

P.A.T.H

Paranormal Assisted Treasure Hunters



Return of the Reich

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-Prologue-

Total devastation surrounded the solitary figure. Bombed-out buildings and semi-submerged wrecks of a decimated fleet were all that remained of a navy that once dominated the oceans. The man stood at the end of a concrete jetty lost in his thoughts with his hands clasped behind his back. His weary features and silver hair made him appear far older than his fifty-six years as he gazed at the ocean, cursing under his breath.

With the rumble of explosions in the distance, he inhaled, filling his lungs with tarnished, salty sea air.

Several hours earlier, the dockside had been swarming with military personnel. Throughout the night, they had been unloading boxes and huge crates from army trucks, sweating and swearing as they struggled to load them onto a sleek black U-boat by moonlight. Having to run for cover occasionally as the now familiar drone of Merlin engines roared overhead, dropping their deadly payloads around them.

With their job now done, the soldiers, sapped of their strength, murmured as they clambered aboard the trucks and were drove away. The smell of cordite lingered, along with a film of oil and diesel fuel that covered the water's surface inside the harbour.

The dockside was now quiet, with a few of the U-boat's crew and a handful of black-uniformed SS officers milling around the gangway.

The senior officer received a call through his portable field telephone. He barked out an order and activity resumed as SS soldiers with machine guns rounded up the U-boat's crew and ushered them aboard the vessel. The senior SS officer and two junior officers remained on the dockside.

The hatches closed and the three SS officers went to the foot of the gangway. A black Mercedes 770-K with darkened windows pulled up beside them and the junior officers opened the vehicle's doors. They snapped to attention as a man and woman stepped out.

The man ignored the SS soldiers and headed along the jetty. The young officers glanced wide-eyed at each other while the woman spoke to the senior SS officer.

"Let's leave him for a while Hans; this could be the last time he will see his beloved country."

Hans Kruger, the senior SS officer, clicked his heels together and nodded to confirm the woman's request. They watched the man ranting to himself as he strode up the jetty. Hans and the woman chatted and then Hans ordered the junior SS officers to escort the woman to join the man on the jetty.

Hans watched them walk a short distance. He then took out his pistol and, hiding it behind his back, marched over to the Mercedes and tapped on the driver's window. The driver, looking at the grinning SS officer, wound down the window and Hans shot him in the head. Holstering his smoking Luger, Hans then went over to wait at the foot of the gangway.

The man had remained undisturbed until the sound of strident footsteps approaching broke his train of thought as the woman stopped behind him, placing a comforting hand on his shoulder. He smelled her familiar and reassuring fragrance.

"They're ready to leave," she said softly.

He turned and smiled at the woman. The two young officers who accompanied her snapped to attention, raised an arm in salute, and stared ahead to avoid eye contact with the man, who gazed once more at the hills and countryside surrounding the crater-filled and demolished buildings of the once great dockyard. The rusted and twisted metallic hulks that strewn around the harbour were the corpses of a once proud

fleet. Tears welled up in his eyes, knowing that he would never return. Composing himself, he walked with the woman by his side. They strode past the escorts, who fell in behind them and marched toward the large black U-boat, moored at the centre of the partly destroyed jetty. The vessel gently rolled from side to side, moved by rippling waves of the gentle spring tide.

The group walked up to the foot of the U-boat's gangway and stopped in front of Hans.

"Everything set?" the man asked.

Hans snapped to attention, confirming that everything was going according to plan, with the crew detained for now in the forward compartment. The man glanced at the car parked several yards away. He again addressed the officer. "Well done SS-Oberführer. What about the other matter?" he asked. The officer then removed a photograph from his pocket and handed it to him. He stared at it for a few moments and then gave it to the woman, who, after a quick glance, smiled and put the picture in her handbag.

"Very well... Let's get underway," said the man and walked up the gangway with the woman at his side. Without turning back, they headed inside the side hatch of the conning tower.

SS-Oberführer Hans Kruger was a tall, well-built man. He had a domineering presence who commanded both respect and fear. Although a commando, his real forte was far more sinister. He only took his orders from two men: his boss, SS-Gruppenführer Heinrich Müller, head of the feared Gestapo, and the man who had just entered the U-boat.

Hans remained on the dockside and marched over to the two escort officers.

"You served the Fatherland well. Your families will be proud."

The two young officers stood erect and motionless. Hans removed his Luger from its holster, placed the barrel against the forehead of one young officer, and fired a shot between his eyes, killing him instantly. The other soldier urinated but remained motionless; his eyes squinted under the rim of his black peak cap before his end came.

Hans dragged the lifeless bodies over to the parked car one at a time, dumping them onto the back seat. He removed a container of diesel from the car's boot and doused the flammable mix over the corpses and the car. He stood back and threw in a lit match and as the flames spread, Hans strode up the gangway into the vessel.

The U-boat became a hive of activity, as submariners came out of the hatchways and cast off the mooring lines. The Captain and several of his submariners went onto the conning tower bridge, where the Captain gave orders to the deck crew to make ready to shove off. It was a well-orchestrated routine, carried out and performed many times by this experienced and battle-hardened crew. The submariners, after completing their tasks, headed back inside the vessel. Having experienced war in all its savagery, the crew ignored the blazing Mercedes as they readied the vessel for sea.

The U-boat slewed away from the jetty, heading toward the mouth of the small port of Farge estuary. The vessel sailed out of the harbour and, like a sleek whale, eased its way into open water.

Apart from the Captain, the conning tower crew went below decks. Korvettenkapitän Karl Viktor watched as the vessel picked up speed leaving his country in its wake. An explosion echoed from the jetty as the diesel ignited the Mercedes fuel tank, blowing it and its dead occupants to smithereens.

Captain Viktor stroked the black rubber coating of the conning bridge and listened to the battery banks whirring as they reached 17 knots. He watched the bow as the sleek vessel cut through the water, and he looked back in anger at the land and black plumes of smoke in the distance. Hearing the rumble of explosions as the Allies pounded the nearby town, he thought, 'this is truly a magnificent vessel. With a fleet of these *Elektroboote's we could have won the war.'

He took off his cap to let the sea breeze blow across his head and looked at the gauges.

“Seven fathoms, sir,” said the Dive Officer over the intercom.

“Very well...Prepare to dive the boat and level out at four metres,” ordered the Captain.

“Yes sir,” said the Dive Officer and repeated the order to the control crew.

“Open main vents, rig out bow planes, and set down ten degrees,” ordered the Captain.

A sudden bustle of motion signalled the crew's compliance.

“Bow planes set sir,” confirmed the Dive Officer.

The Captain then gave the order.

“Dive the boat!”

Sirens wailed to alert the occupants that the U-boat was submerging. With plumes of water whooshing out of the ballast tanks, the Captain left the conning tower, closed the hatch behind him, and went down into the hot cramped control room. He realised that they were transporting human cargo along with looted treasure, but unsure of whom.

The Captain hung on to the periscope until the U-Boat levelled off at four metres and then he went to check the gauges.

Hans came into the control room, sneering, as he smelled sweat and grease in the noisy confined section, he handed the Captain a sealed envelope.

“Here are your orders!” he snapped as the Captain opened the envelope and read its contents.

“It’s signed by the Führer,” said Hans, glaring at the Captain, who after reading his instructions knew that his boat would no longer have any contact with the outside world.

The war-weary commander looked at Hans and then gave orders to the control room crew.

“Helmsman, starboard 15, steer 3-5-Zero. Down planes ten degrees, make our depth 15 metres.”

The helmsman repeated the order aloud and eased forward on the helm control.

The Captain smirked as Kruger lost his balance and grabbed onto a hot metal pipe, wincing as the boat made a gentle descent. Captain Viktor went to the U-boat’s intercom and ordered all officers' to the wardroom. He went to his chart table, took out charts of their destination, and he and Hans Kruger left the control room, passing two SS soldiers in the communications cabin removing the U-boats radio.

The Elektroboote angled down, gliding under the cold grey North Sea.

*** In Appendix**

-Chapter One-

Ryan rushed over and shook the keeper's shoulders. Looking into his glazed eyes, he yelled, "Church, Church... are you okay!"

Church, dazed, squinted at Ryan and then around the room. He wiped vomit from around his mouth with his hand as his faculties returned. Composing himself, but seemingly unaware of his surroundings, he started to put his cluttered desktop in order.

Ryan stood back and watched as colour returned to Church's ashen face and he stopped trembling. When Church appeared to be back to his normal self, Ryan said, "That was a powerful one boss. Pinky and I felt it in the living room."

Church coughed, focused on Ryan, and with a quake in his voice, replied, "That was the worst experience and the most powerful spirit that I have ever encountered."

Ryan frowned as he glared at the mess in the portal room, "Who was it?" he asked.

The answer never came. The door swung open and a woman in her twenties with short blonde hair entered the room carrying two mugs. She went over to Church and Ryan.

"Are you okay, Church?" Pinky asked, sounding concerned as she handed both men a mug of tea and said, "Here drink this."

"Thanks, but I need something stronger than tea, Pinky," said Church, his hands trembling as he took the mug.

"I know, so I put a drop of Johnny Walker in it," Pinky replied and smiled.

"Great!" exclaimed Ryan, who after slurped his tea winced.

"Duh, not for you dopey," said Pinky and chuckled. Then, noticing something in the corner of the room, she gasped.

Church took a drink of his beverage. He felt the whisky hit the back of his throat and caressed his oesophagus as it eased down, giving him a warm glow. Church exhaled, picked up his notepad, glanced at it, and then replaced it on the desk. Ryan picked up the pad.

Pinky went to the sink, brought over a damp flannel, and wiped Church's face, while Ryan looked at Church's notes and scratched his chin.

The PATH team gathered around Church's desk with items strewn about the top, resembling the aftermath of a drunken Saturday night brawl.

After clearing his throat, Church said, "Right, team. It looks like we have our next assignment."

Church righted his overturned laptop, checked it was okay, turned it on, and entered a password.

"Look, it scorched the wall," said Pinky, pointing to the corner wall. "And looking at you boss, it did more than that, you look terrified. We knew it was serious after the air got cold before it felt sucked out of the living room," she said, scowling.

"So who was it?" Ryan asked, and smirked, adding, "Ooh, is there lots of lovely treasure to be had, and why did you write your spirit notes in German? I can't understand them."

"Anybody we know?" Pinky asked.

“Granny Pearl never came, did she? I can’t smell Brussels sprouts,” Said Ryan. “Or anything else, for that matter,”

Church took another slurp of his drink and with a quake in his voice said, “No Ryan, you won’t smell anything with this spirit.” He shuddered, took a deep breath, and continued, “And to answer your questions, then Yes, I imagine there’s a great deal of treasure, and no, Granny Pearl never appeared and that’s what’s scared me.”

Church leaned forward and typed on the laptop keypad.

“And the answers to your other question.” Church quivered, and said, “This individual was a German, and do we know him? Oh, most definitely.”

Church paused as a face appeared on his laptop screen. He turned the computer screen around so that Ryan and Pinky could view the image and continued, “We all know of him. The entire world knew this character, who according to Grandpa Jack was a bloody menace.”

Pinky and Ryan’s eyebrows raised as they stared at the image on the screen.

Church frowned and announced, “I can sense you both feel troubled. I am scared after my encounter with this powerful spirit.” Pinky and Ryan heard the nervousness in Church’s voice as they glared at the image in disbelief while Church studied his notes and scribbled certain portions of his text in English on another notepad. Ryan broke the silence.

“I don’t understand boss, why now?” He pointed to the screen and continued. “He’s been dead for over 60 years.”

Church looked up from his notes, leaned forward and said, “It was not only the fact of whom or what this individual was now that scared me.” He tapped the face on the screen and continued, “We also need to be concerned about the recipient.”

Church slid his notepad over and showed a name he had circled on his notes to the inquisitive Pinky and Ryan, who both gasped.

There was a stunned silence as Pinky and Ryan stared at both the screen, and the name on the notepad.

Pinky leant forward, pointed at the screen, and asked, “What’s the connection and how was this possible?”

“I don’t know, that’s what we need to find out,” said Church tapping his fingers on the desk.

Church then frowned and through pierced lips told them, “This was not the first time one of these demons had been to this portal.” Still shaking, he glanced at the pentagram painted on the wooden floor in the corner of the room and said, “I know of an encounter we had with a diabolus at our portal centuries ago. They had a recent encounter with another diabolus in the spirit world years ago, which I believe was the same one that I just met.”

Puzzled, Ryan frowned and asked, “What’s a diabolus?”

“I will explain later,” said Church, who went to the safe, took out a thick ancient leather-bound book, came back over, and placed it on the desk. “Let me decipher all my notes and read the journal again,” said Church, opening the book and searching through the brittle pages for the relevant section.

“I am not happy with this one boss. Something does not feel right. Do we have to take the assignment?” Ryan asked, fidgeting and looking at Pinky.

“Perhaps a cheese and ham sandwich would help,” smiled Pinky, trying to lighten the mood, knowing that Ryan would do anything if the reward involved food.

“Oh, well why didn’t you say that before?” chuckled Ryan, “When do we start?” he asked, with a nervousness he tried to disguise.

Church looked at his team. After this powerful encounter and knowing what it was, he felt scared. He knew from the journal the dangers of any encounter with a diabolus, and after what he’d just experienced, did not want to put them in harm’s way. Even though they looked calm, Church sensed fear in the pair and realised that none of them were ready for an assignment of this magnitude. He closed the book, leant on the desk, smiled, and announced, “Okay, we won’t take this case.”

“Phew,” Pinky sighed with relief.

“But can we do that?” Ryan asked, although pleased by Church’s decision, he had a niggling doubt.

Church threw up his hands, but his reply never came, as he saw a bright column of blue light appearing in the corner of the room, along with a familiar aroma.

Sniffing the air, Ryan announced. “Brussels sprouts, Granny Pearl’s here.”

-Chapter Two-

The PATH team lived in a 16th Century thatched-roofed cottage built in a clearing within a dense woodland area of Clifton Moor, close to York city. This secluded cottage belonged to Churchill Potts junior, who inherited it from his grandparents, Pearl and Jack Potts. The cottage had been in the Potts family for generations and although this quaint old cottage appeared like something from a Brothers Grimm folktale, it held a remarkable secret.

During the mid-sixteenth century, a wealthy Englishman, Robert Potts, had the cottage built at a specific secluded location. This was ideal for Robert and his family and perfect for the inhabitants of the surrounding towns and villages. The townsfolk felt certain Robert was a Warlock, so the further away he was, the better.

With England in turmoil after the civil war ended and after Charles I was beheaded, a Cromwell-controlled protectorate government, one with deep puritanical beliefs, now ran the country. The English people felt terrified and confused. This fear paved the way for a government-backed religious crusade to rid the country of those considered heretics, so witches and warlocks became an indoctrinated terror. This fear led to the formation of the 'Witch Finders.' These individuals scoured the country on high government salaries, flushing out dark forces that allegedly manifested themselves in human form.

Robert was from a wealthy and respectable family. He'd fought during the English civil war as an infantry officer in Oliver Cromwell's Roundheads. His father was a minister at York Abbey, and after witnessing many bloody battles, Robert knew he wanted to follow his father's example and serve God within the clergy. He returned to York after the end of the civil war at the age of 17. His father used his influence to push his son through the ranks to a junior ministerial position within York Abbey. Robert had suffered headaches throughout his childhood and heard incoherent voices when nobody was there, especially on the battlefield. Unable to understand why, and afraid to seek advice for fear of being accused of being cursed, he ignored it. Robert was a slim young man and his ashen complexion gave him a ghostly appearance.

Everything changed on his eighteenth birthday when his headaches became severe and the voices became louder, although still a myriad of sounds, he heard cries for help and could sense despair. Everybody now seemed bathed in a white light, apart from him, who glowed with the colours of the rainbow. This terrified Robert and convinced he was a warlock, feared for his life. Robert altered overnight, becoming reclusive and no longer attending the clergy or fulfilled his duties, spending his time in his room alone. This greatly disturbed his respectable parents.

Robert went out most evenings, strolling along smoggy, cobbled city streets of York, amongst the hustle and bustle of street vendors, entertainers, and taverns. Although different from his sheltered religious upbringing, the streets seemed to beckon him. He knew he would find something there, but did not know what.

It was on one of these nightly excursions when he met Elizabeth cooking at a small street vendor's stall,

"Can I tempt you to some lovely tripe and onions, Robert?" She smiled.

"What!" exclaimed Robert, taken aback how she knew his name, as he had never laid eyes on the girl before. Robert noticed that the aura surrounding her was crimson colour, so realised that she was also different.

Robert returned to her stall every night to see the pretty brunette with rosy cheeks that seemed to glow against her pale skin. Elizabeth instigated the courtship and asked him to take her out, which in those days was unheard of, and she could have ended up in prison or far worse. Robert became intrigued and besotted with Elizabeth, who was almost 19-years-old.

“We are special my love.” She’d told Robert. “We are Chosen-ones, and when we find our portal, thou will be the keeper with me as thine guide, and together we will become Angels.”

This always confused Robert, but he accepted her strange behaviour because he was in love and wanted to marry Elizabeth. His parents wouldn't give their consent to this union until Robert announced Elizabeth was pregnant. His parent, although outraged, went ahead with the marriage with it being inconceivable to have a child out of wedlock. Not only would it have destroyed the family's reputation, but also they didn't want to upset Robert's uncle, as this man terrified people. His uncle was Mathew Hopkins, known throughout England as the Witch Finder General. Robert and Elizabeth married straight away and lived in a cobblestone cottage on his parent's estate.

Elizabeth, now seven months pregnant, looked radiant, and Robert looked forward to the birth of their first child.

One evening as the pair chatted by candlelight, Robert felt a sharp pain in his head. Elizabeth, knowing of the headaches, reassured him they would go when the time was right, explaining that she too used to get them, and it was only restless spirits trying to contact him.

“They get worse,” said Robert groaning and glancing over at his wife, who appeared to be talking to a blue column of light by the wall.”

After squinting through the pain for a few minutes, his headache stopped and he looked at Elizabeth smiling at him.

He looked at the wall, but the light had gone. Feeling bewildered he looked at his wife whose crimson aura now had a faint multi-coloured glow surrounding her stomach.

“My love, I have to go away,” said Elizabeth.

“What?” asked Robert, taken aback, “Go where?”

“I need to prepare for our eternal task ahead.” She said, with calmness in her voice.

Robert stammered, “I don't understand. Thou art my wife and I forbid thee to go anywhere. What about our child?”

“Goodbye my love, don't worry, I will see thee soon, and we will all be together,” said Elizabeth, who smiled and closed her eyes,

“What's happening? Elizabeth, open thy eyes, I want to talk to thee,” said Robert, frowning.

Elizabeth's body juddered and then convulsed.

“Elizabeth, Elizabeth!” shouted Robert. His eyes widened as he rushed over to his wife as her crimson aura faded.

It took over an hour for a doctor and midwife to arrive on horseback. They looked at each other astonished when the midwife delivered a healthy baby boy from Elizabeth's body.

Elizabeth's death devastated Robert. He spent days and sometimes weeks in bed, ignoring everyone. He never acknowledged his son, refusing to give the child a name. As far as he was concerned the infant had killed his beloved Elizabeth, so did not exist.

Several years passed and the reclusive Robert stayed alone in his cottage while his parents raised his son, who they named him William.

Late one night while Robert lay in bed watching the candle flicker, staring as the flames went through their nightly dance. He rubbed his temples, “Argh, damn these headaches,” he said aloud. Closing his eyes

as the pain intensified, he smelt Tripe and Onions. Robert felt confused as a blue column of light appeared by the side of the candle and then a crimson apparition swirled at its centre. Robert sat up in bed and stared wide-eyed at the light, which got brighter. Then a familiar voice said, "Robert, my love, I haven't got long to explain. Thee must come and find me and our portal, so we can all be together."

"Elizabeth" he gasped, startled by the apparition which became clear and he could now see Elizabeth smiling at him.

"I don't understand. Where art thou? Am I dreaming?" spluttered Robert.

Elizabeth put her arms out and repeated, "My love, thee must come and find me and our portal. It is close by."

Robert looked agog as the apparition faded, but he felt euphoric and no longer in pain.

After his contact with Elizabeth's spirit and although he thought it was a dream, Robert knew that he needed to find the portal that Elizabeth told him about, praying that if he found it, he would see her again. He scoured the Yorkshire countryside on horseback for several weeks.

One warm clear night, he came across a large circular clearing within a dense forest area of Clifton Moor. The large patch of earth seemed out of place amongst the woodland, but Robert felt drawn to this area and dismounted. Robert led his horse out of the woods and went over to the circular area. He saw rocks assembled in neat rows around the circle, with a large scorched area in its centre.

Robert cringed, 'A witch's coven,' he thought 'Damn, I did not know witches were in this area?'

He turned around, grabbed the horse's reins, and as he placed his foot in the stirrup, a sharp pain shot through his head.

'Argh, not now,' he thought, as the pain intensified.

"Robert, Robert!" said a familiar voice behind him. He removed his foot from the stirrup and swung around.

In the centre of the circle was a vivid blue column of light, with a figure bathed in crimson flames glowing in its centre. Although he couldn't make out any distinctive features, he recognised the voice. He dropped to his knees and stared into the light.

"Elizabeth, Elizabeth," he wailed.

"Robert, thee has found our home," said Elizabeth, with her soothing voice comforting Robert, and the pain in his head stopped as she continued. "I have a lot to teach thee my love, but first, thee must build protection around our portal and bring our son to make our family complete."

Robert gazed into the portal feeling euphoric. He saw Elizabeth clearly now and went over to the portal.

"Do not enter the portal my love." She warned him.

Robert stopped and gazed at his wife. In a dreamy daze, he looked at his body now glowing with colours, and as he gazed at his hands, he screamed "But how? What is this sorcery? I am cursed."

Elizabeth giggled and said, "Thou art not cursed my husband, what thee was seeing is thy aura."

Elizabeth explained a little over the next hour, and Robert, with his new understanding, left the portal to start with his task ahead.

Over the next few months, Robert worked tirelessly. With his parents' money and a few overpaid builders from the nearby town, he built a thatched-roofed cottage on the patch of land surrounding the portal. Robert designed the cottage so the portal would appear in a corner of a room on the ground floor, which

would be his bedroom. Even though his parents were concerned for Williams's safety, they allowed Robert to take his son. Robert and William moved into the cottage and the three of them lived there undisturbed.

The Potts reared livestock and grew fruits and vegetables, which kept them isolated from the outside world. Elizabeth's spirit taught Robert about the world she now inhabited. She explained about the *Gift, and advised him how to use his keeper's power wisely to protect the portal and help lost souls enter the afterlife. Robert, in turn, taught his son and William grew up believing that their way of life was perfectly normal. His father spoke to an area of his bedroom, but even though he saw nothing, believed his father when he told him that he was speaking with his mother. Robert schooled him, and they worked and lived off their land. Robert walked to Radcliff town several times a month for supplies. The townsfolk were always suspicious and afraid of the Potts family. However, knowing who Robert's uncle was, they did not want to risk their being accused of sorcery and burned at the stake, so they ignored the Potts.

William first encountered his mother on his 18th birthday. He was reading a manuscript by candlelight on the cold winter's evening when he felt a sharp pain in his head. He screamed as he saw multi-coloured lights envelop him and he rushed into his father's bedroom.

"Father, Father, look at my body, it ..."

William gasped and stood in awe at the sight in front of him. Blue light filled the corner of the room, with a shimmering crimson figure at its centre. He couldn't make out any clear features, however, he felt euphoric, and the pain in his head vanished, leaving just a warm narcotic feeling. His father stood to the side of the blue column, his multi-coloured aura radiating. He smiled and announced, "William, meet thy mother."

Over the next few years, they lived as a complete, although strange, family.

Elizabeth instructed William to find a wife who would be his guide when he was twenty-one-years-old. She told him that it was time for his joining and said where he would find his Chosen-one.

William found his guide, a girl named Rebecca. She was 16, and in jail in the village of Woodford awaiting trial for witchcraft. He instantly fell in love with her and using his elderly uncle's influence had Rebecca released. Rebecca and William married and she moved into the Potts cottage where shortly after they had a daughter who was a keeper, and in time also instructed on whom to marry.

Robert died at 65-years-old. His and Elizabeth's spirits continued to teach William until he and Rebecca died. Elizabeth and Robert went to the afterlife while William and Rebecca's spirits taught their children and grandchildren, and so on and so forth, continuing with the bloodline throughout the ages.

The centuries passed, with roads built around the area of the Potts secluded thatched-roofed cottage.

The portals previous keeper and guide, Jack and Pearl Potts, hadn't updated the cottage for many years and had remained reclusive during their lives there, preferring to keep away from the ever increasing populous. Pearl, the keeper, was a cheerful woman with many friends, although very few in the mortal world. Jack, the guide, on the other hand, was a grumpy old sod, who grumbled most of the time.

Church's father, Churchill Potts senior, never acquired the gift, so when he was 17-years-old he joined the army, where he met and married June, a civilian teacher at his barracks. They distanced themselves from Pearl and Jack as their weird ways scared June. They moved into a modern detached house in York city centre, where their only son was born in 1965. They named him Churchill, the same as his father, who his father, Jack, had named him after his hero Winston Churchill, so Churchill senior bestowed the odd name onto his son.

Pearl and Jack had no contact with Churchill senior or June for many years, but went to the hospital when June was in labour. Pearl told her son that her grandson would have the gift, and it would be powerful. Churchill Senior didn't want to know and was uninterested.

Several years later Jack passed away. Churchill senior, not wanting to lose his inheritance, reunited Pearl with his family.

Church's childhood was far from normal, spending his weekends with his grandmother Pearl at her old cottage. Granny Pearl lived alone after Jack passed away, although she told Church that she spoke to Jack every night and he would one day meet his grandpa Jack. Church grew close to his grandmother and loved spending weekends and holidays at the cottage although it always smelled of Brussels sprouts. It felt comfortable and homely to Church, who went to primary school in York, but found it difficult to make friends with the other kids wary of his strange behaviour. Granny Pearl had told him that he had a special gift and although he considered this special gift a pain in the arse, he preferred to spend time with her as opposed to other kids. The countryside surrounding the cottage was picturesque and alive with wildlife going about their daily ramblings. It was a great adventure for a curious, solitary little boy.

Young Church could not understand why he was different. His blinding headaches, voices, and pallid complexion, gave his teachers cause for concern, and they pressured his parents to seek help. Churchill senior and June persuaded them that he had a hereditary disorder and that it was nothing to worry about, they now distanced themselves from Church.

Granny Pearl died when Church was fifteen-years-old and bequeathed the cottage to him for his 18th birthday. He felt lonely without Granny Pearl, but she had told him that he would see her again and for reasons unbeknownst to him, he believed her.

Pearl left strict instructions the cottage remained sealed until then, and only when Church moved in, would his parents be entitled to their inheritance.

When Granny Pearl died, the lawyer from Mason & Mason, an old family lawyer for Pearl and Jack, gave Church an ancient key on a silver chain and told him to keep it safe until his eighteenth birthday. Church hung the key chain around his neck.

During the eighties, while the other kids grew up around discotheques and Duran-Duran, Church, stayed home alone, with his strange erratic behaviour making him an outcast.

Church finished school when he was 16 with no ambitions or future direction. His mother and father accepted this and ignored him as he rarely left his room. On the eve of his 18th birthday, Church's life changed and he awoke with a sharp pain in his temples. He had never experienced such an intense pain. He sat up in bed, squeezed his hand against his head, and through the pain noticed a vivid column of blue light. His pain subsided and he stared at the plume as it increased in size. Something else illuminated his senses; the familiar smell of Brussels sprouts. He watched in awe as the myriad of colours took shape. An unfocused human bathed in multi-coloured flames formed within the centre of the column and a familiar voice that he had not heard for three years, said, "Hello Churchill, you have grown. I don't have long to talk and I know you feel confused, but when you move into the cottage, all will become clear. I have a lot to teach you."

"Granny Pearl." he stammered as the figure became clearer.

"Yes Church, and you have nothing to be concerned about my grandson, your life will be better from now on."

The figure then faded along with the blue column of light; leaving Church bewildered, but feeling euphoric. Smiling he drifted into a blissful slumber.

Churchill senior phoned Mason & Mason solicitors to confirm his son was moving in the following day and wanted his inheritance. The lawyer informed him that it was somewhere in the house and that young Church would know where it was when they got there.

The following morning, Church's parents woke him early and drove him to the cottage, eager to find their inheritance and settle Church into his new home. Churchill senior had seen his father bringing in small

valuable items into the cottage when he was a child and Jack had always told him that one day the Potts treasure would be his.

Church smiled during the short journey thinking of the fond memories of the small thatched-roofed cottage. He felt happy about being able to live there alone. With his parents ignoring him over the past few years he was used to being a recluse, but as they approached the cottage, he had a strange feeling he would not be alone for long.

The car pulled up and Church felt the fresh crisp country air of his surroundings on his face. Churchill senior struggled with the old lock and after cursing and grunting, he shoved the door open and they went inside.

“It smells musty,” June grumbled.

Church smelt something else and smiled.

With the cottage sealed and furnishings covered, it had remained in good condition. The Potts removed the cloths and June rushed around and gave the downstairs a cursory clean. The electrical switches and appliances, although archaic, were in working order. Churchill senior had arranged for the power supply to be reconnected and everything worked. Jack had plumbed in a system of pipes from the outside well into the house, so Church had fresh running water.

Church looked around smiling; he knew every part of this cottage. Except for one room that Granny Pearl kept locked, he had played around every other part of the cottage as a child.

Churchill senior and June looked anxious, so after June put food and other stuff she had brought with them in the cupboards, his father said,

“Okay son, we want to get back to York, The lawyer said you know where our inheritance was, so if you would give us that, we can be on our way, and we will see you later.”

Church looked puzzled and threw up his hands. “I don’t know where it is?” He said.

His parents glared at him; Church senior sighed and said, “That solicitor’s an idiot and it’s just like mum to give us the run-around. Oh well, I imagine that it is around here somewhere. I suppose we better search.”

“This place gives me the creeps, so I will look outside.” Said June and rushed out.

“I’ll go look upstairs, you look down here,” said Churchill senior.

Church wandered around and felt drawn to the room on the ground floor that Granny Pearl had always kept locked. When young Church had asked why, she had always told him that it was her and Grandpa Jack’s special room that he could not go in... yet.

Church went over, turned the knob, and opened the door.

He gasped upon entering the room. A vivid blue column of light shone from the centre of the pentagram in one corner and in it stood two figures: one crimson and one multi-coloured. The apparitions shimmered and the familiar aroma of Brussels sprouts wafted around the room, along with a faint trace of Brylcreem.

“Happy birthday young Churchill,” said a man’s voice, followed by a familiar woman’s voice, “Churchill, meet your Grandpa, Jack.”

Church giggled and said, “Hello Grandpa Jack, and Granny Pearl... Fancy meeting you here.”

Both spirits chuckled. Granny Pearl then said. "Happy birthday Church; we can talk later, but for now, let's make your parents happy so they can leave, and we can begin your tutoring. You will be relieved to hear that you will no longer be plagued by headaches."

"Your dad's always was a greedy money-grabbing little sod," interrupted Jack.

"Be quiet Jack, we have to help Church." Pearl curtly replied.

"You must have been secretly seeing the bloody milkman. Certainly no son of mine," grumbled Jack.

"Shush stupid," snapped Pearl. Church looked on at this exchange between the two spirits and chuckled. He knew his life would now change for the better.

Pearl gave Church directions to an area outside the cottage and told him that he would find a chest buried there containing various items. She instructed him on what to give his parents and what he must keep.

Church left the portal room and called his father downstairs. Although he and his father had never spoken about his gift, Churchill senior was aware his parents were different by the way he was brought up as a child. He also knew his son was different and had the gift, so it did not surprise him when he said that Pearl had told him where their inheritance was buried.

"Okay son. Let's go find it, but say nothing to June about your grandmother's ghost."

Church and his parents found the spot under a large, gnarled oak tree root, marked by a cross and rose symbol scorched into the ground. Church dug up an ancient chest. He took the ancient key and chain from around his neck and opened the lock.

The old lid creaked open, and they all peered inside.

Churchill senior and June smiled.

The chest contained various items of gold and silver jewellery adorned with rough-cut precious stones, along with gold coins and ingots.

Churchill senior grinned as he picked up a coin dating back to the 16th century, while June picked up a bejewelled necklace and put it against her neck, getting the nod of approval from her husband.

Church was more interested in an old leather-bound journal he saw at the bottom.

They took the chest into the cottage and laid it on the kitchen table. While June fetched a cold box from the car containing sandwiches and cakes she had brought along, Churchill senior loaded items from the chest into a duffel bag.

Church removed the book and glanced within the pages, made from varying materials, from old parchment to typing paper. The journal, compiled over the centuries by different authors, with the later entries put in by his grandmother, who he knew had an old typewriter.

Once the box was empty, Church locked it and replaced the key around his neck as Pearl had instructed. He placed the chest into an old cupboard in the scullery.

After eating the sandwiches and cakes, Churchill senior announced, "Okay son we will leave you to settle in. Until you get a phone installed, I will visit once a week and bring you fresh supplies."

Church knew they were impatient to leave and go value and sell their inheritance. "Thanks dad." He said, also wishing they'd hurry up and leave.

"Will you be alright Churchill? You don't have to stay if you don't want to," said June, sounding concerned.

“I will be fine mum,” Church replied and smiled.

“He’ll be okay, come on let’s go June. We have a lot to do,” said Churchill senior heading for the door.

His parents drove away looking delighted and chatting about their newfound wealth.

With his parents gone, Church went to the portal room to learn about the family business.

-Chapter Three-

The year was 1945. Magnificent buildings that once stood proudly in the opulent city of Berlin now lay in rubble; decimated by an angry world hell-bent on exacting revenge by annihilating the city. The Allied Powers wanted to make the German people atone for the atrocities committed by their country over the past few years.

Although spring was in the air, no aromas of freshly mown grass and fragrant flowers carried on the warm breeze. Instead, the overpowering smells of cordite, napalm, and the vile stench from the charred, rotting corpses, which lay strewn amongst the rubble-filled graveyard of the city.

With World War 2 almost over and while the demoralised German people came to terms with an uncertain future, the leaders of this fallen nation were now deep within a bunker, planning their next and final atrocity.

Located fifty feet beneath the once picturesque Gardens of the Reichskanzlei chancellery building, there was a large concrete and steel bunker. Within the bunker, several sections built to protect the occupants from the Allied bombing blitz. Inside the bunker gathered a group of men, which included several military figures and a few civilians. They gathered around a large table while their leader screamed at them, and by their nervous expressions, they were terrified of this individual.

Adolf Hitler looked furious as he glared at his War Cabinet and senior officials of his Nazi Party, in a large plush conference room within the 'Führerbunker.'

Hitler pounded his fist onto the desk and hunched over the table with rage in his eyes.

"Because of your incompetence, we are losing this war," he hollered.

He looked into each face around him, giving them all an icy-cold stare. His steely eyes burrowed into their souls. He composed himself, inhaled, swept his fringe away from his forehead, glared at General Wilhelm Kietel, and said, "Kietel, give me some good news."

Kietel's hands shook as he organised charts on the desk, and with a quiver in his voice said, "My Führer, I have no good news. The American, European, and Russian forces will be in Berlin by next week."

Again incensed, Hitler shouted obscenities and accusations of treason at the General, who hung his head looking embarrassed and afraid.

Hitler then focused his attention on a large man dressed in a white uniform.

He asked Herman Goering, "What about our beloved Luftwaffe?"

"Führer, we only have a few planes and pilots remaining, although we..."

"Silence!" Hitler commanded. Outraged, he struck the table hard again.

"I suppose our great fleet is also finished." He glared at Admiral Raeder, who nodded and replied, "We are still fighting Führer, but we are taking heavy losses from the enemy."

Hitler remained silent for a few moments and then addressed the group. "We must regroup and win this war. Our enemy is inferior to us." He continued with his orders. "Hienrich, you and the S.S., along with Walter and Alfred, round up anyone who can carry a weapon, old men or young boys, and get them to defend their fatherland."

Hienrich Himmler, Field Marshal Walter Von Brauchitsch and General Alfred Jodl, clicked their heels in salute. "At once Führer," They said, confirming that they would carry out Hitler's order, although they realised the futility.

Hitler leant over the table, sighed, and lowered his head. The others noticed his hands shaking as he mumbled to himself.

“My Fuehrer; we must get you out of Germany,” said Max Amann, a senior Nazi Party official. “We have false Red Cross papers for you and Eva with an escape route planned. We can...”

Hitler looked up, giving Amann a cold stare, stopping him in mid-speech.

“Do you mean a *Ratline, Max?” He asked.

“Yes, my Fuehrer, we planned one for you,” Max stammered, looking nervous.

“Do you think of your Fuehrer as a rat Max?” said Hitler, sounding calm.

“No Fuehrer, I am concerned about...”

“Your concerns do not interest me, Amann!” Hitler yelled interrupting Amann, who hung his head and looked at the floor as the tempo in Hitler’s voice reached a crescendo. He again slapped the desk hard and returned to staring at the individuals, screaming, “I will never leave my beloved Germany. Only you fools think this war is lost. I am the German people, and I will have victory. We cannot be defeated. We are the superior race, and I am your Fuehrer. There will be no surrender or escape for anyone.” He stood silent for a moment and looked at certain individuals, who nodded as his gaze fell upon them. He then bellowed, “Do I make myself clear? No escape and no surrender... Now get out of my sight.”

He slouched again over the table as some of the men left the room ignored by Hitler.

Several men remained behind, unnoticed by the others who left with their heads lowered, avoiding Hitler’s gaze, and wrath.

Two guards closed the large doors behind the last man to leave. Hitler looked at the six individuals remaining in the room.

SS – Gruppenfuehrer Heinrich Müller - Chief of the Gestapo.

SS- Oberfuehrer Benno Von Arent.

Gross Admiral, Karl Dönitz.

Professor Kurt Gutzig.

SS – Hauptsurmfuehrer Doctor Josef Mengele, and Professor Hellmuth Walter.

Hitler smiled at the men, and sounding calm, asked, “Has everything been prepared, gentlemen?”

All six raised briefcases, showing the Fuehrer. Hitler smiled.

“Excellent,” he said and shouted over to a guard at the door.

A guard marched over to Hitler, giving him a smart ‘hitlergruss.’ Nazi salute.

“Take the Gross Admiral, Doctor Mengele, and the professors to the stateroom and ensure they are granted all necessary comforts,” he ordered, and then spoke to the four, “Karl, Kurt, Hellmuth, Josef, excuse me, we have an important matter to deal with first. I will summon you when ready.”

The four saluted Hitler and followed the guard out of the conference room.

Hitler faced the two remaining SS officers smiled and said, “Heinrich, Benno, we have guests waiting to see us, so let’s retire to more comfortable surroundings.”

He turned and went over to a wall where a large red flag with a white circle and black swastika imprinted on it hung over a doorway. He moved the flag to one side and pushed a section of the wall. A door opened and the three head down a well-lit shaft, with only a gentle buzz, heard from the air filtration units' battery generators. They walked the short distance along the tunnel, entering through a door into Hitler's drawing room.

Another Nazi flag was on the wall and in front of the flag was a large desk, with a telephone on one corner, and a strongbox placed at its centre. The red chest had a swastika symbol painted on each side, with: **STRENG GEHEIM : BUCH MOSE** (TOP SECRET: GENESIS) stencilled across the top.

In the centre of the room, several armchairs were around a large coffee table. The main entrance to Hitler's drawing room was from double doors opposite, with two armed SS soldiers stationed outside, and another SS soldier stood by the side of a well-stocked drinks cabinet. The soldier snapped to attention when the party entered the room.

Chandeliers illuminated the room and several art masterpieces adorned each wall. A large, ornate hearth situated to the right of the room with a raging, smokeless coal fire, burning behind a golden antique fire surround and a false York Stone chimney. Despite having powerful air filters and extractors hidden behind the chimney, the room smelt of coal.

Even without windows and natural light, the room resembled an elaborate drawing room, although it was underground and encased in thick concrete and steel.

Already seated in the room, was a young blonde woman, Hans Kruger, and a small, dark-haired, middle-aged man. They all rose when Hitler entered.

Hitler instructed them all to take a seat and offered them a drink.

"Hans, Erik, Eva," said Hitler, smiling at those already in the room. He sat on the middle chair, looked at the five and said, "You know why we are here, so let's get on with it."

The guard placed drinks on the table beside the men and woman and then left the room.

"Eva, you don't need to be here for this, so go to your room," he commanded Eva Braun, who nodded, smiled at the men, took her drink, and left the room.

Gestapo Chief Heinrich Müller removed maps from his case and laid them out on the table and they all leaned over to look.

Hitler pointed to an area marked on the map and asked, "You are sure there are no enemy forces in this area?"

Müller looked at Hitler and replied, "Yes, Fuehrer, I am positive. This area has no strategic value or use, so there is no military activity there."

Hitler looked over at the chisel-jawed Hans Kruger and enquired, "Is everything prepared, Hans?"

Hans Kruger sat upright, staring straight ahead. "Yes my Fuehrer, my team is ready and awaiting your order."

Hitler looked at the map, smiled, and addressed the smaller man, "Erik, you have done well with this find. Are you prepared?"

"Yes, my Fuehrer, everything has been taken care of, and our equipment will work," said the little Jewish man, smirking.

Hitler smiled and asked, "How do you know it will work Erik? We haven't been able to test it."

The small Jewish man pushed his wire-rimmed spectacles further up the bridge of his nose, smiled, and with an air of confidence, said, "I am sure F  hrer,"

This small Jewish man seemed not to hold any fear of the F  hrer, which puzzled the military men in the room. They all had the same lingering doubts about Erik Jan Hanussen. Hitler was a staunch anti-Semitic and they wondered why this Jew was always allowed an immediate audience with Hitler. They knew Erik always stayed close to their F  hrer, who would always listen to his advice, more so than any other of his war chiefs. They could not understand their close relationship, which was more of equals, as opposed to the reality of master and servant. Erik unnerved them all with his sinister and creepy demeanour.

Hitler studied the plans and the markings of a small valley alongside a glacial stream, near the town of Schenkenzell, in the Kinzigtal valley at the edge of the Black Forest. A square grid drawn around an area in the small valley appeared to be a planned excavation site.

"Make sure you don't slow them down Erik," said Hitler, who smiled at Erik Jan Hanussen, his 'Jewish psychic.' Erik smiled back, and looking nervous, glanced at the large Hans Kruger, Hitler's Leibstandarte SS, personal bodyguard, and assassin, sitting next to him.

"No my F  hrer, I will try not to." stammered Erik.

"Kruger, make sure no harm befalls Erik. The third Reich's continuing existence and future 1,000-year reign rest on your shoulders," said Hitler, glaring at Hans.

"I will take good care of Herr Jan Hanussen, My F  hrer," said Hans, smirking at Erik.

"You have your orders, so carry them out. Failure is not an option and will result in your death Hans," said Hitler, with a menace in his voice.

Hans and Erik stood up and saluted Hitler. Hans marched out of the room with Erik stumbling behind him.

Once they left the room, SS-Oberf  hrer Benno Von Arent, the Nazi specialist agent for art and treasures, removed a small stack of pictures and photographs from his case and placed them on the table. Hitler picked them up one at a time, scrutinised them and separated them into two piles.

"These will go with us," he said and tapped at one pile.

"And these would go along to the other bunker once Hans and Erik had completed their task, and you have built it," he pointed to the other pile.

Benno Von Arent nodded and picked up the piles. He clipped the individual papers together and replaced them back into his case.

"We want them at both locations in three days," Hitler ordered.

"Yes, F  hrer," said Von Arent, and as he collected his things together, Hitler gave him a stark warning, "I will check there are none missing Von Arent. Now go!" commanded Hitler.

Benno Von Arent stood and saluted before he left the room.

Now alone, Hitler leant forward, stared at M  ller, and asked, "How are my two Jewish decoys?"

M  ller smiled and said, "They are fine. Surgery went well and along with the cosmetics, everything appears as we designed. They are both enjoying all the trappings of being first class citizens again."

"You are positive they won't be discovered?"

"Yes F  hrer, I have given strict instructions on the incendiary to use for maximum effect. I will use two of your staff to make the discovery, which will be more convincing when they are captured," explained

Müller and sounding confident assured him, “There was no way to identify the remains. That technology may be decades away and by that time our beloved third Reich will once again dominate the world.”

Hitler sighed, smiled, and asked, “Was everything else on schedule Heinrich?”

Müller nodded and replied, “Once Hans completed his mission, he will then carry out your next order, and then we can start again. Germany and the Third Reich will once again be the world’s superior power under your leadership and guidance my Führer.”

Hitler smirked at the SS officer, and then shouted at the two guards, “Bring Dönitz and Walter.”

The guard marched away to fetch the two men. Müller packed away the maps and then he and Hitler chatted until Gross Admiral Karl Dönitz and Professor Hellmuth Walter came into the room; followed by Eva Braun, knowing she would be included in this part of the plan.

They sat around the large coffee table. Professor Hellmuth Walter took pictures, blueprints, and schematics from his bag and placed them on the table.

Professor Hellmuth Walter, a tall stocky man with slick back grey hair was not a military man but a brilliant and innovative engineer, who felt nervous and overawed by Hitler’s presence. He fidgeted and stammered as he showed the group a schematic of a U-boat and explained about that phase of the operation.

“The vessel we are using to transport you and the other items was a refitted new *XX series Elektroboote with my revolutionary peroxide battery engines.” said Hellmuth as he tapped on the schematic and continued. “A sound-absorbent rubber coating covered the U-boat, to make it less of an ASDIC/Sonar target. The boat’s system had a chemical bubble-making decoy, known as ‘Bold,’ named after the mythical sprite of German folklore.”

“I only want simple facts Mr Walter. What does that mean?” asked Hitler.

“Well Führer, it means the U-boat would be undetectable by radar or sonar so invisible to all enemy vessels, and the new engine would make it to your destination submerged, using a snorkel to recharge the batteries.” He said, and to avoid Hitler’s gaze pointed again at the schematics.

Hellmuth showed the group the rear section of the U-boat with the torpedo room and crew compartments removed and replaced by a cargo storage area. He told them, “The storage is now eight separate sections, only accessible from the deck. Containers could be loaded and unloaded by crane into the separate sections. These sealed compartments are part of the structure so not to compromise the watertight integrity of the U-boat and could offload in rough seas.” He pointed to the conning tower and said, “This has been heightened and reinforced, so can be used for extra cargo storage and an entryway for you Führer. This remodelling still enabled the crew access up to the conning tower bridge.” Hellmuth looked up and assured them that he had calculated for the extra weight and doubled the ballast tanks’ volume to compensate for the additional 800 tons.

“What about armament?” asked Müller “What would happen if the U-boat was attacked?”

Gross Admiral Karl Dönitz answered that question as Hellmuth Walter appeared flustered and shuffled his papers around looking nervous.

“We still have six torpedoes in the forward section,” said the Admiral who stared at Müller.

“Would six be sufficient?” asked Hitler, sounding concerned.

“Oh yes my Führer. You cannot shoot what you can’t see,” stammered Hellmuth Walter.

Hitler gave him an icy stare, and in a threatening tone replied, “I hope so Mr Walter.”

Noticing Hellmuth was about to piss his pants, Dönitz produced a red folder from his case with, STRENG GEHEIM : BUCH MOSE, marked on the front, which he laid on the table.

They leant forward to study the folder. The front page contained an enlarged photograph of a battle-hardened Naval Officer.

This is Korvettenkapitän Karl Viktor,” said Dönitz, as he handed a photo to Hitler. “Viktor was one of my best wolf pack commanders and his submariner crew are loyal. They sank 187 merchant ships in the Atlantic and patrolled the Gulf of Mexico, with 130 kills credited to him. Viktor is a loyal and respected commander, with two iron crosses.”

Hitler studied the photo. Dönitz turned more pages from the folder. Hitler snatched the files and started to read.

Dönitz, perturbed by this, skipped the details and shortened his brief. He went to the important final stage and explained. “The barges will rendezvous with the U-boat at the coordinates in Argentine waters at the scheduled time and offload the cargo. The barges will then sail to a cargo dock in Retiro and unload the items into our disguised vehicles. The U-boat will then sail into international waters and surrender to the American fleet.”

Hitler then glanced at Müller who nodded and grinned.

Hitler continued reading the folder and looking at the relevant pictures as Dönitz continued, “A motor launch will take you, Eva, and Hans to the beach at Costa de la Platas en Barazeregui. A Focke-Achgells FA-33 hubschrauber helicopter with the presidential crest will then fly you to Quinta de Olivos palace in Buenos Aires. President Peron will meet you there. He told me that he is looking forward to spending some time with you and Eva.”

Eva Braun smiled; she remembered how she had enjoyed the previous visits and liked President Juan Peron’s wife, Maria Eva Duarte de Peron, simply known as Eva Peron. However, Hitler never shared her sentiments.

“I have met President Peron many times. He is not a man that I trust,” sneered Hitler.

“The Gestapo are in place my Fuehrer. Peron will not be any cause for concern. He will be well-compensated, so their feeble army will be the strongest in the region, thanks to our generous donation and technology,” reassured Müller, his interruption annoying Dönitz.

“What about Peron and the Americans? Are you certain we can trust him not to betray us?” Hitler asked.

Dönitz explained, “America was putting pressure on Peron to choose sides, but they cannot give him what we can offer. If they ever found out he collaborated with us, they would no doubt put Argentina on their 'Exkremente liste.' Shit list. Peron already lied to them and told them Argentina had declared war on our fatherland. He's assured the Americans that the Argentine navy will patrol the area of Rio de Planta in the South Atlantic, our rendezvous point, so we have no concern over being intercepted or disturbed by enemy warships.”

“What we can give, we can also take away and give to his opponents, and Peron knows that. Knowing our power, he will co-operate. He is our Latin American pet,” said Müller, receiving a contemptuous glare from Dönitz for interrupting him.

“Have you also offered President Rios of Chile the same deal?” Hitler asked, smirking.

“Of course, Fuehrer.” Müller smiled.

“That sounds satisfactory. I only want to be in Argentina for four days at the most, until we make our final relocation,” insisted Hitler, feeling confident that every step was meticulously planned, he continued to read Dönitz's Genesis folder and asked, “How and when do we begin the operation?”

“We will take you to the U-boat at Farge port. Kruger should have completed his mission at Schenkenzell and will meet you at the U-boat in three days.” Müller explained.

Hitler again studied the details and asked, “What about our false papers?”

Gross Admiral Dönitz took a small brown bag from his case and handed it to Hitler, who opened it and removed several bundles of papers, some containing photos.

“Everything is in order for every stage my Fuehrer,” said Dönitz. He rubbed the Iron-Cross on his skirt collar and smirked at Müller.

“These are exceptional,” said Hitler scrutinizing the documents. He looked at the men and said, “Three days it is then. You still have a lot of work to do, so carry out my orders, but make sure you double-check everything. You have your Fuehrer's life in your hands. Müller, keep me informed of Kruger's progress.” He sat back in his chair.

Müller nodded and said, “Yes, My Fuehrer.”

Hitler and Eva remained seated while the others in the room got up and walked towards the door.

“Heinrich,” he called out to Müller. “Tell the guards to fetch Doctor Mengele and Professor Gutzieg.”

“Yes, my Fuehrer,” said Müller exiting the room, leaving Adolf and Eva alone to carry on looking at their new papers and reading the files.

The telephone ringing disturbed the couple. Hitler got off his chair and went to answer.

The caller was SS-Obersturmbannführer, Adolf Eichmann, a call that Hitler was expecting.

Hitler got straight to the point, and asked, “Has everything gone according to plan Eichmann?”

Eichmann replied, and Eva saw Hitler becoming irate as he snapped, “You are already behind schedule. What do you mean 90% complete? Are the Jews dead?”

Again, Eichmann replied, and after giving details, Hitler said, “So, the result of the project is 100% of the 500 unprotected test subjects died, but none of the 20 immunised individuals were affected?” Hitler calmed down, smiled, and said, “Eichmann, that sounds to me to like a 100% success.”

Hitler heard artillery shells exploding in the background and asked, “Are those the enemies' shells or ours?”

Eichmann told him that they were British artillery closing in on their position.

He then explained about his 10%, shortfall of success and needed more time to monitor the immunised surviving test subjects. He told Hitler that because the tests were only recently conducted, he could not guarantee the immunisation's success, or if its effects were permanent or only temporary. Eichmann said he needed time to work on an airborne delivery system.

“We have no time for that. It is imperative I get this information immediately,” said Hitler, and with urgency in his voice, added, “We can leave those small details for the future. You must get here with all haste. Can you avoid capture?”

Eichmann assured him that if he was to leave now that his men would cover him so he could avoid the enemies advance on the concentration camp.

“What about the scientist and our successful test subjects, are they with you now?” asked Hitler.

Eichmann confirmed they were also in the room, along with a few of his soldier’s as ordered.

“Get here as soon as you can, Eichmann. I am waiting, and you know what you must do?” continued Hitler and with a sinister tone to his voice, added, “Leave no trace Eichmann. Do you understand?”

Hitler heard Adolf Eichmann issue an order to his men, and the sound of automatic gunfire reverberated through the telephone. Hitler smirked and hung up.

Professor Kurt Gutzig and S.S. Hauptsturmführer Doctor Josef Mengele stood in the doorway along with their soldier escorts. They had overheard the end of the call, which sent a chill through both the medical academics.

Hitler looked over at the men and ordered, “Please be seated gentlemen,” motioning for them to sit alongside Eva.

Professor Kurt Gutzig took his BUCH MOSE folder from his case and placed it on the coffee table. Hitler joined them and the professor opened the folder. Gutzig took out five A4 size documents, four of which had details filled in with photographs clipped to them. The fifth sheet was almost blank, with no photograph. Kurt handed them to Hitler, who held up the sheet of paper, and asked, “What about this sheet. Why are there only a few details on this one?”

Mengele answered, “She is still about two days from delivery. We don’t yet have any details about the infant yet.” He then chuckled, “This one doesn’t want to come out.”

Hitler sneered and said, “I want to know everything about this one, too.”

Mengele nodded and assured him that he would have the details and a photo as soon as possible.

“Make sure that I do,” said Hitler glaring at Josef Mengele to serve as a warning not to chuckle or make light of the subject. Mengele got the message and stayed silent. Hitler showed the documents to Eva who looked at each photograph and smiled at the black and white images of mothers cradling new born infants.

Kurt Gutzig then smiled and said, “This process I named Gutzig Esterne Ovariellen Insemination, and it has been a great success.” He produced a separate file from within his Genesis folder and was about to explain his technique, when Hitler abruptly cut him off and asked, “Have you any other copies of this technique?” (Re-developed decades later and known as *I.V.F).

“Yes, Führer,” said Kurt, looking confused as he reached into his case and took out a small journal.

“Everything on my research is in this book. However, the BUCH MOSE file, also had the details,” said Gutzig.

“Anything else?” Hitler asked, glaring at the professor.

“No Führer,” announced Gutzig, furrowing his brow and looking nervous.

Hitler held out his hand, and the professor handed him his journal assuming he wanted to study it. Instead, Hitler went over to the fireplace, tossed the professor’s journal into the flames, and then re-joined the group. Noticing the shocked disbelief on Professor Gutzig’s face, he said, “If this fell into the wrong hands, they would realise we have done something using this technique and investigate, and we can’t allow that, can we Kurt?”

Gutzig watched his work burn. He sighed, shook his head, and replied, “No, my Führer.”

Hitler flicked through the rest of the folder and asked Mengele, “Are you familiar with the professor’s technique, Josef?”

Mengele had known Hitler for some time, so became suspicious of his question.

“No Fuehrer, I have never been involved in the professor’s research.”

Kurt Gutzieg looked shocked by Mengele’s reply, because he had spent a great deal of time assisting him and knew his techniques, so why lie? A horrifying thought entered his mind. He felt nauseous and afraid as Mengele, changing the subject, said, “All mothers and children are in excellent health and ecstatic with their miracle babies. They are all in different hospitals, so they will never meet or know the truth. The medical staff wouldn’t suspect anything because we used the miracle babies as a sign that things would improve for Germany with these omens.”

“Are you certain nobody had any idea what happened?” Hitler asked, with menace in his voice.

Mengele nodded, “Positive Fuehrer; they all think they were amongst the hundreds that we sterilized. They don’t realise the process was different for them, so when they became pregnant they assumed it was either the failure of the sterilization or a miracle,” Mengele assured him.

“Kurt, you performed all these embryo techniques?” Hitler asked.

Still numb with shock, Gutzieg replied, “Yes Fuehrer.” He glared at Mengele and told Hitler, “I performed yours and Eva’s egg fertilization and the implantation into our subjects,” although he felt unsure why he should protect Mengele, but thought history would now remember him alone, with his ego bigger than his life.

Hitler took all the folders from the table and went over to the BUCH MOSE strongbox. He removed a key chain from around his neck and put it into the lock. Lights flashed from the keyhole, scanning the key. The lock’s mechanism clattered and went silent as the lid popped open slightly. He lifted the lid and shouted over at the two men, “You’ve destroyed any samples.”

“Yes, Fuehrer. Everything was disposed of per your orders,” confirmed Mengele.

Hitler put the files into the box, closed the lid, and removed the key. Tumblers fell into position, locking the chest. Hitler re-joined the sitting group. Eva was still smiling, unaware of the fate of one of the two men who sat beside her and who had provided Hitler and herself with heirs.

“Thank you gentlemen; that will be all... Josef, don’t forget my 5th photo and information,” said Hitler and summoned the guards.

“I will take care of that personally Fuehrer,” said Mengele as two guards came over and Hitler spoke to one, who glared at Kurt Gutzieg.

Gutzieg and Mengele stood. Gutzieg trembled and Mengele smirked, as Hitler ordered, “Take the doctor and professor topside and make sure they are well taken care of.”

The soldiers snapped to attention and escorted the two out of the room. Gutzieg walked slowly but with dignity, terrified of his impending doom. He was a proud man and even though knowing he would never see his family again, he accepted his fate with dignity. He glanced back at Hitler who now had his back turned while he spoke to Eva. He looked at the embers of his life’s work, smouldering within the flames.

“Herr Professor, please come this way,” said the guard as he lagged behind Mengele and his escort.

-Chapter Four-

Granny Pearl explained to Church over his first few days at the cottage what their edict entailed. They provided a link between the mortal world and the celestial plane.

She explained, “When someone died unexpectedly, sometimes they left something unresolved in the mortal world and are unwilling to go into the light of the afterlife. These are lost souls, and your task Church, was to resolve these spirits issues in the mortal world to let them find peace so they will pass over to the afterlife. These cases usually involved finding something of value hidden by the deceased, which they want to be given to their recipient.”

Church realised this could be a difficult task. He had to be a researcher, private detective, and a grievance counsellor, having to deal with whatever challenges he came across.

Granny Pearl explained how, and over time told him the rules he must follow.

Church spent many hours in the portal room with Granny Pearl and Grandpa Jack’s spirits tutoring him. This education felt comfortable and normal, giving him a sense of belonging, away from the outside world that ridiculed him.

Church studied the Potts journal. His mother and father gave him some money after cashing in their inheritance and Church had a phone installed. He knew he had to learn how to run the family business to make his reclusive lifestyle possible and be independent.

Every keeper of a portal kept a journal. Robert and Elizabeth Potts started the Potts journal in the 16th century, with updates recorded by keepers throughout the ages when changes occurred in either world.

He learned:

Portals: These celestial gateways connected the spirit world to the mortal world. In the mortal world, **permanent portals** were on consecrated ground located throughout the world and guarded by mortal keepers and guides and at fixed locations. There were also **temporary portals**. These opened briefly and could appear anywhere. Portals were vivid blue luminous columns of light and, depending upon which spirit was there, their coloured aura appeared in the centre. Portals were only visible to Chosen ones.

Granny Pearl told Church that their portal, although over 400 years old, was relatively new, and known as : ‘The Potts Portal,’ which Church thought sounded cool, but she also gave him a stark warning about portals.

“Mortal keepers and guides must never enter a portal.”

Several new permanent portals were initiated every millennium unless human events change when the afterlife needs to stabilise itself, because of a rapid influx of souls, for example, during the Dark Ages, World Wars, etc. Although many permanent portals existed worldwide, the origins were unknown. (But all is revealed in, Next... the sequel.)

Auras: Every human being has an aura surrounding them and only seen by individuals possessing the gift. In life, these auras appear as various colours surrounding the body. Apart from gifted ones’, everybody’s aura is white. Individuals with the gift auras are different colours. Guides have a crimson aura, and keepers of Portals such as Church and Granny Pearl, have multi-coloured spectral auras, like shimmering rainbows. These auras are mortals’ souls and in death, become orbs of energy with memories to exist in the spirit world and the afterlife. There had been black auras encountered throughout the ages but these were extremely rare occurrences.

The Gift is a psychic power bestowed upon selected individuals when soul and body combine at birth. It is an undetectable gene, known as the spirit gene. This ability allows people with the gift to contact the spirit world, along with processing certain powers.

Chosen-ones: People possessing the gift passed down through bloodlines. These are the guardians of portals, known as keepers and guides. These people possess certain extra powers and have clearer insight and knowledge of the spirit world. Chosen ones were partnered at birth, and once they meet in later life when the time was right for their joining, they stay together for eternity.

Keepers: Spirit and Mortal, are guardians and custodians of permanent portals. They are the connection between the mortal and spirit world, to help lost souls find peace and closure. At the Potts's Portal, Granny Pearl is the spirit keeper and Church is the mortal keeper. Jack is Pearl's spirit guide, and thus far, the jury is still out on Church's mortal guide. A mortal keeper's gift comes with powers to assist them, such as the ability to see portals and spirits. They can sense emotions in spirits and gifted individuals, along with other abilities needed to communicate with spirits and mortals.

The one Church found useful was his ability to understand every human language, written and spoken, in both modern-day and ancient texts. Church often wondered how many lifetimes it would take an intellectual to achieve this. Church decided to have some fun, so telephoned his old school. He wanted to speak with Mr Grimley, a teacher whom Church had always disliked, as he called him Pin-Brain Potts. Grimley, the French and German tutor, was fond of spouting off in either language to show off. He always reminded Church of a certain Nazi dictator and he chuckled as he dialled the number.

"Hello, Richard Grimley speaking," answered the teacher.

Church didn't announce himself, he just said, "You are a twat," in German, French, Spanish, Swahili and any other language that popped into his head. He continued until an angry Grimley hung up the phone.

Guides: Spirit and Mortal. Spirit guides take lost souls to a permanent portal to contact the spirit keeper. Mortal guides assist keepers with their quest to resolving problems and only **Chosen-ones** guides can see portals and spirits.

Individuals who have the gift, but not Chosen-ones, were also known as **Guides**. These people in life are mediums, clairvoyants, spiritualists, etc. When they die and become spirit guides and stay at the first level to help lost souls. These spirit guides are many, and take lost souls to the right portals spirit guide or keeper. They also use temporary portals to contact mortal guides, although this contact is brief and instigated by the living guide, via séances or other means to contact the spiritual realm. These spirit guides have restrictions and the mortal guides cannot see spirits or portals, although they can see mortal's auras, hear spirits, and smell their individual odours. Their gift was not passed down the bloodline and they have no joining, so whom they partnered with was their choice.

All spirit keepers and guides give off a familiar smell associated with them in their lifetime that only people with the gift could smell. The keeper's odours are stronger. Granny Pearl's odour was Brussels sprouts, while Jack's fainter odour, Brylcreem, and Church will regret splashing Brut all over in this life.

Church was nineteen when Granny Pearl introduced him to his first assignment.

It was midday and while Church fixed a leaking tap in the toilet, he smelled Brussels sprouts.

'Granny Pearl's early.' he thought as he made his way to the portal room.

Granny Pearl was in the Portal along with a white spirit. She introduced Church to Albert Wright, a recently deceased 79-year-old man who was now a lost soul with a problem. Church felt sadness coming from Albert's soul as he related his story, while Church wrote the details on a large notepad, which he referred to as 'Spirit notes.'

PATH GTR 001: 1984.

Albert's tale began 30 years ago, during the late 1950's. Albert was the skipper of the trawler 'Ross Rodney' sailing from the port of Grimsby.

With calms seas, they fished for cod on the Anthony Bank fishing grounds in the North Sea. Coming to the end of a trip and with the fish hold almost full, dawn broke as they hauled in the last catch of the season. The bulging net covered the deck and the crew removed the cod-end spilling wriggling, thrashing, fish onto the slippery deck. The five-man deck crew went to work, sorting the catch. The crew saw several large boxes amongst the writhing fish, and removed eight boxes from the nets. They carried them below deck until they had finished sorting, gutting, and icing their catch. While steaming home, the crew gathered in the galley to investigate their find. They gasped in amazement when they opened the first wooden box and found it contained gold bars and the seven other boxes contained the same, with a small engraved brass plaque fixed onto each box.

SS BATAVIER V

Dutch/Batavier line. Amsterdam:

Built: Gourley Brothers & Co.

Commissioned: 1903.

Delighted, but shocked by this treasure, Albert and his crew knew they must keep their discovery quiet, realising that the English government would take the gold off them as the country still suffered from post-war expenses. As they steamed back to the Grimsby port, they decided to bury the boxes until it was safe to sell the gold. Fishermen are a trusting breed, especially of their Captains, so they buried the loot in Albert's garden amongst his vegetable patch.

Several days into their next trip, on a bitterly cold January morning, they set the trawl nets into a calm sea. Albert started the slow trawl and then he and the crew felt a thud on the port side. The Bosun went across the slippery deck to investigate as an explosion ripped through the side of the vessel, violently rocking the boat, and throwing the Bosun into the icy cold ocean. They had struck an unexploded mine, one of the many from World War 2, still floating around the North Sea. The small trawler listed and started sinking, with the crew tossed into the bitter, cold, merciless North Sea. Immersed in the frigid water, Albert panicked and splashed around, his drenched woollen deck clothes now became like a lead suit dragging him under to a watery grave. Accepting his fate, he stopped splashing and prayed as he sank beneath the waves. His hand then touched something and he grabbed onto a piece of fishing net attached to the Rodney and hauled himself back to the surface. The little trawler turned turtle, leaving the keel exposed above the waterline. Albert pulled himself onto the icy cold metal of the keel. With the last of his strength, he entwined himself in the netting. He resembled Captain Ahab snared to Moby Dick.

Luck or fate was on Albert's side that day; another trawler fished nearby and saw The Rodney's plight. The Trawler, aptly named the Samaritan, steamed towards the stricken vessel. Albert lay exhausted and as hypothermia took hold, he felt at peace. He closed his eyes and said a prayer before he heard someone yelling and the engines of another trawler.

"Grab the float," yelled a crewman as Albert heard the dull thud of a cork float hit the boat. He glanced over and saw the rope of the rings of cork slipping off. He grabbed the rope and untangling himself from the net, clung on as the Samaritans crew hauled him through the frigid water and onto their deck.

The Samaritan's fearless crew, after pulling Albert from the clutches of an icy, watery grave, searched the surrounding area but were unable to find the rest of The Rodney's crew.

Mariners are superstitious and Albert, now fearing the Bataviers treasure cursed, never touched the gold for decades.

Albert lived in his home in Grimsby throughout his life. He and his wife had a son, Keith, who had a son, named John.

Losing the Rodney and its crew greatly affected Albert although he continued to skipper trawlers until he hung up his oilskins and retired from fishing at 65 years old. He'd seen the decline of the industry he loved over the next ten years and with his wife dying a few years earlier, he knew his end drew near. He wanted to leave his family something of value. One night, he was watching a T.V. program on the BBC about a treasure unearthed in England. The program mentioned that the finders kept all the proceeds. Albert knew then what he must do. Even though he feared the gold cursed, he felt that maybe the curse would lift if he passed it on to help others. At least proceeds from the sale would come in handy for his grandson John and his family, with him being out of work and a new baby on the way.

Albert wrote to the admiralty and various government departments. The government responded by writing him a letter, informing him about the vessel: Steam Ship SS.Batavia V, which sank in May 1916, along with its cargo of gold, rice, etc. The letter went on to explain the vessel, along with its contents were insured by a Swiss company; therefore, the Dutch salvage company hadn't attempted to salvage the wreck or its contents, so the gold ingots legally belonged to him.

On receiving the letter, Albert decided to dig up the boxes the following day. Unfortunately, the fickle finger of fate stepped in, and Albert suffered a fatal heart attack. He died before his planned excavation.

"I would like you to help my grandson John find the gold," said Albert and gave Church instructions and relevant information he thought useful.

"Good luck Church," said Granny Pearl, as her and Albert's spirits faded, and the portal closed. Church read his notes and called his parents.

The following day, Church borrowed his mother's battered, second-hand Ford Escort car and drove the four hours to the northeast coast. He arrived at Albert's old house in Grimsby late afternoon.

John, although of similar age to Church was married with his first child on the way. He was a fisherman like his father and grandfather. Now with the industry in severe decline, with most of the trawler fleet decommissioned, John was unemployed. Albert had bequeathed his house, including the contents to John, and he and his pregnant wife had moved in several days ago.

Church sat outside in the car, trying to figure out his best approach. Albert had told Church that as a child, John would often visit, but he had seen little of him over the past few years. Using this information, Church figured out a plan. John and his wife Sandra were in the kitchen unpacking boxes when Church knocked on the door. John answered.

"Hello John. My name is Church and I was a friend of your Grandad's," Church smiled and extended his hand.

John appeared bewildered. "He never mentioned you," he said, shook Church's hand, and frowned.

"Probably not," said Church. "The last time I spoke to Albert he told me that you rarely visited, but he often spoke about you."

John sighed, as it had been well over a year since he had last seen his Grandad.

"Well, it's nice to meet you Church. What can I do for you?" asked John.

"I wanted to offer my condolences; although your Grandad mentioned something that concerned him the last time we spoke, so I was wondering whether anything had been done about it?"

"Who's at the door?" shouted Sandra from the kitchen.

"A friend of Grandad s," John shouted back the reply.

“Well invite them in, but tell them we are in the middle of unpacking so excuse the mess.”

“Yes dear,” said John smiling and said, “Come inside Church, we can chat over a cuppa.”

Sandra joined them in the living room bringing in two mugs of tea and the three sat on a couch. Church told the couple how he was a neighbour until his family recently moved. “I often came to see Albert and listen to his stories. One of the neighbours called my dad and told him that Albert passed away. I came to see you and keep a promise that I made to Albert. He wanted to make sure you found the gold,” said Church.

John chuckled and said “Not you too. Grandad used to rave on when I was a child about this cursed treasure buried in the garden. I never believed him. It was only a fairy-tale,” he laughed and said, “Don’t tell me that you believed him.”

Church smiled and said, “Well, he had me fooled, especially after showing me the letter.”

John frowned and asked, “What letter?”

“The one from the government,” said Church. “Didn’t you read it?”

John and Sandra looked at each other.

John shrugged and said, “No, we have seen no letter.”

“Oh, that’s strange,” said Church. “Perhaps it’s still here somewhere. It was very important, so I doubt if Albert threw it away.”

John thought for a moment and went to find the box of papers that he was about to put in the rubbish. He brought in the cardboard box containing letters, papers, and various photos.

John placed the box on the table, and they rifled through it.

“Is this it?” Sandra asked, holding up a government-franked envelope.

“Yep, that’s it,” said Church, hoping it was.

John read out the letter from the admiralty. When he’d finished, he looked shocked and said,

“It says we own the gold, great!” he and Sandra smiled at each other and then John’s expression change as he screwed up his face and said, “Hang on a minute; what gold? Not Grandad’s fairy-story gold.” He then smiled and said, “Grandad was a great one for stories and exaggerating.”

“Maybe so,” Church said, “But Albert told me where it’s buried.”

“Why didn’t he dig it up before then?” John asked, sounding suspicious.

“Albert told me it was cursed for anyone, except you, John,” said Church.

John smirked and said, “And you believed him?”

“Albert was a mariner and superstitious, so yes, I believed him,” said Church, knowing that John also being a fisherman would understand about fate.

“What do you want?” Sandra asked sounding abrupt.

“Nothing,” said Church.

“We’ve only know you for a few minutes, and you want us to dig up our lawn because you made friends with a crazy old man,” said Sandra glaring at him.

“I know it sounds bizarre, but what do you have to lose? I know where to dig, so if I am wrong, you can laugh me out of your home... But what if I'm right?” Church asked and gazed at the couple.

Church and John took turns digging at the spot where Albert had instructed. They had only excavated down a short way when John's shovel struck something solid. They removed the boxes and, joined by Sandra, opened the first box of gold ingots. John and Sandra's eyes widened and they gasped.

“He wasn't such a crazy old man after all, was he?” said Church grinning.

John fumbled for words while examining one of the gold bars. “There must be a bloody fortune here!”

“And it's all yours,” said Church.

They spent the rest of that day and the following morning at banks and gold traders around Lincolnshire with the Admiralty letter in hand. They sold some of the gold bars and the rest John put in a bank's safety box. Church spent the night in a spare room at John and Sandra's.

The following day, Church said he had to leave.

“You are a godsend, Churchill Potts,” said Sandra, giving Church a hug.

“Yeah, you've changed our lives for sure,” said John, with tears welling up as he rubbed his pregnant wife's stomach, and added, “At least he will have a good start in life.”

“Or she,” interrupted Sandra,

“Thanks to Albert” Church reminded them.

John faced the heavens and said aloud, “Cheers, Grandad.”

He then handed Church an envelope and one gold bar. “Here Church, take this as a token of our gratitude.”

Church opened the envelope and pulled out a bundle of crisp banknotes.

“It's the least we can do,” insisted John. “Now, put it to good use and make sure you keep in touch.”

Granny Pearl had told Church that he could not charge payment for his help. However, he could accept any reward happily donated, and this reward was very happily given, as were the many others that would come.

Church thanked the couple. He put the money and gold bar into his pocket and said his goodbyes.

Church drove home thinking about how to spend his fortune. ‘Five hundred pounds and a chunk of gold for a few days' work; that's fantastic.’ he thought, never having seen that much money before, although he knew it was not always going to be that simple or lucrative.

Church arrived back at the cottage early in the evening. From the familiar smell that greeted him, he knew Granny Pearl was waiting in the portal room. Feeling excited, he went to tell Pearl about his success, and he felt an overwhelming feeling of happiness. He smiled and stood in front of the portal, facing Granny Pearl and Albert.

“You've done well Church,” said granny Pearl, adding, “Albert is ready to pass over, but wants to thank you.”

“What's happening? I have felt nothing like this before,” said Church, feeling euphoric. “It's amazing.”

“It is the emotion from Albert. A pure feeling of closure and peace,” said Granny Pearl.

“It’s time for me to leave now,” said Albert. “Thank you young Churchill, you will make a great keeper.”

Church saw the smiling face of an old sea-dog smiling as Albert's shimmering white apparition faded.

PATH GTR 001 : Fisherman’s Friend : 1984 : Case closed.

Churchill was an enthusiastic and focused student, spending time during the day repairing and updating the cottage with money he had made from the family business. Apart from when he was away on assignments, Church seldom left the cottage, with his evenings spent with Pearl and Jack in the portal room.

Church used the money from John to buy an Acorn computer to record his assignments and other information. Fitting a washbasin, mirror, and kitchenette in the portal room, he bought a mahogany desk and along with his desktop computer, he felt like an executive in his new office.

Church recorded his observations on his computer, he wrote:

The spirit world has two levels. The first level is similar to a border control, known by various names over the centuries depending on religion and culture; Purgatory, Limbo, Twear-Youmork. This level is the soul's first port of call when mortal life expires. Every soul passes through here and transcends through to the final level ‘afterlife’, commonly referred to as Heaven, Nirvana, Jannat, etc. The afterlife is the soul's final resting place and a place of no return, so it is unknown.

Granny Pearl and the Potts journal described the first level, which I compare with the ringed planet Saturn. The immense globe of intense white light of the afterlife would be Saturn, while the rings are countless orbs of light.

These orbs vary in colour. Glowing blue lights are portals with multi-coloured lights pulsating in the centre that are spirit keepers. Crimson orbs orbiting portals or inside, are the Chosen-ones’ spirit guides and the many smaller crimson orbs that flit about are the spirit guides.

The constant streams of bright white orbs are new souls passing through on their journey to become one with the afterlife. Granny Pearl described this as columns of glowing white ants heading for their nest. Occasionally a white orb will veer from the stream and travel aimlessly around. These are lost souls.

Granny Pearl explained that this little solar system is in constant and perpetual movement: a cacophony of colours, like slow moving fizzy bubbles of light, with guides, keepers, portals, and souls.

Church surmised these lessons thus:

Humans are individuals with their own values, ethics, and beliefs. There are leaders, followers, good people, and evil people, with different coloured skin. In life, there are Christians, Muslims, Buddhist, etc. In death, people shed their mortal shell and pass into a state of being, which passed through the first level, then immediately onto the afterlife. However, some souls have something important they need resolving in the mortal world before passing over. These lost souls leave the organised flow to the afterlife to seek out a spirit guide to take them to a keeper at permanent portals or through temporary portals to contact the mortal world, through a mortal guide at a séance.

Other souls that won't go into the light taking them on their celestial journey, cannot accept the fact that they are dead. They hang around the mortal plane, convinced that their family will contact them. These lost souls can detect gifted ones' auras and bombard them until the time the gifted one was fledged, usually, on their eighteenth birthday. Until that time, the gifted ones are vulnerable, and the futile attempts by these lost souls to make contact, gave the gifted blinding headaches and hearing incoherent voices. These souls, once located and reassured by spirit guides, continue on to the afterlife.

There are souls that flatly refuse to pass over for no reason at all. Known to mortals as ghosts and poltergeists, they haunt buildings or a fixed point, poignant to a significant part of their lives. They stay on

the mortal plane and manifest themselves to scare the bejesus out of people. They were usually grouchy people in life and a nuisance in death, but usually pass on when they get bored or exorcised.

One day, in 1986, Granny Pearl came to the portal. Church picked up an emotion from his spirit keeper that he had never felt before... fear.

“Hi Granny Pearl... what’s the matter?”

Church could hear the concern in her trembling voice as she told him, “Church, the afterlife’s in turmoil. I haven’t long to explain and I will come and tell you more when we have restored order. In the meantime, you need to research diabolus in the journal, so you are prepared. Be careful my grandson.”

The portal closed and Church rubbed his chin. “That didn’t sound good,” he said aloud and took the journal from the cupboard, put it on his desk, and looked through the pages. He came across several entries in the journal relating to the subject and read about spirits with dark blue and black auras, known as **Aura Diabolus**. Church read that this phenomenon, which although extremely rare and inexplicable, keepers described it as pure evil, capable of damaging the fabric of the spirit world, leaving turmoil in the celestial plane for decades. He became more concerned when he read about the doom the mortal world faced should a diabolus re-enter the living world as a spirit.

Referred to in the journal as **Diabolus** or **Demon spirits**, he read the short list of mortals with Aura Diabolus in the past, with only the last two names he recognised, the others pre-dated mortals history books. One was Genghis Khan, and as he looked at the most recent name, a cold shiver went through his body. It wasn’t the fact of who it was that concerned Church; it was portal that the diabolus re-entered the mortal world through.

Church made a cup of tea and studied the ancient English text about the last diabolus encounter. He read how that demon had come in through the Potts portal.

The entry was dated March 1859.

Mortal Keeper: Joshua Potts. Spirit Keeper: Samuel Potts.

Joshua had written:

“I had a terrifying encounter with a powerful diabolus spirit, known in the living world as Adam Weishaupt S.J., a professor, Jesuit, mass-murderer, and founder of the Illuminati, who entered the spirit world and thwarted all attempts by spirit keepers and guides to contain the demon. The diabolus flitted from Portal to Portal before finding and entering ours. I was unprepared, with little knowledge known or written about these demons.

I was awaiting my father, the spirit keeper, when the demon burst into my portal sucking the life out of the room and knocking me off my feet. With fear and trepidation...”

Joshua described his epic battle with the diabolus, using all his power to keep him in the portal room until his spirit keeper, accompanied by many other spirit guardians rushed through the portal. Joshua described the scene in detail and then wrote. “Although it took our combined strength, the spirit guardians ushered the demon back through the portal and herded it to the afterlife.”

Joshua wrote down a stark warning. It is crucial to avoid these demon spirits leaving a portal that a pentagram along with our symbols of protection must encircle all portals. These symbols would contain any spirit within the portal with no soul able to cross.

Church then noticed Joshua’s writing became a scrawl as he wrote: “It has been several days since my encounter with the diabolus. I feel that with the demon entering my body, some of his demonic spirit

remains inside me, making me weak and unable to regain my strength. I am now preparing to take my place as the next spirit keeper at our portal, to expel what remains of this demon for eternity.”

Church looked at the heading of the next entry also dated March 1859 and gasped:

Mortal Keeper: Arron Potts - Spirit Keeper: Joshua Potts.

Confused and shaken, Church took a drink, sighed, and stared into his cup, deep in thought. ‘It’s 1986, I don’t know of anyone nowadays who I would describe as pure evil, so if there was now a diabolus, who could it possibly be?’

After wiping pearls of sweat from his brow, Church looked over at the faint pentagram and symbols painted on the floor in the corner of the portal room and thought. ‘From what I’ve just read and the terrifying emotion that I picked up from Granny Pearl, I hope I never come across a diabolus.’

He went into York and bought paint.

-Chapter Five-

Years passed, and with Church now almost forty, he felt content with his strange lifestyle. With his stocky build, thinning hair, and jovial features, he could be mistaken for Bob Hoskins. Due to his powerful gift, he had led a sheltered and secluded life, only meeting people briefly while on assignments.

Granny Pearl noticed a change in his demeanour. She knew it was a time for a change to occur in his life. She had explained many times about the Joining, the time when Chosen-ones found their eternal partner. Although usually at an early age, there was no timescale for the joining and Church was not looking forward to that bit.

He now thought himself to be too old and hoped the spirit world had overlooked this part of his edict after the turmoil the diabolus had caused decades ago. Besides, what did he know about women? He'd never had one and couldn't see much use for them.

Some of his rewards had been generous and he'd amassed treasure and money, living well within his means. The external features of the cottage remained untouched, but he had landscaped the grounds with a large wall and gated fence now surrounding the property with a new BMW 3 series parked in his new garage. His driveway now led to a main road into Radcliff town.

He had modernised the interior of the four-bedroom cottage with modern furnishings throughout and large televisions in every room along with the most up-to-date computers and surveillance equipment. Large monitors and a flat screen TV now hung in the portal room, which had now become his plush office and where he spent most of his time. He had redesigned his kitchen with more storage facilities to stock food and other supplies for months at a time.

The remote cottage suited Church during the early years as his gift made him reclusive. By the time he'd become familiar with his special talents, he had grown accustomed to the solitude... although he was never alone.

Church decided a few years earlier to form a company. He called the company Paranormal Assisted Treasure Hunter, or PATH, for short. He found this to be a good icebreaker when meeting the relatives of the lost souls, making the first contact less obtrusive and reassuring.

His ability to converse in every language came in useful with one of his most important cases.

PATH PNK183: 2005.

Church was in the portal room when Granny Pearl, accompanied by a Danish spirit named Heidi, came to the portal. He not only picked up Heidi's sad emotion, but she had a crimson aura, so he realised she was a spirit guide.

Church felt baffled why a spirit guide needed help. Granny Pearl, detecting his confusion said, "As you know Church, guides cannot use their power to help themselves and Heidi's problem was special." Both spirits sniggered and Church picked up a mischievous emotion from Granny Pearl, one he'd not felt before from his spirit keeper.

He frowned at Granny Pearl smirking, as Heidi related her story.

Heidi lived alone until her death aged fifty-two in a small village near Aalborg, Denmark.

As a teenager, Heidi became reclusive, suffering from frequent headaches and claiming to hear voices. Heidi's sister, Greta, was different, although twins, Heidi had a pallid complexion and looked drawn, while Greta had rosy cheeks and was outgoing, unlike her standoffish sister.

To earn money for the family, after finishing school they found work on a small dairy farm in the next village. Greta would go into the village at night to party, while Heidi remained in her room, becoming ever more distant and reclusive as the headaches and voices intensified. While Greta dreamt of Prince Charming and living happily ever after, Heidi dreamed of normalcy, believing she was mentally ill.

Before long, the sisters ran the farm because the elderly owners were unable to work.

Heidi and Greta continued working the farm until the owners passed away. First the wife and a few months later, the husband, with the farm bequeathed to their son, Svend Pinquist, who had moved to England during World War II to fight alongside the Allies. He remained in England after the war where he married and started a family.

Svend and his wife, along with their twenty-year-old son, Harold, came to the farm, to bury their father and sort out the estate. Harold and Greta, now almost eighteen, fell for each other.

Svend sold the farm, giving both Greta and Heidi a chunk of money to resettle. Heidi bought a small house in the village, while Greta and Harold married and moved to England. It was many years before Harold and Greta had a daughter, and Heidi told Church that their daughter, Sharon, would be eighteen the following day.

Heidi told him that she stayed alone in her house throughout her life. Greta and Harold visited her several times, but never stayed long and stopped coming after their daughter's birth, breaking off all contact with her and with her unable to speak English, she had no way to track them down.

Church saw Heidi's spirit smiling as she then explained, "I discovered about my gift when a spirit guide named Peter came and spoke to me on my eighteen birthday. He explained about the gift and told me that I was a mortal guide. I worked the rest of my life as a local medium, with Peter as my spirit guide."

Heidi went silent, so Church asked, "What do you want me to find? Did you leave treasure hidden in Denmark?"

"No," said Heidi. "It's not treasure I need to find. I want to pass straight to the afterlife, but there is a troubled relative that I need to help first."

Church knew that non-chosen one's spirit guides could pass to the afterlife at any time. Heidi continued, "I knew my gift was not passed through bloodlines so I assumed that I was the only one with the gift. However, I now know my twin sister Greta had the spirit gene that remained dormant but has somehow passed to her daughter, who is a gifted one, although she doesn't realise it and is in turmoil."

Church read his notes, looked at the portal, and said, "I'm confused. This is a spirit guide's job. Surely Grandpa Jack could do this. I am a keeper and I..."

Granny Pearl interrupted, "This time Church, there is no treasure involved. This time, it's personal." She sniggered.

Church felt the mischievous emotion again emanating from Granny Pearl's spirit.

"What do you mean personal?" he asked, and then looked aghast as he realised, 'Bollocks, she must be a Chosen-one,' so he repeated, "What do you mean by personal?"

His question went ignored as Heidi gave him directions, and although listening and taking spirit notes, he mumbled as his mind focused elsewhere.

Heidi finished giving her instructions, so Church asked again, "Now, what do you mean by personal?"

Again, no reply was forthcoming as the two apparitions faded with the sound of women's prankish giggling echoing around the portal room.

“Come back here and explain what you meant about personal,” demanded Church, at the now empty portal.

“Granny Pearl!”

Silence.

“Granny Pearl.”

This played on Church’s mind while he drove his shiny new BMW 3 series along the A19 towards Mexborough. “Why did they not just come out and say that I was about to meet my wife.” He mumbled. “I am too bloody old for this nonsense.”

Church had already spoken to Harold on the phone before he left as part of his preparation. Church intended to introduce himself as an investigator for the deceased’s estate. He’d told Harold that he was a UK agent for a Danish law firm and that he had some information and items to pass on from Heidi.

Church took with him an antique ring, which he would use to break the ice and meet the family. He pulled up outside the Pinquist’s terraced house on a small council estate.

He sat for a while and poured over his notes while the butterflies in his stomach settled. Church tried to imagine what his bride-to-be would be like, He had thought about the age difference. He was almost forty and she was eighteen today. He smirked as he imagined walking into the house and greeted by a young, demure, Princess Diana lookalike with an enigmatic smile.

After several moments, he composed himself, went to the house, and knocked on the door.

Greta answered.

“Hello, Mrs Pinquist. I called earlier. I’m Churchill Potts. Your sister Heidi’s representatives in Denmark sent me... Sorry for your loss.”

In her now broad Yorkshire accent, but with a Danish twang still audible, Greta said, “Hello, Mr Potts. I’m Greta, Heidi’s sister. We’ve been expecting you; please come in.”

She led Church to the living room, where Harold sat in a large armchair in front of the television. The house smelt of bleach and Church saw it was spotlessly clean.

Harold stood up when Church entered and introduced himself. Harold motioned for Church to sit down, which he did on the large sofa that took up most of the space in the small room. Church looked at Harold and thought if it wasn’t for his combed back blonde-grey hair, he would look like a wizened, wrinkled old man.

Greta sat next to Church while Harold moved his armchair around to face them both. Church noticed Greta was an attractive middle-aged woman. Her blonde wavy hair made her look a lot younger than Harold, and it was good to be able to put a clearer face to Heidi. He noticed Greta’s aura was white, but with a slight tinge of crimson. ‘Probably with a guide’s power, Heidi wouldn’t have noticed this.’ he thought.

“Thank you for coming, Mr Potts. The Danish embassy only told us recently that Heidi died. We lost contact with her years ago. I’m afraid we weren’t close,” said Greta, who looked guilty, and throwing Harold a piqued glare, said. “The last time we visited Heidi was when Sharon was born and we haven’t seen her since.”

“I understand she left some property for us?” Harold said, grinning.

“Well, sort of,” said Church. He took a small velvet box, containing the antique ring from his jacket pocket and took out the ring, showing it to the couple.

Greta gasped, “I have never seen that before,” she said, admiring the large, valuable looking antiquity.

“Now Mr Potts, what do you mean by; it was sort of for us?” asked Harold.

“Please call me Church. And the ring is for your daughter, Sharon, and my instructions were to give her this on her eighteen birthday, which I believe is today,” said Church, pulling out a sheet of headed paper that he'd made on his PC from his inside jacket pocket.

Harold and Greta looked puzzled, and although Church's ability never stretched to picking up normal mortals emotions, he could see their embarrassment and guilt.

“But, Sharon never met Heidi. The only time she has seen her was just after she was born,” said Greta fidgeting.

“Be quiet Greta, you're repeating yourself,” snapped Harold and continued, “That's okay Church. We can give it to Sharon later. She is sick in her bed at the moment.” He stammered and looked at Greta for backup.

“Yes,” said Greta. “No problem, we will give it to her later... she will be pleased.”

“I'm sorry,” said Church, showing them the paper, “but my instructions were specific. I have to hand the ring personally to Sharon.”

He handed the couple the letter. He had added an extra incentive, which they read with their eyes widening as they read the bottom section.

Designer / Manufacturer.

Georg Jensen, Copenhagen, Circa: 1925.

Commissioned for: Alexandrine of Mecklenburg-Schwenn.

24 kt gold setting

1 x 7 cts Emerald, oval cut (AGL 2) excellent

7 x 0.5 cts Diamonds, round, brilliant cut (GIA E)

Total weight gold 9.4(gms)

Appraised: €730,000.

Church noticed the Pinquists' expressions change as they both looked amazed at the ring and saw the name of its previous owner. Church prided himself on this deception and thought adding the Georg Jensen crest was a nice touch, although maybe putting the old queen consort of Denmark as the previous owner might have been overkill.

“How did Heidi get this?” Greta stammered.

“I don't know.” said Church, “but you can see why I have to follow Heidi's wishes; the item is of great value.”

Whilst still holding onto the document, Church could see Harold and Greta pondering, and Harold sighed and said, “Sharon has been sick for some time. The doctors say she has got adolescent schizophrenia, so she never leaves her room.”

“She gets violent,” interrupted Greta, sounding embarrassed, which got her an indignant stare from Harold, who continued, “It is a little difficult to see her now. She had a bad episode this morning, claiming the dead were talking to her again and ranting about a ghost called Jack.”

“We had to sedate her.” interrupted Greta.

Church sat back onto the sofa.

‘Grandpa Jack must have already contacted her. At least they are making my job easier,’ he thought. Church smiled and said, “I’ve had experience with these types of cases, which is why Denmark contacted my company and sent me along,” Church produced a business card from his top pocket and handed it to Harold.

“PATH,” said Harold, “What’s that?”

“I’ll explain later, but let me assure you I am only here to help you and Sharon. Now, if I could see her, I am sure I can help. I can give her the heirloom, which she can sign over to you if she wishes.”

Church’s last sentence gave the Pinguists’ the incentive he had hoped, as Harold sighed and said, “Greta, go upstairs and see if Sharon is awake yet and tell her she has a visitor.”

Greta nodded, nervously got off the sofa, and went upstairs. Harold tried to engage Church in meaningless conversation, but Church’s thoughts and senses concentrated on what was going on upstairs. He had felt the presence of the gift from the moment he had entered, but couldn’t detect any emotion from the gifted one, which surprised him. ‘She must be in a deep sleep.’ He thought.

A deep emotion hit him. Fear and confusion surged through his body, emotions that he hadn’t felt to this degree.

Although taken aback by the sudden surge, he remained calm.

He could hear Greta’s voice and then another voice yelling, “Fuck off, out of my room.”

Church heard Greta trying to calm Sharon down and obscenities went on for several minutes, until silence.

Greta came back downstairs and into the living room shaking her head and looking bemused.

“What happened?” Church asked, seeing Greta shaking.

“I’m not sure,” said Greta. “One minute she was shouting and screaming as usual and then she went silent as if someone slapped her. She then smiled at me and said, “Please send Church up, Mother.”

“That’s an improvement already,” said Harold, who then asked, “Why do you have a stupid, bewildered look on your face Greta?”

Greta took a deep breath and said, “I didn’t tell her that she had a visitor, and I certainly never mentioned his name.”

Church then picked up a new emotion coming from upstairs... Hope.

Church got off the sofa, putting the ring in his pocket, but leaving the valuation letter on the coffee table for the Pinguists to ponder over.

“I will go by myself to see Sharon if that’s okay with you,” he said.

“That’s fine. Go to the top of the stairs. It’s the first room on the right,” said Harold, putting his arm around his shaken wife’s shoulders.

Church looked at Harold consoling his wife and as he climbed the stair thought, ‘I bet that’s seldom witnessed in this house.’

He knocked on the door of the first room on the right.

“Come in, Church,” said Sharon, her voice sounding hoarse.

Church entered the room. His first impression was of a hospital ward. It looked clinical, with pill bottles and injection ampoules laid out on the top of a large white bedside cabinet, along with a carafe of water and a single glass. A yellow plastic box was on another table, used for sharps disposal.

Sharon lay in the bed. She looked groggy after her morning dose of sedative. She looked ashen, with her crimson aura dim. Church saw an empty ampoule of Midazolam, a strong sedative, on the cabinet top and an empty syringe.

Church noticed the teenager had the same wavy blonde hair as her mother, although matted and uncombed.

Sharon sat up in bed and swung her feet over the side. She moved slowly, appearing to be in a trance.

'Effects of the drugs,' thought Church. He wondered why he hadn't felt the 'thunderbolt' (Cupid's arrow) like Granny Pearl said she had when she first met Jack. From what he knew about the Joining, it was what all keeper and guides experience when they meet their Chosen-one.

“Happy birthday Sharon, my name is Church.”

“I know,” said the girl. “I have been expecting you... Call me Pinky,” she said as she leaned over to the cabinet and took a tin from a drawer. “Are you my angel?” she asked, still trying to focus. “You are covered in a rainbow. Apart from Jack, the red angel I saw this morning, and myself, everybody else I have seen was just white. Mind you, I thought Jack was my imagination until you arrived as he said you would. I have been hearing voices in my head for so long and getting blinding headaches.”

She opened the tin and pulled out a hand-rolled cigarette, which she lit and blew marijuana smoke around the room. Putting the joint in an ashtray, she filled a glass with water, opened a bottle of pills from the collection of neuroleptic medications, and swallowed a small yellow pill with the water.

“Clozaril,” she said, tapping the plastic bottle top. “New wonder drug for crackpots,” she chuckled and held out her arms and showed Church. “This is all over me; I am glowing red, that isn't normal. I thought it was the drugs giving me hallucinations until I saw you.”

Church smiled and said, “For people like us that is normal, and to answer your question, I am not an angel. What you see is my aura, the same as I can see yours, it's not red, it's crimson. I am a keeper, so mine is multi-coloured, and this morning my grandfather Jack's spirit visited you. You aren't crazy Pinky, just different,” said Church reassuringly. “We are special.”

Pinky closed her eyes as she was feeling high, but juddered awake and concentrated on Church.

“What about all the voices and headaches? Jack told me some crazy weird shit, saying you would explain everything,” she said, adding, “unless it was the drugs. None of this seems real.”

Church remembered his days of confusion and fear, so he could empathise with this young frightened woman.

“Jack told you that I would come, didn't he?” Church asked.

“Yes,” said Pinky.

“And I am here,” said Church.

Pinky thought for a moment and slurred, “Yeah.”

“Therefore, everything Jack told you must be true... I will try to explain in more detail... but first” said Church, taking her hands. Pinky felt a strange power course through her body, like a warm wave of electricity. Her aura now glowed and she felt clarity.

“Wow! What happened?” she asked, gazing around the room. “I feel great, drug-free.”

“As I said,” said Church, “We are special and help each other as well as lost souls.”

While Sharon smiled and looked at him, Church went over to the corner of the room and fetched over a small plastic chair.

“Jack told me that once you come, my headaches and different voices would stop pecking at my head. Is that true?” She asked, and said, “That would be my best birthday present.”

“Yes, they will stop now,” Church assured her as he sat and smiled at her, “Let me explain,”

Church spent the next hour or so explaining about the gift and their edict in life, and about her auntie Heidi. Although he never mentioned she was his chosen bride.

Greta then came into the room and asked. “Is everything okay? Have you taken your medication Sharon? Would you like a cup of tea Church?”

“No, thank you, I’m fine,” said Church.

“Isn’t it a lovely ring Sharon? Okay. I’ll leave you to it then. Shout if you need anything, and don’t forget to take your pills Sharon.”

Greta backed out of the door, closing it behind her.

“What was that stupid woman talking about?” Pinky asked.

Church had forgotten about the ring; he’d been too engrossed explaining to Pinky about the gift and the spirit world. He explained about the ring being a ploy, which they could use to their advantage.

Church told Pinky that she needed more time to learn about everything and experience things, so she could get a clearer understanding. He suggested that she came to his cottage.

This came as a shock to Pinky, but she felt relieved. Although everything Church had told her seemed unbelievable, she’d trusted Church from the moment she met him.

She glanced around her sparse unwelcoming room and said, “When do we leave?” She asked, smiled, and looked at Church who frowned and appeared nervous. “What’s wrong?” She asked

Church sighed, gazed into her blue eyes, and told her about the Chosen-ones joining.

Pinky grinned as she listened to Church’s voice get croakier. When he’d finished, Pinky smiled and put her hand on his thinning hairline and stroked the top of his head “So you and I are supposed to fall madly in love?” she whispered.

Church nodded.

Pinky chuckled, slapped his head, and said, “Bah, don’t talk shite! You look like Bob Hoskins, and I certainly wouldn’t go out with him, let alone marry him.”

They stared at each other for a moment, before bursting out laughing.

“These Spirits of yours must be as bonkers as I was, are they on drugs?” giggled Pinky.

“They certainly got it wrong this time,” chuckled Church, hoping that they had.

They laughed for several minutes before Pinky looked sullen and said, “My parents got money from the government for taking care of me, so they would never let me go.”

Church showed her the ring.

“Maybe they will with this,” he said and told her his plan.

Church went into the living room. Greta and Harold sat on the sofa pouring over pictures of new cars in magazines. Harold had never worked, and after they’d spent the money that he’d inherited from his grandparents many years ago, they had lived off government benefits. Pinky, although an annoyance to them, served them well, with generous carers allowance payments.

“I need to take Pinky to the facility at my cottage for treatment; she needed more help which I can provide there,” said Church.

Harold and Greta looked at one another. “Will we get extra payments?” asked Harold.

Church shook his head and said, “No, but the treatment is free.”

The Pinquist’s mumbled and whispered to each other shaking their heads.

Church and Pinky knew they weren't about to allow their golden goose go anywhere without an incentive. Church took the letter from the table, folded it and added, “Oh, and Sharon told me she would give you the ring if you'd let me help her. But I understand if you aren't happy to let her come.”

“Oh!” exclaimed Harold, looking as if someone had just taken away his favourite toy. “Let’s not be too hasty, Church.” he stammered, “If you think you can help her. Sharon already seems a lot better since you arrived.”

“Yes,” agreed Greta. “Maybe for a short while will be okay, after all, she is eighteen now, so can make her own decisions.”

“Isn’t greed great?” said Church, driving along the motorway.

“Yeah, I knew those two greedy parents of mine would jump at the chance for the money. The only problem is, what happens when they find out the ring did not belong to the Queen of Denmark and isn’t worth that much?” enquired Pinky from the passenger seat.

“Oh, that,” smiled Church.

“The ring was one of my favourite rewards. I will explain how that works later, but it was given to me by...”

“Just get on with it,” Pinky interrupted and feigned a yawn.

Church smiled and continued,

“What I said about the ring was almost true. It was from the 19th century. However, it did not belong to Alexandrine of Mecklenburg-Schwenn, nor was it made by Jensen. It's a Sybil Dunlop ring and made for the wife of Logie Baird. I estimate the value to be around the same and knowing your parents, even for such a short period, I imagine they will not care about anything but its value.”

“Made for Yogi Bear’s wife, that’s cool,” Pinky chuckled.

“John Logie Baird, not Yogi Bear,” Church continued, “He invented the television.” Church saw Pinky smirking and knew she was joking. He smiled as Pinky then asked,

“So why feed them all that rubbish about Denmark then smartarse, hmm?”

“Well, it would’ve sounded stupid saying Heidi had a ring from England when she’d never been away from Denmark in her life, wouldn’t it?” said Church, sounding smug.

“Hmm, I suppose so,” Pinky said, shrugging her shoulders.

“Besides, it made them feel guilty about not visiting Heidi,” said Church.

Pinky asked question after question during the ride to the cottage. Church told her he would explain later. He was pleased when he pulled up outside the front door of the cottage. Pinky felt happy; it was just as Church had described and how she had imagined.

“It looks like it’s had a woman’s touch,” she commented.

Church laughed and helped her unload her belongings from the car boot, went inside, and showed her to one of the upstairs rooms.

“This will be your room. Anything you need, just ask. You unpack, and I’ll cook us something to eat and show you around,” said Church, leaving Pinky to accustom herself to her new surroundings. For the first time in her life, she felt comfortable and had a sense of belonging.

Greta and Harold went upstairs to clean Pinky’s room after she and Church drove away. They felt delighted and had already picked out which model of Toyota they wanted.

They went inside the room and noticed how neat Pinky had left it. Her medications and a tin of marijuana rolled cigarettes, arranged neatly on the bedside cabinet top, with a note leant against the water carafe, which read:

‘I won’t need these. I’m going home.’

They looked puzzled for a fleeting moment and then went back to discussing their Toyota.

Pinky showered and started putting her clothes away into a wardrobe. Church knocked on the door.

“Sorry to disturb you Pinky, but we have some visitors who I think you’ll want to meet,” he said.

“I didn’t hear anyone knocking,” said Pinky as she walked outside the room. They both went downstairs and into the portal room, with Church chuckling.

Church led Pinky over to the portal, “This is the portal I told you about. Meet my grandmother Pearl and your auntie Heidi.” He said.

Pinky stood facing the portal, screwed up her face, looked at Church, and said, “There’s nothing there; although I can smell of Brussels sprouts and tulips... Oh, and now something else.”

“That’s Brylcreem you can now smell,” said Granny Pearl. “Happy birthday Sharon.”

“Hello Sharon.” said Grandpa Jack, “Welcome home.”

“Oh, Hi Jack,” said Pinky, “What’s happening?”

“Church will explain everything later, and better. Won’t you Churchill?” said Granny Pearl, chastising him.

Church, still confused, stammered as Granny Pearl continued, “Meet your auntie, Heidi.”

“Happy Birthday Sharon,” said Heidi, and with spirits communicating through thought, Pinky had a happy conversation with Heidi about their lives.

Church stood back frowning and kept glancing at his smirking grandparents.

Auntie and niece finished their conversation and Granny Pearl said, “You’ve done excellent work, Church, although you need to teach Sharon a lot more.”

Church felt he was being ‘battered’ up, like a lamb going to the slaughter. Although he had only known Pinky for a short time, he’d become fond of this jovial, troubled girl, although more like a father opposed to a husband, and he certainly felt no throbbing passion for this teenager. Pinky felt the same depth of passion for Church... Zero.

Granny Pearl continued, “Your reward this time wasn’t treasure, Church. It’s far more special.”

Church, becoming frustrated, said, “Okay, Gran, let’s cut to the chase... When and where?”

“When and where what, Churchill?” Granny Pearl asked and Church could hear Jack and Heidi giggling.

“When are we to marry? I presume you will give us directions on that; you seem to meddle with everything else in my life.”

“Marry!” exclaimed Granny Pearl chuckling. “Who mentioned anything about marriage?”

“But you’ve been insinuating ever since I started this case about marriage, talking about Chosen-ones and the fact I am getting older, and this one was special, but no treasure etc.”

Granny Pearl chuckled, as she answered, “My dear grandson, we never mentioned a Chosen-one. Sharon’s not a Chosen-one, but she is a guide, and a special one. Didn’t you realise that when she couldn’t see us?”

Church groaned and said, “Yes I thought that was strange... You buggers have been winding me up.”

Laughter came from the portal.

“What are you laughing at?” asked Church, glaring at Pinky.

“Hard luck Bob Hoskins, Perhaps, you’ll find someone your own age.”

Church chuckled as Granny Pearl, still smirking, told them, “We have had a great deal of turmoil in the spirit world since the demon spirit entered almost two decades ago. It would be unwise for you to meet your eternal partner now. However, Heidi wanted her niece settled and content with her gift. Sharon will be your apprentice, so you can teach her the ways of our worlds,” said Pearl.

“You bloody spirits have a wicked sense of humour,” said Pinky, a sentiment echoed by Church. Laughter filled the room.

The Portal glowed again as another crimson spirit joined the group. It was Peter, Heidi’s old Spirit guide.

“Are you ready Heidi?” asked Peter.

“Yes,” said Heidi and told Church and Pinky, “Thank you both. I am now going to the afterlife with Peter, so I wish you both all the happiness and luck you deserve in life. Pinky, learn from Church, he is a wonderful keeper, stay safe and be wise,”

Peter and Heidi fused into one intense ball of crimson light and euphoria surged through Church and Pinky. Their energy then disappeared, leaving Granny Pearl and Jack.

“Was Peter the reason why Heidi doesn’t want to stay a Spirit guide?” Church asked.

“Yes,” said Pearl. “They fell in love after spending all those years together talking as Spirit guide and clairvoyant, although they couldn’t be together in life, they can spend eternity together.”

Granny Pearl sniggered and said, “Sorry about you two. I think you would have made a lovely couple.”

“Yeah, and she would stop you bathing in that stink that you call Brut,” added Grandpa Jack, chortling.

“Yeah, very funny, you old fossils,” smiled Church.

Pinky marvelled at the euphoric feeling she was experiencing.

“Wow! I feel great. I’ve never felt this good before, not even on cannabis,” she said grinning.

“Sorry child, that was the only time you will experience this emotion, only keepers have this part of the gift,” Pearl told her.

“Lucky bastard.” said Pinky, light-heartedly.

“Hah, and that is me Miss Pinguist, my young apprentice,” joked Church, with a condescending air of mocking superiority.

“Don’t be so cocksure, my boy,” interrupted Granny Pearl. “Your wife will also have this power with her gift.”

“Hmm, not that again,” Church groaned, “I think we have established that I am not to marry yet.”

“Not yet... but soon Church... very soon.”

“What do you mean, very soon?” Church asked.

Granny Pearl and Grandpa Jack faded, still sniggering.

“What do you mean by, very soon?” Church repeated.

Pinky basked in her euphoric state, as Church shouted at the now empty portal,

“Granny Pearl!”

Silence.

“Granny Pearl!”

“Bloody woman’s done her disappearing act again,” said Church sounding frustrated.

Pinky stood and sniffed the air.

“When I first came in, I could smell Brussels sprouts and tulips, but it’s gone now,” said Pinky.

“Don’t get accustomed to the tulip smell, that was your auntie Heidi,” grumbled Church, now in a foul mood.

The Paranormal Assisted Treasure Hunter was now Hunters.

PNK183: Apprentice and family: 2005: Case Closed.

END OF SAMPLE

Novels by Robert A Webster

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Enjoy the hilarious antics of an elderly four piece band as they embark on a whirlwind tour of several countries in Southeast Asia, unaware of their amazing worldwide success. The four musicians are inadvertently united and form a band named Fossils, whose unique sound filled an auditory hiatus lacking for decades in the modern day music industry. Pursued and hounded by ruthless record producers, this unassuming rock band discovers a new, exciting and carefree way of life, which they enjoy to the fullest, or at least what remains of it. Viagra, snuff, and Rock ‘n’ Roll.

P.A.T.H

A team of three psychics use their unique talents to provide a link between the mortal world and the celestial. Commissioned by lost souls; they find lost treasures for the troubled spirits, which they give to the mortal beneficiaries. One particular case finds the team caught up in a plot that had been conceived during world war two, which is instigated in the present day. The team has to solve a mystery that threatens to split the delicate fabric joining the two worlds.

Return of the Reich.

NEXT - PATH 2 – Covenant of the Gods

With the fate of humankind resting on their shoulders, the PATH team, along with the mortal Keepers and Guides around the world, are sent on various quests. Each individual test will push them all to their limits as time slowly ticks down towards Armageddon and their destiny.

Ratchet and Stench – Animal Sleuths

Dog Gone Mystery

When Cruft’s Best of Breeds Champion mysteriously disappears; the finger of suspicion points at the owner of a rival kennel.

Somerset police find the missing Scottish terrier’s dermal tracker but cannot find further evidence of a crime. Having no proof they are unable to do anything and drop any investigations.

The other dogs call in Ratchet and Stench, and even though they uncover clues that suggest a brutal murder, the animal sleuths aren’t convinced.

Non Fiction

Diabetes Type 2 – Help safely lower your blood sugar with the Tree of Life

This book is not written by Physicians or anyone with Ph.D.'s, but by medically trained diabetics who stumbled across pills capsules and powders made from the leaves and seeds of the Moringa tree. Dubbed The Miracle Tree or The Tree of Life. They found it reduced their blood sugar levels. This prompted research into this remarkable tree and its health benefits, which you will find outstanding. The tree grows in many parts of the world and indigenous people have been using its health giving properties for generations.

Moringa pills, capsules, and powders are now readily available worldwide, This publication will tell you about the research gained and the benefits to diabetics, along with Moringa's other health benefits. It will let you know current suppliers, and where you can research for yourself this amazing tree. It will also tell you how to grow organically for yourself and a few simple recipes you can use to enjoy the health benefits of Moringa.

Something to Read While Travelling-THAILAND.

Is an informative and entertaining companion to accompany you on your travels, which contains useful information about Thailand, some of which you won't find in travel guidebooks. While comprehensive travel guides will go into more detail on specific areas of Thailand; this publication will only briefly explain about popular tourist hotspots, giving you plenty of time to read and enjoy the Useful Tips: Thai Language Made Simple: Popular Thai Recipes: Fun Quizzes and Brainteasers: Hilarious Jokes: Short Stories: and the full comedy adventure novel, SIAM STORM – A Thailand Adventure.

Leave your cares and woes at the arrivals section of the airport. Make sure you pack a big smile and this travelling companion in your suitcase. Open your heart and mind, and enjoy your wonderful time in the Land of Smiles.

