

# THE DARK KEY

by

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## Chapter 1

“You’re a demon,” said a face with crimson eyes and a cruel grin.

“What... do you mean?” asked Matthew.

“Hell’s about to erupt into your life!”

It was a bright Sunday forenoon when Matthew Wilson opened his eyes. The sun light, which shone through his bedroom window, was alive with a million specks of dust. He gaped at the familiar debris of a morning after a night spent drinking. His clothes lay in crazy patterns on the floor near to the discarded foil containers of the take-away which had been half-eaten.

He wrenched himself out of bed and made his way to the toilet while pledging to abstain from boozing—for a while at least. He stared at his reflection in the mirror and decided he had suffered too many Saturday nights pass by in an alcoholic haze. It was time to improve his health, so he decided, after breakfast, to take a long walk along Arbroath’s cliff top pathway.

After showering and shaving Matthew headed downstairs into his neat but small kitchen and made coffee. He decided not to have something to eat as his stomach felt tender due to the eight pints of beer he had consumed the previous evening.

He read Saturday’s newspaper and attempted to forget about his physical health. The columns were filled with depressing facts about conflict and famine, which didn’t improve his state of mental health. So he gave up reading and decided it was time for the walk.

The day was perfect; the sun burned a golden path across the sea to the horizon. Autumn had turned the leaves on the trees and bushes into a burst of colour. The azure water lapped onto the rocks at the base of the ancient sandstone Cliffs.

He thought of his girlfriend, Jane, and the way they had argued the night before over a trivial matter. The entire thing ending up with her storming off in a taxi threatening never to lay eyes on him again. It was time for a break; he needed excitement in his life.

As Matthew walked round an inlet known as ‘Dickmont’s Den’, a wind got up which made him shiver and caused goose bumps to appear on his bare arms. He rolled down his shirt sleeves and buttoned the cuffs.

He strolled on as a flock of seagulls fleeing inland, their cries piercing the tranquillity of the spot, interrupted his thoughts. The wind became stronger, and the sea whipped up into a mass of manic, white stallions. Waves crashed off the rocks, and large strands of seaweed thrashed back and forth like lost souls struggling to escape a frothy hell.

Dark threatening cumuli, which appeared from nowhere, drifted past and released a light, but penetrating rain which soaked Matthew through to the skin. He had dressed for a sunny day now a distant memory.

The high winds caused him to battle along the path and, as he passed the rock formation known as the Pulpit, Matthew stopped in his tracks and stared in amazement. On a cliff stack in front of him, which threatened to break away from the mainland, six hooded figures chased another hooded figure. He realised they were monks. But what were monks doing here on the cliff tops?

The chasing monks wore black robes with golden cords around the waist while their prey bore a shabby grey habit. Rather than run they appeared to drift over the path which ran the length of the stack. The high winds had no effect on them. The closer he got, the more surreal the scene became. Meantime, the weather became worse, there was no way the monks could stay on the stack in that strength of wind.

Closer and closer the six got to the single Monk until it looked as if they would run out of path. Matthew crawled to the stack path, but wasn't sure what he was going to do.

As the six pounced on the grey monk he turned around and looked straight into Matthews’s eyes. His face ghostly pale with black sockets where the eyes should have been. Matthew felt tentacles of coldness reach down into his soul and wrench ancient memory from his subconscious.

There was a flash of lightning, and the water in front of the stack erupted deluging the surrounding rocks with seaweed. From the sea there arose a shimmering white column of light

accompanied by a sinister growling noise.

Matthew watched agog as the flailing figure of the grey monk went rigid when surrounded by the other monks. Then they leaped into the column with another face turning to stare at him... a white face with blood red eyes.

After the monks disappeared down the column, the entire thing collapsed into the water, and the wind lessened, and the sea calmed down. The sun then flowed through the clouds illuminating the cliff top.

Matthew felt himself transfixed to the patch of grass on which he stood. Even though the air temperature had risen, he shuddered. He scanned the surrounds, but realised there was no one else about to witness what he'd seen. Everything had returned to normal that's if there had been anything abnormal. Could it have been a daydream or illusion? He walked to the edge of the stack, peered down the cliff, nothing seemed out of the ordinary; the seagulls had returned and were breaking the settling peace with their cries. Time to head home and re-examine his decision to lay off drinking, he mused.

The walk back along the cliff path was uneventful, which was just as well because Matthew's nerves were strained. He passed couples out exercising their dogs. "Where were you a few minutes ago?" he said, to himself.

In his house, Matthew turned on the central heating even though it was still sunny and warm. He went into the kitchen and opened the fridge door. He found two cans of beer which he rescued from the cold. In the living-room, he opened a tin then sat down on his newspaper strewn settee and took a long slug of ale.

In his mind he retraced the events of the day: adverse weather blowing up from nowhere, phantom monks at the cliffs; one of them looking at him, and giving him a strange feeling, and then the whole group disappearing down a tower of light. Who would believe him?

Matthew finished the can and felt better. Then he phoned Jane to patch matters up with her, but he was put through to her answering machine, so he left a message and hung up the receiver.

After supper and a shower he retired for the night as it was back to work the next morning. In bed, he found it difficult to sleep; he kept running over the events of the day and the dream from the previous night.

He fell asleep and dreamt of walking through a dark cave which seemed to wind on forever. Matthew thought for a moment he heard foot steps, but when he glanced back, there was only darkness. He pushed on, further and further into the cave which reeked of the sea.

A hand grabbed his shoulder, and he spun around with his heart racing. Behind him hovered the grey-robed monk with its gaunt eyeless face. Matthew woke up with a start, he was sweating and realised he was shaking. He leapt out of bed and glanced around the room—there was nothing only his limited amount of furniture.

He strode into the bathroom and drank water then told himself to calm down. He returned to bed and slept the rest of the night.

The following morning he woke up and looked out of the window. The day was overcast and cold looking. After showering and dressing he headed downstairs for breakfast. The kitchen was freezing; he had left the small hopper window open.

His fridge was empty except for an old piece of pizza, so he skipped breakfast. He grabbed his jacket and made his way to the front door. Outside, he was about to lock the door when he had to go back in and check to see if he had switched off the bathroom light and ventilator. He headed upstairs cursing the obsessive-compulsive disorder that plagued his mind. Matthew was not only limited to checking if electrical items were off, but to doing things over and over again for fear that if he didn't do them something would happen to either himself or his family.

With the bathroom light out and the front door locked, Matthew headed off to work, and walked along streets slick with rain. The wind made him shiver as it blew about small bits of litter and leaves like confetti thrown at a wedding. He was glad to reach the warm confines of the library.

The day saw the usual stream of people borrowing and returning books. The draw of the internet on the library's free computers brought in many students and others who required machines.

At lunchtime Matthew strolled into the reference department and unlocked a glass case full of local interest books. He selected one with press cuttings from 1950 to 1985. Flicking through the pages he happened upon a clipping entitled: 'Ghostly Monk seen at Cliffs'. It was about a man, John Douglas, who was out walking his dog in 1964 near Dickmont's Den when he saw the phantom of a monk in a grey habit rise from the cliff edge. The ghost moved along the top before disappearing. Another cutting a few pages on, read: 'While picnicking at the popular Deil's Heid area of Arbroath Cliffs, a family happened to see a ghostly monk appear. The apparition stared out to sea from the cliff top then disappeared'. Matthew had seen enough, he wasn't going mad. Others had seen an apparition. But, for a shorter time than he had in the same location: the Deil's Heid was the next prominent stack to where he saw the event.

After another boring afternoon at work, Matthew went home via the Abbey Inn. There weren't many at the bar just a few old men nursing half pints. Two women from the library sat at a table in a corner. He bought a pint and headed over to join them.

"Hello there ladies."

"I thought a good boy like you would go straight home," said Sandra, a trim, blond-haired 20-year-old.

"Hey, not so much of the good," he said as he sat and took a sip of his drink. "Mondays, what can you do with them?"

"Yeah, I know what I'd do with them," said Mandy. She was a more senior assistant with long, black hair, streaked grey, and startling blue eyes.

"There's something I want to ask you," he said to them.

"Oh, go on then handsome," said Mandy.

"Have you read anything about ghosts out at the cliffs?"

"You'd better not drink anymore of that," said Sandra as she pointed toward his pint.

"There's an old story about a piper and his dog disappearing into a cave at Dickmont's Den," said Mandy. "The dog got out of the cave without a hair left on its body. They say on a windy day nearby you can hear the pipes."

Matthew looked at his pint glass as he turned it. "Anything else, say... about monks?"

"Monks! said Mandy. She put one finger on to her chin. "The only strange thing I remember on the point of monks was a story I heard a long time ago about some of them at the Abbey leaving the order and practicing black magic, whether it's true or not is anybody's guess."

Matthew finished his drink and bought another one for his work colleagues, said his farewells and left the pub. Outside the sky had cleared, and a full moon lit his way. He passed by a chip shop which advertised the best suppers in town. He was hungry, so he decided to buy fish and chips to take home.

Inside, the shop was warm, and the odour was heavenly. The fryer was a big man with a greying beard. "What would you like?" he asked.

"A fish supper."

"You look like you've had a hard day or a hard weekend."

"Yeah... you wouldn't believe it!"

At home he ate his supper in silence still going over the events of the previous day in his head. The telephone rang.

"Hello," he said into the receiver.

"It's Jane," was the reply, "I want to talk."

"So do I!"

"I'll come over after I've finished the shift."

With that he replaced the receiver, sat down and looked at the clock above the fireplace and thought, ten past eight; she'll be here at ten.

Matthew lay down on his threadbare settee and dozed. He awoke with the sound of rain on the window; strange, he thought, the sky had been cloudless when he entered. As he listened, the patter on the glass seemed to say his name. He shook his head. He must hear things. But the more he listened the more convinced he became he heard his name.

The letter box rattled making him jump. Just the wind, he thought. A musty damp stench entered the room. It reminded him of a cave. He went over to the curtains, pulled them open, and there in front of him was a dark, hooded figure with bright red eyes staring through the glass.

“Oh my God!” Matthew shouted as he tugged the drapes shut.

“Matthew,” hissed an unworldly voice, “you’re next.”

He ran into the hallway.

“Matthew,” hissed the voice through the letter box—which opened-millimetre by, spine chilling, millimetre. He tried to look away, but found his attention drawn back to the front door. Another pair of crimson eyes transfixed him through the open letter box.

“We will take you; you’re the last,” said the voice.

The house shook as if in the grip of an earthquake. The tremors built in intensity until Matthew felt sure the windows would break. He ran to the phone and picked up the receiver, but there was no dialling tone. Things in his living-room flew. A coffee mug narrowly missed him and crashed into the wall beside the moving television set.

The shaking seemed to last an eternity. Someone outside will see this, and telephone the police, he thought, trying to calm himself. Then it was over—the shaking eased.

Matthew thought rationally: these entities were trying to scare him; they couldn’t touch him. As he thought this, the musty smell evaporated—they had gone! But he didn’t have the courage to look out the window. He made his way into the hall and edged toward the front door. He crept closer and closer with his heart thumping. The door flew open.

“Aargh!” he shouted.

“What’s up with you?” Jane asked.

## Chapter 2

In the column of light, Jonas knew where he was going with these black-robed monks. An end to it all after aeons of walking in the void between dimensions. He had been neither in the physical world nor in a dimension of light; able to see humans in one and spirit groups in the other, but he could not interact with either.

Down he went or at least it seemed like descent; he could have been ascending. One thing he noticed was the malevolence of the power grip these demons had on him. His mind seemed encased in metal. He had allowed them to get too close. In fact, he was tired of hiding.

How long had he dreamed of this escape... this closure? He thought of his life in the material world. His devotion to one true god, who had deserted him a long time ago, and left him in prison between existence and non-existence. His sin was to love outside the limits of his chosen path. The life of a monk had not been for him. At the beginning all had been well with abbey life. Human urges are things that never die away however, no matter how devoted you are to God. On a physical level touching is a primal thing which people use to comfort one another. Oh, how Jonas had missed the touching of his youth through these devotional years. The human body, not meant for abstinence from fornication, with hormones and sperm was a distraction.

The woman he had sinned with; a fisherman's daughter called Mari. She was the most beautiful thing Jonas had ever seen. Her hair was long, blond and fell around her shoulders. She had an infectious smile which made his heart skip a beat.

He saw her one day when he slipped out of the Abbey grounds and headed for a stroll through the streets of old Arbroath.

"Hello," she whispered, while passing by.

Jonas was taken aback, because the monks were not spoken to by the locals, and the monks did not speak to them, but he couldn't resist replying.

"Good day," he said.

After this brief encounter Jonas went out of his way to bump into her even when he was due for duties or prayer at the Abbey. At night in his bed in the bleak dormitory his thoughts were of Mari—her ethereal beauty filling his dreams. Oh, had God sent this woman to test him if so He had done a good job.

They met wherever they could, at the cliffs, out in the fields. If prying eyes saw them talking the consequences for both were dire. And talk they did, for hours on end covering as many subjects as they dared. Jonas had discovered the way to laugh again helped along by Mari's zest for life.

One evening in late summer they walked in the fields west of Arbroath. The sun was setting, and a wonderful fragrance of honeysuckle permeated the air. Jonas stopped Mari and held her hands as the red sunlight danced on her blond hair. He pulled her to him and kissed her.

They lay in the long grass and caressed each other. Jonas felt repressed primal urges arise. He desired this woman. With that he pulled open her blouse revealing pert breasts tipped with cherry red nipples which he kissed and licked while Mari moaned. She pulled up his habit and grabbed his manhood, which was erect. She worked her hand up and down the shaft. Jonas gave out a sigh of pure pleasure. He pulled up her dress, parted her legs and pushed his penis into her core. He thrust back and forth while she grunted and put her legs around his body. Then his seed gushed into her, and she laughed. They then rolled over and over giggling before coming to a halt and releasing each other, to lie bathed in sweat and gaze at the sky.

She erupted into an evil laugh. "You naughty monk."

"I don't care anymore," he replied.

"It's time we got back before we're both missed."

"I want to stay here with you forever."

Then they rose and walked back to the town hand in hand.

The white column faded, and Jonas found himself in a dark cave, a thing he didn't expect. The black-robed monks had gone, along with the power grip. There was distant chanting filling the cave.

Jonas recognised the mantra, and drawn on through the cave toward, it chilled his soul. It can't be, he thought, the Black Dimension wasn't a cave where he once walked in the physical world.

The day Mari had told him she was pregnant with his child he sought refuge in a cave along the cliffs wondering what to do. If the truth had become common knowledge, he would have been thrown out of the brotherhood, and Mari would have been rejected from the local community. It was this cave. The structures were the same. Only now he was passing through them as opposed to walking around them. The chanting! Oh the chanting! He now realised what to expect in this... his personal hell.

### Chapter 3

Matthew collapsed back onto the hallway wall, slumped down and sat on the floor with his head in his hands.

“Oh, it’s only you,” he said.

“You know how to flatter a girl,” said Jane, shaking her head. “What’s the matter?”

“Don’t ask.”

She wandered into the living room, her hips swaying from side to side.

“What the hells happened here, have you been having a party?”

He decided that rather than have her storm out he would have to tell her the truth, so that’s what he did. He told her of the events at the cliffs, what he had discovered at the Library and the happenings of minutes ago.

Jane sat and stared at Matthew for a moment unable to comprehend what she had just heard, then she asked: “Are you feeling all right? You’d better lay off the booze for a while.”

“I’m telling you that’s what happened, I haven’t been drinking... well not much.”

“You’d better tell the police or somebody.”

“Oh yeah, that would be wise... excuse me officer I saw ghosts out at the cliffs, then they appeared at my place! I’ve taken enough of a risk confiding in you,” scoffed Matthew.

They tidied up the house and opened a bottle of wine which Jane had brought.

“Okay let’s say I believe you,” she said, after sipping her wine. “What are you going to do now?”

“I’m not sure. I must find out more about these black monks. Oh, and I’ll be sleeping with the light on from now on, unless you’d like to come and hold my hand,” he said, raising his eyebrows.

“Not so fast boy, you’ve still got some making up to do.”

The following day, at lunch time, Matthew again headed into the reference department of the library. He searched through old volumes of Arbroath’s History looking for anything to do with monks. There was information about the founding of the Abbey and daily life in the brotherhood, but nothing of renegade monks.

After a while Matthew’s boss entered. A tall, balding man in his late forties, Brian Jones had been head librarian for four years.

“What’s this Matt, overtime?”

“Nah, just looking for information.”

“Must be old, looking through these things,” Brian said, pointing at the books.

“Yeah, it’s about monks at the Abbey.”

“There are older volumes in a store in the basement, I’m sure some of those are on the Abbey,” said Brian.

Matthew closed the volumes he had open on the desk in front of him and put them back in the glass case. He then walked through to the main desk and grabbed the keys for the stores, which were on a hook under the computer shelf.

The hinges groaned as Matthew opened the door with ‘Books’ written on it in black felt pen. He switched on the light to reveal a small dusty room with two racks of ancient books with faded brown covers. Where do you start? Matthew thought. Most of the volumes were to do with eminent town’s people and nothing to do with the monks.

Further along the shelf he came across a book called ‘A History of Arbroath Abbey 1100—1300’ which contained articles on the first monks establishing themselves at the Abbey but not much else of significance. The second volume however, ‘A History of Arbroath Abbey 1300—1500’, proved to be more interesting. One article read: ‘In the year of our Lord 1424 six monks were burned alive at the stake. Their sin was to have taken money and valuables from local people for the Abbey with the assurance of salvation. The Abbey, however, never received anything’.

Jeez, they didn’t muck around in those days, thought Matthew.

He thumbed through the rest of the book, but nothing caught his eye. He knew there was more, but lunch time was over so he placed the books back, switched out the light, locked the door, and



started up the stairs. He returned to check if he had put the light out. If he didn't check, the bulb could be on for weeks. He opened the door to find... darkness.

"There you are... satisfied?" he asked himself.

The next day, Wednesday, was Matthew's day off; so he headed to the Abbey, where he introduced himself to the curator, Ronald Cunningham, an amiable lad, interested in all things historical. Matthew told him he was doing personal research into the Abbey and would appreciate any help.

"What periods are you interested in.?"

"Just the one—the fifteenth century," replied Matthew.

"Well, I'll take you to our library."

They walked through the modern visitor centre, which was empty except for an elderly couple looking at the post cards. They entered a room in the back which looked out over the Abbey graveyard. The books were much the same as the one's in the basement of the General Library. This was no dusty room, however, it was immaculate, and the books were in glass cases. Ronald opened one case and looked along the shelf before choosing a volume.

"There you are Matthew—take as long as you want-I'll be out front." With that he closed the case and left.

The book in front of Matthew was entitled 'Aberbrothock Abbey Vol Three'. It contained much of the same material as the others he had looked at: monastery life, the lay out of the Abbey. He had to scrutinise every page, and after what seemed like hours he hit pay dirt. An article on a group of monks being ceremonially disrobed and cast out of the order for straying from the path and pursuing an alternative religion. It said they had left the Abbey to seek forgiveness and were eight in number.

Matthew read the last part again. Left the Abbey—yeah right! Wait, a minute... eight in number! Either the book was wrong or two monks escaped the burning. What this meant he wasn't sure. He skimmed through the rest of the volume. Finding nothing of consequence he closed it and returned it to the case.

He was about to turn toward the door when another book caught his eye. The cover was maroon with an overlaid intricate golden pattern. He lifted it out from its resting place.

Inside, the old tome wasn't printed but written by hand with fountain pen, or a quill. There were small multi-coloured drawings at the head of every chapter, and the sentences were well placed out. The old prose, tested Matthew, who had only encountered it once before at school. He read for about an hour before his eyelids grew heavy. He was about to doze off when he came across a piece about the monks at the Abbey being of a particular order. They were Tironensian Monks, but also called the Guardians of the Key. Matthew looked through most of the rest of the book, but couldn't find more of relevance. He returned the book to its place on the shelf and closed the case.

At the front desk Ronald was serving three Japanese visitors, who were buying Declaration of Arbroath T-shirts. After they had left Ronald asked him if he had found what he was looking for.

"Yes and no... or maybe, oh I don't know! Anyway, thanks for letting me look through the books."

"Anytime," replied Ronald.

"There is one thing, have you heard of the Key?"

"Yes the monks were the Guardians of the Key, but to my knowledge no one knows where the Key is or what it's for."

"Could I go into the Abbey and have a look around?"

Ronald smiled. "Sure, that'll be four pounds."

The Abbey looked great. It was ruined through local people taking the stone work for their own purposes after the monks left. The South Transept dominated the area known locally as the Round 'O' it had a large, round, glassless window and came to an eroded point, which pierced the brooding October clouds as they rolled by, propelled by the icy north wind.

The last time Matthew was in the Abbey, was on a school trip. Shameful he thought as he lived in the town. He walked along the nave, which would once have been flagstones but was now grassed

over, and passed the stone bases which would have supported the main columns. He came to the grave of King William the Lion. He stopped for a reverent moment before turning around and looking back at the main part of the building. He wondered what the Key was for. A shiver ran down his spine as the face of the grey-robed monk exploded into his mind's eye.

It was time to go, the Abbey was becoming eerie rather than awe inspiring. Matthew made his way to the main gate and stepped back into the twenty-first century.

## Chapter 4

Drawn through the cave toward the chanting, Jonas thought of the time he spent in the void. He watched people in the physical world and dreamed of going there once again. To feel the fresh air on his skin. To stroll along a country lane, smell the honeysuckle in bloom, and listen to the birds call to each other on a summer evening. The sensation of pleasure and pain he missed. All these years in his inter-dimensional prison Jonas longed for the touch of another human being. But he had to carry the burden, for if he didn't there would be no human world.

He had searched for Mari the long months of her pregnancy. But he never found her. He even thought of going to find her home. But how could he? He couldn't ask local people where she lived. The scandal would have destroyed both their worlds.

Then out of the blue she appeared to him, in the otherwise deserted Chapter House, with babe in arms and spoke to him with a gravelly voice. "Jonas, this is your son," she said, "this is David."

He gazed at the boy who had dark brown hair and piercing blue eyes.

"Where have you been?"

She laughed while transfixing him with a cold stare.

"Oh, poor Jonas for all your righteousness, you're blinded by human emotion and sensuality," she hissed.

With that she turned around and left. He ran out of the door after her but she had gone. He searched along the Cloister, but there was no one about.

Why had she been so cruel to him? The cold stare that froze his being, and that rasping voice, it was as if she wasn't quite... human. But that couldn't be—could it? The day they made love she was so gentle and loving. But there was that evil laugh when they had stopped caressing. Then there was her family. She had told him about how her father had worked long hours fishing in all weathers, and her mother looked after her two brothers and three sisters. But he had never seen her walking or standing with anyone, she appeared as she had today.

Anger and frustration welled up in Jonas. It was as if reality, his sheltered reality, had ripped apart. What had it all meant? What could he have done? He couldn't have confided in anyone for fear of scandal and rejection, he had to carry on and keep the matter concealed. He had to appear pure to be the next abbot.

The chanting was growing louder the further into the cave he went. Jonas could make out an eerie red glow eating up the darkness around a bend. He could sense the collective consciousness of the dimension invading his thoughts, he had to resist and stay focused on pure thoughts for as long as he could. At least until he could contact the one person who could help.

Jonas saw the circle of black-robed monks. The chanting of their demon worshipping mantras was becoming deafening. He could feel their evil thoughts, like gnarled roots, about to tighten around his mind. The source of the red glow was a symbol in the centre of the ring. At the rear of the cave was a huge altar dug out of the sandstone. In front of it there was a hooded figure sitting in a big ornate chair.

Images of his son flooded his mind. The day he saw him, seventeen years after Mari had taken the baby and vanished, he noticed the boy had none of his features; in fact he didn't look like her either.

Jonas was then abbot and received David in the privacy of his chambers.

"Father dear, I've come back to see you," David sneered.

Jonas got up out of his seat and closed his study door.

"Afraid they'll find out you have a son. Tut! Tut! It's okay, I'll tell them I was looking for spiritual guidance and had to see the abbot," he giggled.

"Where have you and your mother been?"

"We've been away," replied David, as he fixed Jonas with an icy stare.

"I've taken your name... I'm now David de Longford. It has a certain ring about it, don't you think?"

“I need to ask you to leave I have business to attend to,” said Jonas, pointing to the door.

“Oh I won’t be leaving, you know what I’m here for Father dear.”

“I have no money; it all belongs to the Abbey.”

A depressive heaviness descended over him, and he had to sit down as his legs shook.

“Don’t treat me like a fool, I want the Key,” growled David.

“I don’t know where .”

“Oh, but you do. I know the secret of the hiding place is passed down to successive abbots.”

“Look you must leave,” Jonas said, angered by the pleading tone of his voice.

“I see I’ll have to do this the hard way. I’ve probed your mind but you seem to have placed a block in the way,” said David.

The surrounding air tightened around Jonas and he rose out of his seat. Up he went as he spun. When he was near the ceiling he spun, faster. He could feel the blood rush through his body and surge into his skull.

“You will tell me,” he heard David say in his mind.

“Tell him,” every fibre in his body screamed! “I must not, I must not, must think pure thoughts!”

Faster and faster he spun. He was about to pass out when the spinning stopped, and he was returned to his seat. He sat there for several moments feeling dazed. Then, David kneeled before him with tears in his eyes.

“Father please forgive me. Oh, what have I done?”

David rose and ran out of the room. Jonas stood up, but had to sit down again due to dizziness. After a short time he rose again and raced to the door, only to find a monk, Brother George, standing there.

“I heard noises, so I came to see if you were all right.”

“Yes fine, I stood up too fast and lost my balance,” said Jonas. “But I’m okay now, thanks for your thoughtfulness,” he continued.

## Chapter 5

It was a wet night in the ancient French town of Chartres. The wind swept the rain along Rue du Massacre. There were few people on the dark streets; those that were out hurried about their business.

Down a narrow alley sat an old cafe called Le Moine. Inside, the walls were stained brown with nicotine; in fact most things were brown with nicotine. The linoleum tiles on the floor, which were once black and white, were now black and brown. Some curled at the edges. The tables and chairs looked as if they were out of some nineteen sixties museum exhibit.

At the bar sat a regular with half a bottle of Pastis in front of him. He was talking to the barmaid about French patriotism, but she was more interested in the soap opera on the old television in the corner above the toilet door.

They watched as the dark clad members of the club filed through the door at the back of the bar. They met every Tuesday in the basement. Different clubs used the room, and the owner didn't much bother as long as they paid.

Behind the locked and bolted door downstairs, the brethren donned their black habits and pulled up their hoods. All except for Jacques Rancourt who stood and watched as they unlocked a cupboard door and brought forward an altar. He had been approached to join the Order and had accepted. He felt as though it was the right thing to do; it was as if his whole life had been leading up to this. The man who had approached him was Judge Didier Grondin a well-respected official of the local community. He had hinted at being able to help Jacques with his career. He watched them set out a sculpted bronze idol of a grotesque female-like figure as he donned a black habit given to him. Jacques stood in the centre of a circle drawn in chalk on the floor.

The brethren gathered around the inside periphery of the circle. Then one of them approached Jacques and blindfolded him after which another placed a goblet full of red wine in front of him. He then heard a familiar voice.

"Welcome brothers. Oh brethren of the Order of the Gate." It was Didier Grondin, thought Jacques although before he had never heard him speak with such power.

"We are here to initiate brother Rancourt tonight," continued the voice.

"Yes master," said the men in unison.

Grondin chanted words which meant nothing to Jacques, he assumed they were Latin. The others joined in, softly at first, but then gaining strength. This continued for some time, always increasing in volume and then speed.

The next thing they did would have disgusted Jacques if he could see. For the brothers raised up their robes, pulled out their penises, and masturbated, while chanting. The mantra chanting got faster and faster until it stopped, and they ejaculated into goblets placed in front of them. They then took their goblets and poured the contents into the cup before the initiate.

"Brother Rancourt, do you swear allegiance to the Goddess Hel, and to merge your eternal soul and your body with ours," said Grondin. His voice sounded like it could start an earth quake.

"I do," said Jacques.

"Then drink the fluids of life and death."

Jacques was handed his goblet, he raised it and drank the contents. The chanting began again; different this time and at a slower pace. As he drank Jacques thought, fluids? Surely he meant fluid as in the red wine for the blood of Christ in Christian communion, and this tasted like red wine... frothy red wine!

The new brother then had the blindfold removed and took his place in the periphery of the circle with the rest of the order. He joined in with the chant which was again increasing in volume and speed.

Jacques glanced around; the others were in a trance. Grondin was kneeling in front of the altar with his head swaying from side to side. Jacques, to his horror, noticed that the Master's facial

features were distorted. His eyes were crimson and his skin had taken on a sallow complexion. Jacques looked away in revulsion. But he couldn't resist another look. When he glanced back Grondin's face was normal. It must have been a trick of the light, or something to do with the wine, he thought.

After the meeting broke up Grondin told Jacques that he would be contacted about the next meeting and what was expected of him. He then approached another brother.

"We need to talk Georges."

Georges Lagrange was Grondin's right-hand man. He was a big well-built man with short cropped red hair.

"What's up?"

"The time has come, you must go to Scotland, and take Alain Caron with you," said Grondin. "I've been contacted by our brothers behind the veil. They know who and where the new carrier is and they've paid him a visit. But could do nothing but scare him...you know how they are," he continued.

"But if they have Jonas does it matter?"

"Yes, he could have contacted this person before they got to him," said Grondin.

"I'll leave the details, tickets and money at the usual place," he continued, while moving away.

With that they disrobed and locked the altar away. Then the brothers filed out past the bar maid and the regular who had now finished his bottle of Pastis. Grondin put 30 Euros on the bar as he was leaving.

Outside, the wind was still blowing the rain along Rue du Massacre as Didier Grondin buttoned up his coat and disappeared into the night.

## Chapter 6

On Thursday morning Matthew woke up to the sound of a fog horn drifting up from the harbour. He gazed out of the window into thick fog. All he could make out were the spectral shapes of trees and parked vehicles. The glass was sodden with condensation; big drops of water were racing one another down the pane.

He dressed and headed downstairs. There was the usual assortment of junk mail and charity letters lying waiting for him on the mat behind the front door. He grabbed the letters and threw them onto the small telephone table in the hall.

He drank coffee while watching the morning news. Depressing images of starving people in Africa made him promise himself to donate something to Oxfam. At least the weather forecast was cheering: the fog was to give way to a bright sunny day on the east coast.

Matthew left his house and walked down the misty street. The street lights were still on due to the fog and cast an orange glow. An engine ignited behind but he didn't see any vehicle pass by, which was unusual because he lived in a cul-de-sac. As he turned into Carnegie Street, he was certain he heard the steady hum of an engine. The hairs on the back of his neck rose as he quickened his pace. When he reached Ernest Street, he was almost running. Matthew looked back still convinced he heard an engine close by. When he returned his gaze forward, he crashed into a man.

"Hey watch where you're goin'."

"Sorry!" Matthew said picking up the man's work bag.

At work he was uneasy and brusque with people. During lunch time Brian, the boss, came through to the common room.

"Matt, there's two gentlemen to see you. They've got Home Office badges and are official looking. I've shown them into the reference department, it's empty at the moment," he said.

With some trepidation Matthew walked into the room where the men were. When he saw them, sitting at a reading desk, his adrenaline surged. They were clean shaven, and both wore dark suits. And, something more worrying: they were big. They reminded him of the bouncers that stood at fashionable pub doors at weekends.

As he approached them, the bigger of the two men rose from his seat.

"Mr Wilson... Matthew Wilson?" he asked.

"Yes that's right," replied Matthew, "what can I do for you?"

"We're from the Home Office, here's my card."

Matthew took the card, embarrassed by his trembling hand, and studied it. The card looked official but then again he had never seen a Home Office card. It had a government stamp over the man's photograph. His name was Roger Hamilton.

"This is my associate - Jonathon James," Hamilton said, nodding toward the other man.

"We're investigating... this is delicate... strange phenomena," he said, taking his card back out of Matthew's hand.

"What like the X-Files or something." Matthew scoffed.

Hamilton moved closer to Matthew and stared into his eyes.

"Mr Wilson I am serious," he said, sending shudders down Matthew's spine. "Have you seen anything out of the ordinary?"

There was something about the way he talked which Matthew couldn't fathom. Ah yes, there was a slight French accent.

"No, I haven't seen anything strange I'm afraid, and now I must get back to work." Matthew said turning to leave.

"One moment Mr Wilson, if you see something please telephone this number." Hamilton said, handing Matthew a yellow card.

Matthew walked out of the room with his mind churning. What was he mixed up in here? First ghosts, and now those two. They knew he had seen... things.

## Chapter 7

The telephone rang in Didier Grondin's study. He drifted in from the hallway and answered it.

"Hello... Didier Grondin."

"It's Lagrange."

"What's new my friend?"

"We made contact, and he says he has seen nothing, but I'm sure he's lying."

"What do you want done?" Lagrange asked after a pause.

"Nothing, only keep an eye on him. If he goes anywhere out of the ordinary follow him; you know what we want and what to do."

Didier sat back in his big leather swivel chair. At last it was all coming together, he thought, after all these centuries. It was just a matter of time before Jonas's mind opened to the consciousness of the Dark Dimension.

All the time Jonas eluded them by hiding in the void between dimensions. It was all for nothing. The Key would soon be in his hands, the key to unlocking the gate which would allow a greater enslavement of humanity on this forsaken planet. All religions being swept away in a glorious triumphant day... if he allowed it!

He stood up and strolled over to his drinks cabinet where he picked up a bottle of brandy and poured the brown liquid into a tall glass. After taking a sip, he walked back to his desk and sat down. He picked up a remote control and pressed a button. The soothing sound of Rachmaninov's Third Piano Concerto filled the room. He then swivelled around and gazed out of the large window into his well-kept garden. Big, grey clouds swept across the sky and darkened the study.

With the alcohol coursing through his veins he thought of the other members of the Order. They knew they were chosen because of their dark souls and that their master drew power from them to supplement his demonic powers from the Dark Dimension. Some were incarnations of earlier members, but could he trust them?

Sometimes, in his lighter moments, he wished to be free, but he knew it could never be. With what was to be, wasn't it better to be part of the glorious New Order?

Rain began and rattled on his window. He glanced out and sought solace in nature—nature the divine. He drank the rest of his brandy and gave out a long, low sigh.



## Chapter 8

In the cave again, Matthew was floating above the rocky path, moving on toward an eerie red glow. This time the grey hand pulled him down to ground level.

“Don’t be scared,” said the hovering apparition in front of him. “I’m Jonas de Longford. This is no dream, we have to meet - the time is short. You must come to the cave at the inlet past the Deil’s Heid stack.”

Matthew tried to speak but, although his lips were moving, he found he could not utter a word. He awoke, it was cold and dark. He glanced at his bedside clock; it was ten after two.

With Jonas’s words fresh in his mind he arose and dressed in the dark. Then he descended the stairs without putting on a light for he was certain the two men who came to talk to him at his work were watching the house.

He searched through the hallway cupboard, finding a flashlight which illuminated the space. He then slipped out the back door and climbed over the garden fence and set out for the cliffs.

The early morning was still, but cold. Matthew could see his breath arise in front of him like some escaping phantom. He left the welcoming glow of the streetlights and made his way into Victoria Park, into the dark.

The moon was a curved slither. He stumbled along the path at the top of the park, not using the torch, preferring to save the battery power for the dangerous journey ahead.

The park pathway eventually became the cliff top path. Matthew could hear the roar of the waves washing over the rocks below as he switched on the torch. He kept to the inside of the path being thankful it wasn’t windy.

After a long and often stumbling trek, on the wet slippery verges Matthew could see the dark mass of the Deil’s Heid. So where was the inlet? He shone the torch along the cliff top, and, then after a moment he knew where to go.

As he entered the black maw that was the cave, two pigeons erupted and flew out, raising his blood pressure, which was way past normal. He moved further into the cave shining the torch all around making shadows move on the craggy walls.

The cave smelled damp, and there was the sound of running water from somewhere up ahead. Matthew was losing his nerve and contemplated leaving when...

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