Relax... can’t you feel it?’

‘Feel what?’

‘The vibe, man, the vibe! These lovely ladies, good music, fine wine...’ He indicated the empty bottle rolling on the floor. ‘Some truly excellent grass... and now, on the main stage at The Marquee, it’s Kenny McConnell! Give us a song!’

‘Sing us a song! Sing us a song!’

‘Are you all insane? Christ, at least Danny’s doing something useful!’

‘I can be useful, Kenny, let me be useful.’ He could feel Raina slipping round behind him, cool fingers starting to massage the knots out of his shoulders. ‘Tell me what you want, what you need, what you *desire*.’

‘Stop it, Raina.’ Suzie’s voice cut through the smoky room.

‘Kenny’s right. What are we going to do?’

He paused. What were they going to do? Felt for the amulet next to his chest, flexed the muscles of his back. That did feel better. No. Think, Kenny, think.

‘We’re going to get out of here alive. Whatever it takes.’

They stood looking at the pile on the kitchen table. ‘So we’ve got Ray’s shotguns, Andy’s pistol, the sword, the axe and the poker. How much ammo did we find, Vinnie?’

‘Two boxes of shells in the cellar. And a can of petrol in the shed.’

‘We’ll save that. Don’t want to start a fire unless we have to, but find some bottles and rags in case we need to make cocktails.’

‘Cocktails?’

‘I believe Mr McConnell means a Molotov Cocktail. Favoured weapon of revolutionaries and rampaging mobs everywhere.’

‘Yeah, thanks, Archie. What did you find?’

Archie produced a heavy rolling pin and a cast iron frying pan with a slightly sheepish expression. ‘It was all I could think of.’

‘Fucks sake, man, this is a war, not a pantomime.’

‘Needs must, dear boy.’

‘Jesus. OK, how many torches have we got, Andy?’

‘Four. But the batteries are going.’

‘OK, OK. Right when it comes back we go upstairs. Take what you need and get up to the room at the back. Danny’s got some kind of hospital set up in the bathroom. I’ve made Sadie take her notes up there. Keep Sindy safe and keep the women out of the way.’

‘What about Paul and Xander?’

‘Fuck them. So here’s the plan, I’m going to keep watch from the first floor out the front. Vinnie, you’re down here, Andy I want you looking out the back and Archie you go upstairs and look out over the woods. This time we’re going to be ready.’ *I don’t know what you’ve done, Neil. But I’m going to try and fix it for you.*

‘Let me help you, Kenny.’

‘I’m busy, Raina.’ He was standing in the front bedroom, looking out over the dark lawn through the fog, one hand on the sword.

‘I could help you relax. Make you feel better.’

‘Stop it.’

But her fingers were dancing up and down his back, sliding, smoothing, kneading.

‘Stop it!’ He whirled around, caught her slim wrist in his hand, her long black hair falling past her shoulders.

‘Kenny. You’re special. I can see that. I can always see the special ones.’ She gave him that little girl look and began to shrug out of the long dress she was wearing. Underneath he caught a flash of the gold bikini he’d seen her in earlier on her way back from the bathroom.

‘Kenny... Kenny... I don’t belong to anyone now. But I could give myself to you...’

‘Oh God.’

‘None of this matters... it could be just you and me. I could give you power, give you everything, see your future, oh!’

He’d pulled her towards him, she was fragile like a bird, little heart fluttering in her chest, but strong inside like steel wire. Electricity in her blood and something else, something dark coming for him, filling him with a power that tasted of copper and lightning and dreams.

‘Raina.’

He turned away from the window, one hand twisted in her hair, the other still holding the sword.

‘Put that down, you won’t need it any more. You won’t need anything any more.’ And for a moment as he dropped the sword and fell to his knees in front of her he thought it might be true. *‘Hold me tight, baby, stay in the light. Let me hear you breathing, let me know you’re alive.’*

‘FUCK ME! IT’S IN THE HOUSE! IT’S IN! HOLY SHIT!’ Vinnie’s scream echoed through the house, a high note of pure terror threading through it.

‘Who opened the door?’ That was Danny, voice full of disgust as he grabbed his bag and legged it up the stairs to the second floor.

‘Where is everyone!’ Vinnie again, crashing into a table in the hall, panicking and trying to get to the stairs. Kenny ran out of the front bedroom and onto the landing, standing and listening to the dark. A deep echoing noise and the drip, drip, drip of water in a cave.

‘WHAT THE FUCK IS IT?!’

Upstairs Raina suddenly screamed and he could hear Suzie shouting ‘Sadie! Run upstairs now!’

Vinnie was still stumbling around downstairs, his white face staring up from the hall ‘Now, Kenny? Now would be good. Now would be really fucking. Fuck, its coming, fuck, it’s coming!’

Kenny grabbed the sword, swung down the first set of steps with a scream, pushing Vinnie behind him, away from the shadow that was advancing down the hall. ‘GET BACK! GET BACK!’

Then Andy was backing him up, firing into the darkness, and something was snarling and lurching away. Kenny yelled at everyone to get back, then Andy was shouting for a torch, the girls shrieking on the first floor, Luna tripping and stumbling on her long dress.

‘It doesn’t like the light! Stay in the light!’

‘Fucking hell. Shit. Shit. Shit’ Vinnie was sobbing behind him, a hand clasped to a spreading wet stain on his shirt.

‘Get up to Danny, run, get up there!’

‘Paul, get the fuck down here! Anyone with a gun! Bring the

shotguns!’

It was Suzie who appeared behind him, grasping the poker firmly in one hand, shotgun in the other. ‘Suzie, love, get back up the stairs, you don’t even know how to fire that.’

‘Kenny,’ Andy’s voice was low in his ear. ‘I’ve got an idea.’

‘I’m all fucking ears, mate.’

‘What if we turn off the torch for a minute?’

‘What!’

‘Just for a moment, and we get all the torches down here and then turn them all on at once. We might blind it?’

‘Jesus, Andy, do you think that’ll work?’

There was another deep snarl from the door, the single torch beam wavering through the fog in the hallway, picking out glimpses of something in the shadows, long claws, teeth, bones, fur. Kenny tightened his grip on the sword. ‘Do it.’

They passed the torches down the stairs, Vinnie’s Zippo too, just in case.

‘OK, I’m going to turn mine out, then we all turn them on at the count of three. One, two, three...’

But it was fast. So much faster than he’d ever realised and the count of three got mixed up in Suzie’s scream as the torches came back and then it was on them, on top of them, ripping at Andy and dragging Suzie from his grip.

‘Leave her alone!’ He could hear Suzie screaming, cursing, hitting out with her fists but it was stronger than him and then there was a last shocking glimpse of her blue eyes staring at his before her blonde hair was sucked into the dark. ‘Up the stairs! Get back! Get back!’

He swung the sword in the blackness, feeling something crunch, hot blood spattering his face, the amulet burning his chest with cold fire. ‘Get back!’

Running up the stairs again, fog and claws at their heels, dragging Andy the last few steps and crouching on the turn of the landing. ‘Suzie! Suzie!’

From upstairs he could hear whimpering, Danny’s voice telling Vinnie to stay still, Luna sobbing gently. Then it was coming again, loping up the stairs, hunched on one side, green eyes and the stink of blood in the darkness. He swung the sword again and again, felt a claw rake his leg, but it was dropping back, snarling shuffling, pulling back with the mist back down to the hallway where Suzie’s body lay waiting.

‘Kenny! Kenny? Has it gone? Where’s Suzie?’

Suzie Q, with the blonde curls and the giggle. Who’d shown them the film and brought a shotgun down the stairs and gone to her death hitting something from a nightmare with a fucking poker because he couldn’t protect her, couldn’t protect any of them. He pushed himself up again, leant heavily on the wall and wiped the blood from his face.

‘If I called to you would you answer me? If I called to you would you come?’

‘Sadie! Where’s that ritual?’

*We come from the land of the ice and snow
From the midnight sun where the hot springs flow*

*The hammer of the gods
Will drive our ships to new lands
To fight the horde, singing and crying
Valhalla, I am coming!*

*On we sweep with threshing oar
Our only goal will be the western shore*

*We come from the land of the ice and snow
From the midnight sun where the hot springs blow
How soft your fields so green
Can whisper tales of gore
Of how we calmed the tides of war
We are your overlords*

*On we sweep with threshing oar
Our only goal will be the western shore*

*So now you'd better stop and rebuild all your ruins
For peace and trust can win the day
Despite of all your losing*

'Immigrant Song' | Led Zeppelin | 1970

Kenny

Kenny McConnell was still something of an unknown to me. All Simpson had managed to turn up on him was an article about Delta on tour in France where he was mentioned in passing and three arrests for assault, the most recent at the Glastonbury Festival.

I was supposed to be back in London, but instead I was walking briskly along the corridor in the private hospital near Colchester that Kenny had been moved to three days earlier, and which I'd only managed to track down by impressing a nurse at Ipswich by flashing my warrant card without actually giving my name.

As far as I could tell Kenny had known John and Neil for years, driving their van, arranging parties, finding them girls and generally hanging around, until they'd become Delta, and hired him as their Head of Security – a job he'd apparently taken very seriously. He was something of a legend in the industry according to a fanzine piece I'd found, managing guest lists and backstage passes and deciding who got in and who was definitely out. When the tours had come to an end, he'd tried a few other things, working for a couple of other rock bands and drinking heavily, until he'd made his way back up to Otten Farm at Julian's request to try and keep the guys in line and in the studio and keep everyone else out. His arrest report said he'd been heavily

intoxicated at Glastonbury and when a fan had tried to climb up on stage during Hawkwind's set Kenny had smashed him in the face with a bottle of Jack Daniels. So much for peace and love.

Unlike Danny he'd had access to a good lawyer from the start, which was the main reason I hadn't spoken to him earlier. He'd been taken to hospital after the raid, and had needed some fairly serious surgery on his leg. Once he'd come round, his first words had been the name of his brief, who had successfully argued that Mr McConnell was too ill to speak to us, traumatised by the events, and in any case clearly a victim, not a suspect. With no evidence to charge him with anything and the net closing around Danny Reece he'd been left alone to convalesce. I'd made two efforts to speak to him once I'd heard the recordings of the fight on the Dictaphone but been put off on both occasions. Someone was looking after Kenny – I didn't know if it was Atlantic, Bernard Davies or some mysterious department, or whether he really was that sick, but when I'd managed to get hold of the fingerprint reports I'd muttered a jubilant 'gotcha' under my breath. Kenny McConnell's fingerprints, carefully taken and filed by the Somerset constabulary, were all over both the sword from the house and the axe we'd found in Paul Bronson's back.

After my call to Professor Snow the night before I'd gone up to my room at the pub and pulled John Markham's diary out of my pocket. I'd skimmed it briefly when I'd taken it from Andy Took, but at the time the significance of some of the entries had been lost on me, and then I'd been sucked into following Neil's story to its bloody conclusion and in the haze of horror and exhaustion

I'd honestly forgotten I had it. I certainly hadn't got round to registering it with the investigation as evidence and I doubted anyone wanted it now.

John's diary was very different to Neil's. For a start it wasn't magically enchanted, as far as I could tell, and his handwriting was better. It talked of long walks on the dunes and hours spent recording birdsong or sitting crossed-legged in the woods, trying to 'connect with the sound of the land'. Sounded a bit pretentious to me. It seemed that while Neil had gone looking for his new sound in other worlds, John had been trying to find his in the landscape of Suffolk, in the bleak beauty of the salt marsh and the early morning whisper of sea on shingle.

Kenny didn't look too bad, sitting up in bed with the sheets draped over the cage that was protecting his leg. Better than Andy Took and Danny Reece anyway. He was good-looking, with a slightly cheeky face, younger than I'd expected, but with an air of competence and something hard around the eyes that told me he'd be a good man in a fight.

'I've been trying to talk to you for a while, Mr McConnell.'

'Well, that's what lawyers are for, mate.'

He had a slight Essex accent, and I realised I recognised his voice from the Dictaphone tape as the man leading the fighting, while Vinnie went to pieces and the others screamed upstairs.

'He's coming back, he was getting the sword... Kenny, maybe just keep that with you, yeah?'

'Why did you kill Paul Bronson?'

I'd surprised him. His eyes widened slightly and for a mo-

ment he looked very young indeed, hardly older than my Peter.

‘I don’t have to tell you anything.’

‘I rather think you do, Kenny. Your fingerprints are all over that axe. The sword as well, but I’m not so sure what you were doing with that. I can’t see you stabbing Archie in bed, or taking Suzie’s head off... but Paul Bronson? Yes. Was he going after Sindy, Kenny? Was that why you killed him?’

He wiped his hands on the sheets, lifted his chin at me.

‘I want my lawyer.’

‘You know what I think you want, Kenny? I think you want to tell the truth to someone who’ll believe you. I know what happened after you all called on Nodens – or at least I think I do. Did they come for you, Kenny, when you called? Did you get the help you asked for?’

‘Fucking hell, man.’

John’s diary might not have been as obviously dark as Neil’s, but the more I’d read, the more I’d realised he was in a torment of his own, driving himself to the edge in search of the perfect sound while he watched his best friend do the same. He’d become convinced there was something watching him in the woods, waking in the night to walk out onto the lawn at the farm, wet grass underfoot, feeling eyes on him. Ancient eyes. There were a lot of notes about ‘scops’ and ‘skalds’ – the Saxon storytellers and singers of old. *‘And now and then one of Hrothgar’s thegns who brimmed with poetry, and remembered lays, a man acquainted with ancient traditions of every kind, composed a new song in correct metre. Most skilfully that man began to sing of*

Beowulf's feat, to weave words together, and fluently to tell a fitting tale. Many an episode unknown or half known to the sons of men, songs of feud and treachery'. Pages of scribbles about old instruments he might try, lists of locations like Bawdesy Churchyard where he'd recorded the ambient sound, trying to collect the echoes of the past. He'd had dreams too. Dreams where he was chased through the woods by wolves and warriors who wanted something from him. Something he was afraid to give.

[Shouting, running footsteps, drumming noise]

Vinnie: Now then, who can use a fucking gun?!

Kenny: What gun is it, man?

Vinnie: They're fucking coming in! There's things out there and they're coming in through the fucking windows, they're in the fucking house!

Kenny: What are they?

Vinnie: They got in the [...] FUCKING LOOK THERE!

Kenny: What the fuck!

Vinnie: Fuck! Fucking hell!

[Screams and indecipherable shouts]

Vinnie: You'll be all, you've, look at the fucking THING!

Kenny: You're Saxons! We're on your side!

[Woman wailing]

Kenny: I've got the amulet, I've got the amulet, fuck off!

Vinnie: SHIT! THEY'RE FUCKING COMING!

Kenny: BACK OFF!

[Sounds of scuffle/gun shots/swearing]

[Loud crash]

[Gun shot]

Vinnie: Fuck, that man! They're fucking invincible! He shot two of them... SHOOT IT!!

Kenny: I've got the sword! I've got the sword of Beowulf! Back off! Back off! Yeah!

[Men and women shouting]

Kenny: Archie are you OK?

Archie: No!

Kenny: I've got the sword, I've got the amulet. Take a step down! Back off!

Vinnie: Fucking hell.

Kenny: No. Don't step up to the door. Don't you dare take another step or I'll fucking hit you.

Archie: I don't think I, I don't think I. Just put the gun down, it might be OK.

Kenny: I've got the amulet, I've got the sword. Back off!

Vinnie SHOOT THEM!

[Sound of gunfire]

Kenny: Yes! Back off!

Vinnie: JUST SHOOT THE FUCKERS!

Kenny: Go! Go! Now! Fuck! No, you! That one! Now!
[Sound of blows] Shit! Shit! Shit! Back off!

'Where did you get that from?'

'There was a Dictaphone at the house. I think it must have been left running. Vinnie really went to pieces didn't he?'

'Yeah, well he'd lost his hand. And that point we didn't even know what for.'

Even knowing everything I did, I'd had to almost stifle a laugh listening to this Essex boy telling their attackers to 'step down and back off!'

'What happened, Kenny? What happened on Saturday night? You're not fighting Grendel – I can hear Vinnie saying 'they,' and you're trying to talk to them, whoever they are.'

He gave me a long look, weighing up his options, before taking a deep breath and giving me the final part of the tale.

I wasn't sure when John had bought the sword. His diaries had become cryptic, secretive. Full of ramblings about how he'd been chosen, about figures who were more bone than flesh who'd met him in the midnight grove and shown him a candle burning on a black stone. Lyrics about brotherhood, about oaths and bones and how he too was now a warrior and about the thing in the dark that was taking Neil from him.

He talked about the sword a lot once he had it though. I'd begun to like John Markham less and less. He was vain, arrogant, proud to be chosen to be something better than mortal men. He'd had dreams too. Dreams where warriors came in the night and took him into the woods and showed him what was down there in the dark. Dreams where the stars spun slowly above him in the moonlight as they showed him the candle again and the sword this time and asked him to prove his strength, make the sacrifice like Tyr and give his hand to the wolves in the wood. And he'd run, and run and kept on running.

Kenny was telling me things I already knew. The party, the fight,

the eyes outside, breaking down the bathroom door to find only a whirlwind of bloodstained papers and the clicking camera. I'd let him talk, let him ease himself into the story and watched the way his hands gripped the sides of the bed, scabbed and scratched, and seen the muscles clench under the bruises on his face. He'd probably been closer to Neil and John than any of the others, seen himself as part of the Delta team and I wondered if he'd felt betrayed by the men he'd spent years working for.

'So we went out under the tree and did a load of shit. Chanting stuff – Xander was having the time of his life – and flinging all this wine around and promising the gods we were going to be worthy. Boasting and all that. Big old pissing contest.' He flashed me the quick grin I had learnt to associate with this down-to-earth man before his face hardened again.

'Vinnie was completely off his face by that point. Convinced he had to chop his hand off to get us some help, and Danny, well Danny said if we couldn't stop him then at least we could do it right.'

'It came for us straight away. Grendel. We thought nothing had happened, that the fucking rite thing hadn't worked, so we were running back to the house and it came for us out of the trees. I went for it with the sword but it mauled Vinnie pretty bad. And then everyone really lost it. Like we'd unleashed this wave of something, something dark. Everything was just crazy, the air was electric and we were all seeing things, running round the house, hunting, being hunted. Xander and Raina... they...'

He'd stopped. Something about Raina, then. Had Kenny had a thing for her and killed Xander? Or had he been the one who

raped and smothered her?

‘Look, I thought she didn’t want him to. I thought, maybe she and I, so when I heard them, I went in. I could hear her shouting ‘No’, but when I went in, they were... and she told me to get out. That she wanted to be with him.’

‘He asked her to give her body to him, the way a devoted initiate would sacrifice to his or her god or High Priest... She said he made her feel special, wanted, desired, in control.’ I didn’t know what signals Kenny had got from Raina, but he had clearly been hurt by her rejection of him for Xander Black. I suspected Kenny was the type who liked to save people. Had he been hurt enough to try and make a move on her himself? Kill her?

‘We thought doing the magic would get us out, make the fog go away, you know? Or that these warriors would turn up and fight Grendel for us like on the album cover. But when they came, they weren’t how we thought they’d be.’

‘There was this drumming. All through the house. This slow beat, going right through everything. Like, like a, look I don’t fucking know, I’m not a drummer, but it was really fucking creepy. Vinnie was getting the fear and I said to get all the birds upstairs. Then there was fog coming in under the door, filling up the hall, like dry ice, only real... I looked out the window and they were just standing there, the three of them. Standing out on the drive, beating their swords on these shields. It was dark, but you could see.... You could see they didn’t have any fucking faces. Just bone under the helmets. Bits of rag and bone. And I’m like, we’re fighting fucking zombies with skeletons here!’

‘Zombies?’

‘Yeah. Oh, Danny didn’t tell you about that? Yeah, Neil came back. Suzie, Ray, Margot, all of them. Covered in this horrible stuff and still walking around when they ought to have been fucking dead. Anyone Grendel took came back that way.’

His jaw clenched again and I imagined Suzie and Neil stumbling through the house, back to friends who would have first- tried to speak with them, then run from them, tripping and pushing their way up the stairs, Andy firing his gun at them, Suzie falling but pushing herself back up again. No. I’d got my head around some of the things that had happened in that house, but this was just too bizarre.

‘It’s reported he has the ability to animate corpses by immersing them in some kind of slimy excretion until he tires of them and allows them to die’. I shook my head.

‘I had the guys chop them up,’ continued Kenny, matter of factly. ‘It’s what they do in zombie movies, you know? Night of the Living Dead? I wanted to burn them, be on the safe side but we didn’t want the fire to attract anything. I made pretty sure with Neil. No way was he getting up again. So, yeah. Zombies.’

‘Draugr.’

‘What?’

‘It doesn’t matter. You, er, you seem pretty OK with all this?’

‘Well. It’s like you get to a point where everything is just crazy and you have to decide. Go nuts, or give up, or do what you have to do. Just look around you and think: what do I need to do to get out of here alive? That’s all I was thinking about. And I thought, yeah, I’m a survivor. I’m Kenny McConnell and I’m fucking getting out of here.’

‘So the warriors came to you?’

‘They came in the house.’

According to Kenny the music had been playing again on the smashed stereo even though the electricity was out – Delta or Zeppelin, he wasn’t sure which. Something loud, that had got twisted up with the deep drumbeats and the coils of fog as the figures had come into the pitch black house and steadily up the stairs.

‘We panicked. Well, Vinnie panicked. And I suddenly thought maybe they weren’t here to help. Look, we didn’t know what the fuck we were doing – I’d taken a lot of coke, everyone was hurt, it was two in the morning and you’ve got fucking skeletons with swords coming up the stairs in the dark. Sadie was trying to talk to them, and I was shouting that I’d got the sword, I’d got the amulet, that we were on the same side. But then Andy tried to shoot one and it all got a bit messed up.’

‘I’ve got the sword, I’ve got the amulet. Take a step down! Back off!’

I could see the scuffle on the stairs. Andy Took firing into the darkness, Kenny shouting and brandishing the amulet like some kind of bouncer holding back a crowd, Danny trying to get Sindy and Archie up to safety, Sadie reading words from her dictionary, Xander doing whatever the hell people like him did. Probably trying to raise Bugg-Shash himself or fucking Raina while Paul Bronson watched.

‘So they fought you?’

‘I think they might have done. We weren’t exactly proving ourselves worthy, know what I mean? But then *it* came back.’

He shuddered. 'It only had one arm. That's one of the reasons we knew it was Grendel.' I'd wondered about that, whether it was the 'real' Grendel or just something similar, why they'd been so sure of what they were dealing with.

'We'd had the kid's book and in the pictures Beowulf had pulled one of its arms off.' He paused, remembering the fight, eyes looking out of the window onto the damp lawn outside. 'Mind you it didn't need two arms. It was big, fast, strong. Too strong for us. But *they* fought it, out on the lawn at the front, all three of them together, going at it with swords and shields. It took one of them out, just reached out and crushed them and I realised they were going to lose.'

In my mind there were fires burning, but there couldn't have been, Kenny had said they didn't want to light a fire. Still I could see flaming torches, the beat of a drum, three warriors in helmets like the one I'd seen at the British Museum, fighting silently in the cold night against a snarling beast. Bone and iron on reeking, steaming hair and bloody claws.

'I made everyone get out there and help. To bring whatever they had and get the fuck out there. This was our chance to take it out. I knew that. *Knew* it. We'd never have survived another attack.'

I could see him now, standing by the front door, sword in one hand, gun in the other, bruises on his face. I couldn't imagine it had been easy to rally them. Vinnie would have been out there, maybe Andy and Danny... but Xander, Paul, the women? I imagined him silhouetted against the candlelight, striding up and down, sword and amulet gleaming, face flushed, screaming at

them: ‘Don’t be such cowards! Get back out here or I’ll fucking shoot you myself!’

So they’d all run out into the night, screaming and shouting and battering the monster, firing shotguns and hitting it with the sword, a poker, Ray’s axe, everything they had. Berserk in the moonlight, fired up with cocaine and mead and LSD and blood magic.

‘And we did it. Killed it.’

‘So why didn’t you leave then?’

Kenny snorted. ‘You think we didn’t try? That was the first thing I wanted to do. But the fog was still there, and any way, the two that were left were stood there making the Delta sign at us.’

I looked at him blankly.

‘The Delta sign! You know, man...’

Kenny held his hands out in front of him, thumbs and index fingers touching to make a triangle. ‘It’s what they do at gigs —it’s Neil and John’s sign! Delta, the triangle...it’s on all the album covers. When we saw them doing it we thought it might be *them*, these two warriors stood there, making the sign and that they were asking us for help. But I don’t think it was. It was the sign of the three.’

Three warriors. John’s diary had been quite clear about that too. Three guardians left to protect the Seal, wherever that was. Three was a magic number, I remembered being told once. Kenny, Neil and John – three men against the world. I could see why he’d wanted that to be true, his mates coming back for him.

Kenny was still talking about the warriors, a tone of awe and respect in his voice now, from one hard man to another.

‘...because one of them had died. Well, I mean, they were already dead, but one of them had been... destroyed. And I could feel that was wrong, that they needed someone else to go with them, to take his place. You know what I mean?’

‘They said that?’

‘Nah, mate, they never said a word. But I could tell.’

Following that they had apparently gone to bed, after Danny had stitched up Archie, bandaged Kenny’s leg and found Vinnie dead in the bathroom. ‘I know it sounds crazy, but we couldn’t go anywhere and it just felt safe all of a sudden, warmer too. Sadie kept saying she might have a way for us to leave, but that we needed to know a symbol first. And we argued for a bit about how you see a symbol that you don’t know. Maybe you could dream it, or take acid, and Xander said we should look in Neil’s book, try some of the spells. It went on and on, and eventually we just gave up and went to bed. It was, well, it was almost like we were being made to sleep. I kept just thinking that it would be fine to go to sleep, that we were being watched, protected’.

‘You didn’t go with the warriors?’

‘I tried. I shouted after them, said they could have me, but they just shook their heads, kept making the sign. So I went to bed. And dreamed.’

I wasn’t sure I could have slept. Not in a house full of corpses, guarded by ancient skeletons and drenched in blood. But Kenny was adamant they had. And they’d woken knowing what to do.

‘I came down to find everyone shouting. Half the birds were dancing around in the lounge singing the album. Luna and Cindy,

they'd dropped some acid, said that Sindy had dreamt the symbol and that it was going to be fine.'

'Did *you* dream it?'

'I might have done. I was dreaming about circles, like concentric circles, I think, but nothing I could draw for you now.'

'Sadie had been up most of the night, drinking coffee, taking speed, we found her asleep at the table but she said she had the answer now and that we needed a sword that had killed a man, or something like that. She said it was all in the songs. A dishonest blade.' He shook his head, clearly the magic side of things wasn't his cup of tea.

'What about the others?'

'Archie was in bed, he was in a bad way after the fight. Andy too, Danny was looking after them, but he said they needed a proper hospital. Paul was helping Sadie. He was going through Neil's diary, 'cause he said he was working out how we could get there.'

'There?'

'Some place we had to go.'

I counted them up in my head. Luna, Sindy, Sadie, Kenny, Paul, Andy, Danny, Archie. 'Where were Xander and Raina?'

Kenny's expression shut down for a moment.

'I found them, Kenny. In the bedroom on the first floor. He killed her, didn't he?'

'I don't know.'

'I think you do. I think you had a thing for Raina, Kenny. Was it him, or was it you? Were you so jealous that you smothered her? Or did he rape her and try and cover it up?'

‘I don’t know!’

‘Everything you’ve told me and you’re going to lie about this? I know you killed Paul, Kenny, and from what I’ve heard you might have done the world a favour, but I need to know what happened to Raina!’

Those thin arms, reaching across the bed, pale morning light washing her skin.

‘I’m telling you I don’t know because I don’t fucking know! Alright? She had a weak heart. She’d told me the night before. No-one saw them go upstairs. I went to check on Archie. He’d been, well to be fucking honest he’d been a nightmare, shouting for people to come and help him, that he needed people to take him to the bathroom, just moaning and crying and... well I noticed it had gone quiet so I went up there to check and he was dead.’

‘So you checked his body? Why?’

‘I just thought, I don’t know, there was something off about it. Xander had been downstairs when Sadie said we needed a dishonest blade, and then he’d gone upstairs and my sword had gone from the hall, so I pulled back the sheets and had a quick look.’

‘So, he did die from his injuries?’ ‘No, actually. Someone stabbed him with a long sharp blade, maybe a very large knife, right through the stitches of the original wound.’

‘I knew it. I just knew it was him, the bastard,’

‘You mean Xander?’

‘I went straight down the hall to their room and I could hear him inside. He was crying, shouting at someone, something, tell-

ing them it would submit to his will, that his will was the whole of the law, crazy stuff. I kicked the door down and he was there.'

'With Raina?'

'Yes, but, when I'd heard all that from outside I thought he was shouting at her, forcing her.' He looked away. 'But she was already dead. He was shouting at this candle he had on the floor in front of him, just shouting at it that, no, he was its master, that he wouldn't be judged, clawing at his face, at his eyes. It was insane. With everything that happened, I think that was the worst. I shouted at him, asked him if he'd killed Archie and he turned to me and I knew. I fucking knew it. So I shot him.'

We'd taken a break while a nurse had brought us some coffee and a plate of biscuits. Kenny looked tired, his hands were starting to tremble a bit and the colour was gone from his face. He had clearly come out of this the best of all of them, but even he had to have suffered, however much he bluffed his way through stories of sword fights with zombies and coke-fuelled battles in the middle of the night. '*I made pretty sure with Neil. No way was he getting up again.*' What would doing something like that do to a person? What did he see when he closed his eyes?

'Tell me about Paul.'

'Paul was a cunt. The minute I first saw him, I thought, I know your type, you dirty fucker. The kind of man who likes little girls, women who have no choice, who likes to hurt, who takes what he wants.'

Kenny swallowed suddenly and I wondered if he was thinking of Raina, or something else from his past. '*Kenny gets all the*

girls for Delta.'

'You said he was working on a way to get you out?'

'Hah! Yeah... he worked it all out and explained it to Sadie. Told her everything she needed to know. That was his mistake.'

A cruel smile had drifted onto Kenny's face.

'We were standing outside the house, getting ready to do whatever it was they wanted us to do. Sindy had drawn something on a rock and Sadie was saying we should stand in a circle and hold hands. And I could see Paul just looking at Sindy, just looking, and then he said he'd hold her hand and something inside me had just had enough. He'd been no fucking help in the fight, I didn't see why he should get to go home. So I asked him if he'd told us everything he knew. I kept asking him if he was sure, in case it went wrong, had he told Sadie everything? And he was swearing over and over again that he'd told her everything he knew, that he'd held nothing back. Swearing on his life, not that I thought that was worth much. So I stuck an axe in him. Felt good too. And you've no record of me saying that Inspector. I'm not doing time for a shit like that. I was putting him down, George. Like you would an animal.'

I left Kenny not long after that. A nurse had come in to see if he was getting tired and, anyway, I needed to go away and think. I'd asked him what happened next, but he couldn't remember.

'We were starting to do something, something was happening, we were moving, going somewhere else. I know it sounds mad, but I remember Danny saying the names of tube stations. We were travelling, Inspector. Travelling without moving, and

then it all went wrong and we were back where we started and your lot were there, shouting and screaming at us.'

'Where were you going?'

'I don't know.' He turned haunted eyes on me. 'But I think I need to go back.'

I'd fallen asleep in the little room above the pub listening to the sound of the river with the diary on my chest and the amulet clutched in my palm and dreamt of a dark, creaking cave. Cold under the earth with the flicker of the candle and something dripping onto the black stone. And I'd known I could never do what they wanted. That I'd failed the test, couldn't do what they asked, even to save the world. To save my brother. Because if I did I wouldn't be able to play the guitar anymore. When I woke my hand was throbbing, blood from the tiny cut smeared on the silver of the amulet and I knew I had one person left to see.

SEX & DRUGS & TENTACLES

*You'll hear me calling in your sweet dream
Can't hear your daddy's warning cry*

*You're going back to be all the things you want to be
While in sweet dreams you softly sigh*

*You hear my voice is calling
To be mine again
Live the rest of your life in a day*

*Get out and get what you can
While your mummy's at home a-sleeping
No time to understand
'Cause they lost what they thought they were keeping*

*No one can see us in your sweet dream
don't hear you leave to start the car*

*All wrapped up tightly in the coat you borrowed from me
your place of resting is not far*

'Sweet Dream' | Jethro Tull | 1969

Sindy

Music Prodigy To Meet Stars, Shepherds Bush Gazette, 16th September 1970

Shepherds Bush music student Sindy Reynolds hit the big time this week when she won a competition to meet the world famous band Delta at a star-studded launch party for their new album.

The competition, held by Radio Free London DJ Vinnie 'The Voice' Diamond, asked listeners to write in with a question that they would like to ask the band. The prize for the lucky winner was a ticket to accompany Vinnie to the party and meet Delta.

Sindy, a sixteen-year-old student, who has just been accepted to West London College to study music at A-Level, was one of the hundreds of boys and girls trying to make their dream come true.

'I can't believe I actually won,' said Sindy, almost breathless with excitement, when interviewed only hours after hearing the news. 'I always listen to Vinnie, he really knows music – I love everything he plays. When he announced the competition I just had to have a go! I love Delta and I didn't even know they had a new album so close to coming out! Anyway, I knew exactly what I would ask them, you see I play the guitar and I can play everything they have ever done, even their old stuff before they became famous. So I would just ask if I could play with them!'

Sindy, who plays not only the guitar but also saxophone and piano continued, 'I can't wait to get to the party but I am quite scared. I really will ask them if I can play, but I don't know if I'll be able to say anything else, they are just so amazing! I know I will cry when I see them!'

Producers of *The Graveyard Shift*, Vinnie's two-hour midnight show, told reporters that the DJ was 'very excited' to meet Sindy and that her answer was 'a clear winner'.

Sindy herself is no stranger to the public eye or to competitions, having been the winner of several Bonnie Baby competitions including our own Summer Baby Photo Comp, when she was only three years old and then going on to be the face of Pippa Dee Parties before even starting school.

Delta's manager Julian Cavendish was unavailable for comment.

Sindy Reynold's parents had looked dazed the first time I'd seen them, with the stunned look I'd first encountered as a young policeman, on the faces of people whose lives had been suddenly derailed, the bottom dropping out of their world and leaving them stumbling jerkily around trying to find the magic words that would somehow make this not be happening, not to them, not their child, please not their child.

'But she *can't* be!' Sindy's mother had said over and over again to me. 'She can't be here, she was just going to a party. She *can't* be here.'

Just going to a party with Vinnie Diamond and Delta and half of the most unsavoury characters on the London music scene, I

had thought to myself. What were you thinking, letting her go? I hadn't said it out loud though. No need to add to their grief.

'She won a competition. The radio station were supposed to be looking after her. They sent a car, Mr Diamond said there would be a chaperone. No-one said she was going to Suffolk! No-one said there were going to be drugs! She doesn't take drugs. She's going to college next week. She's a good girl!'

She probably had been. Poor Sindy, I thought. You never stood a chance. I was back in the hospital in Ipswich where Sindy Reynolds, who would be 17 next week, lay flat and silent under a very white sheet in a private room at the end of the hall. I'd heard Atlantic were paying for everything and that her parents were going to sue Radio Free London for every penny they had. The table by the bed was covered in sentimental 'Get Well Soon' cards from her old school friends. Some had sent toys, knitted things, home-made badges and a school scarf, and her mother had pinned some posters to the wall before the nurses made her take them down again.

'I just wanted her to have her own things around her. In case she wakes up and wonders where she is.' Mrs Reynolds started crying again. She'd cried every time I'd seen her, tears just sliding out as if she hardly noticed them at all any more. Mr Reynolds had needed to go back to work and they were talking about having Sindy moved back home, or to a hospital nearer their house in Shepherd's Bush. I imagined Peter lying there. All those years you spent loving them and washing them and dressing them and getting them through school and holding them and watching them breathe as they slept and then, just nothing. All

for nothing. It all seemed such a terrible waste.

‘Would you mind if I sat with her for a while?’

I’d expected Mrs Reynolds to say no, but she didn’t seem to mind, or even wonder why I was asking. She murmured something about how kind I’d been, how kind we’d all been and said she’d get a cup of tea and packed up her knitting.

I sat down in the still-warm plastic chair by the bed and stared at Sindy’s smooth face. Eyes closed, smudged shadows underneath, dark reddish-brown hair. No-one knew why she wouldn’t wake up. Jack had found her lying on her back on the lawn when he arrived at the house but the doctors had found no injuries on her other than a few scratches and bruises and decided to put it down to drugs. She had taken acid, we knew that. *‘Luna and Sindy, they’d dropped some acid, said that Sindy had dreamt the symbol and that it was going to be fine.’*

How was it going to be fine, Sindy?

I shouldn’t be here. Bernard was out for my blood for not dropping the case yet, and for making WPC Simpson hand over the evidence boxes to me. Jeanette must be going out of her mind wondering where I was. I knew it was only a matter of time before they all tracked me down, but I had to think. I just needed time to sit somewhere quiet and think and work out the final piece, and Sindy’s bedside was a very quiet place indeed.

I pulled out my notebooks, the diaries and spread them on the bed. Come on, George, think like a copper. Go back through what you know until you find the piece you don’t. There was something very old under the Sanctuary, Herot House, Heorot Hall, whatever you wanted to call it. What had Fisher called

them? ‘Great Old Ones’, or was it ‘Elder Gods’? No that was Nodens. The thing down in the dark was the Old One, sealed away, or according to Fisher, possibly not in this world at all. So Alderton was a place where the walls between the worlds were thin, the kind of place where a man like John Markham or Neil Fenn might hear something, if they listened hard enough.

‘Really strong energy here, can feel it down in the earth – standing in the moonlight... the music is there, just gotta dig it up.’

And whatever it was, the ancient Britons had known about it and the not-so-mythical-after-all Vortigern had released it, or possibly one of its servants, and sent it out to kill Saxons as vengeance for the death of his son.

‘And Vortigern did curse them and open the Seal at Aelwar-tone and release those abominations held below.’

Professor Snow had been right about the ships, and so had Edith Pretty. They must have been buried with a warrior in each – the fairest and brightest, men who had made some kind of great sacrifice to so as to lie in wait, holding the seal, ready to do battle with the thing that came in the night, whenever they were called. Cultural awareness, I realised, that’s what this was. Like the training day we’d had to go on about dealing with ‘ethnic communities’ as the woman running it had called them. About how London was now a multicultural society and if you arrested a Sikh it was OK for them to have a sword because it was a cultural thing, and how we should ‘police with respect’. It hadn’t gone down well, all a bit bleeding heart liberal. I remembered a room full of smoking, fidgeting coppers, making jokes and eyeing up the woman’s top trying to decide if she was wearing a

bra or not, and generally feeling this was a waste of time. They break the law, we'll nick them and we couldn't care less what colour their skin is or why they wear a turban. But I saw what she meant. Something had been woken by what Neil was doing, and the Guardians had reached out to John, but he hadn't understood, hadn't realised what sacrifice meant to them, hadn't understood what it was they wanted him to do and when he finally did he'd run away and not called for help and things had got worse.

'I'd never considered that before, how, to a singer, especially these young people, how significant sound could be to them.'

And they never considered how a guitarist like John Markham would feel about losing his hand. I'd wondered if it had to be a hand, but the packet of notes Professor Snow had sent me had explained that. John's diary had been full of references to Tyr and I now knew that meant the son of Odin, a god of war who would take mead, meat and blood for sacrifice. The sword had a rune scratched on it dedicating it to Tyr, which I assumed John must have done. I was a bit hazy on the details but Tyr had somehow had his hand bitten off by Fenrir, who was a wolf, and possibly another god, it was all a bit complicated. He'd sacrificed his hand willingly so that the other gods could bind Tyr and keep the world safe. So that explained that, and all the dreams about wolves in the woods. It seemed our Saxon warriors were very literal people. When they asked for a hand, only a hand would do.

Working back through the diaries I decided that Danny and Xander must have bought Neil some time by 'killing' him at Midsummer, breaking his connection to Bugg-Shash, or whatever it was that had pulled him down there. You tried your best,

Neil, I thought. If they'd let you die it might have come out alright. But I rather thought not. The seals were broken, according to Neil's diary, and I'd put good money on the possibility that if Neil had died, Xander would have been up at the farm next, carrying on where his protégé had left off.

And then the party, and the realisation that the music in their heads, the music they'd spent so many hours trying to record, wasn't what they'd thought it was. Like a brilliant idea you have in a dream, that you can never bring back to the real world.

The equinox, the time, the place, the music, the threshold between dark and light, the fight between brothers, and Neil's sudden decision to fuck them all and summon vengeance on John, that had been what started it all off again.

So back to the same puzzle. I knew Grendel had come, that they'd fought him, fought their dead friends – brought back by the mist and the demon's kiss – and then summoned the Guardians and won. So why wasn't that it? Where was Sadie trying to take them before we interrupted her? What was it Kenny still needed to do?

'Because one of them had died... And you could feel that was wrong, that they needed someone else to go with them, to take his place... Sadie said she had the answer now and that we needed a sword that had killed a man, or something like that. She said it was all in the songs.'

The bloody songs. The songs that Sindy had worked out all the words to because she was Delta's biggest fan. There was no-one else left. Whatever Sadie knew was locked inside her head and she was locked in a secure unit. Danny and Andy never

really knew what they were doing, Julian had run away before it started, Luna wanted to die to be with her lover and Cindy, who might have had all the answers, was lying here silent as the grave.

I sighed in exasperation, staring up at the ceiling. My other long shot had taken me nowhere. The last thing I'd done before leaving the Yard had been to call the number from the American Embassy, working out the time difference as the long distance operator put me through to a telephone somewhere in New York. A woman had answered the phone with the strongest New Jersey accent I'd ever heard, and in case you're wondering how I know, Jeanette's older sister married a GI from Atlantic City and it's not an accent you forget.

'Is that Samantha Vilhalmsdottir?' I was fairly sure I'd mangled the surname horribly.

'This is Valerie. You want Sam? Hold the line.'

I heard footsteps and the sound of the voice shouting in what sounded like big room. A studio maybe? Samantha was supposed to be some kind of artist.

The phone was picked up again and a soft voice came down the line.

'Samantha speaking. Who is this?'

I'd explained I was a police inspector from England, and that I needed to talk to her in connection with the death of Neil Fenn. She'd already read the news, and I wondered how it sounded to her, thousands of miles away.

'I'm just calling because we have Neil's diary, and it mentions you visiting him at Otten Farm earlier in the summer and I won-

dered if you'd noticed anything odd, anything unusual in his state of mind?' She'd laughed at that.

'Oh, honey, you obviously never met Neil. The only thing that could have been unusual was if he *hadn't* been in an odd state of mind. I think I knew it was coming though. When I left him that day I kind of knew I wouldn't be seeing him again. What happened, Inspector?'

I paused. I wanted to tell her everything, ask her why she'd given him peyote, what he'd seen, what he'd told her, why was she crying that morning at the Sanctuary, who was Valerie, what the hell was going on in the world?

'I'm afraid our enquiries are still ongoing.'

'Oh.' She sounded disappointed. 'Could you – could you tell me one thing? Were they together when they died? Neil and John, I mean.'

I thought of Neil's corpse in the bedroom and John's at the bottom of the lake.

'In a way, yes.'

'Good. You could never separate those two. Never get between them. Oh, they fought, sure, but they were brothers, that pair. Light and dark. Two sides of the same coin.'

Two sides of the same coin, maybe. But pulling in two different directions. '*A lot of it sounds like they're fighting each other, not working together, like there are two albums, two sounds they're trying to make.*'

I flicked through the diaries again. Random lyrics jumping out at me. '*A dishonest blade, plunged deep inside, open up the*

unseen world’ ‘*A warrior’s weapon, take your last breath, seal the spirit inside*’. Hang on. I went from one diary to the other and back to my notes, where Peter and I had written down the lyrics, cross referencing, underlining. My God, I thought, rubbing a shaking hand across my forehead. It was right there. Sadie had been right – it was all in the song!

But how would you do it? Neil’s diary again: ‘*And then we see all these spells to create or destroy magical seals.*’ OK, OK – Xander would have worked that out easily enough, but how to get there? I scrubbed a hand through my hair, heart pounding, trying to think, think. I had everything they had. Paul Bronson had worked it out, surely I could do the same.

I turned the pages of Neil’s book back and forth. The spell was broken now, but it hadn’t improved his handwriting and it was all such a mess, a confused mess, ‘*a terrible mish-mash really, a sort of hodge-podge, if you will, of occult dabblings, cod-mysticism, Kabbalah, eastern meditations, pseudo-Satanist practices and a letter from someone claiming to be Jimmy Page – although I have no way of verifying it – claiming to give instructions on how to teleport.*’

I picked up the book and shook it until a slightly sticky letter fell out from between the back pages.

SINDY

*Boleskine House
Loch Ness
Scotland
13th December 1970*

Hey man, how's it going? This place is just amazing! The atmosphere here is like nothing else I've ever felt – you've got to visit when the album's done. Sometimes I can't believe he really lived here. Frater P is such a misunderstood genius – really, a genius of the 20th century. He thought Boleskine was the Mecca of the magick world, a place which would not only become the destination for sorcerers everywhere but somewhere where the Thelema was so strong that the magick couldn't not work. It's a long low building, he used the south-western half for his work – which as we know, is the right direction. There's a big room – the biggest, actually – with a bow window, and that's where he made a north-facing door and constructed a terrace and the lodge.

I read on frantically, turning over the second page, looking for what I needed.

'The whole purpose of this letter is that I found a Gate spell. I haven't tried it properly yet, it needs three people... 'found it in one of the books that we got for Equinox...' 'if you have any success, let me know. Seriously, you have to come and see us. Bring Annabell...'

Come on! Come on! I thought, get to the point – here we go!

‘On the place where you intend to erect the gate, trace a circle with a sword that has killed a man. The gate will be strongest when the moon is full, weakest at the dark of the moon, but it will always need the strength of three to create, and maybe more if they are not puissant. There is no limit to the number of mages who can work together on this enchantment but they must be as one in their will – any deviation will prove destructive to the spell and likely fatal to those concerned. The substance is most important. Should you erect the gate on a stone flag, you will only be able to travel to a stone flag, likewise a wooden floor will only take you to a wooden floor.’

‘The symbol is important: this cannot be stressed enough. There is good reason for its complexity: it is true that you could travel merely by inscribing a simple circle, but that gate would not be targeted. You might find that your gate takes you to the nearest circular thing, or to a distant circle. Simplicity, usually an asset to the sorcerer, here represents danger of the highest order. You must be able to visualise with great clarity the location to which you wish to travel. Again, confusion will be dangerous and may be fatal.’

Shit. I could see the dark cave in my head, but it was blurred, moving. Nothing there I could get a handle on, nothing to focus on. *‘Sadie kept saying she might have a way for us to leave, but that we needed to know a symbol first. And we argued for a bit about how you see a symbol that you don’t know.’*

Kenny had said he’d dreamt of circles, but I hadn’t seen that.

Just a black rock, with, yes, with markings on it. Concentric circles? Maybe, maybe not. Hang on, hang on, what was that reminding me of? *'Cup and ring markings? I'm afraid you'll have to enlighten me on that one.'* *'Oh, they're carvings on rocks, typically a concave depression, no more than a few centimetres across, pecked into a rock surface and often surrounded by concentric circles also etched into the stone... What Ashbee has found that is so interesting, are similar markings at the Sutton Hoo site in base rocks found beneath three of the ship burial sites.'*

I turned over page after page, looked back at the list of evidence from Sandy's ring binder. Nothing. There was nothing. Only one person had ever known that symbol, and she was lying motionless on the bed in front of me. I blew out a long breath, the moment of madness passing. What exactly had I been planning to do anyway? I pushed the chair away from the bed, closed the diaries and tucked the letter back in my pocket along with my notebook. Let it go, George. It's over. My palm still stung where the amulet had pierced it. *'The guardian amulet? That belonged to my mother. Edith Pretty gave it to her. It's supposed to protect the wearer.'* I pulled it out of my pocket and placed it in Sindy's cool hand. Maybe it would protect her.

I stood up and pulled on my coat and walked over to the window. The light was fading, no moon rising tonight in the clear sky. I could see Mrs Reynolds walking across the hospital car park, stopping to talk to a doctor, her hand tugging at his sleeve, his face serious. *'What do I tell Sindy Reynold's parents?'* *'If she doesn't wake up, which I hear is looking more likely by the day,*

you tell them Delta killed their daughter.'

There was a soft noise from behind me. A tiny rustle of cotton on skin. Holding my breath I turned around slowly, to see Sindy's finger tracing out a pattern over and over again on the sheet.

SINDY

SEX & DRUGS & TENTACLES

*The gates are breaking down
Seal it tight now in the ground*

*Rip the world and set it free
Give yourself to eternity*

*Sacrifice or set it free
Sacrifice or set it free
Sacrifice or set it free*

Make the choice that you believe

Delta, 'Sacrifice/Set it Free' | 1971 (unreleased)

Sacrifice

I hit the brakes hard as a rabbit shot out into the beam of the headlights. The night was dark, the new moon and stars spinning overhead as I hit the accelerator again and the car shot down the lanes towards Alderton. On the back seat Kenny and Luna were holding hands, faces white in my rear view mirror. I'd picked up Kenny from the hospital and taken Luna from the nursing home, flashing my warrant card and hoping desperately that Bernard hadn't already called ahead of me. The sword was in the boot along with a couple of torches and the evidence boxes. The amulet, letter and my notebooks were jammed into my pockets.

'The gate will be strongest when the moon is full, weakest at the dark of the moon, but it will always need the strength of three to create, and maybe more if they are not puissant.' I had no fucking idea what puissant meant, and the moon was as dark as it could be, but I could feel in my bones that it had to be now, tonight, before anyone else died.

I overshot the driveway at Herot House, slammed on the brakes and reversed, turning into the driveway past the now sodden and torn sign that still proclaimed 'Delta are NOT here', pieces of broken wood and wind chimes snapping under the wheels of the car.

We pulled up in front of the house with its dark empty windows and I turned off the engine, sitting in silence for a minute as the car cooled. I'd been worried Tamara and Sky might be there, or even worse that we'd arrive to find the press camped outside, but the place was still deserted. I thought about the inside of the house, dark and silent, blood-spattered and filled with ghosts. They should tear it down, I thought. Burn it all to the ground and never come back. I turned to the couple in the back. 'Ready?'

I'd explained to them on the way that I knew what to do, knew the ritual and the reason why. To leave the seal open would mean all this would happen again and again, especially once the world knew about the house and Delta fans and people like Xander Black started congregating there and Sky the warrior moved in. I must have sounded like a madman, but they'd both just nodded seriously and clutched each other's hands tightly as we sped off into the dark countryside.

Kenny took the sword from the boot, limping heavily, face determined, while Luna looked around for a rock. '*The substance is most important. Should you erect the gate on a stone flag, you will only be able to travel to a stone flag.*' I knew there were cup and ring markings on the base rocks below the ship burials and I was just hoping what I'd seen in my dream was true. I pulled a piece of paper from my pocket and looked over to where Luna was standing, staring at the flat black water of the pond, a chill mist lying above its surface.

'Luna!' She shook herself and walked back over to us, holding a smooth dark stone in both hands. 'It was the biggest one I could find.'

I crouched down on the gravel and pulled a piece of chalk from my pocket. The letter had said red chalk, but I hadn't been able to get hold of that. I scratched at my palm where the amulet had cut me and smeared the end of the chalk in the welling blood. Blood magic. Bound to work.

Sindy had kept tracing out the pattern on the sheets long enough for me to copy down what she was drawing into my notebook. A series of circles connected by three lines with smaller dots around them. It was like nothing I'd ever seen before – ancient and alien – and I carefully marked it out as well as I could on the slippery surface of the stone, pausing to rub the chalk against my palm a couple of times. I placed it down on the ground and surveyed my handiwork. It didn't look like much. *'What did he do wrong?' 'No pentagram, the wrong kind of knife, he hadn't remembered the words, I don't think he was facing East, the symbols were badly drawn.'* I swallowed hard, remembering Neil arching backwards in the bathroom as his spell went horribly wrong. I pushed the image away and looked up at Luna and Kenny.

'OK. I think – I think what went wrong before was that Sadie didn't properly explain to you what you were trying to do. It says here that we *'must be as one in our will'*. That means we have to concentrate really hard, probably, on what we want to happen.'

'Just tell us what you need us to do, Inspector,' said Luna. Kenny was leaning on the sword, one arm draped over Luna's shoulder to hold himself up but he nodded at me and I pushed away my doubts and looked back at the crumpled letter.

'Right, I need to draw a circle...'

The letter said to do this with a sword that had killed a man, which probably explained why Xander had killed Archie. But I had my own idea about that. I didn't want to sully the spell with anything Xander Black had wanted to do so I did it by scuffing my foot in the gravel. It was more of an oval, admittedly, but I hoped the powers that be wouldn't mind.

'We need to walk backwards into it and face South, which is that way. And then we need to hold hands...'

I took Luna's small cold hand in my right and Kenny's strong one in my left, then realised I didn't have a free hand to read the letter. I ended up putting the letter on the ground next to the stone and balancing my torch next to it and we all crouched around it and held hands again.

'OK, so I'm going to say some words and then we all need to focus on travelling. On going to the place where this symbol is – it's underground somewhere, dark, I think there's a candle, and a stone, bigger than this but with the same symbol on it. So you need to think of that. Can you do that?'

'It's alright, Inspector,' said Kenny. 'I know where we need to go.'

'In the circumstances, Kenny, I think you should call me George. I'm – I'm not entirely sure I'm a policeman any more.'

He flashed me a quick grin in the torchlight and we leaned forward over the letter again.

I cleared my throat and took a deep breath, tried to fix the image of the dark place in my mind. 'This we shall achieve by evoking the True God of the Cross-Roads and by such Power and Knowledge as is granted unto us, thus we break the Laws of

Science. Thus the energies of our Faith shall be freed, as if by complete doubt we hadst recoiled there from. And thus we shall be released from the fetters of our own making and be made free, to walk the Pathway anew and as shall be determined by the Will of this Sign. By the Force of our Will shall we Travel to this Sign and our Will shall be the whole of the Law.'

Nothing. An owl hooted overhead and the thick watchful darkness surrounded us. I tried again, ending on a shout this time. 'By the Force of our Will shall we Travel and our Will shall be the whole of the Law!' and I felt something tiny shift inside me, a tiny blurring of the world for a minute.

'Say it with me!'

We stumbled through the words, then again with more confidence, shouting them over and over, hands gripping painfully onto each other and the world *was* moving, turning around us, but not enough, not enough!

'Power comes from the practitioner, Inspector. The words are simply a focus. And to develop real power requires years of training, understanding and certain personal sacrifices.'

I didn't have that kind of power.

I slumped backwards onto the ground, legs shaking. It was the dark of the moon and we clearly weren't puissant enough. I didn't know what to do, could hear myself breathing harshly, breathing out fog in the suddenly ice cold air.

I heard Luna gasp and looked up to see them, walking bare-foot across the drive towards us from the house, long black hair and golden curls, dressed all in white, felt a cool hand in mine and looked down to see Raina's fingers in mine, pearly in the

moonlight. Suzie moved between Luna and Kenny, her bright smile glowing as she gave me an encouraging nod.

I looked at the paper again, but my voice had failed me, nothing coming out but a dry sob.

‘This we shall achieve by evoking the True God of the Cross-Roads and by such Power and Knowledge as is granted unto us, thus we break the Laws of Science...’ Raina’s voice was high and clear and calm. *‘He told her she was ‘special’, that she had an innate spirituality, a gift. There was something strange about her, that she didn’t understand or know how to control.’*

I found my voice again, heard the others join in and then the world *was* moving and I saw the rest of them standing there too under the trees— Archie, Vinnie, Margot, Ray... and everything was rushing, red circles coming up to meet us and I could hear Danny Reece shouting, ‘Marble Arch – Bond Street – Oxford Circus – Tottenham Court Road!’ And then we were there.

‘This we achieved by evoking the True God of the Cross-Roads and by such Power and Knowledge as is granted unto us, thus we have broken the Laws of Science. So we are released from the fetters of our own making and made free, to walk the Pathway anew.’ Raina’s voice was fading, her hand drifting away like smoke and we were alone in the dark.

It wasn’t a cave at all, I realised. It was a ship, a great wooden ship, buried deep in the earth. We were crouching at one end, brittle wooden boards under our feet, thick dust and sandy soil covering everything. A greenish glow filled the space, just enough to see by without our torches, the kind of light you’d get

SACRIFICE

in a cave by the sea, rippling on the wooden walls. Behind us was a deep dark well, a hole in the ground that I didn't dare look at, something evil lurking at the corner of my eye, black tendrils creeping out from it, curling towards us.

Kenny was moving forward, leaning hard on the sword, towards the other end of the ship, past ancient weapons, piles of coins and cups and bowls and tattered, decaying fabrics that crumbled to dust under his touch.

The stone was there, much older than the ship. A great lump of crude black rock, the symbols carved deeply onto it, a single unlit candle standing before it and in front of that the bones of a warrior.

The flesh had long since gone and now there were only bones, lying on what must have been furs, poking out of helmet and chain mail, buckles lying where the leather had rotted away, a shield marked with a red triangle over the crushed chest, a broken sword on top.

It had come to me when I was sitting with Sindy. The final song on the album – the one that Peter had titled either 'Sacrifice' or 'Set it Free'. The lyrics had been scattered between the two diaries, half from Neil and half from John, telling two stories and giving two possible outcomes. I pulled out my notebook as Kenny fell to his knees in front of the rock, turning to the page where I'd underlined John's words.

*I am reality
Body, soul, my mind is free*

SEX & DRUGS & TENTACLES

Life in stone, blood in life

Time to make a sacrifice

Black walls, deep underground

Worshippers praise in alien tongues

It's time to make a choice

When the spirit calls your name

Hey baby, time to make a choice now

Ooooh, a dishonest blade

Plunged deep inside

Open up the unseen world

Oooh, a warrior's weapon

Take your last breath

Seal the spirit inside

I am the sacrifice

I am the slayer of Gods in the night!

Come on now baby, give me sweet release!

Come on now baby, I'm seeking nothing more!

Come on now baby, and pour it on the stone!

Come on now baby, won't you keep me in the ground, yeah!

The gates are breaking down

Seal it tight now in the ground

Rip the world and set it free

Give yourself to eternity

Sacrifice or set it free

SACRIFICE

Sacrifice or set it free

Sacrifice or set it free

Make the choice that you believe

I just had to hope that Kenny was going to make the right choice. I turned to the spell I'd copied from Neil's diary, the one that explained how to seal a spirit, but Kenny and Luna seemed to have their own idea of what to do, reaching out together to lift the sword and shield from the body of the warrior.

'No!' I shouted, but Luna just smiled at me and began to take the helmet and mail shirt from the bones, handing them to Kenny who shrugged awkwardly into them.

'No! You don't have to! I have a spell that...'

'Ssshh,' said Luna, looking at me with dark, blank eyes, face luminous in the green light. She reached out her hand to me and found myself taking the amulet out of my pocket and giving it to her so she could fasten it around Kenny's neck on a ribbon she pulled from her hair.

Kenny knelt in front of the rock, hissing in pain as he bent his injured leg, bowing his head, laying John Markham's sword on the ground in front of him. And then the candle started to burn.

I knew the candle wouldn't burn for Neil, knew that Xander Black had tried to tear out his own eyes rather than look into its flame, that John had been too afraid to even try and now I knew why. To look at the candle was to look into your soul, to see the very worst of who you were, your true desires, stripped bare of every little lie you'd ever told yourself. Absolute self-realisation.

'Look into the candle, let it burn your eyes out. My heart is full of music but I'm tainted inside.' I tore my gaze away, sickened by the dark truths at the bottom of my own soul, at how little I cared, at how I really saw the scum I arrested, at my own superiority, at every lie I'd ever told Jeanette. I could hear Luna sobbing softly and Kenny muttering desperately to the candle as it flickered in front of him.

'I didn't mean to hurt her, but she wouldn't stop crying. And I drugged the girl so she would sleep with the band. I – I killed Xander because he didn't deserve Raina and I wanted her. Paul, I just knew it would feel good... Is that enough? Is that enough?'

The candle wavered, grew dim and Kenny howled in anguish. 'Just take it all! Take it all! I give it all up, take everything!'

The candle dimmed, then burned bright again and Kenny nodded before taking up the sword and slashing his arms before we could stop him, his blood pouring out onto the black stone.

Luna and I had both leapt forward and as she supported Kenny I dragged the pages out of my pocket, skimming the ritual we would now never complete, and reading out the last words. 'In slaying myself becometh I the living reality of the Gods. Such a one seeketh nothing of which he hath need, because he is kept under the ground. So mote it be.' And then because I was thinking of Annabell I added, 'Blessed Be.'

We stayed with him until he died and then laid out his body in front of the rock. Sword and shield placed on his chest, a new warrior to guard the seal and heaven help anything that came out of that dark well and tried to fuck with Kenny McConnell. The

ship had started to shake, wooden beams creaking and shifting, sandy soil drifting down to cover us, the green light dimming and fading and I'm not sure how we got out because I didn't know where south was any more, but I remember holding Luna's hand and shouting the words of the travelling spell until I was hoarse and then just screaming 'Take us back! Take us back! I command it by my WILL!' until everything blurred again and it was three stops on the Central Line and we were back outside the house.

Bernard Davies and three cars worth of coppers turned up not long after that to find me burning a pile of tapes on the lawn outside the house. I didn't tell them where Luna was, because she'd told me it was OK, and anyway they'd find her body in the pond by themselves eventually.

*I see a red door and I want it painted black
No colours anymore, I want them to turn black*

*I see the girls walk by, dressed in their summer clothes
I have to turn my head until my darkness goes*

*I see a line of cars and they're all painted black
With flowers and my love, both never to come back*

*I see people turn their heads and quickly look away
Like a newborn baby it just happens ev'ryday*

*I look inside myself and see my heart is black
I see my red door and I must have it painted black*

*Maybe then I'll fade away and not have to face the facts
It's not easy facing up when your whole world is black*

The Rolling Stones, 'Paint It Black' | 1966

Fade Out

Medical leave, full pay, don't push yourself, no need to come back too soon, maybe think about early retirement? The department had made it pretty clear they didn't want me back. And if I was honest I couldn't imagine becoming a policeman again. Anthony Fisher had written to me, offering me a job, but I'd burnt the letter and locked the front door for three days.

The story of Delta would live on forever – the conspiracy theories, accounts from people who were never there, Tamara shouting at the journalists camped outside Herot House, Blake Markham dressed in black at John's funeral. Atlantic had broken the news that the album had been lost in a fire at the studio, but there are already rumours, bootlegs, tributes and re-imaginings out there – or so Peter tells me when he visits. We never talk about what we heard that night in the lounge, or the dreams we have now.

Sindy woke up the night we did the ritual, remembering nothing after she arrived at the party. Andy died two days later.

I'm not the man I was. Jeanette says she understands, but the house is so quiet now and I stumble through the days looking for the magic words that will take me back to the world I used to know. Then the dark days come for me. When Black Shuck comes around, when the fog rolls in or the moon is high, or the

seasons turn and I open the locked box in the garage, put on Peter's old headphones and light a candle. Stare into the flame for as long as I can bear it and then press play.

*I'll sing you a song of the worms of the earth
And a song, of iron and bone
Iron and bone*

*I'll sing you a song of the dark at the heart of all
Of blood, dripping onto the stone*

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This story is based on a Lovecraft-inspired live roleplaying game which was run twice by Disturbing Events in 2010 and 2011. I can take no credit for the Great Old One, Bugg Shash, nor can I claim any ownership of Misaktonic University or the creatures from the Mythos that are mentioned in this book.

The original game was co-written and run with Rob Pryce, who should take most of the credit for the Saxons, all of the credit for the police raid and so much more. And for not killing me with a shotgun every time I had another 'good idea'. Special thanks also to Trish, who inspired the Sanctuary; Kim, without whom there would have been no book of spells or letters from Jimmy Page; Mark who built Grendel; Rich for painting the album covers; Drew and Andy for their ever invaluable support; Elliot for singing on the album and embodying Neil Fenn and finally Tig and Paul for combining in my head as the two versions of John Markham and terrifying us all as Grendel.

I have changed outcomes and stories to make this version work and I hope the players will forgive me. With two versions of the story to draw from I couldn't write in everyone as much as I would like, but if you look hard you are all there somewhere.

I will, though, take the credit for Delta, Neil and John and the myth of the greatest band who never were. I am still their number one fan.

