

Richard Mosses  
eruditorum@hotmail.com

Approx 92,000 words

Enoch's Vault

By R. W. Mosses

## **Enoch's Vault - Synopsis**

### **One Line Pitch**

Detective Alexander McEwan must save his lost love and discover the location of Enoch's Vault to prevent the return of the fallen angels and the onset of the Apocalypse.

### **Cover 'blurb'/Brief Synopsis**

Alexander McEwan, leads the investigation to capture a notorious serial killer - the Sigil Slayer. Kate Harlow, McEwan's lost love, is researching a book on the history of Masonic buildings in Scotland. She has become a Nephilim, created by the fusion of human soul and angel.

When McEwan discovers the Killer murdered he realises the woman he loves is in danger. Robert Saint Claire, last descendant of the Nephilim and Kate's occult mentor, is planning to free the fallen angels, to breed a new race of Divine Kings...and to him Kate is just a tool.

Other shadowy figures of Scotland's occult underground have their own plans. The Mistress broods in her castle moving people like pawns. Kether has guided Glasgow unseen for centuries; he also wants to free the fallen angels...to kill them.

The lost Name of God.

A secret vault built by the patriarch Enoch.

Together McEwan and Harlow must prevent the fallen angels returning from the Abyss, from fathering another generation of monstrous Nephilim, and from heralding the Apocalypse itself.

**Full Synopsis**

Detective Alex McEwan works for the Claymore Consultancy, a sub-contracted criminal investigation company. He has his evening speed-dating in Glasgow city-centre interrupted. Malcolm Graves, the pathologist, calls to inform him that the report on the Sigil Slayer serial killer's latest victim is complete. Having unsuccessfully tracked him for several months, McEwan discovers the killer has been using an ancient Arabic scalpel. This breakthrough leads McEwan to consult antique dealers and arrive at the killer's door. Inside he finds the slayer slain, murdered using his own M.O.; the sigils which gave the killer his name are carved into his dead body. Whilst recording the sigils, written in Enochian script used by the Elizabethan magus John Dee, McEwan discovers that the script is a code that holds a hidden message. The name and address of his lost love, Kate Harlow.

Fearing for her safety, McEwan speeds over to Kate's flat, only to find her missing and the flat trashed. Secreted behind a picture, he finds the password to her computer which contains her journal. In her journal, Kate claims to have fused her soul with an angel and consequently become a Nephilim; a creature of legend, alluded to in the Bible as the offspring of fallen angels and human women. She also expresses her fear that her boyfriend Robert Saint Claire is going to harm her. McEwan no longer knows if Kate is insane or just in danger, but sets out to find her.

No one has seen Kate at her workplace where it is believed she is on holiday researching a book on the Freemasons and their buildings in Scotland. McEwan is left following clues in Kate's journal. As Kate did before him, he places adverts in local New Age shops seeking the Mistress, a shadowy figure of Scotland's occult underground. The Mistress responds to his advert, and invites McEwan for an interview. In her Jacobean castle the Mistress interrogates McEwan, probing his mind and his heart. He confesses his buried feelings for Kate. The Mistress, satisfied, gives him a riddle to solve. Asking Malcolm for help, McEwan is led to the door of the reclusive millionaire and strange looking Kether. Kether admits to helping Kate recover from her spiritual transformation, something Saint Claire should have done. Kether warns McEwan that in the occult underground, Saint Claire has a poor reputation. Kether believes Kate has gone to find a place called Arthur's Oven, the mausoleum of the legendary king. However, he doesn't know the Oven's location, and Kate doesn't mention a specific place in her journal, leaving McEwan to follow Kate's footsteps once more and find clues in the Masonic buildings in Scotland.

First, McEwan visits Hamilton Mausoleum, constructed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by Alexander Douglas, the 8<sup>th</sup> Duke of Hamilton, as his tomb, but used for secret Masonic rituals. The main sandstone building is composed of a square, a cylinder and a hemisphere on top of each other, all 33 feet high. Kate's journal describes the eight-sided crypt below as being similar to the tomb of the mythical founder of the Rosicrucians, an ancient secret society. In the centre of the main building is an ornate mosaic, which looks like an eye inside the sun and a set of bronze doors modelled on the Baptistery in Florence, beneath which McEwan finds a jumper. The local museum curator identifies the jumper as being worn by a woman fitting Kate's description. Encouraged, McEwan moves on to Rosslyn Chapel, near Edinburgh. The chapel is an ornate 'book in stone' built by the Sinclair family, early Scottish Masonic grandmasters, in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century. Every surface is carved with biblical scenes and rare plants. Two elaborate pillars hold up the roof; the more austere Master's pillar and the helically garlanded Apprentice pillar. The chapel is the subject of many occult theories; it is the resting place of the Holy Grail, the Ark of the Covenant, the body of Christ, the spiritual home of the Knights Templar, a scale replica of Solomon's Temple. McEwan finds only grail hunters and tourists inside. An entry in Kate's journal reminds him of the connections between buildings through Sacred Geometry. With Malcolm's help, McEwan finds the geometric links between Arthur's Oven, the Mausoleum and the Chapel. The Mausoleum and Chapel are exactly  $33 \frac{1}{3}$  miles apart. Using this as a starting point they divide the line into thirds and reason that the Oven most likely rests in a place called Camelon, near Falkirk.

McEwan visits Camelon and finds that the Oven sits in the back garden of an ordinary house. At first, he is mistaken for Saint Claire by the owner, who refuses to let him in and see Kate. When he proves otherwise she relents and for the first time in a decade McEwan meets Kate. Kate appears to be sane, but while afraid of Saint Claire she won't leave her excavation of the Oven. She believes the Oven is actually the vault built by the biblical patriarch Enoch to preserve knowledge in the event of an apocalypse, as related in Masonic myths and rituals. Enoch had visited Scotland when he was asked to beg God for mercy on behalf of a group of rebel Watchers, earthbound angels, who had taken human women for wives, creating the monstrous Nephilim who had ravaged the land as they warred and pillaged. McEwan agrees to help finish the dig and finds the vault is now just a hole in the ground. He has to overcome his claustrophobia to enter the vault. They descend through several chambers and at the bottom they discover proof this is Enoch's Vault. The Name of God. This object is a delta of agate with the true name of god written on it, an object that gives the wielder the ultimate power on

earth, the power of God. No sooner do they discover it than Robert Saint Claire appears; he has been following McEwan, knowing McEwan would find Kate. He threatens to kill them with a gun and escapes with the Name. Kate and McEwan follow, only to find Saint Claire had stolen Kate's car too.

Kate has difficulty controlling herself in her anger; her transformation has made her more susceptible to savage lusts. McEwan finds this out first hand when they return to Kate's flat and she fucks him and throws him aside; his perfect dream sullied and torn. The next day McEwan is shaken and wary, but Kate has no recollection of what she has done. She agrees to relate her tale and explains how she met Saint Claire doing research for her book. They became lovers and she learned of the ritual that aids all magicians: the Knowledge and Conversation with the Holy Guardian Angel. She decided to undergo the rite and now has a connection with her guardian angel - her angel had possessed her the night before. McEwan thinks she has certainly lost her mind, but wonders why Saint Claire wants the Name. Together they realise Saint Claire must want to free the Watchers, who had been trapped in the Abyss for their crimes. Kate persuades him they have to tell Kether and the Mistress.

McEwan retreats to his work and learns that the forensic tests prove that his dead body is the serial killer. He argues with his boss that they still need to find the killer's killer. He is told that since they have no contract to find the murderer, he should let it go. Kate and McEwan visit Saint Claire's house looking for clues to his whereabouts. While they find the door open, no one is home. In Saint Claire's study McEwan finds a scrapbook containing newspaper cuttings relating to the recent murder of serial killers across Europe. There is also a period cutting concerning the last murder of Jack the Ripper and a flyer from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, for the trial of the North Berwick witches, a coven accused by James I of trying to kill him and his queen with magic. Finding no further insights, they visit Kether who is pleased to see Kate.

Kether reacts badly to their news and warns that releasing the Watchers will lead to new Nephilim being born and subsequently a global war. Kate and McEwan argue that the Watchers have paid for their crimes. Kether believes the Watchers are like a plague and, if freed, should be killed. McEwan reasons that it is likely Saint Claire has headed to Loch Ness, a deep watery Abyss. Kether gives them an amulet that can help them track Saint Claire. When he sees the amulet working, McEwan is stunned and finds himself questioning his scepticism. As night has fallen, Kate and McEwan visit the Mistress. The Mistress accepts their theory, but makes no comment on it. Kate asks her for a knife. Surprised, the Mistress fetches the Knife of

the Akedah; the knife with which Abraham intended to sacrifice Isaac, the knife a Watcher prevented him from using. Afterwards, Kate reveals she had been conversing with the Mistress psychically and they speculate that the Mistress is a vampire. Exhausted, they go to the pub.

McEwan tries to sort through some of their differences, confessing his feelings to Kate. Kate echoes his feelings, but claims that she doesn't think they can be together under the circumstances. This upsets McEwan who fails to understand why they can't at least give it a try. Kate says that she isn't ruling out a relationship forever, just not right now. The next day they head north to Loch Ness, stopping of in Crianlarich where they discuss Saint Claire and why he got McEwan involved. McEwan wonders if Kate is also now capable of murder. They reach Fort William, at the foot of the Great Glen, and get some food, which they eat at Glenfinnan, where Bonnie Prince Charlie rallied the clans. Kate confesses that she was in love with Saint Claire and this makes matters more complicated for her, despite his betrayal. They are finally reconciled and finish their journey to Loch Ness.

When Kate and McEwan reach Fort Augustus at the foot of Loch Ness they decide to investigate the old monastery where Saint Columba spoke to the monster. They try looking for a boat, only to encounter something noxious crawling through the undergrowth. They decide to travel up the loch to Urquhart Castle, another place of frequent Nessie sightings. Breaking in to the grounds through the gift shop they walk down to the castle ruins and see Saint Claire on a boat on the loch. He passes something to a huge serpent-like creature, which crashes beneath the surface. Saint Claire comes ashore. McEwan tries to arrest him, but Saint Claire turns his gun on McEwan and fires. The water pistol dampens McEwan's face, but increases his inner fire for justice. Saint Claire admits to returning the Watchers to earth to learn their secrets. He believes them to be another humanoid tribe that evolved in parallel to Homo Sapiens, some of whom taught mankind their knowledge and magic, everything else has been propaganda. The serpent returns to the surface, flailing and dies. Saint Claire has killed Nessie. The ground shakes as the ancient tectonic boundary beneath the Great Glen splits to release the Watchers on earth once more.

Out of the depths of the Abyss, the Watchers emerge. Long tapered heads, men and women, dressed in tartan weave and cloaks of raptor feathers. Another figure, bound in ropes and covered in scars, appears amongst them. He is released and when Saint Claire speaks to him in Enochian they learn he is Azazel, the leader of the Watchers. Saint Claire negotiates with the Watchers to follow him. Trucks wait in the castle car

park which the Watchers board. McEwan is convinced that nothing good can come of Saint Claire, serial killer of serial killers, rehabilitating the Watchers into modern society. They follow the trucks to a disused army base outside Glasgow, where uniforms and food have been made available. The next day, McEwan and Kate learn more about the Watchers from Azazel. He claims they were incarnated advanced souls who had been meant to guide humanity's spiritual progress. An argument had erupted between his group, determined to act more directly, and the Elohim, who wanted to nudge and hint. The Watchers left and produced children with humans, the Nephilim; men of renown, giants and monsters. Azazel does a roll call on the parade ground. Two of the Watchers are missing, but appear from the far side of the base looking like naughty children. McEwan fears something has gone wrong already.

McEwan's fear increases when they take Azazel and some Watcher women shopping. The hunt for clothes turns into a huge brawl in the city centre. Kate takes the women back to the base while, at Azazel's request, McEwan takes him to see Kether. Azazel turns out to be Kether's father; making Kether a true Nephilim. McEwan goes to his office to follow up on his suspicions about the Watchers. He discovers from Malcolm that two women claim to have been abducted by aliens, in a village near to the army base. Malcolm warns him about the other Watcher offspring, the Naphidim, their twisted breeding experiments. Investigating further, Kate and McEwan find one of the women genuinely thinks she was abducted, but her friend was viciously attacked and has committed suicide. The attackers description matches the Watchers. McEwan promises the grieving father justice.

On their way to confront Azazel and Saint Claire, Kate tells McEwan of an article in a New Age magazine looking for the mothers of a new race of Divine Kings. She thinks that only Saint Claire could have placed the article and that he must be planning to breed a new race of Nephilim. McEwan recalls that one of the people to be tried with the Berwick Witches was Francis Stewart, the Earl of Bothwell and a rightful claimant to the throne of Scotland in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. He guesses that Bothwell and Saint Claire may be the same person and that Saint Claire wants his throne. Saint Claire admits their suspicions about him and claims to be a descendant of the original Nephilim, and that Kate is too. Azazel is shocked at Saint Claire's plans and the actions of the Watchers. He begs McEwan to find the Elohim and to plead for mercy on their behalf, he asks that the Watchers be allowed to leave earth rather than be imprisoned again. McEwan agrees, but has no idea where to find the Elohim.

McEwan has barely returned home when he finds Kether on his doorstep. McEwan apologises to Kether, now understanding his reason for fearing the Watchers return. Kether fears his father will follow him, so they go out on a pub-crawl. After several drinks McEwan asks Kether about the Elohim. Kether gets irate, nearly breaking the bar table. McEwan whisks him away afraid of another public brawl. Waking up with a serious hangover, McEwan remembers he is meeting Kate for lunch. Kate shows him a newspaper story about the theft of a shewstone used by John Dee to talk to angels. McEwan guesses Saint Claire stole it to prevent them from contacting Elohim with it. He gets a phone call from the Mistress' assistant Helen asking them for help. Kate and McEwan arrive to find the Mistress' castle a burnt out shell. They find an old Templar church hidden in a nearby wood. Inside, Helen is hiding from the daylight due to a rare disease. Helen believes the Mistress is dead. The next morning McEwan is woken by Kether, his business has also been burnt down.

They all convene in Kate's house. Helen thinks that the Mistress may have been an Elohim, but she is now dead. McEwan asks Helen to look for the special water needed to grow the rare Haoma herb the Elohim and Nephilim have used to prolong their lives. Meanwhile, Kate, Kether and McEwan revisit Enoch's Vault looking for more shewstones. They discover hidden storage areas which are opened by shining light on a crystal in the centre of the Vault. While they find a letter written in Enochian, they also find a gloating note from Saint Claire claiming to have already retrieved the stones.

McEwan discovers from Helen's investigations that Malcolm is an Elohim who has been growing the Haoma herb in a warehouse in the Gorbals. He confronts Malcolm who denies all knowledge until McEwan threatens to call in the drug squad to look at the herb. Malcolm claims he can't help Azazel and the Watchers, he can't interfere, but he warns that an apocalypse is coming, the result of mass karma. The return of a Nephilim race of kings would be a good way of leading humanity out of the resulting dark age. McEwan decides that humanity would be best left alone for once. Translating the note from the Vault, McEwan learns that the shewstones can send the Watchers back to heaven. However, Saint Claire appears to have them all. McEwan decides to let Azazel know what has been happening. They all go to the army base.

At the base they find the girl who thought she was abducted. Saint Claire claims she is pregnant. McEwan informs Azazel that they found an Elohim, who wouldn't help them. Saint Claire extols the joys of staying in the modern world. Azazel is unconcerned. McEwan tells him about the stones and Azazel tries to get Saint Claire to hand them over, when an eerie

siren song begins. The Djinn, desert beings of storm and sand, attack the base. The first wave of Naphidim, seeking revenge on their creators. Kate draws out the Knife which has extended to a golden blade. The Djinn are joined by waves of fireball breathing Wyrms, noxious gas producing Basilisks and the siren-like Kelpies. Caught up in the lust of war, the Watchers defeat their attackers, and then turn on each other. Only Kether and Azazel survive.

Saint Claire is forced to hand over the shewstones and Kether, Azazel and McEwan open the doorway back to heaven. Saint Claire refuses to leave, but is pushed in by Helen, in revenge for the death of the Mistress. Helen slips in after him. Azazel leaves, followed by Kether, who cannot live long now his Haoma has been destroyed. McEwan has to close the doorway by uttering the Name of God himself, being damaged and touched in the process. Kate collapses from breathing in Basilisk fumes. The base catches fire, and the mother of the new Nephilim helps Kate and McEwan escape, as the ashes of angels rise up to heaven.

Part I

Apprentice

I Asked a Thief

I asked a thief to steal me a peach,  
He turned up his eyes;  
I ask'd a lithe lady to lie her down,  
Holy & meek she cries.

As soon as I went  
An angel came.  
He wink'd at the thief  
And smild at the dame--

And without one word said  
Had a peach from the tree  
And still as a maid  
Enjoy'd the lady.

William Blake

## Chapter 1

He made his way over from the next table, carrying his drink, coat slung over his arm.

She rose to greet him. "Carol," she said, awkwardly offering her hand. He was tall, dark and broad shouldered. He seemed presentable, if conservatively dressed. He looked like he had lost his tie. Most of the other men wore jeans and trainers. Shame he hadn't polished his shoes.

"McEwan," he said. Realising his mistake, he smiled and shook her hand. "I'm sorry, I'm Alex." They both sat down. The high-sided black leather chairs were now fashionably unfashionable. The muted din of the trendy main bar formed a background drone to the chatter in the low-lit function room.

Carol smiled shyly, covering her embarrassment, and studied his face. "Is this your first time?" Carol asked.

"No, but it's been a few years since I last came to an event," McEwan said. "Last time I was in this place I was depositing my student grant cheque."

"Yeah, me too," she said, laughing lightly. She pushed her long chestnut hair out of her face so he could see her sparkling blue eyes and pointed triangular face better. He had a rugged clean-shaven look, not quite handsome. Maybe if he got a proper haircut, rather than a quick snip and clip over at the barbers, that could change. At least he had tried to tame it with some gel. He had a pleasingly subtle, woody,

masculine smell. She saw him studying her with his brown eyes, a slight wrinkle on his brow as he thought about something.

"What did you study?" McEwan asked. He felt free not wearing his tie, but the best thing he had found to wear was another work suit. He rarely needed to wear anything else. Fortunately, the shirt was freshly washed and ironed. It had been hand delivered to his office, along with the rest of this week's service wash. Damn, forgot to polish my shoes, he thought. He tried to tuck his feet out of sight.

"Politics and German. Lot of good it did me," she grumbled. "What about yourself?"

"Theology," he said.

She looked surprised. "You don't look like a priest."

He smiled playfully. "What does a priest look like?"

"I dunno, more bookish, with a dog collar?"

"You're right, I'm not a priest. What do you do? I'm guessing it doesn't have much to do with politics."

"I'm an assistant bank manager," Carol said, clearly proud of her career. He was sitting with his shoulders hunched, elbows on the arms of the chair, leaning forward, tensed up. "If you're not a priest, what is that you do then?"

"I'm a detective," McEwan said cautiously. He braced himself for her reaction.

"With an agency?" she said neutrally.

"Yeah, the Claymore Consultancy."

"What are you working on?"

McEwan was surprised. Normally he was attacked at this point. The other person had a short rant about what a stupid idea privatisation had been, how things were worse than before. Then he would make his excuses and leave. "I'm afraid I can't really discuss it." He shrugged.

"So why study theology and not minister to a flock?"

"I didn't hear the calling," he said simply. And then, as though being punished, he was wracked with a wet phlegmy cough.

Carol looked at him, clearly concerned. "Are you alright?"

"Sorry. I quit smoking a year ago, but this cough won't go away," he explained when the attack ended. He sipped desperately at his dark rum and coke. He blinked slowly and smiled. "All over now."

"Your coughing reminded me of an earthquake I was in once, in California. I thought my lasagne was going to fall on the floor. But as soon as it came, it went. Like nothing had happened."

McEwan looked at her, wondering if maybe she wasn't quite all there. Her face was pretty, but she looked a bit skinny in her floral pattern dress. It didn't seem to fit right. Perhaps she'd lost weight recently. "I've never been to the States," he said. "Maybe one day. What's it like over there?"

"Flat, nothing seems to be over two stories. Everything is spread out. No wonder they need big cars to get about. But

it's like a bad case of déjà vu. Everything repeats itself every couple of blocks. McDonalds, Wal-mart and so on, all clustered round major road junctions."

McEwan's mobile phone began to ring. Dans Macabre rose and fell and got louder as he took it out of his pocket.

"Sorry," he said. "It's the office, I have to take this." Carol smiled thinly, clearly irritated. He pushed the answer button. "Hello?"

"Alex, it's Malcolm," said the voice. Malcolm Graves was the Consultancy's pathologist.

"Hi, Malcolm. What are you doing in the office?" he asked.

"I was finishing my report on the latest victim," Malcolm said. "I've uploaded it onto the server, but I've also sent you a copy via email."

"Anything stand out in particular?"

"I was able to get a good look at the wounds this time. I'm certain now that the murder weapon was a surgical instrument of some sort."

"Okay, thanks Malcolm. Have a good evening."

He finished the call and put his phone away. "I'm sorry," he said to Carol. "Something's come up at work. I have to go."

"Can I get your number?" Carol asked perplexed, they still had at least another minute.

"Just tick the box on the form," he said, putting his woollen overcoat on and downing his drink. "I'll try and be in

touch. Got to run. Bye." McEwan half waved as he walked backwards a pace. He turned and strode out into the main bar, the relaxed chat deluged by a flood of voices. Carol watched him go. She drank her gin and tonic and waited for the next dater to move to her table. Perhaps the evening wouldn't be a total loss.

McEwan hurried out the main door and up St Vincent Street towards Blythwood Square. Saved by the bell, he thought. She was nice but not really who he was looking for. Besides, when she realised who he was, she was bound to change her mind.

The afternoon was damp and cold. He wrapped his coat around him. Town was busier than he expected. The attempts to reach desperate, drunken oblivion seemed to last all weekend now. A burnt out car was blocking an alley. Inside he saw a scantily dressed girl. He went over and checked to see if she was still alive, assaulted by the smell of alcohol and vomit. Satisfied, he called for an ambulance and waited until the paramedics arrived. For a cynical moment McEwan thought about survival of the fittest, but he was determined not to give the killer, or any other predator out tonight, a freebie.

## Chapter 2

The Rhododendron refused to come free; its roots grasped the earth and stones tightly. McEwan hacked at the roots with his spade. He gritted his teeth as he tugged, and with a low roar ripped it free from the Welsh hillside.

"You look like you enjoyed that," observed the auburn haired girl in his work group. She had done some weird loop thing with her long hair that tied it back under its own weight. Whenever she bent over to work near the ground, her low-necked, navy blue vest, gave him an elusive view of her breasts. She wore shorts that showed off her long tanned legs. He hoped she hadn't noticed him looking.

"There's something satisfying about straight-forward, hard work," he said. A trickle of sweat ran down his back, soaking into his blue shirt. He took his baseball cap and heavy gloves off and wiped his forehead with the back of his hand.

"I'm Kate, Kate Harlow," she said.

He noticed she had a soft Lancashire accent. He liked it.

"Alex," he said.

"From Glasgow?" Kate asked. Her green eyes looked emerald in the summer sunshine.

"What gave that away?" he laughed. "Couldn't have been the accent surely?"

"Well, it was tough, but I figured it out. Besides, I just graduated from Glasgow uni." She smiled, showing perfect white teeth. Her triangular face made her look like a taller, less slight, Audrey Hepburn.

"Anything useful?" McEwan asked, playfully.

"Naah."

"So, come here often?" he asked, joking.

"Twice actually," Kate said. "Once, with my parents, when I was too young to remember and last year. We had a lot of Americans and Belgians last year, for some reason. I quite like it here."

She sat down and looked out over the valley. Hills rolled away into the distance. A light mist hung in the bottom of the vale and gave it a haunted look. It would burn off by lunchtime. The church they were staying in was couple of miles away, but its spire could still be seen. Birds sung in the trees. The lightly wooded hillside was warm, full of laughter and the sound of spade slicing into dry earth. McEwan sat down next to her. She smelled of sunshine.

"Not slacking off already are you?" asked a slightly overweight blonde girl, who emerged from behind the clump of Rhododendrons.

"Lynda, this is Kate. Kate, this is my girlfriend Lynda." McEwan introduced them. Lynda had been trimming down the branches. She had chosen it as a relatively easy job that was largely effort free. "We've got one bush out. I don't think

there's much harm in having a rest before we clean up the remaining roots. Is there any water left?"

"Yeah, I'll get it," Lynda said. She returned momentarily with a half-full litre bottle and handed it to McEwan. "Don't drink all of it," she said. The bottle had been full when they left this morning. This was his first drink.

McEwan bit his tongue, deciding it was easier not to say anything. He took a long drink of the tepid water and offered the bottle to Kate. "I guess I'll have to go and get some more," he said. She took it, her hand brushing his. Lynda was waiting with hands on hips, frowning slightly and casting a cool shadow over McEwan.

"It's okay," said Kate. "I've got a bottle and I'm sure someone else in the group will have some." She indicated the others, working on a clump ten metres along the hillside. One of them noticed her looking at them. He waved, smiling. Reflexively, she wiped the bottle mouth with her hand and took a sip. "That's John. I guess we're seeing each other," she explained. "Although, to be honest, I only met him last week, when I came here." She waved back.

McEwan felt a slight pang of jealousy. "Thanks," he said. "I didn't really fancy the round trip." Kate passed the bottle back to Lynda.

"Come on," Lynda said. "We've a whole hillside to clear in a week." She stomped back round the clump and returned to trimming the bushes.

"Guess we better get back to it then," said McEwan, raising his arms in a 'what can you do' gesture. Kate grinned, and joined a conspiracy.

"Do you fancy her?" Lynda asked him later, with barely concealed jealousy.

"No," he said, holding her gaze, knowing that he probably did.

#

They sat on the landing at the top of the wooden stairs, outside the hall in which they were staying. The stairs went from the first floor down to the ground. Their feet dangled over the edge, as they looked through the banister at the stream bubbling by. The sun was setting, turning the sky shades of gold, red and cobalt. The heat of the day had warmed the dry wood and was radiating from the redbrick wall behind them. McEwan felt at peace, happy and content.

His culinary skills had fed thirty. The food had been so well received that the conservation volunteers had come back for more. He had hardly eaten himself. His stir-fry didn't seem to have agreed with Lynda though. She was, by turns, in pain or in the loo. There wasn't much he could do. He sat with Kate, watching the world go by, pleased he had met someone he could be quiet with.

"I better go check on her," he said softly, breaking the silence.

"Stay, come on a walk with me, into the trees," she grinned impishly, an unspoken promise in her eyes.

"I can't," he said, regretting, for once, being bound by his principles.

Kate's face fell. "I don't understand how you can be with someone like her, no-one here can. You're kind and helpful. She's a shrew, a selfish, wicked, spiteful woman. That's not something that's easy for me to say about anyone."

"I guess I see a side of her no-one else does, when we're alone." McEwan clambered up. Kate reached out and held his fingers. Gently, regretfully, he left her to attend to his duty. She sat and watched the water flow as the sun went down.

#

They stood out on the dirt track outside the church hall, a large pile of suitcases and rucksacks off to one side. Lynda's dad would be picking them up soon. Goodbyes were being said.

Kate thrust a small sheaf of papers into his hand. "We're making sure we all swap addresses," she said. "So we photocopied the contact list the conservation trust made up. My details are in there, I hope you write." Kate handed another bunch of papers to Lynda, smiling.

A few months later, after Lynda slept with his best friend, he was free again, so he did.

## Chapter 3

Once the woman had been taken away, McEwan continued on to the offices. He walked past Blythswood Square, untended and overgrown, and down to Pitt Street. The steel and glass Claymore Consultancy building was situated on the site of the old police headquarters.

Claymore had won the contract to perform criminal investigation in the city. It also owned a number of smaller security firms that worked on crime prevention in the neighbourhoods, estates and streets that could afford it. Consequently, some parts of the city had gone feral. It had been happening anyway, the government had simply decided to cut its losses and its costs. Outsourcing policing on local and regional scales made perfect sense.

Glasgow had always been a pioneer of policing, having a force long before the London Peelers. The city council had practically begged for Glasgow to be the first deregulated city. Crime solving was actually up, reported crimes had fallen for the third quarter in a row.

McEwan stopped briefly at the entrance that operated like an air lock. The glass outer doors opened. McEwan entered and placed his right thumb on the print reader. After it scanned, the outer doors shut and then the inner ones opened. He crossed the empty lobby, his footsteps echoing, and climbed the stairs to the third floor. McEwan hated taking the lift,

he always felt like he couldn't breathe inside the little metal box.

At the end of the corridor was the situation room. He paused a moment, ensured his mind was back on work, and then opened the door. The room was a mess. Pinboards and white glossy wipe boards were covered in notes, ideas, photos and diagrams. Seven women had been killed in the last six months, the work of a serial killer. Their deaths, and their lives, had been dissected and displayed all around the light grey room. Somewhere in here was a clue, something they'd missed. Perhaps Malcolm's report would give them a lead.

McEwan had been on the case for five months. His predecessor had had a nervous breakdown. He was young but his success in a similar case meant his name had passed across the desks of them upstairs. They thought he was ready to run his own team, a rising star.

The team had a wealth of forensic evidence, but there were no connections, no links and therefore no leads. Nothing concrete anyway. Identifying the inscribed language had led to the arrest of a couple of occult weirdoes. Beyond circumstantial evidence, McEwan had been unable to link them to the murders. No proof, no conviction. He had been banging his head against a brick wall and decided to give everyone the day off. Maybe a rest would help them come up with something new. If they didn't get a concrete lead, or worse yet, there

was another murder, they were all for the high jump. The papers were all over him, and the case, like a bad rash.

Jarita Jandhyala, or JJ as she was known, sat at her desk. She was wearing jeans and a t-shirt, but then she shouldn't have been in work. Her thick, black hair was cut short and complimented her oval face.

"What are you doing here?" McEwan asked.

"Staring into space, mainly. Going through our notes, the reports, and the backgrounds. I can't get the case out of my head," JJ said bluntly, her Glasgow accent held traces of some language from the sub-continent. She had tried, but couldn't put the case away long enough to get some proper rest. It was an itch, one she could only scratch by working on the problem. "This week's victim, Gillian Carter, I kept thinking about her."

JJ's directness surprised him, but it also got him fully focussed. JJ looked weary, bone tired. Part of him was annoyed she'd come in, but he was also pleased at her dedication. He could see a hint of desperation in her. The bit was between her teeth and she didn't want to let go. He knew how she felt. "That's why I wanted you to take a day off, along with everyone else," he explained, trying to sound supportive.

"What were you doing?" she asked, almost an accusation.

"Oh, pretty much the same," he said evasively. To some extent it was true, he had been thinking about the case. He

always was. The weight of guilt for the deaths he should have prevented hung heavy round his neck.

McEwan sat down in his cubicle, turned on his computer and read Malcolm's report. "Malcolm called me," he said, a few minutes later. "He finished his report. Because the victim's body was a lot fresher this time, he was better able to do a better examination of the knife wounds. He thinks the murder weapon is some kind of surgical instrument. Will you see if there's anything in the database that could be used in surgery and inflict wounds like these?"

"Okay," JJ said, without enthusiasm. McEwan quickly checked the rest of his mail and then re-read the report. "Nothing seems to fit," she said shortly. "I'm sure Malcolm would already have done a quick check and said if he found anything."

"I'm sure you're right," agreed McEwan. "But one day even Malcolm will make a mistake." He said this without any bitterness or rancour. Malcolm had never been wrong, but there was always a first time. "Okay, let's assume it is a surgical tool, but not something in the database. We have two options; either it's too new to get in, or too old to be considered relevant."

"I'll start checking the medical journals and suppliers, see if anyone has something new on offer," suggested JJ, perking up. A new lead seemed to bring her new enthusiasm.

McEwan could feel it too, but he remained cautious. "Okay, I'll just look through the rest of human history," he laughed.

Half an hour later they compared notes.

"There doesn't seem to be anything relevant introduced recently," said JJ. She was annoyed, this seemed like another futile dead-end.

"I might have something," said McEwan. "We'd need Malcolm to narrow down which type, but there are a number of instruments invented by the Spanish Moors. They basically invented surgery, as we know it. I've been looking at designs by a guy called Kahaf Abul-Qasim Al-Sahabi."

"That's easy for you to say," said JJ, smiling for the first time since McEwan had arrived.

"He seems to have created a variety of odd, barbarous looking scalpels. But, better yet, he intended these items to do more than simply cut and mend flesh. The Moors, like the Sumerians, thought that illness was caused by demons inhabiting the body. These tools are also for exorcism," explained McEwan.

"Which now explains the other occult trappings we keep finding," exclaimed JJ, catching up with McEwan's train of thought.

"Exactly. This guy is trying to exorcise his victims with the carvings, probably using instruments like these." McEwan

wondered if it was more torture than exorcism. With these instruments there seemed little difference.

"At least now, we have another insight into his mind," commented JJ.

"More than that," said McEwan. "Now we have a probable weapon, we can go looking for it. We can see who has access to these objects. Surgeons, historians, museums. Perhaps one has been stolen?"

"Okay I'll check and see if anyone has mislaid something like this," suggested JJ.

"I'll see if there is anywhere you can buy this sort of thing."

#

McEwan picked up the phone and dialled America. I hope they're in, he thought, checking his watch and calculating the time difference. Five hours behind he reckoned. The ringing tone was unfamiliar to him; it sounded more like an engaged tone.

The phone was picked up. "Hello, Alexandria Auctions, how may I help you," answered a man, probably in his fifties, with a nasal American accent. The auction house was based in New York's Greenwich Village.

"Hello, sir. I'm Consultant Detective Alexander McEwan from Glasgow, Scotland. I'm investigating a case and hope that you can help me."

"I'll do what I can, sir," said the man.

"I see from your website that you had a number of lots up for auction nine months ago. All of them were related to alchemy and early surgery in Islamic Spain."

"That's right. Was there something in particular you wished to know?"

"Are you aware of any other auctions, or sales, of this type of item, in the past few years?"

"No sir, to the best of my knowledge ours was the first this century. These things aren't too easy to come by for private collectors."

"Could you send me a copy of your catalogue for the sale and also a list of who bought what items?"

There was a pause on the line. "I can certainly send you the catalogue sir, we don't tend to give out our client lists."

"Mister, er..."

"Rowe, Nathan Rowe."

"Well, Mr Rowe, I'm investigating a murder. I'd rather not have to go through the complicated process of getting this information some other way. Tell you what, I'll give you my fax number, as well as my email address. You can check with directory enquiries, see if the number belongs to me."

"I'm sorry Detective, I can't do that. I'll send you a digital copy of the catalogue, but that's all I can do."

"Thank you for your help, Mr Rowe," said McEwan, annoyed by this jobsworth. He gave his details and finished the call.

"Not much luck?" asked JJ.

"Well, I know they sold some of these things, and we'll soon have the auction catalogue. We can see what they all looked like. We just don't who bought them. They won't give me their client list."

"I haven't got much further with my inquiries. There hasn't been any theft of ancient, Moorish, surgical devices reported. As far as I can tell, there aren't any on display in Scottish museums. That leaves the College of Surgeons in Edinburgh, but no-one is in right now," reported JJ.

"While we can go through channels, try and get a local judge to get us that list, I'm wondering if there's another way?"

"Like what, hack into their computers?"

"Actually, I hadn't thought of that." He grinned. "But now you come to mention it..."

"No way. Besides the evidence wouldn't be admissible." She frowned.

"I know," McEwan said, putting his hands up. "Just pulling your leg. On the other hand, if there was a financial transaction from a bank account to the auctioneers, those records would be in Scotland."

"That could be a needle in a haystack," said JJ, looking less than impressed with this line of reasoning.

"Not really, how many international transactions, to that auction house, nine months ago, do you think there could have been?"

"I'll get on to the banks then," she sighed.

"I'll get us some food. What do you want on your pizza?"

"Anything but pineapple," she grimaced. "How anyone can put that on perfectly good pizza is beyond me."

"I'm with you on that one," McEwan agreed. "Chicken and mushroom it is then."

#

They looked more closely at the picture of the object projected onto the wall. It had a cylindrical handle made from bronze, the size and length of a pencil. At the top was a sliver of similar metal. The front edge curved out like a sickle. The rear edge didn't follow it evenly, giving a fat, pregnant look to the blade. The rear of the blade and the cutting edge came to a point, a centimetre or more, behind their origin at the handle. The rear of the blade also had two large barbs or serrations sticking out of it. The note at the bottom identified this scalpel as Lot 34.

"I think that's our weapon," McEwan said. A couple of other items in the catalogue might also have been used as murder weapons, but McEwan's instinct said this was the one.

"Well, you could be right, but without Malcolm confirming it we don't know for sure," cautioned JJ, eating the last slice of pizza.

"I'm going to try the friendly neighbourhood antique dealer you found, see what he has to say."

After eight rings the phone was picked up. A slightly sleepy woman answered. "Hello," she said.

"Hello, sorry to disturb you, may I speak to Leslie Griffith, please?"

"I'll get him for you." The phone was put down.

"Hello?" This voice was alert.

"Hi, Mr Griffith, sorry to call you after hours. I'm Detective McEwan at the Claymore Consultancy. I wanted to ask you about a lot you purchased, from the Alexandria Auction house in New York a few months ago."

"I see. This couldn't have waited until tomorrow then?" Mr Griffith asked angrily.

"I'm sure you know there have been a number of murders over the past few months. If we can prevent another, by catching the killer tonight, that would be for the best, don't you think?"

"Er, yes. I suppose so," agreed Griffith meekly.

"Do you recall the purchase, Mr Griffith?"

"I do. I don't often buy from overseas."

"Can you tell me what it was you bought?"

"I can't remember for certain, I'd have to check my records. I don't buy them for myself, you understand. I was asked to act on behalf of someone else."

"Do you know who it was?"

"No, I don't remember. Look, why don't I look up my records and call you back Mr McEwan?"

"Okay, how long do you think that will take?"

"Not long, they're all on my laptop. I just need to find it."

When the phone rang McEwan snatched it from its cradle.

"Hello, Claymore Consultancy, Detective McEwan speaking."

"Mr McEwan, I have the details you were looking for. My client wanted three lots; 29, 34 and 56," said Mr Griffith. McEwan glanced up at the photograph still projected onto the wall.

"Time to put out the call, get everyone together," said McEwan, when he put the phone down. "Our man bought that scalpel. We have an address and we have a name."