

Clock Tower 2 Adventure Novel: Helen's Part

Complete Translation

PROLOGUE

Aren't you fed up with your humdrum routine?

Getting up in the morning, going to school, having to entertain your friends' witless conversations, being browbeaten by your stupid teachers, going back home, shoveling in your vittles and going to sleep - that life, never changing, nothing more?

At such times, two doors appear before you.

By mere chance is it decided which you shall open.

One is the door leading to your humdrum everyday life, same as always.

And the other is the door leading to a terror yet untasted, terminating before long in death.

Now, which door would you choose?

If you chanced to open the other door, I would be your guide beyond.

I am a disciple of the Great Father, he who holds sway over tales of the putrescent darkness and the Dead.

Well, then - shall we open the first door?

There was darkness. Darkness, and heat.

In the darkness, the mucus stirred. Spurred by the heat. It had originally not yet progressed beyond its pupal form, not ready to emerge.

Even so, within, It was now well on its way to maturity.

First, the guts were grown.

Like eggs being scrambled in the heat, the cloudy mucus congealed, writhed, wriggled like slugs moving toward their designated positions.

Next, the bones were grown.

White fragments oozed into existence, interlaced, proceeded to bond together.

The ribs embraced the innards; the skull encased a brain like that of a malformed animal.

Then came the tendons and ligaments, entwining round the bones like ivy.

Slowly, a membrane began to spread over the half-formed dissection dummy. The skin. And, at last, the skin enveloped everything.

And then, suddenly, It awoke.

And within Its leaden head, like a spark, was a consciousness conceived.

I have to kill.

Me, myself, I was born a child of the Great Father. And so...

I have to kill.

Ripping stomachs, rending arms, lopping legs, gouging eyes, and snipping necks.

I have to kill.

Ah, my heart races at the very thought. What pleasure! What thrills!

Me, myself, I have been born again. Here, in this manner, for this purpose.

Ah, yes. I remember.

Jennifer.

I love you, Jennifer.

Wait for me. I'll come to you - right away.

I have to kill.

I have to kill.

A light pierced the darkness.

The wall of flesh confining It was rent asunder.

The mucus gushed out, vaporizing with a sound. An appalling stench filled the environs.

It reached its arms through the fissure.

The heat was overpowering, but Its pale skin was incapable of sustaining a single burn.

It reared its head through the roaring flames.

It breathed the putrid waves of heat deep within its lungs and gave a cry like a cat in heat.

It was a cry of jubilation.

A cry of joy in supplication to carnage and blood and terror.

And so begins a new tale...

PART ONE

The masks were actual human faces, flayed from the faces of nine women with the utmost care. There were no eyes, of course, just eyeholes cut where eyes would be. The hair was still attached to the heads, though. Some of them were dried out, almost mummified.

- report from criminal investigators who entered the room of depraved murderer Ed Gein

CHAPTER ONE

On the screen was projected a large pair of scissors that had been left on a floor. Huge scissors, made from two crossed, curved blades, similar to the swords used in ancient China. Probably better suited to lopping off human heads than to snipping flowers.

The shears were circled by white chalk, a placard labeled "17" set matter-of-factly to their side.

They bore stains the color of red rust.

Click.

The next slide shifted into view.

A shower stall.

A girl hung from the ceiling, suspended from her bound wrists. You could tell it was a girl from the clothing;

the body itself had been decapitated. The girl's head, with its lavish blonde hair, had been stuffed in the refrigerator.

The girl's name was Rolla Harrington.

Click.

The next slide revealed a girl half-buried in a flower bed. Her neck was twisted at an unnatural angle. Both her face and her body bore numerous gashes.

This girl's name was Anne. A foundling, she had no last name.

Click.

A girl lay dead, her throat torn out.

This girl was Lotte. She, of course, had no last name, either.

Click.

A close-up of the gouge. The mark seemed as if a wild animal had eaten it away.

Click.

This slide was different from the previous; it showed a clipping from a newspaper.

A black-haired girl stood supported by two men. The girl's exceptional beauty shone undiminished by the blurry, grainy photograph. Yet her eyes were vacant; her face, expressionless.

She was Jennifer Simpson. The only person alive of all those that had flashed across the screen.

Click.

The next slide showed nothing. Just pure white light illuminating the screen.

Helen stretched and rose from her steel chair.

She went to the window and opened the curtains. The early summer sunlight bathed the office in brightness and warmth, and she breathed a sigh of relief.

Atop a desk lined with monitors, heaps of documents were piled sky-high everywhere, ready to topple over. Someone had made coffee, and the smell lingered, bidding the nostrils to remember.

Helen Maxwell: an expert in criminal profiling at work here, South Oslo University, as an assistant professor. Analyzing the various evidence in a crime to piece together an image of its perpetrators - that is criminal psychology. Those who choose to specialize in the field, profilers, are venerated by the media - held up, indeed, as latter-day Sherlock Holmeses. Actual criminal psychology, however, is a workmanlike trade marked by patience and perseverance, like filing away bit by bit at nerves with a rasp.

She opened the window, and a cool breeze rushed in. Helen's hair shook; it gleamed gold, like the rays of the sun. And with it, Helen felt, blew in something dark and heavy, something that settled in the recesses of her mind.

It had been eight years since she had come to work as an assistant in Professor Samuel Barton's office; one year since she had taken on the current case. In that time, she'd probably seen the horrible images of these girls who had been reduced to pitiful corpses countless times over. No matter how much time passed, Helen could never inure herself to viewing the photographs of victims - particularly when young girls were on the receiving end of the violence. From time to time, she envied colleagues who could calmly eat their lunches while looking at mangled corpses.

Brought in not long after the incident by the Oslo police, it was Professor Barton, her mentor, who had taken the lead in profiling. And it was to be the very first official case taken on by Barton's office - the Clock Tower incident. This mass murder had taken place in a mansion tucked away in the mountains far from Oslo, and yet the case became not only a national sensation. The attention pinned hopes all the higher on Barton's office, but even now, a year afterward, those results had not been realized.

"Scissorman!"

A cry came from the therapy room next door.

It was Jennifer.

The girl who had escaped the clutches of the perpetrator in the Clock Tower case and made it back to safety. Helen had become her guardian, and the two now lived together.

Helen rushed into the therapy room.

Jennifer lay on the black leather bed. Her arms and legs were stiff as planks, braced against the surface. Her eyes were both wide open; her mouth, agape with terror. A huge shock had sent her into catalepsy.

Jennifer lay still as stone; a man surveyed her. A man of late middle age, the very image of an English gentleman, clad in an elegant blue-grey suit. This was the one and only Professor Barton, professor of Behavioral Science at Southern Oslo University, and its foremost criminal psychologist.

Jennifer came to this office every day to undergo his hypnotherapy. And she was in therapy this very moment.

"What do you want?"

Barton cast a casual glance over his shoulder, as if nothing at all were amiss.

"Excuse me."

Scowling at Barton, Helen approached Jennifer. Her voice washed over Jennifer's body as she called to rouse her.

Jennifer! Jennifer!

The girl's eyes slowly came to focus on Helen. Her lips moved, a scream still upon them.

"Helen....."

Jennifer wrapped her arms around Helen, hugging her with all her might. You'd say she'd disappear if she let go.

"Helen. We're expected at least to *knock*, aren't we, if we enter the room during therapy?" Barton looked at Helen expressionlessly - just as if he were regarding a pen that had fallen on the floor.

"Professor, I don't believe hypnotherapy to be appropriate in Jennifer's case."

Having originated as Mesmerism in the 18th century, hypnotherapy had been little used in psychoanalysis since being declaimed by Freud. For starters, Mesmerism's main proponent, Viennese doctor Anton Mesmer, was a character of dubious repute. In the 20th century, new hypnotherapy methods such as "autogenic training" and "self-control" were devised, and Helen herself was aware of the current reviews. But she could think of the "age regression" hypnotherapy Barton employed as nothing but a practical joke - nothing but rekindling Jennifer's terror.

"Every day, it's getting harder and harder for Jennifer to wake from hypnosis. Worse, even when she *does* wake from hypnosis, she's still for a time paralyzed from the horror of that day. Your methods, Professor, are accomplishing nothing but terrifying Jennifer."

"I have no inclination to explain the effectiveness of hypnotherapy to *you*."

Having studied in the U.S. at Stanford, Barton was at the time the youngest person ever to earn a diploma as a Hypnosis major. He had also served as director of the National Association for the Study of Hypnosis. He certainly wasn't going to be taking any lessons from Helen. Nevertheless, she persisted in her protests, even if she *were* "just Helen".

"Even so, Professor, Jennifer is not a lab rat. She's still struggling to pull herself together day by day from that incident. She--"

To the very last, Barton couldn't let Helen get a word in.

"Of course Jennifer isn't a lab rat. She's a test subject. And you are not my professor. You are an assistant. I have nothing to learn from you. If you find my methods so disagreeable, then feel free to quit. Otherwise, keep your opinions to yourself."

Barton spoke the words coolly, as if enlightening Helen that one plus one were two. His grey eyes stared down at Helen. *Studied* might have been the better word. At the very least, you could say he stared not with eyes regarding a living, breathing individual. Every time she found herself in that gaze, Helen felt as if she herself had become a mouse in a maze.

Finally, as always, Helen averted her eyes. She had never won a single debate with Barton. On the contrary - there hadn't even been a debate to begin with.

"At any rate, I'm taking Jennifer with me already."

"Do what you want, Helen. The therapy's already over."

So saying, as if he had completely lost interest, his gaze turned to a giant pair of scissors on the table. A replica of the murder weapon used in the Clock Tower incident.

"Let's go, Jennifer."

Taking Jennifer's hand, Helen helped her up from the bed. As Jennifer was yet unsteady on her feet, Helen lent her her shoulder and led her from the therapy room.

Two research assistants had come back from lunch and were in the room where Helen had been viewing slides by herself until a little while ago. Slamming the door full force, Helen said, "I just can't get him to understand! The professor's dead set on drawing those memories out of you, no matter what."

"Are you two still butting heads?" Beth said, laughing. She'd become a research assistant the moment she graduated from South Oslo. The first time she came to the lab, she'd laughed and told Helen that she majored in criminal psychology because "it looked kinda fun, you know; just like something out of a mystery novel!". She was one of those in the profession who could eat lunch while looking at pictures of victims.

Beth resumed her chatter. "Well, I guess it's only natural, though, really. When you get right down to it, how you're able to *work* under that professor all the time, *that's* what's *really* weird." Beth dropped his voice to a whisper in the middle.

And when she got near Helen, she again lowered her voice to say, "And I *don't* understand why would you ever--"

"Beth!"

Helen scowled at Beth. Her sharp glare never needed any reinforcement for anyone except Professor Barton.

"Sorry," Beth said in a small voice, returning to her seat.

"Well, then...excuse me, but I'm going out for a bit to take her back to the dorm."

When Helen said this, the other lab assistant, then seated, rose to his feet.

"Are you going home already, Assistant Professor Maxwell?" asked a small, somber man, rasping like a ghost.

"Yeah, Harris."

Harris came doddering up to Helen like a wind-up doll. Though he was only five years older than Helen, he seemed older than even Professor Barton.

"Also, I'm always telling you this, but you can call me Helen."

"Well, one must clear about these things...and it is true that you ARE an assistant professor...and what we call 'formality' is to some people..."

Harris mumbled his words, as if talking to himself. He was always like that. You often couldn't catch what he said. Even worse, he never looked at the other person when he talked; his eyes were always aimed at the ground. It was if the person with whom he was speaking were falling to the floor or something.

".....In any case, is Jennifer going home already, then?"

"Indeed she is. Her therapy is over for the day."

"Is it really..... Oh, it's not that I'm doubting you, you knowit's just that I thought I heard your voice, fighting with the professor.....going against the professor so much might not be.....it's just, I mean, that the professor has taught us all so much, you know....."

"Spit it out, Harris." Helen opened her mouth, finally out of patience.

"Well, I don't have anything to *say*, but.....Jennifer"

Harris this time faced Jennifer. And looked at the toes of her boots.

"That there just now.....so much has happened, and I think it's awful, but.....if there're things you don't understand about the therapy and things you're worried about, you could always.....I mean.....if you could come to me and let me talk things over with you.....as far as it were in my ability to respond, I could....."

Jennifer stepped behind Helen, as if to hide.

"Harris, I'm sorry, but we're going now. Jennifer doesn't seem all that well, either."

"But.....well, then, all the more reason to..."

Ignoring Harris, still grumbling to himself, Helen said in an intentionally loud voice, "All right, everyone, I'll be back!"

Taking Jennifer's hand, Helen left the lab.

CHAPTER TWO

Summer was approaching.

The sun shone strong and warm. A dry breeze rustled the lush greenery. Vacation was just around the corner. Then, in one short month, the everyday bustle of sightseers and locals would commence. The most agreeable season for one to pass in Northern Europe was underway.

Helen enjoyed this season, in this city, above all else. If only it weren't for the nosy media.

It happened just after they left the research complex - when they were approached by two men who had been lying in wait by the front gates. Both were about 30. One was, at first sight, a charming young man, tall, in a jacket, jeans, and well-worn sneakers. The other was a flabby man in a ratty sweatsuit. A large camera hung from his shoulder.

Since beginning her current job, Helen's interaction with the police and media had increased considerably, albeit to her distaste. Thanks to that, it now seemed like she could spot a police officer or member of the media on sight. They both had a distinctive smell about them.

The two men approaching reeked of it.

Sure enough, both were employees of *Oslo Week*. *Oslo Week* was the type of third-rate rag than ran garbage headlines like "JFK Assassinated by Spacemen!" on the front page.

The tall man in jeans was Nolan Campbell. A reporter. And the heavy man was Tim. He was a photographer.

All the same, they're not good people, Helen decided, putting on a polite facade with the issue settled in her mind. Still, the reporter named Nolan was flashing Jennifer a cheesy smile, trying to reel her in with small talk and stupid jokes.

Helen took Jennifer's hand and quickly boarded the bus to the university's faculty residences, where the two of them lived.

"Weird guy." So murmured Jennifer, watching the pair as they promptly faded into the distance.

Wonder if I should venture a word of caution.

For a second, Helen thought she should, but promptly reconsidered. Helen had complete confidence in Jennifer. She was a fifteen-year-old girl - a little girl with straight black hair and a beauty that set even grown adults, even women, aflutter. *But*, thought Helen, *she has a stronger, wiser heart than mine. She won't be taken in by stupid media sweet talk.*

Helen looked at Jennifer lovingly, as if she were her own daughter.

She was staring straight ahead with those big, beautiful eyes of hers. As was her way. Had a fairy alit on the tips of her eyelashes, Helen would not have thought it amiss.

And yet Helen knew that beneath Jennifer's expression, with that mixture of strength and frailty that churned within her, lurked a danger - of a girl poised at the edge of an abyss.

The mass murder that had caused a media sensation a year ago had hounded her to the point of madness.

That was the Clock Tower incident.

The mass murder took place in a mansion situated in the mountains of the Romsdaaren area. What the Norwegian police who arrived on the scene discovered were seven corpses total - the butchered bodies of three young girls, another girl's mummified remains, the bodies of two adult males, and the body of one adult female who had been pecked by birds her entire length.

The owner of the so-called "Clock Tower" mansion was Simon Barrows. He had been discovered in a cage in the courtyard, a corpse.

The lone survivor of this bizarre mass murder was Jennifer, who had contacted the police.

Jennifer was one of four young girls who had been adopted from the Granite Orphanage and taken to the mansion. And she was the lone living witness to this unprecedented incident. (There was another survivor, a young boy who had been rescued from the mansion, but he had lost all of his memories.) Aggressively interrogated by the police and hounded by the media thereafter, Jennifer had reached her breaking point.

At issue was her outlandish account of the incident.

According to her testimony, Scissorman, an unstoppable monster wielding a giant pair of shears, was the culprit behind the murders; Mary Barrows, the instructor at Granite Orphanage who had led the girls to the mansion, was an accomplice; and in the caves hidden beneath the mansion lay yet another creature - a greenish fetus the size of an NSB rail car.

The story was difficult to take seriously from any perspective.

A giant pair of scissors and Mary's body were found inside the mansion. Even so, though the police conducted a search for the underground cave creature, no body of any creature could be found.

The media jumped on the story immediately, and talk of the monster with the giant shears, Scissorsman, spread like wildfire. Jennifer, already in the spotlight, became an even greater media target.

After witnessing the brutal murders of three dear friends and being very nearly killed herself, the girl was hammered with the most outrageous questions.

Traumatized by the incident, Jennifer was in torment. Nightmares every night. The fear that she might be attacked. Undue wariness as a result. Barton had diagnosed it as post-traumatic stress disorder, such as that which arose in Vietnam veterans. Even if no name had been put to the disease, it was apparent even to a layman that she had suffered huge psychological scars.

She was a girl of fifteen who had been abandoned by both parents and seen her best friends slaughtered before her eyes. Yet no shadow could be seen clouding the face she wore everyday. She lived her life in the moment, with vim and vigor, ever looking on the bright side, to the future. She had faith that she'd find her own happiness someday. No one would suspect her dark past by talking to her.

But Helen lived with Jennifer on a daily basis, and Helen was awakened by her screams of terror every night, and knew how she crept shaking to Helen's bed.

The bus reached its appointed stop. The two continued chatting like the closest of sisters until it arrived at the faculty residences.

At the entrance to the residences, Jennifer stopped short.

"Are you gonna go back to the lab again?" Jennifer asked in a childish mien, as if to wheedle Helen. The emotion made her heart ache.

"Yes. My hard drive crashed on me. Restoring it'll take some time, so it looks like I'll be coming back late. I'm sorry; you should go ahead and eat alone tonight."

Just saying it wrenched her heart. If it were up to her, she'd always have Jennifer by her side. She'd wanted to take Jennifer shopping, have dinner together, and play Monopoly together on the bed in their pajamas until they fell asleep. But it was crunch time at work.

At the moment, they were still far from cracking the Clock Tower case.

The official findings the police handed down on the case were that cult rituals were conducted at the mansion and that the children were offered up as human sacrifices. Mary Barrows was determined to be the perpetrator. But it was apparent that a woman would have had difficulty handling the giant shears that had been the murder weapon. Naturally, the existence of an accomplice was suspected. Barton's office had been assisting in deducing the identity of this accomplice. Even now, though, a whole year had gone by, and no results were to be had. If a half a year more passed - if three more *months* passed without results, the police would probably revoke Barton's profiling commission. In the worst case, collaboration with the criminal psychology department might stop completely.

As a result, Barton was all fired up. Helen felt the same way. She'd been cutting down on her sleep, trying to

build her profile of the criminal. Jennifer understood. That was why she never made unreasonable requests.

Helen sympathized so she felt Jennifer's pain herself. Sympathized, but there was nothing she could do.

"Hey, didn't they build a new restaurant at the end of this street?"

"That place where they put a bar in the basement?"

"Right. There's a cafeteria on the lower level; you could do take-out, too. You should get something and come back!"

"...Yeah, I'll go get something now."

"Shall I go with you to the restaurant?"

"I'll be OK alone. And...it'll be lonely sitting at home by myself, so I'll go take a walk around the neighborhood for a while."

"Well, OK... I'll be back home before it gets dark."

"Got it - Assistant Professor Helen."

Jennifer gave a smile and let go of her hand. As if to disengage her feelings, Helen turned her back and headed for the bus stop. She felt as if she were turning her back on Jennifer forever.

CHAPTER THREE

He looked just like an angel.

Such a trite turn of phrase, it seemed, to describe a beautiful boy. Looking at the one standing before her, though, nothing came to Helen's mind but the cliché.

So far, he's been receiving his therapy at home, but he'll now be moving to his accommodations at the hotel and will begin his therapy in earnest here in the office. Let's get him introduced to all of you.

So said Barton when he brought the boy into the office. He was chaperoned by his guardian, Kay, an instructor at his orphanage. She was probably the same age as Helen, but slight and sullen; at times, she even looked like an old woman in the light.

"Call him Edward." Kay introduced the boy in a faltering voice that was weak and barely audible.

"Edward..... Has he recovered his memory, then?"

When Helen asked, Kay made as if to answer, but Barton brushed her aside and said, "The orphanage gave him that name. He'd be rather at a *disadvantage* without one, don't you think?"

Helen was so transfixed by the boy that she took no notice of Barton's sarcasm.

There was one other survivor among the victims of the Clock Tower incident. The boy who had lost his memory - this Edward.

His neatly-clipped golden hair shone like an angel's halo. His pale skin was translucent. A porcelain angel. A delicate angel that, it seemed, would shatter at the slightest touch - wrought by a master craftsman, no less.

"So *cuuuuuute!*", Beth screeched, and Helen finally succeeded in tearing her eyes off Edward.

Barton spared Beth not a glance, but Harris made no attempt to conceal his disgust.

"The woman who made that ridiculous noise just now is Beth. And the man standing behind me is Harris. There are just three others besides, but their absence makes little difference to us. And she's Assistant Professor Helen Maxwell. If you have any questions when I'm not here, you should ask her."

Harris again made a face in back, not that Helen could see it.

"Pleased to meet you." Helen held out her hand, and Edward hesitantly reached out to grasp it. His hands were cold as ice.

Edward stared unblinkingly at Helen with his limpid blue eyes. Helen felt as if he were steadily drawing the warmth from her body.

He did not release her hand.

The pair froze over, their eyes locked.

"With all that's happened to the little boy, um, with that incident, he's not at his best with others...", Kay said in a sort of apology, gently taking back Edward's hand from Helen.

"Well, then, shall we begin today's therapy?"

And so saying, as if he had no intention of showing the two around, Barton turned on his heels and headed into the therapy room.

Are you going to subject the boy to your hypnotherapy as well? The sentence hung on the tip of Helen's tongue. In the end, though, she said nothing as she watched the three enter the therapy room. The next time she stuck her nose in Barton's work, he would probably dismiss her as his assistant as he had promised.

The "therapy" lasted into the evening.

What happened within brought new pallor to Edward's face and drew sweat upon his brow.

Kay emerged behind him, her face flushed. Only Barton remained impassive as always.

Kay thanked Barton and led Edward away.

"There's something about him - he seems like the son of royalty, doesn't he!?" Beth said, just as Barton once again retired to the therapy room.

Helen and Beth usually sat back-to-back; since she had sent her own computer out for repairs, though, Helen

was now seated at the station facing Beth, borrowing the computer there. The monitor stared Helen straight in the face; Beth's head popped up from around from the side.

"It must be romantic to lose one's memory, don't you think?" Beth propped her chin on her hands like a starry-eyed girl. From her words, you'd never think her the type to study psychology.

"There's no such thing as romantic memory loss!"

"Oh, Helen, you're every inch the woman of science, aren't you? You and Barton really *are* made for each other!"

"Beth!"

Beth ducked behind the monitor before she caught one of Helen's glares.

Though Helen was loathe to admit it, it was an open secret around the office that she had slept with Barton. There was nothing she could do about the matter; Barton had never had any intention of hiding the fact. It had happened about eight years ago; she was a girl of little more than twenty.

Barton had a reputation among the aides as a psychoanalyst with no understanding of the human heart.

To him, hearts were akin to the bacteria cultivated in the agar of a Petri dish. Test subjects to be observed and analyzed, nothing capable of "emotion." Or love.

Helen learned that in the short time she was with him. When she came to understand that his idea of a wife was "a cross between a maid and a whore," she made up her mind to leave him.

Helen respected Barton as a researcher. She felt that he was a born genius in criminal psychology, but his personality disgusted her. She now regretted sleeping with him. A youthful indiscretion, she thought.

Helen always ended up being drawn to that type of man - the distant, older intellectual. She knew the reason. Her late father was precisely that type of personality. She was shocked, in the beginning, by how much Barton in particular was like him.

The salt and pepper hair and moustache. The penchant for gentleman's attire and the condescending manner of speaking. Everything brought back her father's memory. And she loved Barton - as she had her father.

Helen knew the truth all too well.

Open a psychology text, and it'd be printed in big, bold letters on about the third page.

Father Complex.

A diagnosis any witless sit-you-down, quiz-you, take-your-money therapist could give.

So simple, Helen thought, a diagnosis for a psychologist to receive it was embarrassing.

When the notorious Barton left his therapy room, he passed straight through the office without stopping. As always, he gave not a word as to where he was going or on any other. When Helen saw the large briefcase dangling from his hand, she assumed that he was heading home for the day.

Beth thought so, too, apparently. She took a long, lazy stretch and began applying her make-up. She was

getting ready to go home.

From the clock on the wall, it was five p.m. Her hard drive wouldn't be coming back from repairs till around eight. She'd begged a favor from the maintenance company, imploring them to have it back to her by the end of the day.

Without the data she'd collected so far, there was no way she'd be able to get any work done.

Helen got up, abandoning her work.

She called to Baker, whose computer she had been borrowing.

"I'm going to take a little nap in the break room until my hard drive comes back! I haven't been sleeping well lately."

"You won't be using my desk anymore, then, huh?"

"I appreciate it, Baker."

"My pleasure. Happy to be of service to the prettiest woman on campus."

Beth cut in. "It's no use, Baker, no matter how much you kiss up to her. That's a woman of steel you're dealing with, and you're no iron man! You're no match for her! A marshmallow like you is better off with *Rose*."

"A woman like *you* is one to talk about *Rose*!"

"What's *that* supposed to mean!?"

Helen left the office to the sound of Beth and Baker's usual bickering. She boarded the elevator that would take her to the third-floor break room.

When she arrived at the third floor, a hush had already fallen over the corridor. Almost all the other people in the office had gone straight home, it seemed. Barton's office was the hardest-working in the building.

The research lab had been newly reconstructed in cold concrete, white walls with a white ceiling. The floor was a blue-grey. It was rare for Norwegian architecture to be so devoid of warmth; the building felt a very monument to utilitarianism and rationality. Helen approved. The ability to concentrate on one's research free of extraneous distractions was paramount.

Opening a door at the end of the corridor, Helen entered the break room.

It was pitch black inside. As she turned on the light, she heard an ill-tempered voice.

"Who's there?"

"Helen!"

It was a narrow room containing only a couple of bunk beds lined against the wall. Currently, about the only ones who used it were Barton's staff, who had the work ethic of Japanese salarymen.

The woman sitting up in the bed was Rose, another of the assistants in Barton's office.

"You could at least knock!" Rose said, running a hand through her disheveled hair.

"And *you* could at least lock the door, you know! It's careless to leave it open."

"C'moon! I'm having Baker over!"

"Go ahead, but I'm begging you - don't do anything stupid while I'm still in the room, OK?"

Leaving the conversation at that, Helen made for a bed. Rose snuggled back in her own, with a "Turn out the light, huh? I'm the type that can't sleep with it on."

Helen flipped the switch by the door and turned off the light overhead. She then stood there and waited, staring straight ahead until her eyes adjusted to the dark.

Before long, she could make out the striped patterns on the floor traced by the light filtering through the window blinds.

Helen kicked off her flats and climbed into bed.

Woman of teal or not, the fatigue from the past month's rush had begun to take its toll. Exhaustion sunk like a stone into every last cell of her body. Her only sensation was of herself sinking ever more deeply than usual into the mattress under its weight. Closing her eyes, it took only minutes for her to settle into sleep.

And then she was awakened by a knock at the door.

The knock was stubborn, insistent. The same dull rhythm, over and over.

"Rose! Baker's here!" Helen called out - but there was no answer.

Helen got out of bed and turned on the light.

Rose's bed was empty. The blanket and sheets were as she'd left them when she'd gotten up. She'd already departed for her date, it seemed.

Helen peered out through the peephole.

She found Baker staring right back at her. His eyes were widened, as if something had startled him. His face was pure white.

"What's wrong, Baker?" So saying, she opened the door.

And there was Baker. From the neck up, to be precise.

A stick had been shoved into his severed head.

It had held it up to present Baker's face to the peephole.

The *It* holding the grotesque lollipop.

A tangle of hair like wire clung to its twisted face. Its eyes were milky cataracts; its eyelids drooped down. Its daggered nose pointed to the floor like an arrow, and its mouth gaped from the right ear to the left like an open wound, each jagged fang peeking out in its own direction.

Helen could not even scream.

It tossed the skewered head aside. The other hand already grasped its scissors, huge beyond all reason.

"Scissorman....."

Helen said beneath her breath. It was as if she were in a dream. The Scissorman of Jennifer's testimony was now standing right before her eyes. It was all too surreal, Helen could only think, stupidly. The very thought was proof that her mind had already been gripped by panic.

Shing.

Scissorman opened his shears wide.

She knew that she should run. But her legs wouldn't move.

He looked up at Helen with eyes that seemed unseeing - or perhaps not; Helen couldn't tell. It wasn't that Scissorman was short in stature; it was that he was bent over like a prawn.

Every detail was just as Jennifer had attested.

Shing.

Scissorman closed his shears.

The tips of his blades pointed at Helen's chest. Scissorman had to move forward but a little for them to pierce her heart.

The images of the butchered corpses from the slides she'd seen time and again flitted through her mind.

I'm going to die.

The thought came to Helen's mind, suddenly recalled, as if it were the name of the pop star that had been eluding her since morning.

Shing.

I have to run.

Her feet took one step backward.

I'm going to die.

She retreated another step.

Shing.

The scissors closed once more.

The sound was like a starting gun to Helen's ears.

Looking back on it afterward, she found it strange that she did what she did so quickly.

Helen dove beneath the upper bunk.

The scissors slashed the space where she had stood until a moment earlier. They missed by a hair's breadth.

Throwing herself into the bed, Helen grabbed the blanket. Wheeling about, she hurled it at Scissorman.

It snared Scissorman's blades like a net.

Helen ran past him in a flash.

She hurtled down the corridor, threw the door shut.

The corridor was pitch black. The lights had all been shut off; only the greenish shine of the emergency lamps lingered. Only their dim light illuminated the hallway.

Helen ran. Dashed down the stairwell leading to the first floor.

She extended one foot from the first-floor landing; it caught in mid-air.

Her body was suddenly thrown forward. Her feet and legs and lower body hit the ground; before she knew it, she was sprawled out on the lower floor.

The pain told her she'd lost her footing on the staircase.

When she got up, her knees and legs hurt horribly. She didn't seem to have broken or sprained anything, however.

Swinging her head around, Helen bolted for the front entrance. She flung herself at the door - only to find it unyielding. *Is it locked?*

The key should be in the security office. All the keys for the building were stored there.

The instant she surmised that, a noise came from the top of the stairs.

Footsteps. His footsteps - there was a limp.

Another sound accompanied it. It was the sound of those scissors - scissors fashioned solely to rend a human body limb from limb.

Shing. Shing. Shing.

It was if she could see the image of Scissorman before her very eyes, opening and closing his giant shears, hunting for victims.

Helen looked around. Every lab had its door closed. If everyone had gone home, they would be locked like the front doors. She didn't have time to check them one by one.

Shing. Shing.

The sound came closer and closer.

Helen fled to the one place that didn't seem like it would be locked.

The men's bathroom.

A bit of light from the streetlamps outside crept in through a meager skylight, providing the only illumination. The lights inside were out. Scissorman must have cut the main power, Helen thought.

She opened the door to one of the stalls.

It was then that she first realized that she was not alone.

She peered ahead into the dim.

The stench hit her before she realized what it was.

A smell of meat so thick it was stifling.

It was blood. The smell of blood.

And then she realized that the figure standing against the bathroom wall was Rose.

Rose's hands had been hoisted high above her head, a screwdriver thrust through the palms. The screwdriver was buried up to its handle; it probably pierced the wall.

Crucified, Rose howled with laughter.

The Cupid's-bow lips on which she prided herself were slit from ear to ear in a ghastly crescent. She stuck her tongue far out to mock Helen; the organ probably had been yanked out.

With her mouth agape and eyes wide open, it looked as if she were laughing.

Nothing was left beneath her gaping eyelids. Only vacant caverns of flesh remained where her eyes should have been. Fresh blood flowed down her cheeks like crocodile tears.

A shallow incision had been made in the center of the corpse, in the stomach beneath the ribs. That which had been taken from the eye sockets had been inserted here.

The two eyeballs stared at Helen, as if hoping that she would laugh at this "funny joke".

Helen had studied how, when one has had a truly horrible experience, one could - conveniently - often be rendered incapable of screaming or other such vocal reaction.

Her sense of reality, which had been fast dissipating ever since the incident began, now completely vanished.

It was as if she were looking at a movie screen - as if she were beside herself, a spectator watching the whole thing.

The core of her mind froze over like ice.

She did an about face and slowly, like an automaton, emerged from the bathroom.

That's right, she remembered. I have to get to the guard station.

To do what?

To find the key. Yes, yes. I'm going to find the key.

The key, the key, she muttered to herself, like a senile old woman. Helen headed for the guard station.

Could she not say that luck was on her side? She hadn't run into Scissorman yet, after all.

Helen opened the door to the guard station as if she were opening the door to her own office.

It was close quarters.

The wall that greeted you as soon as you entered boasted a panel that informed the guards of emergency situations. There was a light for every room on each floor; press an emergency button in one of those rooms, and the corresponding light would go on in the office. When you pressed the emergency button on the panel itself, a siren would sound, alerting the entire building as well as the police.

I should push it.

Helen blithely flipped the emergency switch on the panel as if she were flipping on the TV.

There was no response.

Of course; the main power's been cut.

There was a phone on the table next to the panel. Helen picked up the receiver and put it to her ear.

There was a dial tone.

Helen recalled the number for the Oslo police. She attempted to dial it. It was then that she first caught a glimpse of her own fingers.

They were shaking.

Quivering, as if she were the victim of poisoning.

Helen cocked her head.

Why are my fingers...

She rubbed her index finger and thumb together. Her hand was drenched in sweat. Her hand - her entire arm was trembling.

I'm scared.

The thought penetrated her frozen brain like an icepick.

Click.

The freshly-dead head on a stick.

Click.

The laughing corpse that had been crucified.

The raw images became slides projected through her retina.

I'm all alone in the lab, in the pitch darkness. No one is coming to help me. No one will save me.

He's coming. He's coming. HE'S COMING.

I'm scared. Shaking with a terror I've never before experienced.

I'm going to die.

I'm going to die.

I'm going to die.

"Forgive me," Helen said to herself.

At some point, she had slid to the floor, still clutching the receiver.

Ah, maybe I'm going crazy.

The mere thought redoubled her fear.

She could hear the dial tone from the phone.

That's right; I'm calling the police.

Following the last slim thread tethering her to reason, Helen dialed the number. The time it took to enter the eight digits on the keypad seemed an eternity.

She heard a ringing for a while, and then the phone was picked up.

"Hello, Oslo Police Department."

It was a man's voice. All the different things she had to tell him fought to the front of her throat like an angry mob.

"Help me!"

That was all, at last, that could come out.

"Could I please have your name and address, ma'am?"

Her throat dried up. Her tongue stuck to the roof of a mouth like ash. She peeled it away and relayed her name and the address of the lab.

And she added: "Scissorman is here!"

--*Again with the Scissorman*, she heard in whispers from the other end of the receiver.

"But it's true! It really is Scissorman!" Her voice was shaking; it had turned panicky.

"Understood, ma'am. I'll transfer you to the officer in charge. Please wait."

Helen was familiar with one of the officers in charge of the Clock Tower case, a middle-aged man by the name of Assistant Inspector Gotts.

"Then transfer me to Assistant Inspector Go--"

From the other end of the receiver came a tone that told her she was on hold.

Hurry up, hurry up, hurry up, Helen muttered, like a tape on endless playback, waiting for someone to come on the line.

The signal cut out, and a man's voice answered.

"Yes, what's going on?"

It was the voice of a young man. Not Gotts.

"It's Scissorman. How many times do I have to say it?!"

"Scissorman, huh. Yes, I got that. And your name is?"

"I told you before. Helen Maxwell. I'm an assistant professor at Southern Oslo University!"

"Could I please have your address?"

"I told you *that* already, too!"

"My apologies. One more time, please."

"All right already! ...I understand. Um..." Helen struggled to give the address of the research building - the very address she had given only moments before. Regardless, she just couldn't remember it.

"Something wrong?"

"...I can't remember! I already said it once! Ask the person I talked to before. Just get down here quickly! People have been killed!"

"Acquaintances of yours?"

"Rose and Baker - from Barton's research lab!"

"And you are the one who discovered the bodies, correct?"

"The perpetrator's still in the building. He's going to kill me, too! It's the research building at South Oslo University!"

"The research building at South Oslo University...correct?"

"Yes - please - hurry - help me!"

"Yes. Then--"

Suddenly, the phone went dead. There was no dial tone.

The line had been cut.

He's here!

The realization hit Helen like a thunderbolt. She wheeled around.

In her mind's eye, she saw Scissorman standing right there.

But there was nothing there. Just the partition that divided the room.

Helen limply replaced the receiver.

Perhaps it was because the aggravating conversation had stoked her anger, but she had, to a certain degree, been able to free her mind from terror's grip.

There was a table in the room.

Upon it was a keyring.

At least, it seemed, she would be able to achieve her objective.

Helen picked up the keyring.

She heard the sound of water.

The sound of dripping water.

Trickling down, drop by drop.

The sound seemed as if it were coming from behind the partition.

It's nothing to worry about.

So Helen thought. Or, rather, tried to convince herself.

But she couldn't help herself. She had to check.

Yielding to temptation, she stepped around the partition.

The guard was there.

His body dangled in mid-air, swaying from side to side.

The sound came from the substance that dripped from the tips of his toes.

Blood. Flowing from the guard's stomach.

The man's abdomen stuck out sharply. And from within, rending his uniform, erupted the tips of two blades, one atop the other - both pointed toward Helen.

The guard's body was flung aside.

The partition was knocked down, and the guard's body tumbled like a doll atop it.

And then Scissorman appeared before her eyes.

He opened his giant shears and hoisted them above his head.

The first thing Helen did was scream.

Screamed, and ran out into the corridor.

On her way, she realized that she was running in the opposite direction of the front entrance.

Without a glance back, she sensed that Scissorman was at her heels.

She opened the nearest closed door and went inside.

There was a smell of metal and grease.

The storage room.

She then remembered that there was an emergency exit right next door. Too late now.

Just when Helen was about to admit defeat - *this is it* - she saw that there was another door in back.

That's right. The storage room is supposed to open out into the parking lot.

Flinging aside the cardboard boxes strewn about, she flew at the door.

It was locked.

She looked again at the keyring in her hand. It seemed to Helen as if all the keys in Oslo were on there.

Methodically, she took a key from the ring and tried to put it in the lock. It didn't go in. Her fingers were trembling; they couldn't find the slot.

She tried again to slip the key in the keyhole; with difficulty, it went in. But it wouldn't turn. It was the wrong key.

With a bang, the door by which Helen had entered flew open.

Without a look back, Helen tried the next key. This one looked completely the wrong size. It wouldn't even go in the keyhole.

Shing.

The sound came from right behind her.

Her shaking fingers tried the next key.

It went in. She turned it; the lock responded.

With a click, the door unlocked.

Turning the knob, Helen threw her entire weight against the door to bust it wide.

There was the parking lot, just like she thought.

Hardly any cars remained there. Helen's eyes searched the large lot fenced in by concrete and found the national highway. She ran for it.

She could hear a siren. A patrol car. The station must've believed her story after all.

"*Help!*" Helen cried, running for the road. She could see the red lights getting closer. Helen flung herself in front of the patrol car as if she were trying to get herself run over.

Helen didn't even notice that the figure pursuing her had already disappeared.

CHAPTER FOUR

"I was wondering if I might be able to call Jennifer."

Helen addressed Assistant Inspector Stan Gotts, who blew his nose loudly into his handkerchief.

"When the interrogation's over, OK?"

Gotts folded the handkerchief neatly and returned it to his breast pocket.

They were in the interrogation room of the Oslo police department.

"You just keep saying the same things over and over!"

"I've already contacted the young lady. And when I took into account your statement, Teach, about how 'the killer was Scissorman,' I even sent an officer over to her place. You got nothing to worry about, Teach!"

Gotts spoke the truth, probably. He could always be counted on to do exactly what he was supposed to - of that, Helen had felt certain ever since they'd met one whole year ago.

But...

Helen let out a sigh. Her back and rear end had begun to ache from the hard steel folding chair.

"I've been sitting here for over thirty minutes! It's been lovely chatting with you, but I've got nothing else to say!"

"Scissorman showed up in the research facility, where he killed three people. He then pursued you, too, but you managed to save yourself, albeit with difficulty."

"Exactly!"

Gotts coughed again and blew his nose once more.

Helen did not hide the face she made.

"Pardon me, Teach. I've had a nasty cold all since the end of last week. You're a doctor of sorts, Teach; maybe you could recommend me a good cold medicine."

"I'm a doctor of the mind! I don't know of any medicine that will cure your warped disposition, though."

Gotts rose and came to Helen's side. He was tall - a whole head higher than Helen, who was herself tall for a woman. And he wasn't big just vertically; his thick chest looked as if it would burst his cheap suit, and his shoulders were so broad his closet required special-order hangers. Indeed, physically, he was every inch the tough guy; by looking at him, you'd think he might play a supporting role on a TV crime serial. His crumpled tie and sauce-stained suit, balding pate and stony face, though, told another story.

If Gotts had had a headshot portfolio, the face with which he now approached Helen would have come from the "grouchy" section.

"If you were me, and you'd been told that Scissorman had resurfaced, would *you* believe it?"

"But, Inspector Gotts, it really *was* Scissorman!"

Gotts returned to his desk and eased himself into his chair. "Assistant Inspector. I'm not a full Inspector." So saying, Gotts retrieved something from a drawer. "There any possibility that this mighta been what you saw?"

Helen flew out of her chair.

What Gotts had taken out was a rubber mask. That warped, twisted face; that gaping mouth; those teeth like fangs - it was, indeed, an exceptionally detailed Scissorman mask. Beneath the lifeless eyes were tiny eyeholes.

"Perhaps," said Helen, struggling to keep her composure. She knew the macabre things were sold at party stores.

The Clock Tower case had sparked a media circus. The alleged culprit, Scissorman, had become a criminal celebrity whose star eclipsed even that of Charles Manson. The mass media was not the only home of those who were inspired to turn a quick profit on the phenomenon.

"I came face to face with Scissorman. That's a fact." Helen leaned toward the table. "But I can't be certain if it was someone wearing a mask or the Scissorman from the previous case. That's for you officers to find out, isn't it?! And another thing - your attitude on the phone! When my life was in danger and I called you for help, you guys didn't even *try* to take me the *least* bit seriously!"

"The police and fire departments get more prank calls than anyone else in Oslo. On top of it all, even now, we get Scissorman calls every day. If we let ourselves get strung around by false tips and lost our chance to catch the real criminals, we'd be the ones hammered for it. So don'cha think it's important that we ask a lot of questions to make sure that the call is genuine?" said Gotts, jabbing his forefinger on the desk to make his point.

"The issue is the *manner* in which I was asked."

"So I'll have the guy manning the phone take an etiquette course!"

"Well, then, Inspector Gotts--"

"Assistant Inspector. How many times do I hafta tell you, Teach? The Inspector's checked into this giant damn hospital the size of a hotel with food poisoning. A bad oyster he ate kicked in on the way home from a little opera appreciation with some society bigwigs," Gotts said, scowling.

"Will 'Assistant Inspector Gotts' do, then?"

Gotts nodded magnaminously.

"The Scissorman who attacked me carried a giant pair of scissors. The same ones that were found in the Clock Tower case. You can't get *those* at any Oslo department store!"

"Nor in a museum, either, no doubt. But there are places... You should know well enough yourself, Teach."

"...You can't mean..."

There was no mistake; Helen had seen them countless times herself.

"This is confidential. I'm not supposed to be telling you this, you know!" Gotts said, amused.

"I'm a victim. I have a right to know!"

"Now, now, Teach. It ain't polite for those outside of police personnel to ask about the details of an ongoing investigation. It'd be like me asking you your age."

"Thirty."

"Huh?"

"I'm thirty. It's no offense to ask me my age! The problem is the other person's attitude when they hear the answer."

For a bit, Gotts just stared at Helen with a dumbstruck look on his face. Then, with an attitude that said "whatcha gonna do" and a nod that said "OK, then," he continued the conversation.

"Well, I guess you'll just hear it from Professor Barton afterward, so I'll tell you. After coming on the scene, we contacted Professor Barton. So we could bring him on the crime scene as a profiler - since we had testimony that the perpetrator was Scissorman, you see. I hear we *had* another profiler, but it seems she's tied up down at the station as one of the victims, eh, Teach?"

Gotts glared at Helen. Helen, unflinching, stared right back. The conversation continued, neither party averting their gaze. "It was there that the professor realized something. One of the items he had displayed in his therapy room had disappeared. I don't think I'm telling you anything you don't know, Teach, but it was a pair of scissors. His therapy room had featured a replica of the weapon used in the Clock Tower case. They were an exact replica - so exact, supposedly, that they, too, could snip through an actual human neck. And now they're gone. It's only conjecture, but the perp probably came in to steal the replica and ended up killing a number of people right there. To eliminate the eyewitnesses."

"A brilliant deduction."

"You look at things through your fancy psychology, Teach, but the most obvious conclusions are generally fact."

"So you're against bringing in profilers. Now I see--"

"You wound me, second-guessing me like that. I'm not against bringing in profilers. I'm against getting women tangled up in all this."

"Chauvinist."

"Around the station, I'd pass for a feminist!"

"What you consider a feminist and what I consider a feminist are about as similar as a tennis ball and the moon!"

"Well, take 'em from the right angle, and they look the same, don't they!"

Helen started to say something, but Gotts held up his hand to cut her off.

"Well, that's enough for today. You'd be happier continuing this lovely conversation some other time, wouldn't ya, Teach? I'll be a gentleman and ready the car that's been sent for you. This way, if you please."

Rising to his feet, Gotts moved to the door. He opened it with a flourish.

PART TWO

Sam loves to drink blood.

'Go out and kill' commands father Sam.

-Excerpt from letter to the New York City police from mad killer Son of Sam

CHAPTER ONE

Look after Jennifer for me.

And with a few words from Barton, it was decided that Helen would take care of Jennifer.

Couldn't he have worded it so that it didn't sound like he was asking me to take care of his puppy? Helen thought at the time.

Until her therapy is over, Helen promised. Nearly a year had gone by since those words had left her lips.

Barton had decided to have Helen take care of Jennifer in the hopes that she'd be able to draw some information out of the girl. Not merely *seemed* to have decided; Barton explicitly ordered Helen to worm stories of the incident out of Jennifer. Helen had listened in silence, but she had no intention of following his instructions. Barton's methods may have been correct for a researcher, but Helen could never act to deceive Jennifer.

Nevertheless, Jennifer often told Helen about her past - but Helen never reported these tales to Barton. Barton, though, seemed to realize this, and he looked down on Helen for her perceived professional failing. For that very reason, even if more out of sheer spite, Helen redoubled her determination never to give Barton the reports he wanted. Such as, for example, a report on the story Jennifer told her that night.

For the first time in a long while, Helen had gotten home from work in time to have dinner with Jennifer. Jennifer was happy as a puppy when Helen took her to a restaurant that had just been built near the campus residences.

The restaurant's exterior, ultra-modern like an avant-garde sculpture, belied a chic interior wrought mostly in wood and brick. Helen treated herself to a full-course seafood dinner.

"Looks like the Clock Tower case isn't closed yet, huh?" Jennifer said, picking at a plate of pickled herring. She'd refused to eat red meat ever since the incident. Her meal tonight, naturally, contained not a bite of it.

"We don't know yet if it's the same Scissorman."

"Hey, Helen -"

Jennifer shifted her gaze from her herring filet to Helen's face. "Do you believe me?"

It'd been a year since they'd begun living together. Jennifer had repeated that line over and over since that time. Helen's reply was always the same.

"Of course!"

"Scissorman is a real live monster. He's not human!"

"Because of the supernatural phenomena you witnessed in the Clock Tower mansion?"

"Yes, the hands reaching out of the mirror, the voices speaking to me in my head - I believe they were all the work of Scissorman."

"You're saying that Scissorman has supernatural powers?"

Jennifer nodded.

"It's a possibility!"

"...But you're also saying I might be wrong, aren't you?." Jennifer asked, with a slightly sad expression.

"Jennifer, I believe you! It's not that I think you're lying. And I know how calm and capable you were when the chips were down. When I saw Scissorman, I couldn't do anything but flat-out panic. You had a much more level head. I don't think you're raving or making false assumptions. I'm just trying to take into consideration all the different possibilities for what happened and why. That Scissorman has psi powers is one of those possibilities!"

"Well, what other possibilities are you considering, Helen?" Jennifer said uncertainly.

"I've been looking for them for one whole year! And I still haven't issued my professional opinion. But I have a hunch that--"

"Yes! That's what I want to hear!" Jennifer enthused, bringing herself closer to the table. "I don't want to hear the clinical opinion in that report you're handing in; I wanna hear what *you* think!"

"I think Scissorman can be reasonably considered to have psi powers."

Jennifer put a hand to her chest and heaved a sigh of relief.

But for Helen, "reasonably" was somewhat of an exaggeration. Helen was about 80% certain that there probably was no connection.

The field of study that dealt with supernatural abilities like telepathy, healing, and psychokinesis was called parapsychology. Parapsychology was associated with the outer reaches of the science; a great many scientists would have nothing to do with it. In recent years, disciplines such as transpersonal psychology and the study of "ki" - of spiritual energy - had come to examine various aspects of paranormal phenomena. In mainstream science, however, parapsychology still met with a hostile reception.

But for Helen, her mindset regarding the issue was anything but hostile; she had even appeared at a national transpersonal psychology conference that had been held in Ireland. She held an active interest in the field, and so she thought it indeed a possibility that such phenomena might be involved in the case of Scissorman. But she wasn't one of those people who fell for those shows on TV that reported on supposed "paranormal phenomena"; she was a scientist, after all.

Despite this, she had no intention of taking the scholarly approach with Jennifer. She'd leave that job to Barton. Or maybe Assistant Inspector Gotts, currently eating an open-face sandwich at the other side of the room with a disgusted look on his face, as if he were cramming wads of paper into his mouth.

As a victim in last night's incident, Helen had been assigned police protection. Helen had never thought, though, that the assistant inspector would be providing the protection himself.

Jennifer stole a glimpse of Gotts sitting there, then began to lower her voice. "Um, you know, Helen...there's something I haven't told anyone. Something I haven't even told Professor Barton.I mean, I might have talked about it under hypnosis, but I didn't *say* anything."

"About what?"

Jennifer again lowered her voice, speaking just above a whisper.

"I saw my father."

"Your *father*..."

Jennifer was an orphan. Her father had disappeared suddenly, and her mother gave her up shortly afterward. She had remained in the custody of the Granite Orphanage ever since she was five years old - which was how she became entangled in these bizarre events.

"My father was an obstetrician."

"So I've heard."

"But, I mean, one day, he went out on a call and never returned."

"And you saw your father? Where?"

".....The Clock Tower mansion."

"...Impossible!"

"You know that the mansion had several hidden rooms, right?"

Helen nodded. The Clock Tower mansion had been built like a labyrinth.

"Do you remember the one that had the door that was half-painted over?"

Helen nodded again. All the room's windows and doors had been completely plastered over; inside was a skeleton wearing a lab coat. The body was to this day unidentified.

"Then that skeleton....."

"Yes.....I think so. It was wearing a lab coat, right? --The body, I mean. I found a note in its pocket. I lost it while I was running away, but I remember what it said. It was signed 'Walter Simpson.' My father's name!"

"This is important; why didn't you ever say anything about it?"

"I couldn't! The police wouldn't believe a word of what I said - not without evidence! And I lost the note, and--"

"But you could have at least told me....."

"I'm sorry." Helen saw Jennifer hang her head and thought, *Now I've done it*. It was if Helen had been cross-examining her.

"It's not that I'm angry, Jennifer! I'm just wondering why you waited a whole year to tell anyone about this."

".....Professor Barton thinks that everything I say is just the ravings of a lunatic! I'm 'ill,' he says. You're a scientist, too, Helen, so I thought for sure you'd think the same thing..... I realized afterward that that wasn't

true, but once you've decided to keep quiet about something, it gets harder and harder for you to speak up afterward."

"I understand how you feel, Jennifer. And.....you're right. In all probability, neither the police nor Professor Barton would've taken your story at face value."

"That's what I thought. You'll understand why once you hear what was in the note."

Jennifer began to explain in detail to Helen the contents of the note.

The note had been hastily scribbled on a piece torn off from a clinical chart. Simpson had been called to the Barrows mansion for his services as an obstetrician. Since this was an exceptional case, he'd been coming to the manor on a regular basis ever since the pregnancy; he'd made an emergency call that day, as the woman was about to deliver. And it was a successful delivery, of twins - one named Bobby, the other Dan. And shortly after their birth, Jennifer's father claimed, one of them bit off his right hand.

"Bit it *off*...a newborn infant?"

Helen recalled the slide of the skeleton; the lab coat had been stained black with congealed blood, and there was no right hand.

"Yes.....but what was born that day wasn't human! They were twin demons, my father said - doomed to inflict horrible disaster upon this world as long as they lived. But he also wrote that the children were born deformed - they shouldn't have lived for long.....but they did live. One of them was Scissorman. The other became that giant fetus.Hey, Helen -"

"I believe you. Every word." Helen smiled in response.

"Oh, I'm so happy! That's wonderful. I feel so much better having talked to you, Helen!"

"I understand why you hadn't told anyone this before. I mean, if you told your story to that blockhead over there, there'd be no way *he'd* believe it - whether you had the note or not!" said Helen, casting a glance in Gotts' direction. Their eyes met. Gotts took his coffee cup and stood up; he'd already finished eating his sandwich. He headed straight for Helen and Jennifer's table.

"It's been a while, young lady!" said Gotts, helping himself to the chair next to Helen. He'd been one of the investigators assigned to the Clock Tower case; he and Jennifer had met many times since then.

"Did you **ask** if you could sit there?" Helen scowled at Gotts - as was her habit.

"No need to make a fuss over something like that, Teach!"

"Perhaps, then, I should make a fuss over why an Inspector...an **Assistant** Inspector is providing protection for someone like **me**!"

"The meatheads who were supposed to handle it both fell ill all of a sudden. One got appendicitis; the other had a herniated disk, they said. There was no one else free. Just me!"

"The lead detective, the Inspector - is the entire Oslo police department staffed with invalids?"

"Oh, we hire nothing but sick bodies. Helps us understand the sick minds."

Jennifer's head was down, trying to stifle her laughter at Helen and Gotts' conversation.

"It's no laughing matter, young lady! I haven't caught a single break since I got married."

Looking at Gotts' solemn face, Jennifer finally burst out laughing.

Gotts shrugged his shoulders and said to Helen, "Looks like the young lady here doesn't have an appreciation yet for life's tragedies."

"I have no desire to appreciate your tragedies. There's something else I'd like to hear from you instead, now that we have an assistant inspector gracing our table with his presence."

"At your service. It's department policy of the Oslo police to provide full cooperation with the criminal psychology department."

"That's not what I was told last night!"

"Now, someone overheard their conversation with you, Teach, and informed the Inspector in the hospital. 'There's someone sexually harassing the Teach down at the criminal psychology department,' they said."

"That's not how it went."

"Thanks to that, I got a phone call from the Inspector. Right at my home - and in the middle of the night! As soon as I got off the phone, I heard about it for two hours from my wife - who'd been woken up! - about taking a job where I get calls after midnight. I got no sleep; I'm *still* not over my cold...and on top of it all, I found out today that my subordinates are out sick."

"Did you come to our table just to foist your complaints on us?"

"Nooo...I came because I was lonely."

Even Helen got a laugh out of that.

But it might have a grain of unexpected truth, Helen mused, regarding the "lonely middle-aged man" across from her.

"Well, I have a question for Mr. Lonely," she said, getting back on track. "I know there's a story going around that there's a man who lives on the outskirts of Oslo who once worked as a butler at the Barrows mansion."

"Where'd you hear that, Teach!?" Gotts' eyes went wide.

"I've been doing some independent research at the lab. I can't rely on the police."

"...So what would you like to ask this unreliable policeman?"

"I wonder if this might not have been left there."

Helen took out a single photograph. It was of a small statue. It was a grotesque thing - a strange-looking monster sitting atop a skull. The monster looked just like a gargoyle used to ward off evil. The statue glittered blue-black, apparently made out of some sort of metal.

"Oh, that's--" Jennifer's voice grew high.

"That's right: the statue found in the Barrows residence. We called it an evil idol! Used in some ceremony in the mansion, I'm sure. Lately, I've come to believe that this idol has a significant connection with Scissorman. But when I went to look at the genuine article, it was gone. It was supposed to have been brought back to the lab. I'm sure that Professor Barton said he had given it to someone for safekeeping to conduct further research, but... I thought it was the head of the library, Professor Sullivan, or maybe the old Barrows butler....."

"Why don't you ask Barton himself?"

"I have my reasons."

Professor Barton didn't look kindly upon Helen's independent investigations. In certain cases, he not only discouraged them; he actively interfered with them. His actions weren't borne out of jealousy, a case of cutting a pupil who threatened to outshine him down to size; Barton fancied himself a genius, and jealousy wasn't in his vocabulary. He just hated being told what to do by other people. He didn't want his "stupid assistants" to interfere with his work, and so he shut down every single one of their proposals at their very start.

The idea that a connection existed between the idol and the Barrows family - and Scissorman - was completely Helen's. She had absolutely no expectation of assistance from Barton.

Gotts gave a significant nod, as if he understood Helen's position completely. "You know I really wanna answer your questions, Teach, but...sorry - I haven't met that butler yet. I didn't even know there was a butler until two, three days ago! I don't know how you guys got that information, but--"

"So you don't know whether or not he has the idol, then," said Helen dejectedly, as if to put the kibosh on the subject.

"Tomorrow, I'm supposed to be seeing the butler - an older gentleman named Rick, apparently; do you want me to ask him then?"

It was an unexpected offer.

"My, how magnanimous of you."

"Well, the Oslo police *have* been requested to provide full cooperation with the criminal psychology department," said Gotts, his face the very picture of grouchiness.

And, my, my - suddenly, two doors stand before you!

This will be your second door.

If you ask Gotts to inquire about the statue, click [here](#).

And if you refuse Gotts' offer, click [here](#).

Which door will you choose, I wonder?

CHAPTER TWO

The morning's rain had grown even more ferocious come evening. Gotts hadn't brought an umbrella, and he was thoroughly soaked by the time he managed to reach the front door. A giant sneeze escaped him just as the door opened.

There was a thunderclap, and a flash of lightning illuminated the face of the man who answered.

Before him stood an old man so thin you'd be forgiven for mistaking him for a skeleton. This was Rick, the man who'd worked at the Barrows mansion as its butler.

"You're from the police, aren't you?"

Rick gave a long, cautious look in both directions, as if he'd expected Gotts to have brought along some unwelcome company.

"Assistant Inspector Stan Gotts." Gotts showed him his inspector's badge.

Rick gave it a long, hard stare as if he were appraising jewelry, then said: "Very well. Please enter."

Led by Rick, Gotts entered the main hall. Without a word, Rick left and returned with a towel, which he handed to Gotts.

Scrubbing his hair dry with no regard for propriety, Gotts took off his sopping jacket. Rick immediately took it in hand and left the room. He seemed to live in this huge residence all by himself.

Gotts sunk into the plush sofa and surveyed his surroundings. The main hall was huge. From the vaulted ceiling above he could see suspended an enormous antique chandelier.

Rick promptly returned. "You probably have your suspicions as to how I can afford a large home such as this, having resigned from my former position." Rick sat lightly on the sofa, regarding Gotts with sunken eyes.

"No, that's really not what I..."

"The master graciously arranged for a severance package upon my retirement - a far too generous sum. It allowed me to purchase this house." His fingers, long and slender like a pianist's, plucked a speck of fluff from the carpet. "You've come to inquire about the master, have you not?"

"Yes, we talked on the phone, but--"

"I thought the police would come eventually. I had spoken with that Professor Barton, and he gave me this."

Rick brought out a tiny statue from his pocket - a small idol, solid black, of creatures perched atop a skull. The same one Helen showed him in the photo. "He entrusted this to me. He also instructed me to tell you if I

knew anything I knew about it - if indeed I did know anything."

"Well, do you?"

Rick answered the question with a question: "But why would the police have any interest in it?"

Gotts didn't like his attitude. There was no change in the policeman's expression, however - it was as sour as it had been from the start of the interview. He just gave an offhand reply of, "It was left at the crime scene."

"I thought the police would come eventually," the old man repeated.

"I have no idea, though, why a college professor would have any notion that this place existed. I have no idea even what kind of person this Professor Barton might be... The police told him of my residence, I take it?"

"No. We never disclose confidential information."

Rick stared at Gotts; it was evident he did not believe a word of his response. He nodded regardless.

"Indeed..... I suppose I've been fortunate to have escaped notice for this long. Particularly from *them*....."

Rick heaved a sigh - the sound of a tired old man.

"I'd like to proceed with a few questions, if I could, Rick."

"Go ahead. That's why you came here, isn't it?"

"At the time of the incident, not a single servant was employed at the Barrows Mansion - the Clock Tower Mansion, as we call it. But that place is huge. An unnatural situation from any angle, wouldn't you say?"

"The master was a wonderful person. Wise - courageous - kind. When he was informed of his wife's pregnancy, he released all the help." Rick stared straight ahead of him, his fingers interlaced as if in prayer.

"The master decided to face it alone. All alone. Nothing of which any ordinary person would be capable."

Gotts hadn't the slightest idea of what the old man was talking about. *Was he senile?* The rude thought crossed Gotts's mind, but he blocked it out and continued. "Uh, Rick--"

"There probably isn't much time left to me. Even though I had all the time in the world before. I know that the master lost his life in the incident. But I did nothing - even though the master wanted me to intervene.I was scared. I wanted to live out my remaining years in peace, if possible....but that didn't happen. ...I've only spent my time in fear. It's been over ten years since the day I left the mansion - here alone in this house, just quaking in my boots....." The thin man cracked a self-deprecating smile. "Um, going back to what we were discussing earlier....." Gotts said, trying to get the conversation back on track. "Why did Simon Barrows have to release his help once he found out his wife was pregnant?"

"So that they wouldn't be killed. By the monsters that would be born."

"Monsters?....." *Again with the "monster" garbage.* Gotts mentally clicked his tongue. He'd had it with all these stories about monsters; he'd already gotten his fill sitting around the campfire listening to ghost stories, he thought.

"Were you aware that the Barrows originally came from England?"

"No." This was new to Gotts; the police had no interest in tracing the Barrows family roots.

"It was eighty years ago that the Barrows came across the sea to Norway. They were originally Lord Wardens of the March who ruled the territory on the Scottish border, retainers of the Percys. The very first lord of the castle--"

"Um, is this going to be a long story?" Gotts had no intention of listening to every last detail of the Barrows family history.

"Are you in a hurry?"

"Well, I want to hear it if it has a connection with the Clock Tower case."

"So it does. All too well."

"Then by all means," Gotts urged, his face resigned.

Rick began to recount the Barrows family history - a bizarre story that seemed to Gotts like little more than a fairy tale.

It all began with the first lord of the castle, Theodore Barrows. Rick told the story with a solemn face: Theodore had returned home in the mid-15th century, from the Hundred Years' War with a paralyzing fear of death. Out of what some might call inordinate terror, he sold his soul to a pagan god in exchange for what he thought was immortality. The deity with whom he made this pact was a god of death known as "the Great Father."

The dark god demanded sacrifices, and so Theodore abducted children from the surrounding area and, after prolonged torture, butchered them in offering to his god. He soon lost his humanity.

Rumors of Theodore's inhuman ways eventually spread among the populace, and, fearing they would reach the king's ears, his relatives poisoned him.

It should have all ended then. But the dark god Theodore had summoned continued to haunt the Barrows clan.

Every few generations, a deformed child came to be born to the Barrows - born from a human womb, yet not human itself. It would instead be a son of the Great Father, a vicious monster possessing unimaginable power. It lusted for blood and spread death like a plague.

In the mid-19th century, the 30th lord of the castle, Quentin Barrows, in an attempt to break the curse on the Barrows family, made a direct stand against the evil god. Though he, too, destroyed a Son of the Great Father, he was not able to fulfill his dream of completely sealing away the Barrows' accursed blood.

After his death, the Barrows clan crossed the sea to Norway, where all was quiet for eighty years. But then, by Simon Barrows' day, the accursed Barrows blood reared its head again, threatening to produce yet more monsters. Aware of this, Simon resolved to fight the dark god; he fired all his servants and steadily made his preparations for his battle.

"But it all came to naught. The master was always very kind to me. He must have had great confidence in me, wouldn't you say? To relate to me the secret history of the Barrows clan. "Finish this if I cannot" - that is what he meant, I think. But.....do you think that I could possibly accomplish what the master himself could not?"

Do I think, Gotts thought; the entire story still seemed little more than a bad dream. There was nothing here of which he could make a serious investigation.

"Rick, did you *see* these monsters?"

Rick shook his head listlessly.

"And after you heard those horrible stories, the incident took place. I bet a lot ran through your head. But you know, Rick--"

A dog began to bark. Its cries were coming from the direction of the garden. The barking escalated, as if the dog had found prey.

Rick, who had so far simply stared at his hands as his spoke, rose to his feet. "What's the matter, Victor?"

Rick headed for the foyer and drew back a heavy curtain. On the other side was a large glass door leading to the garden. Outside, the edge of the grass glistened from the falling rain. A dog stood there.

The giant dog barked frantically in the downpour. He was the size of a calf, probably as long as Gotts was tall.

"Be quiet; I have a visitor. You don't usually bark like this..." Excusing himself, Rick opened the glass door and stepped outside into the garden. He approached the dog, venturing just beyond the eaves of his home.

Rick's body entered the shadows; Gotts could no longer see the dog. His chain was pulled taut. The dog had probably bounded right to Rick.

He's probably babying him, Gotts thought. Just then, Rick fell flat on his back like a felled log. Gotts scrambled to his feet. *what if that big dog had decided to use him as a chew toy? That frail old man won't be able to take it.*

Gotts entered the garden.

Felled, Rick's face was twisted in agony. Blood bubbled from his oral cavity.

Rick's throat had been torn out. The wound was ragged, as if it had been inflicted by some sort of bladed weapon.

The dog's thick front legs perched upon Rick's chest.

He growled, flashed his fangs; they dripped with blood. His eyes glistened in the darkness, burning with rage. He looked just like Cerberus, the watchdog who guarded the entrance of Hell.

The mad dog began to howl, as if he were rabid. Its steel chain - thick enough for a dog of that size - extended taut in a straight line into the space beyond his hind legs. He kept on trying to lunge forward, as if he wanted to tear out Gotts's throat next.

Gotts clasped the old man's hand and pulled him toward him. He was shockingly light.

He dragged the old man's body like a dry twig into the house and shut the glass door. The luxurious carpet was at once stained with blood.

Gotts then headed for an end table in the corner of the room; he'd seen a phone there.

He picked up the receiver. No sound came from the earpiece, though; not even the dial tone. *Had the line been cut?*

Gotts decided to go back to his car and head straight for the station. He crossed the center of the living room, heading for the entranceway. *Jangle, jangle*, went something over Gotts's head.

Looking up, he saw a magnificent chandelier of brass and glass swaying above him. *A little breeze wouldn't be enough to rock that thing*, Gotts thought. Plus, all the windows and doors in the room were shut; there was no way a breeze could get in.

It was a snap decision.

Gotts jumped leapt to the side. Just as he did so, the chain suspending the chandelier from the ceiling gave way.

The massive chandelier fell.

It was over in a split second. The chandelier hit the floor, scattering shards of glass everywhere. It landed right where Gotts had stood.

The phone line had been cut at the same time that Rick had been mauled to death. When Gotts tried to contact the station, the chandelier fell. Gotts couldn't deny that this felt like no accident.

Someone had set this all up.

Someone who was probably still watching him.

Gotts took his revolver out of its chest holster. It was a Smith & Wesson .38 - a gun you could count on.

Suddenly, the lights went out.

Instantly, everything was plunged into darkness.

Gotts readied his handgun and waited for his eyes to adjust. From the light of the lanterns in the garden outside, the layout of the living room slowly came into focus.

The dog continued to scream. But there was a different sound mixed in, Gotts caught.

A sound like knives being sharpened. Like that of two blades scraping together. Or like something else - like another possibility that suddenly entered Gotts's mind.

The sound of scissors. But not just any scissors. Gigantic scissors - ones that could decapitate a man in one blow.

It was coming from the door leading to the entranceway.

when firing his weapon, a police officer was obliged to show himself to his target - to identify himself as an officer. So Gotts stood with his revolver dead in front of him, held by both hands - just as he'd been taught, just as he'd practiced. But as the sound got closer and closer, Gotts found it harder to resist the urge to go hide wherever he could and draw his bead from cover.

His eyes suddenly glanced upon the table. The idol had been left there.

Did he come to steal it?

Gotts reached out his hand, grabbed the idol, and shoved it in his pocket.

It was then that it happened.

The door flung open.

It stood there, looking just as he'd thought.

A deformed monster bent over like an old man, hoisting a giant pair of scissors.

The very Scissorman of whom he had heard over and over in Jennifer's testimony.

"Freeze!" said Gotts, pointing the barrel of his gun squarely at Scissorman.

Shing.

Scissorman opened his scissors in response.

"I said *freeze!*"

He didn't seem to have any intention of listening. Dragging one leg, he slowly advanced toward Gotts.

"Come any closer, and I'll shoot!"

Disregarding the warning, Scissorman took another step forward.

Gotts pulled the trigger. He had no intention of killing. At least, not now.

The bullet hit Scissorman square in the thigh.

Scissorman swayed. But that was all. A normal man wouldn't be able to stand. But Scissorman took another step toward Gotts.

Gotts lifted the barrel, aiming for Scissorman's stomach. Scissorman shuffled toward Gotts as if he were completely unconcerned.

Gotts fired without a moment's hesitation.

The bullet had to have hit him right in the stomach.

But all it did was knock Scissorman back a bit.

Gotts was a little surprised, but he wasn't panicked yet. If he were wearing Kevlar - a bulletproof vest - that would only prevent the bullets from entering his body. He would still feel the shock of their impact; it would be as if he had been suddenly hit like hell with a bat, and hardly anyone was able to continue unimpeded afterward. If, though, he were wearing trauma pads - anti-projectile body armor recently developed for military use - he'd be able to eat a .38-caliber bullet without a flinch. Enough for the most ordinary individual to play the role of the undying Scissorman.

Stepping back, Gotts lowered his revolver to aim to between Scissorman's legs - the one point his body armor

wouldn't cover.

He tightened his grip and pulled the trigger.

The fabric covering the area was shredded. But Scissorman continued walking as if nothing had happened. It was then that good ol' Gotts started to lose his cool.

He once again raised his revolver - aiming for right between the eyes.

The face was a small target. But there were only three meters between him and Scissorman. A small matter for one of Gotts's skill.

The fourth bullet rang out.

In the dim light, Gotts saw that the bullet hit Scissorman's twisted face. He also saw some sort of black liquid spurt out.

But all it did was knock Scissorman's head back. It was if a child had hit him - he hadn't felt it at all.

A die-hard pragmatist, Gotts couldn't believe his eyes. Nevertheless, he wasn't a man to let himself be paralyzed with shock.

Gotts once again readied himself to pull the trigger. It was then that he heard a voice. No - nothing he could call a voice, really; more like the sensation of an idea flowing directly into his mind.

Sic him, Victor.

He was sure that was what he heard.

At once, Gotts heard a loud noise come from behind him. Still on guard, Gotts cast a glance backward. There was the glass door; he'd backed himself up almost against it without knowing. The the door showed traces of blood. He soon understood their source. The mad dog had broken his chain and charged the glass. With a thunderous bang, it smashed its face against the pane; fresh blood ran from its nose. The dog retreated, then threw itself against the glass once more.

The thick glass was giving way.

Shing.

Before Gotts's eyes, Scissorman opened his shears wide. If he closed them, he'd send the policeman's head flying.

Gotts fired a shot.

He aimed for the glass behind him.

With a metallic sound, it shattered, the shards scattering like a spray of sea mist.

The crazed dog flew into the room head first - and collapsed, still flying, in a heap on the floor. The bullet had hit his forehead dead center.

Gotts had aimed for the animal through the glass.

Passing the flying beast in transit, Gotts bounded into the garden.

A moment in the downpour outside, and Gotts was once again a drowned rat. Gotts ran, slogging under the sopping clothes that clung heavily to his skin.

He left the garden, passed through the front gate, and dove into his car.

He stomped on the accelerator so hard he thought he'd push it through the floor, tearing out of the gate. The car's tires threw water like a sprinkler truck.

After driving thirty or forty meters, Gotts spun the car around in a U-turn and stopped dead.

Through the raindrops hammering his windshield, Gotts could make out Rick's front gate. Gotts fixed his eyes dead ahead.

If Scissorman showed his face, Gotts would run him over. In all the criminals he'd faced, Gotts had never harbored any desire to kill his opponent. In this case, though, Gotts felt that there was no other way. Part of himself - part of him aside from his rational self - continued to whisper in his mind, urging him to kill Scissorman.

But Scissorman never appeared. From the last time he'd looked at his watch, he'd been staring in wait for Scissorman for twenty minutes. But of Scissorman he saw not a trace.

Throwing in the towel, Gotts put in a call for backup over the radio. Going back into that mansion before it arrived would take guts even good old Gotts didn't have.

CHAPTER THREE

It'd been a while since Gotts had called last. He was at Prof. Barton's office, he said - he had something he wanted to show Helen.

After dispensing with two or three urgent documents, Helen sped out to the police station as fast as she could. When she entered his office, he said without prelude: "Take a look at this."

Before Helen could ask *At what?*, Gotts put the object in question on the desk - the idol Helen had talked about.

"Myyyy, you went out of your way to get this just for *me*?"

"Not for you, Teach. The department needs it. It's important evidence."

"But I thought that it was at the research facility *because* the police had deemed it unconnected to the investigation."

"There's something even the police overlooked."

"As happens all too often." Before Gotts could shoot something back in response, Helen continued: "By the way, I wonder if it would be all right if I sat down. Unless this is some sort of new interrogation method?"

"Please, go ahead and sit. But this isn't a restaurant, you know! We don't go around giving out chairs to just anybody! ...Well, enough of this for right now. The skull part on this idol - you know the jaw opens up, right?"

Helen shook her head.

"Try it. If you look, there's a little button on the lower jaw. Push that, and it opens."

Just like Gotts said, the skull opened its jaws wide. "There's something inside!"

"Try taking it out."

It was a small folded-up piece of paper. "I'd never seen this before..." Prof. Barton probably didn't know about this - but maybe, perhaps, he only didn't think it necessary to tell Helen. The thought made Helen's blood boil. It was times like this that the thought of quitting her position at the research lab crossed Helen's mind.

"Look at it!"

Helen opened the note.

It was a hand-drawn map. Half of it was torn off, but Helen could see that it was a map of Great Britain. On the border between England and Scotland, near the coastline, was a small circle drawn in red. There was written: "Barrows Castle." Another little map was inscribed within - a map magnifying the area enclosed by the circle. A map, in detail, of the road leading to Barrows Castle.

"I understand the Barrows moved from that castle to Norway eighty years ago. Take a look at the back, too."

There Helen found sentences written in a steady hand.

I go forth into battle with the intent of putting an end to all of this - to sever the curse that has ensnared the Barrows clan.

I will speak frankly - I am scared. I have never felt so close to death as I do this moment.

They control death. They toy with it; it is their plaything.

I have no fear of death itself. If my death comes by the grace of God, I welcome it. But that which they seek to bring into the world - that is what I fear more than death.

When this paper has passed into the hands of another - then I will know I am defeated in my fight. I will probably no longer among the living.

I have no way of knowing who will be reading these words. I write this not knowing friend and foe. I well know that this quite possibly could have fallen into the hands of

the enemy. If it has, then my failure is complete. But if not, then I entrust it all to the one reading this. I ask you to finish what I could not.

I intend here to record all I have learned of the secrets of the Barrows clan, so that it may be used as a weapon against them. Neither sword nor firearm will avail you against they who control death. What you need is knowledge - and all of mine is transcribed here.

Therefore, I implore you: read this, and vanquish them. So long as they yet remain undestroyed, countless lives shall be sacrificed. I myself among them, in all probability. And, perhaps, one whom you love.

By reading this, you have become involved in the curse of the Barrows. You must know that war is already upon you. They're probably right next to you, lying in wait for the moment they can lop off your head. Do not take them lightly - for as I myself have learned, you must know your enemy. The moment the fight has begun, you can no longer trust any man.

The fight will be bitter in every sense. But armed with the right knowledge, you might yet stand a chance of victory.

Fight. Win.

With his Voice, the dark God--

The rest of the paper had been torn off.

"What does it all mean?"

"That's what I was gonna ask you, Teach. We've been sittin' on that thing for almost a year, and we never knew there was such a simple trick to it."

"Obviously." Helen sighed.

"Well, there likely were extenuating circumstances involved, but let's not get into that. You see the news this morning?"

"No. I don't have time for that! The research facility's temporarily closed due to the murder investigation, so I've got a mountain of work piled up on me!"

"Rick's been killed. The murderer was dressed like Scissorman."

"Another murder..."

"And this time, *I* was the eyewitness."

"*What?* Is this true?"

Gotts nodded sadly. "So, I've got something to ask you. ...I want your personal opinion, Teach, on the story

"I'm about to tell you." With that preface, Gotts explained to Helen the events he'd experienced last night.

When she had finished listening, Helen replied in a professional tone: "So you shot Scissorman squarely between the eyes, but he didn't die. And you heard a voice directly inside your head. And the dog tried to attack you, as if in response to this inaudible voice. You're certain of this."

"I'm at my wit's end, Teach! Maybe the voice was just a crazy delusion, a figment of my imagination. But no man can be shot between the eyes and still survive." Gotts held his forehead.

"So, you believe what Jennifer was saying, then?"

"Sorry. I can't trust anything but what I see with my own eyes."

"Stubborn goat."

"Say what you like."

"I wonder, though, if you can't help but take stock in at least some of her testimony now. It corroborates with everything you're saying. Once every several decades, a monster is born into the Barrows family. The thirteenth lord of the castle, Quentin Barrows, fought against this monster. We don't know whether he won or lost, but he didn't break the curse - and demon children were still being born in Simon Barrows's time. He staked his life to stand against them - and he lost... I think that if you just accept that there's an unkillable monster named Scissorman, you'll find there's no more reasonable explanation. But this does settle it."

"Settle what?"

"We have to go to England. To investigate Barrows Castle."

"W-what are you talking about? You're a victim in this case, Teach. You're an important witness - you need protection! You can't travel overseas! No - I won't *let* you. What put this..." *What had put this idea into Helen's head?*

Resentment toward the secretive Barton, if he had to guess. But it wasn't only that, of course. It was also true that one important clue to the resolution of the never-ending Clock Tower case was the existence of the Barrows castle. Even so, though, the deciding factor in her going to England was her animosity against Barton, the control freak who kept everything to himself. But she'd never own up to that to Gotts.

"The key to the Clock Tower case lies at Barrows Castle." So Helen said.

"No way," answered Gotts, his ever-present sour look on his face.

"I don't care what you say; I'm going."

"*No, no, no!* I won't allow it!" Gotts bellowed in anger.

"If you're so worried, then why don't you go with me!?"

"*Who's* worried?"

"Then you're not concerned?"

"It's not that I'm not concerned, but - ...no! That's not the problem! I'm in charge of this case. I can't just up

and *leave!*"

"Then get permission from your superiors!"

"Permission from the chief?..."

"Why not telephone him now? Tell him you'd like permission to go to England."

Gotts gave the idea some thought. Dissuading Helen on this matter seemed to be a rather difficult proposition. If he could make her understand with a simple phone call, then what a bargain *that* would be. There'd be no way the chief would actually give him permission, Gotts thought. "All right, agreed. Lemme get in touch with the chief right now. And if he doesn't give me permission, I'm forbidding you to pursue this "going to England" idea. OK?"

"...All right. I accept your terms." Tit for tat, then.

Gotts picked up the receiver and dialed the hospital as lavish as a hotel. As soon as the chief picked up, Gotts gave a brief account of events thus far and proposed that they head for England. He fully expected to be turned down.

He was gravely mistaken.

Gotts was on the fast track for promotion, but in the end, he was no match for the chief with political ambitions. The chief had an instinctive dislike of Gotts - simply put, he hated him, and his greatest joy was giving him grief.

So the chief considered refusing Gotts's request. But after Gotts finished his explanation, the chief had only a few words:

Well, Gotts, would there be any problem in going to England?

Holding the receiver, Gotts was gobsmacked. Nothing but "well" and "um" and "er" came from his mouth as he heard a curt *click* from the other end of the line.

"Well, Assistant Inspector Gotts?"

Gotts slowly replaced the receiver. Heartbreak was written all over his face.

"You're an important witness."

"Yes, I am."

"Not a criminal or a suspect. That's what the chief said."

"Well, then? Spit it out!"

"Hiding a victim who has a possibility of being attacked again from the perpetrator is something the FBI would do. Therefore, the chief said, I'm going to go with you, Teach, for protection. *Goddamn chief--!*"

As he shouted, Helen thought she could see tears in the corners of Gotts's eyes.

[Please proceed to Part Three.](#)

CHAPTER TWO

In a stately room made of lavish oak, Prof. Sullivan had continued to talk a blue streak, not even stopping for breath. Almost thirty minutes had passed since the director of the library had shown Helen into his office.

While Helen had been studying at South Oslo University, Prof. Sullivan - who had been a professor of religion at the time - had been given the nickname of "Humpty Dumpty": the name of the strange egg-shaped creature that appeared in *Through the Looking Glass*. The illustration and the corpulent Sullivan were two peas in a pod; his namesake was even as garrulous as he was. But where the Humpty Dumpty of the books was always angry and combative, Prof. Sullivan was cheerful and had never really been angry at all.

His large and convex stomach, his round head, and his glossy pink skin all directly invited comparisons to an egg. Even though more than ten years had passed since then, the gloss on Sullivan's skin hadn't dimmed a bit. His hair was now pure white, but in all sincerity, if he parted his hair on the side and dyed it black, he wouldn't have changed a bit since his fifties.

The little mouth that divided his ample cheeks continued its busy movements without cease. Helen always had great admiration for his peerless wisdom and unquenchable thirst for knowledge - but, truth be told, she had always been at a loss for words in the face of his loquaciousness.

Sullivan held his ample stomach and laughed. "Well, you never know what's going to happen in life, hmm?"

If we don't get to the point soon, I'll be here until the break of dawn, Helen was convinced. "Professor Sullivan," said Helen across the desk piled high with books.

"Hm? What is it?" His tiny eyes were still smiling beneath his gold-rimmed spectacles.

"About that idol..."

"Ahhh, the one Barton left with me, correct? I have it, I have it... Um..." Sullivan began rummaging through the drawers in his desk. "Ohhh...where did I put it, now?..."

"Professor--"

"Now, don't look so frightened. I *know* he left it here; it's just...now, where did it *go*?..."

"You're certain it's here?"

"Yes, I'm certain, but...you came to take it back, I take it?"

"Um--well, yes." Helen hadn't yet decided whether or not she'd take the thing back. Barton was the one who'd left it here; a fit wouldn't be the word for what Barton would have if he learned that Helen took it back of her own accord.

"Hmmm..." Sullivan looked at Helen for a while with doubt in his eyes. A smile was on his lips as always, but... "Ivory towers, we universities are often called...among other things. Inside, though, we're no different from the workaday world. Human relationships are a briar patch wherever you go. Even I hate it. That's why I resigned from the university."

"Really?" This was the first Helen had heard of this.

"It must be difficult for you - being under Barton. He's a gifted man, to be sure, but...well." Sullivan slicked back his hair with the palm of his hand. It was a habit of his when he had an idea in his head. "I was supposed to hang on to that statue for two weeks - to research it during that time. But I'd like to entrust it to you today. Give it back to Barton five days from now."

"But - but, Professor--"

"It'll be all right. I've had the idol for only nine days, but the bulk of my research is over. I *am* a genius, after all." Sullivan gave another great belly laugh at that comment. He'd meant it as a joke, but he really was a genius. The thesis he wrote at age sixteen, "Basic Family Structures Seen in Incest Taboos," was even now a staple of anthropology textbooks. That was Prof. Sullivan's illustrious debut as a cultural anthropologist. His interest later drifted to religious studies, but his work was highly regarded in any field.

"I'll send the report directly to Barton. But you probably want to know the connection between this statue and the Clock Tower murders."

"Yes, but..."

"You probably know that the Barrows mansion was moved over from England to Norway over eighty years ago."

"No, I didn't."

"Well, it was! I talked about it with Barton on the phone, but..."

Helen knew her cheeks were red. Prof. Sullivan now knew that Barton didn't trust her with anything.

"Here, let me lend this to you." Sullivan pulled out a bulky volume from the mountain of books piled on his desk. It was entitled *Lord Wardens of the March of Northern England*. "The Barrows family were Lord Wardens of the March who guarded the border between England and Scotland. This book goes into considerable detail about the Barrows family history. Also..." Sullivan pressed his spectacles upward with his middle finger and began paging through the book. "Ah, here we go. This is the crest that Theodore Barrows used. It apparently was unique to the Barrows family."

"Theodore Barrows?" asked Helen as she was shown the open pages.

"The first lord of the Barrows family castle. A key figure in the connection between the Clock Tower murders and the Barrows family."

Helen looked at the Barrows family crest. "This is..."

"A magnificent discovery, isn't it!" The crest in the book featured a monster seated atop a skull - the exact image represented by the idol if viewed from the front. "It seems that the Barrows family subscribed to a very peculiar faith. Not Christianity, as you can imagine. There's a book, *The Nameless Pagans*, that includes some speculation as to the nature of the heretic faith to which Theodore Barrows subscribed. This Theodore was quite a learned man - he left behind four books he'd written! And one of them in part touches upon what one could call the primitive religious consciousness of the Europeans - even if, well, I don't believe there was a sense of Europe as we now know it at the time. Anyhow, they extrapolate from this what the nature of Theodore's beliefs were, and I found it a quite stimulating study! It seems to support my own ideas on the subject."

"Your *own* ideas, Professor?"

"Indeed; it's one of the theses I'd like to complete before I die. Its cornerstone rests on the primitive religious consciousness of the Europeans. Basically, it concerns the nature of the faith that existed in Europe prior to the formation of the beliefs of the Celts. This is my own hypothesis, but I believe that the original form of all the Indo-European faiths - and, indeed, perhaps, most faiths of the world - can be found there."

But if that were so, then it would answer the basic question of what religion fundamentally was. Prof. Sullivan would leave behind a legacy of world renown if he had indeed found the answer.

"And you're saying that was the faith that Theodore Barrows worshipped?"

"Well, not exactly. But I do think it was the faith closest to religion's original form."

The Celts were the original residents of central Europe. By around the 7th century B.C., they had advanced into and covered the whole continent. Eventually, though, they were brought under the dominion of Rome and finished off by the rise of the Germanic tribes. They believed in the druidic faith, but not a letter remained of their doctrines or ceremonies. But Sullivan was in search of was a faith predating even the greatly mysterious beliefs of the Celts.

"I actually had the idol carbon-dated - and the results were shocking. The idol is from 4000 B.C. - it was created 6,000 years before the present day!"

"...Then, by the residents of the land who preceded the Celts."

"Yes. The people who erected the giant standing stones all throughout Europe - they were the ones who created it."

The menhirs - the towering monoliths that dotted the face of Europe. The dolmens, or the great stone chambers. The stone circles, and the alignments, or the rows of standing stones. Various giant stone structures were scattered throughout Europe, and the mysterious stones were said to have been used in the religious ceremonies of the forerunners to the Celts.

"But the idol is metal. How could it have been made in an era that didn't even use iron yet?"

"How it was *made*? I haven't a *clue*! According to Barton's research, it could have been made from a meteorite; they've been used as sources of metal since ancient times. The aborigines and American Indians used them. In the Arabian world, those who used swords made of meteorite iron were said to become

unkillable. But that's beside the point. The idol was indeed produced at the height of the giant stone faith in 4,000 B.C."

In other words, it was an oopart - an out-of-place artifact, a relic that could not have existed in its time frame.

"By the way, you do know about the druids, correct?"

"Yes; they were the priests of the Celts. They held a great deal of power in Celtic society."

"Right you are!" Sullivan clapped his hands together. "And their faith was called Druidry for that very fact. They seem to have achieved a measure of fame for their rites involving human sacrifices and their exceptional cruelty therein. They would drown people by sealing them in barrels filled with water, cram several victims at once into giant human figures built out of wood and burn them alive - some truly horrible practices, I understand. The Celts believed in an undying soul and conducted these services in search of rebirth in a higher form. But if that's so, then why did they have to think up of ever more ways to inflict terror and suffering upon the victims of their sacrifices? That's the question. The Aztec civilization was famous for its sacrifices as well, but they would merely stab their victims in the heart to kill them... - a rather quick procedure, compared to what the Druids did. Why did the Celts adopt such practices, so cruel they were akin to torture? I believe it was due to the influence of a far more ancient faith - the people of the faith of the giant stones, in other words. So why did they offer up sacrifices using such cruel methods? The answer is obvious: because that is what their god desired. Death and terror, that is."

"So that's what the god that Theodore Barrows worshipped wanted as well."

"Yes. So, therefore -"

An electronic *beep beep beep* came from Prof. Sullivan's wristwatch. He turned his wrist to look at the time.

"Darn it, I've talked too long. Helen, do you have a little time?"

"Er, well, not--"

Sullivan didn't even seem to hear Helen's reply. "Here, take this," he said, fishing a key from his inside jacket pocket. "It's the key to the reading room. Go down the hall and take a right, then go further back in the main library hall; you'll find it there. The door has a nameplate on it; you should find it easily enough."

"What's inside?"

"Many of the rare books I've collected. Maybe you could read for a little bit while you're waiting? I have an appointment and have to leave straightaway. I know I'll have remembered where I left the idol by the time I get back, so please hold on just a little longer."

"But, Professor..."

"It'll be only a little while; please, just wait for me." Without giving Helen time for a rebuttal, Sullivan left the director's office. She didn't even get the chance to ask him when he would be back. Sullivan had said he'd be "just a little while," but she couldn't imagine him restricting himself to discussing the business at hand and then heading straight back.

Helen settled in for a long wait.

She left the library director's office and headed for the main hall. Two jacketed detectives followed her from behind - the two assigned to her for protection. It was Gotts's idea; he'd thought it possible that the mass murderer would come back to hunt down the one who got away. Helen should have been grateful but found them nothing more than a nuisance.

She entered the library hall. Whenever she came there, Helen was overwhelmed by the sheer volume of books in the place. In entering, the room seemed like a baseball stadium; inside was a veritable forest of books, the room buried with bookselves. In terms of sheer volume, it would vie for first or second place in all of northern Europe. To this day, however, it still hadn't been computerized - and the number of superior librarians it boasted was quite few. For those reasons, locating a book took quite a bit of time - which sat poorly with Helen.

Helen had walked in between the rows of bookshelves that towered to the ceiling to halfway across the hall when she found Edward - seated in a chair, reading a book. His beauty made him stand out in the cluttered environment. His hair glistened as if it were gold, practically lighting up his surroundings.

Helen approached him. The book he was reading was entitled *The Edda: Myths of Northern Europe*. Edward sounded out its words in a whisper:

*In the east sat an old woman in Járnsviðr
and nurtured there offspring of Fenrir
among these one in monstrous guise
will be the snatcher of the sun*

A stanza from the *Völuspá*, the most famous of the Eddur, the epic poems that composed the mythology of Northern Europe. "Járnsviðr" meant "forest of iron"; it was a primeval forest that had existed since ancient times. "Fenrir" was the name of a monster that would engage in a grand battle with the gods at the end of the world.

Helen was impressed by Edward's intelligence as he zipped through a text written for adults.

"Edward!"

He turned around at the sound of Helen's voice and gazed at her with eyes of deep blue. For some reason, Helen's heart skipped a beat; it was just like when she had viewed Monet's water lilies in Paris. Edward was as beautiful as a flawless work of art.

"Professor Maxwell." The boy placed the book he had been reading on the table.

"Are you alone, Edward?"

"Yes. I was kind of bored."

"Ms. Satterwhite's not with you?" Kay Satterwhite, Edward's teacher at the Granite Orphanage and his guardian.

"Kay...Ms. Satterwhite said she wasn't feeling well, so she was staying at the hotel." Edward and Kay had their lodgings at a hotel in Oslo; they'd return to the orphanage when Barton's therapy was over.

"Oh, my; what's wrong with her?"

"A cold. And she has a little fever, too, she said."

A little irresponsible, isn't it, Helen thought to herself, *just leaving a boy who's had such a shock that he's lost his memory. And he's still so young. His mental wounds are still probably completely unhealed. Letting him go all alone into town is a problematic action for a teacher. I wouldn't let a little illness stop me from going with him,* Helen thought, an image of Jennifer flashing through her mind.

"Why did you come here, Professor Maxwell?"

"I had a little research to do."

"About the Clock Tower case?"

"That's right!"

"Let me know if you learn anything! I'm scared. I don't know why, but I've got a bad feeling. And you were attacked by Scissorman, weren't you, Professor?"

"By someone who was dressed like Scissorman, yes. We don't know if it's the same Scissorman."

"I wonder if he'll come after me, too," said Edward, a worried look on his face. He seemed to be trembling, too.

"He won't come after you," Helen replied promptly, a smile on her lips. "The perpetrator isn't the same as the first Scissorman. This person doesn't have any connection to you."

"If you find out anything, really, let me know!"

"I will!"

"Promise?"

"I promise!"

At last satisfied by Helen's words, Edward broke out into a smile that was like a flower opening into full bloom.

"Thank you, Professor!"

"Well, I'm off to find a book. If you run into any trouble, come let me know. I'll be in the reading room."

Edward nodded and once again opened his book.

Helen left Edward and headed further back into the library hall; upon arriving at the reading room, she unlocked the door and entered. It was the first time she'd been here. It was considerably smaller than the main hall but still had far more volumes than any personal library - all rare volumes hand-picked by Prof. Sullivan.

But when Helen took a nearby chair, she instead took out *Lord Wardens of the Marches of Northern England* from her briefcase and began to thumb through the pages - of course, to read about the history of the Barrows family. As per its title, the book introduced several Lord Wardens of the March from various locales throughout northern England, its entries organized by region. An index was handily provided in the back of the book, as if the volume had been designed for research purposes.

She soon found the section devoted to the Barrows clan. They were a rather well-known, distinguished family, it seemed; their entry went on for a number of pages. It started right off with a map that pinpointed the location of their family home. As Prof. Sullivan had said, Barrows Castle was on the border between England and Scotland, near the coast.

From there, the text began; the origins and history of the Barrows family - retainers of the Percys - were recorded in minute detail. The official history was of little note - but the book devoted just as much space to the "nasty rumors" about the family.

First came the premier lord of the castle, Theodore Barrows, in the mid-fifteenth century. He had been, it appeared, called the "cannibal Barrows" by the surrounding townsfolk - for when he became lord, children from the surrounding area began to disappear one after another. Most were found dead - butchered. When Theodore died, however, the disappearances stopped. The rumors appeared to have been true.

Many rumors circulated about Theodore's death. That he had sacrificed the children to a dark god, but that he finally was forced to sacrifice himself to the god of his heathen religion. Or that his relatives, afraid that the king might hear of Theodore's deeds, poisoned him. Or that they drowned him in his bathtub. Or - the rumors went on.

Several years - several *decades* - later, children once again began to disappear in the territory ruled by the Barrows family. At the same time a song was written that became popular in the family's lands:

*Little John from the big castle
Plays with a little boy
Snip, snip, snip
Off goes his head
Bright red, bright red*

The song was like a nursery rhyme, singing innocently of cruelty. The "Little John" of which it sang could not help but remind Helen of Scissorman. If that were indeed so, then by Theodore's actions, or by the curse of the dark god in which Theodore believed, a Scissorman had been borne numerous times over into the Barrows clan.

The author continued to speak lightly of the "nasty rumors" surrounding the Barrows family. Thanks to the curse brought by the violent deaths perpetrated by Theodore, a monster came to be born into the Barrows clan once every several decades. The master of the castle would then abduct children and give them to the monster. The author never treated this as anything but a tall tale, so as not to break an objective viewpoint. Helen could approve of that.

Shortly after the thirteenth lord of the castle, Quentin Barrows, appeared in the mid-19th century, the child abductions stopped for a while - because, according to rumor, Quentin exiled the monster and the vassals and relatives supporting it. The author, though, cast this as the result of a power struggle within the Barrows clan. And so, thanks to a peasant uprising at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Barrowses were ousted from their castle, and they moved across the sea to Norway.

That Theodore had worshipped the evil god of a pagan religion was fact - that even the author acknowledged. And that there had been recurring rashes of child abductions was also probably fact.

Helen recalled Prof. Sullivan's words: "Because that is what their god desired. Death and terror." Had the events of both one year and five hundred years ago been conducted as some sort of ceremony to that dark god? Were the mass murders going on now part of that same ceremony?

Helen found every single work cited in the bibliography of the section on the Barrows of *Lord Wardens of the Marches of Northern England* and began to read them. *The Nameless Pagans*, which Prof. Sullivan had mentioned, was among them. As the title suggested, the book concerned itself with ancient unnamed religions, the foundation of which was the pagan faith in which Theodore Barrows believed.

According to the author, Theodore had an abnormal fear of death and worshipped an evil god in order to gain immortality. The name of this god was "the Great Father." The Great Father gave immortality to those who worshipped him and bestowed death on others. But this was an immortality of the spirit, not of the flesh. The idea differed slightly from the endless cycle of rebirth in which the Celts believed in that death of the flesh was necessary to gain this immortality; one gained deathlessness by dying. Through this immortality of the soul, even dead flesh could be animated as if it were once again alive. And terror was what fed this immortality - one escaped death by absorbing the spiritual energy known as Terror. The one who bestowed this immortality upon the worshippers was known as a "son of the Great Father" - an entity apparently similar to the angels of Christian monotheism. But unlike angels, a child of the Great Father bestowed only death and terror upon the people.

As Helen went from book to book, reading everything on which she could lay her hands about the subject, she began to get a feeling that this was her true purpose in coming here. She continued until a staff member informed her that it was closing time.

"You're closing?"

"Yes. You're the only patron left."

"Has Director Sullivan returned yet, by any chance?"

"Yes, about ten minutes ago. He's probably in his office."

"Thank you." Helen shoved several books in her bag, intending to get Sullivan's permission to borrow them.

When she exited the reading room, the two detectives regarded her with resentful faces. Helen looked at her watch and found that it was already dinnertime. She remembered that she had promised to make dinner for Jennifer. Accompanied by the two weary detectives, she rushed for the director's office.

"Oh, my, I'm sorry!" A full smile lit up Prof. Sullivan's face when he saw Helen. "Kept you waiting, didn't I? But it's all right - I found the idol. I had left it in the Collections Room - I had completely forgotten..."

Sullivan took the diminutive idol out of his jacket pocket. The little thing glittered blue-black and depicted grotesque monsters perched atop a skull.

"Here." Sullivan handed the idol to Helen. And just as he did so, as if on cue, a sound of giant bells suddenly rang out.

"Those are the bells of the great clock, aren't they? But they're--"

"Yes, they've been broken since before I received my appointment here! Someone must be ringing them as a prank. And they say that bad things happen when the bells of the library ring. Since that rumor's spread, they've been ringing those bells day and night!"

"Well, then, Professor, if you'll excuse me." Helen cut in before another dissertation could begin.

"Ahhh, Helen. Could you hold on for a minute?"

Helen, who had already turned to leave, stopped and said: "What is it?" She had a bad feeling about this.

"I have to go up to the machinery room and fix the bells right now; could you come with me? There's no one else in the machinery room, you see. And it's dark," Sullivan said, in an embarrassed tone. He had long been a scaredy cat; he would always have Helen accompany him when he went to the university reference room at twilight. One time, Helen - meaning no disrespect - asked him: "What are you afraid of?" His answer was flat and direct: "Ghosts."

Helen sighed and turned her eyes toward the clock. Her trip to the library had been a big success: she was able to go back with the idol, and she uncovered more than enough information on the Barrows family. And this had all been thanks to Prof. Sullivan. After a good deal of dithering, she answered: "All right. Let's go."

As if anticipating her response, Prof. Sullivan beckoned her "this way," and left his office. At the end of the corridor outside was a stairway - a long, dark spiral staircase.

It was as if Helen could just hear the sighs from the detectives behind her.

Sullivan continued to chatter, heedless of the feelings of those who followed behind him. "Even after Theodore Barrows passed away, his pagan religion continued to draw followers. There seem to have been repeated bloody feuds between the Barrowses who believed in this faith and those who opposed it."

"And did the members of the Barrows clan who crossed the sea to Norway believe in this faith, Professor?"

"Naturally. A rare example of the origin of the world's oldest faith surviving into modern times."

"Like druidry?"

"You speak of the Ancient Order of Druids, I see? Those are simply Celtophiles - fools who have mistaken the faith of the ancient stones as Celtic in origin. Anyhow, they were founded in the year 1781; they have nothing to do with the original Druids. Some foolish romanticized longing for the Celts took hold in the late 18th century. That wasn't what was passed down by the Barrows clan. It was... One could call it the very origin of religion itself. One of the cornerstones of ancient religion was protection from harm inflicted by the gods. Gods were terrible beings who would only add to the grief inflicted on primal man; even the Old Testament, from a certain point of view, could be called a how-to manual on how to avoid divine wrath."

"And do you believe these terrible gods are real, Professor?"

"In the existence of supernatural, all-powerful gods?"

"Yes. In other words, could Scissorman be explained as a supernatural monstrosity?"

"So you've read *Nameless Faiths*, have you?"

"Yes, I have. It explained in detail the religion of the Barrows family. They worshipped an all-powerful being known as 'the Great Father,' didn't they?"

"It's impossible to prove scientifically the existence of such a being. But I wonder if it a similar type of power couldn't be bestowed upon a human being."

"In other words, if a human were granted special powers by something like 'The Great Father' would be something like Scissorman?"

"Yes. The being referred to as the 'Son of the Great Father' in *Nameless Faiths* is likely Scissorman. A being similar to that which in theology is called an 'angel,' one said to have many forms. One of them looked just like Scissorman."

"The one said to come through the door he opens?"

"Doors have great significance in this religion. I myself don't know whether it represents a literal door or not, but...ah, here we are."

They had arrived before a heavy iron door. To Helen, it seemed like the door that gave "birth" to Scissorman.

Sullivan opened the door with a key with old-fashioned decoration. Rust fell to the floor with a sound. How long had it been since anyone had entered this room?

A chill crept up from below. The room was dim, despite the electric lights inside. A smell of dust and oil was in the air. Countless giant gears creaked as they turned. Above, two giant bells could be seen that swung back and forth horribly, like a pair of honeybees bent on killing each other.

The bells were probably cracked. Their sound was dull and harsh on the ears.

Sullivan approached the mechanism, a monstrous conglomeration of gears and pendulums, and pulled a giant lever one might expect to find in Dr. Frankenstein's lab.

"Helen, could you help me? This is the brake lever; with this, we can..."

The two of them brought the lever to the ground. But the dull bells just continued their cacophony.

"What?" Sullivan tilted his head. "That was supposed to stop them... Wait, hold on, let me have a look..." He bent his heavy frame and crouched to peek between a giant gear as big as a truck tire. "This is the central mechanism. There must be something around here that... Hmm, this is strange. Helen! Helen!"

"What is it, Professor?"

"I thought I had some pliers around here..... Wait, hold on.....oh, dear. Oh.....Helen!"

"What's wrong, Professor?"

"The gear's caught my sleeve. Could you that lever one mo--.....*aaah!*"

Helen pulled the brake lever back and forth several times - but the gears kept pulling Sullivan in, as if they were the teeth of a monster intent on chewing him up.

"Professor!" Helen ran to Sullivan and tried to drag him from the gears. But it did not seem that Helen could possibly pull him out by her own power.

"Helen...please, go call somebody!"

Helen flew out of the machine room. The two detectives were supposed to be there - but no one was. Helen saw only a dark corridor.

"*Help!*" Helen screamed.

The darkness drank down her cry - and only a scream from Sullivan, and the continuing peals of the clock bells, could be heard in exchange. And then a sound like a fruit being crushed underfoot. And a sound like tender wood being broken apart. And a sound like mud being kneaded.

And then all sound ceased.

Steeling herself, Helen turned around.

The machine had not yet stopped moving. From the space between two gears protruded Sullivan's lower half. It continued to convulse a bit, but finally drooped limp and lifeless.

Helen fell to her knees on the spot, hands on the floor, and retched. Even after she had no more to vomit, her stomach kept contracting over and over. Helen could do nothing but stare at the former contents of her own stomach as they continued to spread across the floor.

He's dead.

Professor Sullivan is dead.

Dead. Dead. Dead.

It was an accident.

I didn't kill him.

It was an accident.

He's dead.

Professor Sullivan's dead.

I didn't do anything. I didn't kill him. I didn't do anything wrong.

It's over; it's over. It's all over.

I didn't kill him.

I didn't kill him.

"I didn't kill him. I didn't kill him. I didn't kill him," Helen kept on muttering to herself. *I didn't kill him*, over and over. And then, for some reason, a smile came to her lips.

Jangle.

Helen lifted her face, still on all fours.

A bundle of chains had appeared before her. Thick chains, made of steel. One end was lifted up in the air, swaying back and forth, despite their lack of any visible support. The chains reared with a rattle like a poisonous snake lifting its head.

Helen stared and watched them absent-mindedly, faintly smiling.

Suddenly, the chains lunged for Helen. And wrapped themselves fluidly around her neck.

Doubled twice around, the chains began to tighten around Helen's neck with a sinister power.

The pain, being the most primal sensation, brought Helen back to her senses. Her hands flew to her neck, and she tried with all her might to pull off the chains.

The chains continued to draw tight around her throat with a power strong enough to crack bone. Her head felt as if it would burst with blood.

She couldn't breathe. She could only stare at the air and gape like a fish. The strength was leaving her fingers as they clutched at the chains.

It's over, Helen thought, resigned. But, suddenly, the chains fell limp. They clattered to the floor.

Helen's throat sang as she gulped fresh air, and she stared for a while at the coiled chain on the floor.

Psi powers.

The words came to Helen's mind like a bolt from the blue.

Scissorman.

Helen stood and ran for the exit. She left the machine room and tried to close the door. But it was heavy, and closed only very reluctantly. When the door finally shut with a squeak, Helen lent back against it and slid to the floor.

It was wet beneath her.

A pool of water? She looked at the floor.

It was blood. A huge pool of it. Probably freshly spilled. It was warm, and a white vapor hung above it. Whatever had happened, no creature that had spilled this amount of blood could have survived.

Helen stood. The bloodstains formed a trail to the stairs. As if something had been dragged down there.

Helen followed the blood and descended the staircase. The blood continued without interruption down to the first floor.

There, in the first-floor corridor, Helen saw letters spelling:

Jennifer. I'm coming to see you.

The letters were made of body parts chopped into small pieces. Hair and skin and guts and bone and muscle. All finely minced and crushed to form each letter. In place of the periods were two human heads. They were completely unrecognizable, and yet at the same time unmistakable: These were the two detectives who had been protecting Helen since morning.

Something snapped inside Helen's mind.

As if a switch had been flipped, the frightened Helen vanished, and an objective, cool-headed Helen appeared in her place. She looked at the shredded bodies and thought: *There's not enough flesh here to make the bodies of two men. Where's the rest of it?*

At the same time, she began to analyze herself. She had undergone a dissociative personality split as the result of undergoing a great psychological shock. Something she had experienced a great many times over long ago, when she was little. She was now Helen, the Calm and Collected Scientist, and the Helen who had been frightened like a little girl had run away and was sealed within Helen's heart.

She wiped her dirty mouth on her sleeve. Then she took a look at her surroundings.

Not a sound could be heard.

A long time had passed since closing. The library's employees had most probably all gone home. She recalled that in the time it took her to do her work, no one had interrupted her, so the employee who had called to Helen was probably the last one in the building.

In any case, she had to get out of the library. Scissorman could show up at any moment.

Helen headed straight for the front entrance. She pulled the knob, but it wouldn't budge. She rattled the door several times, all to no effect.

Beside the front entrance was the reception desk, and beyond could be seen a door. Perhaps there was an employee entrance. Without hesitation, Helen entered the office.

It was a neatly-kept office, with not a single extraneous item atop the tables. But the employee entrance for which she had hoped was not present.

As she made to turn around, she heard a voice call to her: *Helen.*

But she couldn't really call it a voice. More like a premonition.

There were some grey lockers here. Steel, with simple locks. On one of them, the lock had been broken.

Helen strode toward the locker and opened the door.

He sat with his arms wrapped around his knees, his frame faintly trembling.

"Edward." Helen called to the boy. He looked at her; his face that was already pale in the best of circumstances had further blanched, and he was drenched with sweat. His immaculately-laundered clothing was stained crimson with blood.

"It's all right. There's nothing to worry about," Helen said, holding out her hand.

"...Professor!"

She took Edward, still clutching his knees, by the arm and pulled him out of the locker.

"You're still here?"

".....Yes; I asked the employees if I could stay just a little longer. I told them that I wanted to go home with you, Professor Helen, and so I..." Edward threw himself into Helen's arms; Helen held him close. His movements seemed awkward and mechanical somehow.

I have to protect him. I have to save him, Helen thought coldly, as if the thoughts were not of her own mind. She looked around.

There was a ventilation duct in the corner of the room. It was covered by metal mesh and was rather large - not large enough for an adult to pass through, but a child like Edward could slip through easily.

"Wait here a moment." Helen gently let go of Edward's hand; he was still huddled on the ground. She took a look inside the locker in which Edward had been hiding. *A-ha*, she muttered to herself, retrieving a tool box from within. She opened the lid, rooted around, and took out a screwdriver. Kneeling before the ventilation duct, she removed the screws that held on the mesh. It wasn't a difficult job; the metal mesh popped right off.

"Edward." Helen beckoned to the boy. "You can get out through here. You'll be able to fit just fine! As soon as you get out, go get the police."

"But..."

"It's all right. You have to get out of here."

Edward's face looked like Jennifer's for a moment as he paused; it seemed as if he were considering what to do. Then, suddenly, he stuck his head in the vent. Just as Helen thought, he was able to pass through.

As Edward's feet disappeared into the darkness, Helen's thoughts turned to her own escape. She began trying the exits. However, just like the front entrance, the emergency exits and windows were all sealed shut. Strange, Helen thought, that none of the exits could be opened from within. The windows had nothing but simple locks - and Helen was sure those were unfastened. And yet they wouldn't open. None of the windows had been rusted shut. This, Helen concluded without a doubt, was a trick of Scissorman.

Yes, there was indeed a strong possibility that Scissorman had supernatural powers.

Lost in thought in the main library hall, Helen was completely unaware of the figure approaching her from behind.

A hand grabbed her shoulder. With a reflexive gasp, Helen wheeled around.

A middle-aged man stood there with a sour look on his face.

"Lost in thought in a place like this, Teach?"

"Gotts..." Helen murmured, and as she did, the Frightened Helen that had been sealed deep down within rose to the surface.

And she screamed.

Long, loud, unending.

Never stopping, until she lost consciousness in Gotts's arms.

CHAPTER THREE

After her rescue from the library, Helen spent the night in the hospital. Upon awakening, she was interrogated by the police, by Gotts. She was still shaky on her feet, however, being that she was rescued by Gotts this time. The morning of the day after, then, was when she returned to the research lab and had a talk with Prof. Barton.

The answer she got from Barton was far different from what Helen had hoped, but nevertheless, the next day, as she anticipated, the two of them together went to see Gotts.

"So that's what you're saying?" Gotts said with a sour look on his face, as if he had fallen in the swamp and was clawing his way back up when he was stung by a bee. "That the Barrows family believed in some crazy thousand-year-old pagan religion?"

"Six-thousand-year-old," Barton corrected.

"Forgive me. ...And you're saying that this six-thousand-year-old religion is connected somehow to the Clock Tower case?"

"It's self-evident truth." Barton's manner of speaking, as if he were always somehow looking down on his listener, probably only served to irritate Gotts even further. He stood up from his chair and began to pace aimlessly about the room. Helen struggled to stifle a laugh.

"I see. Self-evident truth, is it? So, based on this 'self-evident truth,' you want to go all the way to the Barrows Castle in England, is what you're saying. Could you tell me who you're having along on this little expedition?"

"Myself, and Helen, here. Then two of my research assistants, Beth and Harris. Jennifer, my test subject - and

another subject, Edward. Also, his guardian, Kay. That's all."

Helen had made up her mind in the hospital that she would go to England. *I have to go to the Barrows castle to settle the Clock Tower case once and for all. The key to everything is hidden there - I know it*, she thought. When the idea came to her, she had the intention of going alone. She talked to Barton to inform him of this, with the anticipation that he would be opposed to it. When she did, though, Barton was far from opposed - he announced that he was going, too. That alone was a surprise. But Barton's talk didn't end there: he proclaimed that he was taking Jennifer and Edward along, too. Helen was against it, but Barton threatened not only to bar Helen from going to England, but to fire her from the research staff. Helen could only nod in silence.

"That's all?.....Prof. Barton, you're taking along a total of *seven* people. Two of them are important witnesses in the *still*-unsolved Clock Tower case - and one of them is a victim in the *still-ongoing* Scissorman case. To top it all off, you're one of the people in *charge* of the Clock Tower case. You think you're taking everyone to England for a *picnic*?!" Gotts's voice got louder and louder as he spoke, until by the end, he was shouting in fury. Beneath his receding hairline, his forehead was soaked with sweat.

"This is not a picnic. It's an investigation." Barton returned only a smile as he spoke. Deep down, Helen sympathized with Gotts.

"Same difference! Forget it!" Gotts roared.

"Something wrong, Gotts?" Gotts's voice, it seemed, was audible all the way outside the room. The door opened, and in stepped the chief, who had just been released from the hospital the other day. Clad in a spotless, top-of-the-line English business suit, the chief spotted Barton and flashed a worldly smile.

"It's been a while, Professor Barton!"

"You know each other?" Gotts asked, a grim look on his face.

"Indeed. He was my professor in college."

"Your *professor*...?"

Gotts's face darkened with despair. He could tell just what was going to happen.

"Would you mind explaining to this man? We're at quite the impasse." So saying, Barton laid out his plan for going to England.

"I see," said the chief when he had finished listening. "It seems to me like a tip-top plan. So what's the problem, Gotts?"

"*Her*." Gotts here pointed at Helen as if he were stabbing her with a sword. "She's a crucial witness in an ongoing serial murder case. Edward and Jennifer are survivors of the *previous* case. And may I remind you that the Clock Tower case is *still* unsolved. And he's saying to send off almost *all* the profilers working on the case off to England! *How* can I approve something like that?!"

"You seem to be under some sort of misconception. *You're* not approving it. *I'm* approving it." The very day he had been released from the hospital, the chief had decided to retake/reassume complete command of both the Clock Tower case and the current murder investigation. And the chief had an instinctive hatred for Gotts.

And from there, everything proceeded as Gotts had hoped it would not.

"Isn't it all as Prof. Barton has said? Both Jennifer and Helen will be safer in England than they will in Norway. Even the FBI, I venture, hides victims who have a high chance of being attacked again from the perpetrator. Ah - also, Gotts: you'll be going with them for protection."

"What? *Me?*"

"Yes!" The chief said merrily.

Gotts's forecast was off. This was going *far* worse than he had expected. "That's no good, chief. I'm handling the current murder investigation. I've got a mountain of work to do; I don't have *time* to go to Eng--"

The chief, listening to Gotts's excuses with a smirk on his face, interjected: "Then, it's settled. Let me know when you have a date. Well, professor, excuse me." With a salutation to Barton, the chief left the room.

Helen couldn't look Gotts in the face. She felt too sorry for him. Also, she was afraid she'd burst out laughing.

[Please proceed to Part Three.](#)

PART THREE

His mother answered, 'No, pet, Martin is dead.'

Mary responded, 'Oh, I know he's dead. I wanted to see him in his coffin.'

- from a conversation between Martin's mother and Martin's murderer, then-six-year-old Mary Bell

CHAPTER ONE

Branches enclosed the sky, intricately interlaced like fingers gnarled in pain. Even the sunlight that filtered in between them seemed weak and fragile, and the forest seemed lost in a hopeless gloom.

It was as if they had dove into a sea of black. So thought Helen as she gazed at the forest at twilight.

A verse from the Eddas, the epic poems of Norse myth, suddenly came to Helen's mind. The part about Ragnarök, the end of the world.

*Brothers will fight
and kill each other;
sisters' children
will defile kinship.
It is harsh in the world,
whoredom rife
—an axe age, a sword age
—shields are riven—
a wind age, a wolf age—
before the world goes headlong.*

Afterward, a monster that was born devoured the sun and the moon. The gods themselves were destroyed, and the end of the world began. The birth of this monster was foretold in the fortieth stanza of the *Völuspá*:

*In the east sat an old woman in Járnsviðr
and nurtured there offspring of Fenrir
among these one in monstrous guise
will be the snatcher of the sun*

The sun-snatcher would be born in Járnsviðr - a primeval forest yet untrod by human presence.

The Druids - the priests of the Celts, Europe's indigenous people - had no temples; they constructed altars deep within the forests. The forests had been a mysterious presence since ancient times. They were considered to be the boundary between this world and the next, a portal to another realm. As they approached the Scottish border, the forests grew deeper and darker.

The other world was near.

Helen felt small and helpless, as if she were plunging into the deep blue sea.

The van they had rented in London felt like a single grain of sand adrift in the ocean. At the helm of this

particular grain was Gotts. Seated behind him, Helen couldn't see his expression, but she could imagine it; he'd had the same look on his face ever since they'd left. He hadn't quite swallowed a lemon, but when he made that face, it never meant anything good. So Helen thought when she met Gotts at the Oslo airport.

Naturally, no one was riding shotgun. No one wanted to step into that hornet's nest.

A loud voice chattered on behind Helen. It was Beth. Beth, Jennifer, and Harris were all playing cards - bridge or something. They fell into predetermined roles: Harris would make a mistake, Beth would laugh at him, and Jennifer would try to stifle her giggles but fail. There *was* something about Harris that just made you want to give him grief. But in watching the tableau, a thirty-five-year-old man being laughed at by two younger women yet continuing the card game with a grin, something just didn't sit right with Helen.

I'll have to give Jennifer a word of caution afterward, Helen thought.

Behind this boisterous trio sat Kay and Edward, side by side. Kay gazed out the window absent-mindedly; next to her, Edward sat in his seat, a doll like always.

The van crept forward, as if taking care not to break the magnificent doll that was Edward. Helen knew, though, that Gotts possessed no such delicacy - for a thin mist had begun to descend on the already-dim forest, and it would be difficult for them to arrive at Barrows Castle before sunset.

Helen sighed. Their group had eight people in total. Save for Helen, all of them had been brought along by Barton. Everyone involved in the Clock Tower case was to come to Barrows Castle. Barton had *insisted*. Helen hadn't a clue why Barton was so intent on the idea.

It was probably indeed correct that the culprit in the Clock Tower case had a connection to the Barrows family. Therefore, said Barton, the Barrows family history would have great significance in psychoanalyzing the perpetrator.

But in that case, they should've brought just the staff from the research lab. There was no reason to bring Edward, Kay, or Jennifer.

Barton's explanation was that it was dangerous in Oslo, but to Helen, heading for Barrows Castle was even more dangerous. She didn't know why. She could only attribute it to a most unscientific feeling in her gut.

And the great Barrows Castle travel agent responsible for this burgeoning tour group himself sat next to Helen, a hardcover technical book in one hand, ramrod straight and immersed in his text.

Ever since the entourage of this trip had swelled to well beyond her expectations, Helen had begun to feel as if everything were spiraling out of control. She had a premonition that they were flying headlong toward a monster lying in wait with jaw gaping wide. As the dismal forest continued on and on without apparent end, Helen's misgivings only deepened.

And there was another unexpected development. A sedan lumbered several meters behind the van, carrying Nolan and Tim: the newspaper reporter and cameraman for *Oslo Week*. When Gotts realized they were being tailed, he pulled over to the shoulder and waited for them to come closer. Without missing a beat, Nolan stopped his car and got out. When asked where he got his information, Nolan said that he and Tim were headed to Barrows Castle - and before Gotts could open his mouth to stop him, Nolan interjected that, why, if they had been headed the same way, it was mere coincidence.

Gotts had no right to stop them from going to Barrows Castle. If this were Norway, he might have been able to do something - but the Norwegian police had no jurisdiction in the remote English countryside.

It finally ended up that Nolan and Tim just kept right on following behind the van. Even if they tried to lose the car, there was only one road to the castle - a straight shot. Unless they were planning on breaking into the forest, it would be impossible for them to lose their tail. To Helen, it all couldn't help but seem like a bad omen.

She heard Gotts click his tongue. It was loud, as if he meant it to be heard.

"What's wrong, Gotts?" Helen asked, sticking her head into the front seat.

"The fog."

"I can see that."

"Night's going to be falling soon, too."

"I suppose. So I guess this is where you should throw in the towel and admit that this is as far as your driving skills can take us."

"Can't you use that mouth of yours to blow away the fog, Teach?"

"Aren't those scary faces you make enough to frighten it away?"

".....Anyhow, we can't go any further - *regardless* of my driving skills. So we're going to spend the night in the car. Don't go complaining about not being able to sleep where there's no bed, Teach."

"I won't, but I can't make any promises about the people behind me."

Gotts shouted to behind him, like a sheriff laying down the law to the townsfolk: "We can't see with this fog. And night's coming soon. If you don't want to die in an accident before we get to the castle, then we're going to have to find a place to spend the night. Get yourselves ready."

CHAPTER TWO

A simple meal had been set out on the table, with ten places set. Not eight, for there were two extra guests: Nolan and Tim.

Gotts had found a suitable vacant spot and parked the van right away. The two men had then come along and offered to share their tent and table, so it was proposed that dinner be shared with them in turn.

It had been a tempting offer. The van was too small for eight to sleep inside. Beth was the first to start complaining, and Barton took the men up on their proposal. In the end, only Helen and Gotts argued to remain in the van; the others crossed the lines to Nolan and Tim's camp. Helen and Gotts were against the idea to the

last, but they were outvoted. A reluctant Gotts helped Nolan and Tim set up the tent while Helen, Jennifer, and the others prepared dinner.

Finally, the tent was ready, and everyone began to gather around the table to eat.

"The legends of the Norsemen compose a unique mythology." Barton interjected, in a rare talkative mood. "At the end of it all, the conclusion is inevitable - predetermined."

"You mean Ragnarök, don't you?" Edward offered with slight hesitation.

"My, what a clever boy!" Beth said. She'd been a big fan of Edward since she first laid eyes on him.

"Um, well, I like them - the Norse myths."

"Hmm, quite uncommon. Children usually prefer the Greek myths." Barton brought some red wine to his lips - the reason, perhaps, why he was so talkative. "Ragnarök - the Twilight of the Gods - is an apocalypse not even the gods can escape. Therefore, the gods of good must head into a hopeless battle they cannot win. One could say that if the Greek myths are Eros, then the Norse myths are Thanatos. Therefore, they cannot be considered myths to which children would be greatly partial."

It was just like Barton to use technical jargon regardless of if children were present - regardless that he was addressing a child himself. Edward whispered something in a small voice to Harris, who was seated next to him. He must have been asking for an explanation of the terms Barton had used, but a roundabout explanation from Harris must've only made things even more confusing. So thought Helen, observing them out of the corner of her eye.

Barton continued his discourse. "The Greek myths are theatrical, but the Norse myths are couched in realism. Therefore, the stories they depict are extremely true to life. All the world's ills spring from within its people. We all keep a dark beast locked within our hearts. It may normally be held in check by reason or other methods...but, just as in the Norse myths, when the Twilight of the Gods comes upon us, the dark beast will inevitably break loose - and then, our noble gods of reason and morality will have no sway. The outcome of this battle has already been foretold, and it is without hope."

"I wouldn't expect to hear those remarks coming from a profiler!"

"Why is that?" Barton fixed Helen with the dead-eyed stare unique to those who are drunk.

"Well, there's nothing I can do at this late date about you saying such things, Professor, but if what you claim were true, then all of humanity would end up turning into criminals. But, in fact, criminals are the exceptions, not the rule. It might be true that every person keeps a dark beast locked within their heart, but to act on its impulses is proof of illness."

"And, I am sure, at this late date, there is nothing I can do about hearing such things from *you*," said Barton, a thin smile upon his lips. "Well, then, here is my response. Not all of us will see the Twilight of the Gods. But when the time comes, we will know. Know how powerless the gods of right are before the dark beast."

It wasn't really a suitable topic for dinner conversation. Barton probably didn't even notice, but Helen thought, *now we've done it*. A hush fell over the environs, and only the sounds of knives and forks against the plates remained, falling heavily on the ears. Suddenly, it happened:

"*Why aren't you eating this?!*" Gotts raised his voice. He had a bit of brown cheese speared on the fork in his

hand.

Nolan, whom he was addressing, stared at him blankly.

"Do you hate *geitost*?"

"No, it's not that I *hate* it..."

"So *eat it!* No matter how many years you've been in Norway, if you've never eaten *geitost*, you can't be called anything other than a tourist!" Gotts was clearly trying to change the subject. Despite his expression, he was the type of person who would give his all in such an endeavor.

Catching on to Gotts's intentions, Nolan took him up on the conversation. "A cheese that sweet's only fit for women and children. And they say we revert to childhood as we grow older, so I guess it's just right for you."

"So you're saying I'm old, huh?"

"Well, it's true, isn't it?"

"That does it." Gotts rolled up his shirt sleeves. His forearms were thick and muscled - not what one would expect for a man past forty. With a BAM, he cleared the table in front of him and leaned his elbow on its surface, his arm crooked in a V-shape.

"I'm in a bit better shape than a reporter who's been sitting at his desk just writing articles for gossip rags. Let me show you. C'mon."

A childish grin on his face, Nolan put his own elbow on the table and took Gotts's hand. "I'll warn you: I was drafted when I was twenty, and I did my entire tour with the Norwegian army. During that time, there wasn't a single guy there I didn't beat at arm wrestling. There's no way I'm gonna lose to an old man like you."

"Army's ain't what it used to be. Being the best in an army of greenhorns is nothing to be proud of."

"Let's hear you say that after you see what I'm made of!"

"All right, then! C'mon!"

The two met in a show of force. The winner was quickly determined as Nolan's hand hit the table.

"See, boy?" Gotts said, his face all red.

"Arm wrestling's just a parlor trick. You can't use it to judge a person's real strength. Brute force is what we're talking about here. How many push-ups can an assistant inspector do?"

"You want me to give you a show until sunup tomorrow?"

"With me on your back!"

"...All right. You're on."

"You got it. Let's go over there."

As the two began their push-up showdown, bickering like children in a schoolyard, everyone else began to

leave the dinner table and filter away on their own activities. Helen took a seat next to Jennifer and drank some orange juice from a paper cup. Jennifer watched Nolan, seated on Gotts's back as the policeman did push-ups beside the tent. A smile came to her face.

"Jennifer."

".....Hm? *Whaaat?*"

"You seem to be seeing Nolan a lot lately."

"Huh?! Why're you bringing *this* up?"

"I trust you. But I can't trust that man!"

"Nolan isn't like that."

"How old is Nolan again?"

"Twenty-six."

"And you're fifteen. If you've fallen for a man of twenty-six, it'd be easy for him to lead you on! You of all people should know how unscrupulous people in the mass media can be."

"Why do you always think such horrible things?" Jennifer glared at Helen - the first time she'd ever done so. "I didn't meet Nolan with *that* in mind, you know! It was that day - the one where you said that 'I'll be coming back late, so you should go ahead and eat alone tonight.' I met Nolan by chance that day. And we had dinner together! I met him that *one time!* And Nolan didn't report on it. Because he *promised* me - promised me that he wouldn't! And he *kept* his promise! All we did was have dinner! *That's all!* What did you think? That I *slept* with Nolan?! That I afterward blabbed to him about the Clock Tower case afterward while I was lying in his arms!?"

And before she knew it, Helen's hand was raised.

Helen hated violence more than anything. But the blood had rushed to her head, and in the next moment, she had struck Jennifer across the face with her open palm.

Jennifer stared at Helen for a second as if she couldn't believe her eyes. Then she stood, and wordlessly headed back to the van.

Before Helen could follow her, she found Kay standing in her path. She had a tortured look on her face and was staring directly at Helen.

"Um, I have something I wanted to talk to you about."

"I'm sorry, but can we make it later? Right now, I'm--"

"It's about Jennifer."

"So later, if we can--"

"I wanted to speak to you when she wasn't here, and you two are hardly ever apart. It'll just take a second. Just please, listen to me."

"Please make it quick, OK?"

Kay's response was as requested. "You're in danger."

"What?"

"You should go back right now. Scissorman's coming after Jennifer--"

Kay didn't get any further; she abruptly stopped talking and clutched her forehead, as if she had been come down with a sudden headache. Her brow furrowed and her eyes shot wide, as if she were startled by something. She audibly ground her clenched teeth.

"What's wrong? Are you all right?"

As soon as Helen asked, Kay murmured a *no* beneath her breath.

"What? What's going on?"

Kay's eyes rolled back in her head. Her pure white eyes gazed off vacantly into space. The corners of her lips curled back into a smile, and from her half-open mouth came a drop of blood.

Helen grabbed Kay by the shoulders and shook her. "Kay! Kay, what's wrong?!"

Kay's eyes rolled beneath her fluttering eyelids. Her pupils were dilated.

"I'm all right, Helen," said Kay, a smile on her face that looked like a mask. A trickle of blood ran from her nostril.

"Miss Satterwhite!" A voice - Edward's voice - called for Kay from inside the van.

"Yes, I'll be right there." Without even wiping the blood from her nose, Kay turned her back to Helen and entered the van.

CHAPTER THREE

It loomed before them suddenly When they emerged from the forest. Atop a sheer cliff, huddled against a leaden sky like like a dead giant.

Barrows Castle.

The Barrows family's personal fortress, it seemed. It was relatively small for the castle of a feudal lord. The outer stone wall wasn't even surrounded by a moat, and while there were arrow slits, they were a common decorative feature in the Middle Ages.

What this meant was that either this was a peaceful land unthreatened by outside enemies...or that this castle

was defended by a force that transcended mere physical defenses.

Helen's bad feelings were right on target.

The night before, Helen had ended up going to sleep without exchanging a single word with Jennifer. She regretted it when she woke up the next morning.

Kay, Edward, Beth, Jennifer, and Helen had all gone to sleep in the van. When Helen came to the next morning, however, only she and Beth remained. Furthermore, Harris had disappeared from the tent.

No one knew what had happened. But they knew what they had to do.

There was only one road. Unless the others realized they had forgotten something and gone back to Oslo, they could have had only one possible destination.

Barrows Castle.

The old keep shrouded in so many blood-soaked rumors lay in wait for Helen and the rest - waiting, it seemed, to swallow them whole.

The castle ramparts had been brutally broken down - a memento, perhaps, of the popular insurrection.

They passed through the drawbridge between the towers and entered the courtyard. The inner keep itself was like a square box. This cold citadel was the home to the Barrows family, which had stolen the lives of untold hundreds of children.

Helen and the others passed through the main gate and entered the courtyard. They proceeded into a main corridor framed by rib-like pillars, calling Jennifer's and Edward's names all the while.

It was all too sudden, and Helen couldn't understand what had happened.

"Ah - the great hall!" she remembered Beth saying and pointing ahead of her. She also remembered being irritated with Beth for being so happy and chattering at a time like this.

She had the sensation of falling. Before she realized it, Helen had been flung into thin air. She hit ground hard and collapsed upon the floor.

"Helen!" It was Gotts's voice. She looked up and could see a light far above her - the source of the voice. "Helen, are you all right!?"

"Yes, more or less," Helen responded, righting herself. She hurt, but that was all; she didn't have any broken bones or other injuries.

"There was a pitfall. Part of the corridor suddenly gave way." Some sort of trap in the hallway seemed to have dropped her down below.

"Is everyone up there all right?"

"Yeah; you're the only one who fell, Teach, since you were bringing up the rear. But there's a big hole in the corridor, and we can't go back now.Didja hear me?"

".....Yes. So you're saying trying to tell me that I was the only stupid one, right?"

"Not that I particularly feel like doing it, but I'm gonna haul you up, Teach. I'll go get some rope. Wait there."

And then the voice disappeared, and there were no more sounds from above.

Deep darkness enveloped Helen, with only a dim light shining down to her below.

The oppressive silence only intensified the darkness.

Helen took a flashlight out of her backpack. It was a truly small light, meant to be portable. She flipped the switch, and the light cut a small circle on the wall, revealing a dank wall made of piled stone. It seemed to lead into a narrow stone corridor.

Whish. Something flitted across the light. It looked like a small animal, like a rat.

Helen followed with her flashlight where it had vanished. The giant eye drawn by the light moved along the wall. And then it found it.

Suddenly illuminated, it seemed to be confused.

Its five withered fingers scraped the floor, dark brown nails curling from the tips. And there was nothing beyond its wrist. From a round cross-section layered with what looked like age rings protruded a single splintered bone.

It was a hand. A mummified hand that looked as if it had been chopped off, standing on the tips of its five fingers. It froze for a minute, then scurried from the light. It made a sound like a insect chittering in the darkness.

It is said that seeing something so completely illogical freezes a person's emotional responses. Without a trace of shock, Helen followed the hand with her flashlight. She felt at the time as if she had discovered a very curious species of animal.

The hand moved swiftly, and Helen soon lost sight of it.

She heard the sound of wind. Or, rather, the sound of dry leaves blown by wind? As if all the leaves scattered about the surface of the earth had been scattered by the wind at once.

It came from beyond the corner of the darkness where the hand had fled.

Helen aimed her flashlight beyond.

It was then that Helen's wall of dispassion crumbled like thin plywood.

Terror, disgust, repulsion. A Pandora's box of negative emotions welled up all at once within her.

Helen collapsed on the spot. It was as if all her strength had left her from the waist down.

The light had illuminated hundreds of hands. Hundreds and hundreds of desiccated hands, piled up like scales against the wall, squirming.

Up and down, scratching and scrabbling over each other, the hands one by one began slowly to come after Helen.

The sound of fingertips tapping on the stone of the hallway fell like rain.

On all fours, Helen wrenched her body to escape from the hands. She crawled along the floor in an unnatural stance, as if someone had corkscrewed her body. She was frantic. It wasn't terror from the threat of bodily injury that spurred her; it was sheer psychological disgust. It seemed to have driven her mad.

Like a deformed lizard, she slapped her arms along the floor, desperately continuing her crawling flight.

Something grabbed her ankle.

And something snapped inside Helen's head. It was as if her brain had instantaneously vaporized.

She could remember nothing more.

Her next memory was of running down a pitch-black corridor, screaming.

There was a door at the end of the corridor. Behind her, the hands gave chase, their nails scratching along the floor.

Helen flung herself full-force against the door. It opened wide, and she dashed in. She crawled along the floor and flung it closed with all her might.

A hand that had tried to get in was stuck in the door. Two fingers fell shredded to the floor. They twitched and jumped like shrimp marooned on the seashore.

Helen stomped on them. They exploded into pieces like half-smoked cigars.

But Helen wouldn't stop stomping. She kept trampling them over and over, as if she were mad.

It was the sound of scraping at the door that brought her out of her strange dance.

She gradually remembered that those things were waiting for her on the other side of the door. Panicked, she held the door shut and looked about her surroundings.

Right next to the door, there was a huge display case. The case was thick and heavy, made of oak. Normally, Helen would never have thought of attempting to move it all by herself. But she went to the shelf and tried to push it over against the door. To her surprise, it fell easily, definitively blocking the door.

And then Helen heaved a huge sigh of relief. As her breath left her body, so did, it seemed, all of her strength. Helen sank limply to the floor, like sand leaking from a cloth bag.

The room was dimly lit by a lamp on the wall. Helen looked absent-mindedly at the flashlight she still gripped tightly in her hand. Thinking about its battery life, she realized that she couldn't leave it on for a long period of time. She switched it off. The little flashlight seemed as heavy as a boulder, and even that small task seemed like a dreadful burden.

There was a massive table in the room, and six decorative chairs. *Between this and the plush wall-to-wall carpet, show this to any antique collector you knew, and they'd faint*, Helen thought, gazing at the room herself.

Helen had no interest in doing anything anymore. If she could, she'd lie down and go to sleep. If she just

forgot about everything and dozed off, she thought, maybe she'd wake up the next day in a bed in the employee dorms. Indeed, she probably would have gone to sleep, if she hadn't remembered her name.

"Jennifer," Helen murmured under her breath. *That's right; Jennifer.* "I have to find her." She willed herself to speak the words clearly, out loud. Gathering what little inner strength she had left, Helen tried to stand. Her knees were wobbly and creaked as she rose. Her body felt as heavy as a sponge laden with water.

Hand on the wall, Helen rose, whispering Jennifer's name to herself over and over, as if it were an incantation that would restore the strength to her body. She leaned against the wall for support.

There were some pictures hanging there.

They seemed to be portraits of the successive lords of the castle.

Helen stood still, her eyes following them from frame to frame. It was then that she realized something. In the fifteenth century, at the height of the portraitmakers' craft, artists created realistic portraits that seemed to bring out their subjects' inner selves. It was in the mid-fifteenth century that Theodore Barrows had become lord of the castle. So this series of portraits had to start with him, as the castle's first lord.

Quentin Barrows, who had tried to break the curse on the Barrows family, was the thirteenth. If he were the last lord of this castle, then there had to be thirteen portraits in all. But the wall was decorated with only twelve.

The section of the wall Helen's hand currently touched was where the thirteenth portrait should have hung. But there was nothing there - only an unnatural blank space.

Had the portrait been torn down afterward, or was a portrait never painted to begin with?

Helen gave the wall a closer look.

Upon further inspection, one could see that the wall in this area only was a slightly different color. The area was too big to have been the space occupied by a painting. It was tall and vertical, and extended from higher than Helen was tall all the way down to the floor. It looked just as if a door or something might have been there.

And they had painted over it afterward. This portion only.

The earthen wall was damp in this section alone, and there was a faint scent of mold there.

In the middle, letters had been carved. Crudely, as if with a nail.

JUDAS

Judas? He who had sold Christ for thirty pieces of silver, renowned as the world's greatest traitor?

If the portrait had been taken down by the pagans whom Quentin opposed, then the meaning of the word carved here was clear. To them, Quentin was indeed perhaps their Judas.

If they'd only taken a painting down, then why had they gone to the trouble of repainting the wall? Had they hated Quentin that much? And would those enemies who so despised Quentin stop with the simple removal of a painting?

What if Quentin had died at their hands?

While considering this, a slight fatigue crept over Helen, as if she were growing numb. Scientist Helen had resurfaced.

"Judas"...the word itself was like graffiti. If Quentin had been murdered, then the act was no doubt rooted in the laws of the pagans.

Religious murders largely fell into two categories: those carried out using the power of religion, and those instead ordained by the religion. Simply put, it was a matter of whether religion was a means to an end or an end in itself. The dark faith followed by the Barrows family sought human sacrifices and consecrated massacres in the name of its god. Naturally, then, this was considered the latter case, where murders were conducted in pursuit of religious dogma. The ill will that had written the "Judas," Helen thought, should be considered separate from the murder itself.

One system of classifying criminals was the organized vs. the disorganized. The organized were methodical, and their victims all had something in common. The disorganized chose their victims at random, and the murders themselves were impromptu. Ritualistic cult murders were almost always organized. Organized murders were frequently characterized by persistent delusions and ritualistic actions - and for devout criminals, religious rituals and dogma served that purpose.

For a murderer directed by faith, his murders would necessarily consist of a set of rules - and he would never, ever deviate from them.

The first-generation Barrows was a probably viewed as a cult leader of sorts. The system of successive portraits of Barrows lords decorating the walls that he began had to be maintained by the pagans - even with a traitorous castle lord. That was a common monomania among organized criminals; they wouldn't take Quentin's portrait down in a fit of rage. They couldn't.

Therefore, she could think of two reasons why the painting wasn't here. One is that when his betrayal was found out, Quentin lost his position as lord of the castle. The second was that something else adorned the wall in the portrait's place.

Being the lord of a castle wasn't like being the CEO of a corporation. No one but a king could divest him of his power. So the former was unlikely. So something had to be here in place of the portrait. Not the "Judas." That at best was an act of personal spite, scratched there after the fact.

So what was in the portrait's place?

The repainted wall gave a hint.

Helen took a knife out of her backpack - a survival knife she'd bought before she got to England just for this purpose. She thrust its thick blade into the wall. The plaster broke even more easily than she thought; it was rather thin. Beyond was empty space. From the newly-opened hole blew forth the thick smell of mold and something rotten.

Helen continued and thrust her knife in deeper. The wall simply crumbled away.

Then something was revealed within, and Helen's suspicions were confirmed.

Behind was a face that looked like old leather that had been glued onto a skull. Its empty eye sockets gaped blankly at Helen. It was a mummy.

Helen was unafraid. Compared to the moving hands, a mummified corpse seemed almost mundane. Particularly to Helen, who was accustomed to seeing unusual cadavers.

Had he been interred alive? Or some other similarly dire fate, for his jaw was open as wide as it could be.

There was something in his mouth cavity. Helen took her flashlight and peered inside.

Atop a tongue like a shriveled fruit sat a scrap of paper. Helen gently extracted it. It seemed old, like it would crumble to dust with the slightest touch. Helen placed the intricately-folded scrap on the ground and opened it with great caution.

There was text written on it. In Latin. Helen was grateful that she had been diligent in her lessons.

On the paper was written:

*Darkness; oh, darkness. Great lord of Darkness who eclipses even the light.
Return thy child thou didst nestle to thy breast to the Darkness once more.
Open the door, and show me the way. N-ha Ee Sh*.*

Finally, there was the signature of Quentin Barrows.

Whatever significance this sentence held was lost to Helen. But that it had been written by the man who had tried to break the curse on the Barrows family, Quentin Barrows, was certain. He had been killed by the pagans' hand, or sealed up in the wall while still alive. And he had hidden this note within his mouth - at the moment of his death, so that the pagans would not find it. Of this, Helen was convinced. He sacrificed his life to try to pass this note onto future generations. It had to hold some meaning. Helen stored the note in her backpack.

"Assistant Professor Maxwell."

A voice came suddenly from behind. She'd recognize that limp voice anywhere. And there was only one person who called her *Assistant Professor Maxwell*.

She turned around, and there was Harris, hanging his head like a scolded child.

"Harris!"

"Maxwell...I..." Below his receding hairline, Harris's forehead was smudged with mud. He wiped the mud and sweat away with the back of his hand.

"Are you alone? Where's Jennifer? What on earth happened?" Helen said, grabbing Harris by his shoulders.

"So many questions... I'm only one person, with only one mouth... This isn't like you, Assistant Professor Maxwell! Are you upset?"

"Of *course* I am! You all disappeared into thin air all of a sudden! So Jennifer and the others aren't with you?"

"They were with me.But then Scissorman came. While you were sleeping.....so." All of this in his usual ear-straining whisper.

Helen finally snapped, yelling: "*Would it **kill** you to speak a little louder!?*"

"You don't need to get angry, do you? At me, no less.....with all that's happened.....oh, well." Harris nodded to himself smugly.

"Scissorman came with us all the way to the castle?" Helen this time phrased her question gently, as if she were speaking to a lost child.

"Well, apparently..."

"Beth and I both were in the van! He took Jennifer, Edward, *and* Kay without us realizing it?! And *you*, too?!"

"We were brought to the castle while we were sleeping. When I woke up, there I was. Jennifer and the others were with me. I don't know how I was brought here. But what's fact is fact. And before fact, even what by all appearances seems to us to be common sense may be repudiated." With his circumlocutions, he seemed to be imitating Barton.

"So where's Jennifer?"

"Only I was able to escape from him."

"You left them behind?"

".....I had no choice. Yes; there was nothing I could do."

"Then, where are they?"

"Very close.But Scissorman is there."

"I don't care. Show me. If you won't, I'll go alone."

"Very well. ...With the two of us, it might be...this way. Come with me."

The room had two doors: the one now barricaded by the case, and another opposite. Harris had probably entered from there. He headed to it; Helen followed.

After they left the room, Harris jabbered all the while - about the profiling related to the Clock Tower case and the current serial murders. Since he was still whispering in his low, little voice, Helen missed half of it - and of what she could hear, almost all of it had been taken from Barton.

Barton thought that the two cases had been committed by different perpetrators. The Clock Tower case had been premeditated and committed by a lone perpetrator, Mary Barrows. It couldn't have been a simple process

to adopt four children from an orphanage; she was clearly an orderly killer. But she had made no attempt to conceal the bodies, and her methods of murder were considered to be quite disorderly. This was one of the bases for the idea that Mary had had an accomplice. Even in the most recent case, the two types of behavior were intermixed. But Barton did not think that there were multiple killers in this case; he thought that a mixed offender, a perpetrator who was a hybrid of the two types, was behind the case.

If it were the same criminal, then Mary's accomplice had once again gained the cooperation of another party and was again committing murders. But it was hard to conceive that anyone would so easily agree to assist in one murder, let alone a series of them. This was the reason that Barton had pronounced the culprit to be a mixed offender, a lone wolf.

Indeed, all this was true, but Helen had a different idea.

She once mentioned to Barton: "What if there were a cult directing the serial murders?". What if, she said, there was in Norway a cult like the Manson family that had committed the Sharon Tate case? But Barton laughed at the idea; he said she had been watching too many stupid horror movies.

At the time, Barton had unveiled to Helen the same theory that Gotts had, that this perp was a copycat of the original Clock Tower murderer. Helen, too, thought this to be a reasonable conclusion. But she didn't discount the idea that it was the same killer. Barton himself probably hadn't abandoned the "one killer" theory. He wouldn't have been so intent on going to Barrows Castle otherwise.

But the question presented itself: If they were indeed looking for a lone killer, would it be easy for this perpetrator to find accomplices for a mass murder?

To that, Helen had two answers. The first was the existence of a religious cult. The Clock Tower had an unmistakable connection to some sort of religious sect, one that most probably had been followed by generation after generation of Barrowses. It would not seem odd to her if it had continued into the present day. No - Helen was *certain* that this cult was active even now. The lamps in the castle's rooms and corridors had been lit, after all - though the structure had supposedly been abandoned eighty years ago. One could only conclude that someone had been maintaining this castle; the cult had kept watch over it to this very day.

The lamps held one night's worth of oil. But for one person to go around and light all the lamps in this castle would most probably take more than one night. In other words, by the time the last lamp was lit, the first lamp would have gone out - so there had to be several people maintaining this castle. A rather large number of people, she thought.

But she found it difficult to dispose of her other theory.

To consider it, one first had to presume that Scissorman had supernatural powers.

His PSI powers. His "Voice." A voice that was not heard but rather entered directly into one's mind. One could call it a type of telepathy. From what Jennifer had told her, Scissorman could manipulate people at will. The voice had whispered to Jennifer as well, and the girl had just barely avoided committing suicide. When she first heard this, Helen chalked it up to an auditory hallucination like those experienced by schizophrenics and drug addicts - a severe shock might have caused the same in Jennifer, Helen thought.

But if the Voice really were from Scissorman, then it would be easy for him to create accomplices. He could turn anyone into an accomplice.

She wouldn't be surprised if Harris, walking right in front of her, weren't an accomplice himself.

He was obsessively wiping the mud from his forehead. ...But was it mud? In this dim light, anything could be mistaken for mud.

Like blood.

At that moment, Helen suddenly realized that Harris had called Scissorman a "he." They still didn't know whether Scissor"man" was truly a man or a woman. Around the research lab, to avoid jumping to conclusions, they simply referred to Scissorman as "the suspect." Harris, a research aide himself, had used the term "the suspect" as well.

"So you saw Scissorman, then?" Helen called to Harris's hunched back as he walked with quick, swift strides.

"--What?...Ahhh, yes, I saw him. He was a bent-over man wearing that hideous mask from before," Harris said, still looking ahead.

"He was male, then?"

"Um...yes; yes, he was. He was male."

"How do you know he was male?"

"Well, I.....that's right; I heard his voice. It was a man's voice."

Scissorman had "spoken" to Jennifer many times, but not in an audible voice. Why wasn't he using his telepathic Voice?

"Scissorman spoke?"

"That's what I said, didn't I? Couldn't you hear me? He spoke. Scissorman spoke.Don't you believe what I'm telling you?!"

"It's not that, but..."

"Scissorman is *male!* Now, no more questions! ...Ah, here we are."

After an endless walk down a dismal stone corridor, they had arrived at a wooden door. They opened it, Harris in the lead.

In the middle of the room was a giant stove made out of stone. There was a well-used wooden table and various cooking implements, and dinnerware lined a giant shelf. It seemed to be a kitchen.

Harris crossed the room and opened a door further within.

There was a horrible smell.

A smell just like when Helen had unearthed the Barrows mummy from its hole. The stench of mold and rot. Helen took her knife out of her backpack.

The room was narrow.

There was a shelf built into the wall, stocked with mummified meat.

"There's no one here, is there?" Helen said, looking at the husks of desiccated meat.

"Just a little farther.Now, Assistant Professor Maxwell, how do you think we will proceed?" A smirk crept onto Harris's face. There was only one door in the pantry; it was a dead end. Perhaps there was a hidden door somewhere?

Harris probably had no intention of letting Helen answer; he responded right away. "But I suppose *you* wouldn't understand, would you, Assistant Professor? I'll show you!" He reached out toward the shelf with the meat and put his hand on a space between two chunks of carcass. There must've been a switch somewhere there; there was the sound of grinding gears, and one of the stones in the floor slid to the side.

"Oh, my, wasn't *that* a surprise, hm?" Harris said gleefully, staring at the floor. A hole had opened up in it - large enough for a person to fit through. A ladder hung from its edge.

"Follow me," Harris beckoned, and then descended the ladder.

The room that waited below was probably a wine cellar. Bottles lined the shelves, and there were several giant barrels.

Harris pointed to the corner of the room. "Now, then - *here's* Jennifer."

Yes. It certainly was Jennifer.

She sat on the stone floor, her long legs in their beige boots stretched in front of her. Her arms were crossed in front of her chest. She stared vacantly up off into space, seeing nothing. Her arms, her legs, her face were all frozen in shock - all held themselves forcefully rigid.

She was in catalepsy. Her entire body was in rigor in the wake of a severe shock.

And the source of the shock was sitting beneath one of the wine barrels. Both hands were tied behind her back, and her legs were also bound.

Her jaw was open wide, and her face, pointed upward, was bloated; her eyes were rolled back beneath her swollen eyelids. Her mouth had been opened wide, and the spigot of the wine barrel had been thrust into her oral cavity. As if to stabilize her in that position, her neck had been bound back with rope to a cask.

Her stomach was inflated as if she were nine months pregnant. The buttons of her crimson dress had popped off, and her pale gut stuck out like a vein-studded balloon.

A red fluid dripped from her nostrils. It was wine. And that which filled her stomach - that, too, was wine. And that which pooled beneath her, that was also wine.

She had been force-fed wine. Forced and forced, until her stomach burst, until her peritoneum rent, until it leaked from her bowels and bladder.

She was...Beth.

The bright and cheerful, outspoken lab assistant who loved gossip and was so popular.

Oh, Beth, Helen thought, feeling no deep emotion.

She was dead.

In the opposite direction was Jennifer. She was alive.

I have to save her. She is my utmost priority.

Her thoughts unspooling mechanically, like those of a robot from an old-time sci-fi movie, Helen made her decisions divorced from emotion. The change had taken place just after she had climbed down into the wine cellar and glimpsed this terrible sight; it was like a switch had flipped in her brain. The Little Girl Helen who was capable only of being scared fled deep within her heart, and the calm and collected Scientist Helen rose to the surface.

Scientist Helen knew no fear. She knew no emotion. And, of course, she knew no pain, or shock.

And just as blithely as if she were exchanging her morning greetings, she said: "You did this, Harris."

"No, I didn't! I didn't do anything. I did only what the Voice told me to do! I only held Jennifer down so that she couldn't move, and then brought you here."

Shing.

The sound of scissors.

"Oh, Scissorman! Come out! I've brought Helen here!"

As if in response to Harris's call, Scissorman's face emerged from the shadow of a rack of wine bottles. Twisted and wrinkled like a desiccated fruit, the face grinned.

Scissorman hoisted his huge scissors above his head and opened them wide.

"Over here, Scissorman. She's a nasty woman - a nasty, *nasty* woman. And I so very much wanted to see - want to see her die. It was *so* fun when you killed Beth! Such a *merry* little show!" Harris cackled in his throat like a little bird. Scissorman was right behind him. He opened the gigantic pair of scissors that were as tall as he was. Harris laughed - a laugh of sheer, heartfelt joy that Helen had never before seen.

Shing.

The giant scissors closed.

Smile still upon his face, Harris's head tumbled from his shoulders. The spray of blood fell on Helen like a sudden shower. Harris's head rolled to her feet; it looked up at Helen, smile never wavering. Ironic that the first thing his eyes lit upon after his death was a human face.

Shing.

The scissors opened once more.

As if it had suddenly remembered it was dead, Harris's body fell to the floor.

Scissorman approached Helen, dragging the tips of his blades along the floor. They left a red trail behind them

from Harris's freshly-severed head.

Helen ran to the corner of the room where Jennifer sat. The girl was still stiff and lifeless like a mannequin. Helen tried to take her by the arm and stand her up, but she would not move; she sat strong as steel.

Not losing a second, Helen screamed against Jennifer's cheek: "Jennifer! *Wake up!*"

Jennifer looked at Helen with vacant eyes, like a sleepy child.

Shing.

Scissorman took another step forward, watching Helen and Jennifer as if they were an amusing TV drama.

"*Jennifer! Jennifer!*"

Helen took Jennifer's arm and forcibly hauled her to her feet. Jennifer slowly stood, her face soulless.

Scissorman was standing in front of the ladder leading up to the pantry. The only way out of the room was through him.

Helen took her survival knife in both hands and pointed it at Scissorman. Not daunted in the least, Scissorman took another step toward her, dragging his foot behind him, stooping so his jaw practically hit the floor.

"Over here, Scissorman!"

The voice - a man's voice - came from behind the killer.

Scissorman turned around. And when he did, a brilliant light filled the room.

Her eyes now accustomed to the dark, Helen was momentarily blinded. She heard a dull sound, like a leather bag being punched.

"*Run!*" The man's voice again.

Her eyesight returned just slightly. Scissorman was lying on the ground. On the other side were Nolan, holding a 2x4, and Tim, his camera ready. The light from before must have been from its flash.

"*HURRY! HURRY, RUN!*" Nolan screamed, all of his habitual glibness gone from his face.

Helen ran for the ladder, making an attempt to pull Jennifer along. Jennifer was a puppet; she moved only as Helen moved her. Helen pushed her from behind, shoving her up the ladder, following after her.

When they both had finally ascended, Helen looked down. Nolan and Tim were nowhere to be seen.

There was a scream of rage. A sound, as if something heavy had been struck. Another, different scream. And then a groan.

Jennifer stood nearby, not comprehending anything that was happening. Helen led her over to the shelf by the wall. She had intended to push the switch to close the trap door in the floor. She had no intention of waiting for Nolan or Tim to come up; Jennifer's safety was her foremost priority.

A head popped out of the hole. Nolan. Scientist Helen naturally waited until he was all the way out. She could

see Tim's hand behind him, following; Nolan held out his own hand to help him, grasping Tim's arm and pulling with all his strength.

Tim flew forward, a red trail following behind him. Nolan shrieked like a woman. He let go of Tim's hand, and the cameraman's body sailed in a parabola through the air.

There was nothing left of Tim below his waist. His intestines trailing like a tail behind him, Tim's body landed like a statue on the floor.

Helen instantly flipped the switch on the shelf, and the stone plate on the floor began to close shut.

Scissor blades poked through the crevice. The stone, reversing its course, ground its way open.

"Run!" Helen said, taking Jennifer by the arm and pulling her out of the room. Nolan followed, closing the door in a panic.

"The table!" Nolan shouted, dragging the heavy wooden table to the door, Helen helping. The two upended the table, barricading the door.

"You..." Nolan took a breath, his shoulders shaking, and looked at Helen. She was stained red from her golden hair to her chest with Harris's blood. Yet she was utterly unmoved. Her face was impassive, a mask, her expression resolute - like a Norse goddess ready to face the final battle with the beasts.

A huge contrast to the pale, quaking Nolan, raggedly drawing breath.

"You're some woman," Nolan said under his breath, as if to no one in particular. "Is she all right?" Nolan gestured to Jennifer with his jaw.

Jennifer stood behind Helen; she, too, was expressionless. But, from Nolan's perspective, it was clear that she was unsound in both mind and body. Her eyes were vacant, staring off into space.

"Apathy from psychological shock. She'll be back to herself in a little while. Now, let's get out of here. That barricade won't hold Scissorman."

"Yeah, probably not. Take Jennifer and go."

"What about you?"

"I don't have the cool head you do. And I've lost a friend. I've got to draw the line somewhere."

"You're being stupid."

"I know."

There was a BANG at the door, and the heavy table inched from the door with a *creeeaaak*. Nolan put his shoulder against the table and braced it with all his might.

"Now, get out of here."

"All right." Without a moment's hesitation, Helen took Jennifer by the hand and left the room.

She closed the door and ran into the dark corridor. All thoughts of Nolan, whom she had left behind, had fled

from her mind.

The castle was like a labyrinth. The corridors held countless turns and forks, and the stairways would go up and down without rhyme or reason, terminating in hidden doors and false walls. At each junction, Helen would mark which way they went on the wall with her knife. At several points, they got lost, and she had to use the marks to find their way back to their previous position - to where Helen had chosen the wrong path.

I wonder if the castle's labyrinthine structure was an attempt to ward off spirits? So thought Scientist Helen as she fled. Folk beliefs in both the East and West held that ghosts could travel only in straight lines. Legends of a great, black doglike beast had circulated throughout Europe, but if there were a river or turn in its path it was following, it would vanish in a flash of white light. One of the tenets of Eastern feng shui was about how evil spirits traveled in straight lines.

Did the first Lord Barrows fear evil spirits? No - instead, it was probably more pragmatic to think that his fortress had been so built to protect him from those who opposed him inside his own castle.

Continuing her speculations regarding the castle, Helen stepped into a dim corridor. There was a door right in front of her - a deep black door, the likes of which she hadn't seen before. It wasn't made a different wood as the other doors, but it had been painted with something - just what, Helen didn't know. The substance glistened with a strange metallic luster.

In the middle of the door had been drawn a strangely-shaped pattern - a bizarre crucifix, a doll-like human figure upon it with both arms raised in supplication. Atop the crucifix was a skull, atop of which sat a monster. Behind it was a circle - a sunlike symbol - forming something not unlike the Celtic cross. And above it was a symbol - that idol. At least, it looked just like the idol when viewed head-on.

"Here." From behind Helen, someone pointed at the door - Jennifer. A smile, dreamlike, passed across her face, but it looked more like the photograph of an expression than it did actual emotion. It was strangely flat, with no trace of humanity.

Jennifer put her hand into her vest pocket.

"What's wrong?"

Without answering Helen, Jennifer took out a little black statue - the idol that had been at the Barrows mansion.

"Why did you take this?" The idol was supposed to have been in a safe at the research lab.

"I knew it had somethin' to do wit' the mystery of the Barrows family. So I snuck in an' took it out an' brought it wit' me." She ran her words together like a little girl. "Here. Take it."

Jennifer handed the idol to Helen. The psychologist shoved it in her backpack, without saying or asking anything - she knew it would be useless to do so. "Inside, Jennifer!" she shouted, opening the black door.

The room inside was even darker than the corridor. Not a lamp was lit.

But Helen could make out a human figure in the shadows.

Focusing on the figure, Helen took her flashlight out of her backpack. "*Who's there?!*" she called, shining her light in its direction at the same time.

It was a man, arms outstretched in front of his face, both hands holding a gun that was pointed directly at Helen.

"Gotts....." said Helen, and a rare smile crossed the middle-aged assistant inspector's sullen face.

"You crawled up here by yourself, huh?"

Gotts. Deep down within Helen, the cowering, sobbing Little Girl Helen whispered to herself. Gotts. Help me. Help me. I'm scared. There's a big person being mean to me. Please. Help me. Help me.

Like a bubble welling up from the depths of a swamp, Little Girl Helen floated up to the upper layers of Helen's consciousness. Scientist Helen, her performance over, sank back down below.

All the emotions she had sealed away since she discovered Beth in the wine cellar gushed out at once. They overwhelmed Helen in the blink of an eye.

Terror. Terror strong enough to reduce her to atoms, body and soul.

Helen screamed. Screamed with enough force to tear her throat asunder. Gotts ran to her and, at his wits' end, could do nothing but hold her in his arms.

CHAPTER FOUR

"Could you calm down a little, Teach?" Gotts said, lighting the lamp with a lighter.

"All right; at least I'm not going to pieces so that I'm throwing myself at you."

"Guess you're OK if you can shoot your mouth off." Making the rounds of the room, Gotts finished lighting all the torches. He had heard the sound of footsteps approaching previously and had extinguished them in a frenzy - even though he didn't have time to extinguish them all.

Helen leaned back against the wet stone wall and stared at the objects heaped upon the floor before her eyes.

They were bones - a pile of blanched bones lay in the middle of the wide room.

"Is the young lady over there all right?"

"Yes, probably. It's just temporary, from shock. She's seen too many things she shouldn't have." Jennifer stood by Helen; Helen put an arm around her shoulders. The girl hadn't spoken a word since in front of the door before; she had returned to her dolllike state.

"What in blazes happened to you guys?"

"A field trip to hell. Without Beatrice to guide us."

Helen explained to Gotts everything that had happened since she had fallen down the hole. She did her best to remain objective in her account as best she could, without tinging it with her own perspective. "And if you don't believe it," Helen concluded, "that's fine by me."

"I've experienced enough unbelievable stuff to last a lifetime. Since taking on this case, I mean. I'm a babe in the woods now. If you said there were people living on the sun, Teach, I'd believe it."

"Well, what happened to you, Gotts?"

"I went to go get some rope. Everyone was supposed to wait for me in the great hall in the meantime. When I came back, though, no one was there. I guess Scissorman showed up. All their bags were just left there."

"So, did you find any rope?"

"Old, rotten rope, yeah. It looked like it'd fall apart if an ant grabbed onto it."

"So you went on a fool's errand, is what you're saying."

"I wouldn't say that, Teach. While I was looking for everybody, I was able to find the young lady and you, Teach, - you and your vast array of knowledge. There's something I want to ask you, actually." Gotts hastily added, pointing to the mountain of bones. "Even I can see that those're bones, though."

"I wonder if you knew that they were the bones of children?"

"Really?"

"My knowledge of forensics isn't very extensive, but there's no doubt those are children's bones. I don't know whether it happened after they died or while they were still alive, but many of their neckbones seem to have been severed with sharp-edged objects. Also, though I'm going by just a quick once-over, there seem to be no bones from anywhere beyond the wrist to be found in this pile - which is odd, given its size."

"You kidding?"

"I've got no reason to lie to you."

"So that's what you're saying, Teach? That those walking hands that were chasing you were *their* hands?"

"Now, no one said that."

"But you're thinking it, aren't you?"

Helen nodded. "I think it's got more credibility than stories of people on the sun, but what do you think?"

"Well, if it's coming from you, it's got credibility, Teach. I've seen more unbelievable things. *In this room*. Hang around a little bit, and you might get a lesson, too, Teach. The former owners of these bones are--"

The air above the mountain of bones began to shimmer, as if steam were rising. Before Gotts and Helen's eyes, they congealed into human shapes.

They were children. Five or six children, who appeared above the bones. Helen and Gotts could see the stone wall beyond their transparent bodies.

At the same time that the children appeared, a song could be heard. It was the children themselves who were singing.

*Little John from the big castle
Plays with a little boy
Snip, snip, snip
Off goes his head
Bright red, bright red*

"That's...Scissorman's song!"

"There's another verse, too!"

The children joined hands in a ring and danced round and round as they continued to sing their song.

*Little John from the big castle
Plays with a little girl
Stab, stab, stab
She loses her sight
Bright white, bright white*

"That makes the third time I've heard that song. Now, they'll disappear."

Just like Gotts said, when their song was over, the figures of the children began to dissipate like a shimmer of hot air. They soon disappeared without a trace.

Helen and Gotts's eyes met.

Gotts was the first to open his mouth. "First time I've seen something like that outside a Disneyland attraction. So, Teach. What was *that*?"

"You want to hear it from my lips? Those were ghosts."

Gotts heaved a miserable sigh. "No way of thinking otherwise, is there?"

"Some transparent children suddenly pop in, sing a song and dance around, and then vanish into thin air? Unless they had Hollywood-level special effects available in England over eighty years ago, those were definitely ghosts."

"...I suppose. After seeing those, I had a quick conversion."

"To what? Islam or something?"

"From a scientific way of thinking. I realized that you could put in my little finger with room to spare what science can explain."

"Science has always been like that. You have to acknowledge from the start that it has limits. People who think that it can explain everything, like you..."

"Like me, *what?*"

"...have swept that under the rug for the sake of their own reputations."

"Thank you, Teach. I *appreciate* that. *Anyhow*...so what are these ghosts?"

"I wonder if they aren't the child victims of the ritualistic murders conducted by Theodore Barrows and those who came after him. Organized killers conceal the bodies of their victims. And there's a certain pattern to their actions--"

"We're going to die. We're all going to die."

At first, neither Helen nor Gotts realized who was speaking.

"To live is merely to postpone death."

It was Jennifer.

She continued to speak, her face a mask, with only her lips moving. "So it is best not to be born at all - or, rather, to die as a child. Dead children are happy! For in continued life, they would only compound their crimes. Isn't that so, Helen?"

Suddenly addressed, Helen could only continue to stare silently at Jennifer.

It was Gotts who broke the silence. "Let's get out of this room. Nothing good's gonna happen if we stay here. Besides, if Scissorman attacks us here, we've got nowhere to run."

"...Yes. Let's go, Jennifer." Helen took Jennifer's arm, and Jennifer mechanically followed after her.

Leaving the room, Helen and the other began once again to wander the mazelike corridors. The lamps, spaced a distance apart, were all too dim to eyes accustomed to fluorescent lights; they seemed only to deepen the darkness. It was as if Helen could hear the malice of the butchered souls whispered from the darkness that seemed to swallow everything.

Somewhere along the line, even conversation ceased, and the three walked down the halls without exchanging a word.

It was Helen who noticed a creaking from beneath their footsteps as they walked. Helen looked down; somewhere along the way, the floors had exchanged cobblestone for wooden planks.

Why only here? Helen was about to say - when it happened.

The floorboards burst open at Jennifer's feet. From the broken floor, scattering fragments of wood, emerged a pair of arms.

They latched onto Jennifer's legs.

It was all over in a second. Before Helen realized it, a huge hole opened in the floor, and Jennifer was swallowed up.

"Jennifer!" Helen screamed. She peered into the hole that had opened in the floor. She could see nothing; it was filled with darkness. Helen was about to jump down head first when Gotts stopped her.

It was a close call.

Right in front of Helen's nose, a steel plate slid across the hole. Had Helen been stopped just a moment later, her head would most probably have been neatly sliced off her shoulders.

"No use having just your head go after Jennifer."

"Jennifer's..."

The sound of a distinctive limp that dragged one foot came from beneath the floor - where Scissorman, it seemed, was moving about. Helen could see Scissorman throw Jennifer across his shoulders and carry her off into the darkness.

"This way," said Gotts, following the sound of footsteps beneath the floor on all fours like a bloodhound.

The footsteps continued straight down the corridor - and then stopped short. Helen put her ear to the floor, trying to hear the footsteps. The sound of footsteps stopped in one place, slowly grew fainter, and then disappeared.

Helen stood up and said: "There's a staircase here! Below! He went below!"

"Let's go," Gotts said, running off. Helen didn't even know if they were on the second floor, but Gotts had climbed a staircase from the great hall and thus had an idea of their general position. He led the way, and Helen ran following. Good old Gotts's powers of recollection served them well - even in this labyrinthine castle, they were able to make it to the staircase. But ten minutes had already passed.

From the second-floor staircase, one could see the vaulted great hall on the first floor. Helen and Gotts virtually flung themselves down the stairs.

But when they reached the first floor, they stopped in their tracks.

The once-resplendent gathering place of the great hall confronted them with not one but several doors. The duo had absolutely no idea of which one they should choose.

"Which one? Which one do we take?" Helen grabbed at Gotts's shoulder.

"One's as good as another. Might as well try going into one and see."

"How can you be so *reckless*?..."

"We might luck out and stumble into a miracle. Besides, it's not like we--"

"Quiet!" Helen cut Gotts off.

"Why?"

Helen merely put her finger to her lips - *shhh*.

She might at first have thought it was just her hyperactive imagination playing tricks. In the absolute quiet,

however, she could hear it - faintly, but unmistakably.

The sound she never wanted to hear again.

Gotts could hear it too, it seemed. He murmured: "Scissorman..."

They both could hear it, from afar - the sound of giant shears opening and closing.

"It's coming this way! It's getting closer."

"Which way's it coming from?" Gotts took out his handgun. He scanned the doors, carefully and deliberately readying his weapon.

Shing. Shing. The sound grew louder and louder. But they still couldn't see a thing.

"Where is he?" Gun in both hands, Gotts slowly searched the environment.

"Assistant Inspector, here." Helen pointed to a painting - a landscape that hung from the wall just adjacent to the staircase where she and Gotts stood. Was it a couple meters on each side? The landscape had the dimensions of a full-size bed.

A castle stood on the far side of a gently-rolling hill. A narrow road proceeded from the castle to the foreground of the landscape, and a small figure stood there.

"Sorry. Got no time for art appreciation now."

"He's coming this way!"

"*What* is?!" Gotts said, his voice growing angry.

Helen's voice grew wilder in return. "*The person in the painting!* There wasn't *any* person there at first. He's going to show up at any moment! *And he's getting closer and closer!*"

"What..." Gotts moved nearer and took a look at the painting. Just like Helen had tried to tell him, the figure in the painting seemed to be closer than before.

"Unbelievable, isn't it?"

"It's like I said; I'm a babe in the woods here."

Gotts put his ear to the painting.

He could hear it.

The sound of scissors opening, closing, opening, closing, coming from within the painting.

No - there was no longer any need to have his ear close to the painting anymore. He could now clearly make out a man's face at the bottom of the gently-sloping hill, coming forward. You could even see that he held in his hands a giant pair of scissors.

"No mistaking it, is there?" Gotts backed up a bit from the painting and put his finger on the trigger. "You'd better get down."

Scissorman had walked down the hill, but he walked too far down the path that led to the bottom of the picture, and he disappeared beneath the frame.

Gotts aimed the barrel of his gun at the painting. He waited for so long that it began to occur to him that the situation was ludicrous. He couldn't hear the sound of scissors anymore.

Should I take another look at the painting? As the thought crossed his mind, he unconsciously lowered the barrel of his gun.

And as if lying in wait for that very moment, Scissorman flew out of the painting, the sharp points of his scissors aimed right out in front of him.

At the same moment, Gotts pulled the trigger.

Scissorman rammed full-force into Gotts. Staggered by his weight, Gotts tumbled, Scissorman and all, to the ground.

Scissorman turned and stood. It was then, in a flash, that Helen saw it - had Scissorman *smiled*? He then disappeared into a door to the side.

"Dammit," Gotts said, his face blanched. He lay staring at the ceiling, clutching his side. The blood that welled out from between his fingers had in an instant formed a pool of blood on the floor.

"Take this and go." Gotts held out his gun to Helen. "Don't know how much good it's gonna do you, but..."

"Gotts..." Helen knelt down and tried to help Gotts sit up.

Gotts struggled painfully to breathe. "Sorry, but I gotta ask you to leave me here. It hurts. It can't stand to move."

"What're you talking about? Aren't you a tough guy?"

"I'm no tough guy. Wanted to be one - when I was a kid. Still would like to be thought of as one, if I could! Now, go after him, before I scream or faint or something. Maybe *you* can save Jennifer, Teach."

"Don't say such stupid things!"

"You can see it yourself, Teach. I'm done for."

From the amount of blood on the floor, it was clear that his stomach wound was deep. It had severed muscle, perhaps even pierced the peritoneum. Beneath Gotts's hand, abdominal pressure seemed to be trying to push his guts out.

"Go, Teach. I'm gonna take a little nap here."

It's been a while.

And here, once again, two doors appear before you.

This is your third door.

My, what will you do?

If you want to leave Gotts behind, click [here](#).

If you feel inclined to try to save him, click [here](#).

If you have insight, the door to open should be obvious.

CHAPTER FIVE

".....Wait here. I *will* be back with help." Helen took the handgun and stood. Her hands were covered in Gotts's blood.

"I..." Was he perhaps about to say something tender? But instead of finishing his thought, Gotts coughed up a huge amount of blood. "Go.....please." Gotts spoke in a feeble voice; he didn't even bother to wipe the blood away.

Helen forced herself to tear her eyes away from Gotts and turned them to the door into which Scissorman had disappeared.

"I'm going." Saying it more to herself, Helen passed through the other side of the door.

~*~

When she entered the room, Helen was waylaid by a faint sense of vertigo.

It was a chapel. But its rows of pews, its ceiling and stained-glass windows, its floors and walls - everything inside it was warped, built from a crazed perspective like a funhouse in an amusement park.

Right in front - at the end of the main aisle that led in between the pews - was a fresco that covered the entire wall. It was painted with brushstrokes so realistic the enterprise seemed almost obsessive - and they rendered an image of a Madonna holding two children. The children were swathed in soft black cloth - and had skin that looked melted, akin to that of drowned corpses.

On either side of the mother, at her shoulders, hovered two angels with wings like those of bats. At her feet lay dozens of nude, emaciated men with hands and feet and heads and guts cut off or ripped out. Their faces were twisted in agony; their grasping hands reached out to the Holy Mother as if in supplication; and each and every one of their open wounds was rendered in detail more vivid than a photograph.

Before the fresco was erected an altar, near which stood a cross - a cross which seemed rendered in the shape of a human figure, backed by a sun disk. A cross to which Jennifer had been crucified.

"Please--*stop* all this!"

A woman was there, screaming.

She lay fallen in front of the altar. Before her stood Scissorman, his foot pushing down upon her stomach, his shears raised.

"*Stop!*" Helen screamed, running.

Scissorman pointed the tips of his blades at the woman - and ran her through.

Helen stopped in her tracks.

A fountain of blood exploded from the woman's stomach. Scissorman extracted his scissors from her gut, and, like a magician, drew out a chain of entrails that was wrapped around his blades.

The woman looked at Helen. Helen could that her eyes had not yet surrendered to despair or resignation, but that the light within was little by little slowly fading.

The woman was Kay.

Helen readied her gun. She took aim directly at Scissorman's head.

Over and over, Scissorman thrust his scissors into Kay's body. Each time they hit, her body like jumped like a fish caught on a line.

Helen pulled the trigger. Or tried to. But the trigger wouldn't even budge.

I took a bit for her to realize that the safety was still on.

Kay had stopped moving. Scissorman finally rose to his feet and cut her head off with his blades.

Don't panic.

Don't panic.

Suppressing her emotions, Helen released the safety.

Once again, she took aim and pulled the trigger. But the hammer was heavy, and she couldn't budge it. She steeled her fingers and tried again and again, but the hammer wouldn't cock.

Having perhaps tired of amusing himself with Kay's corpse, Scissorman turned the bloody tips of his shears toward Jennifer.

Helen concentrated all of her strength into her right index finger.

The hammer slowly cocked, and the cylinder revolved.

Helen pulled the trigger as far back as it would go. The hammer hit the cartridge case, and a shot rang out.

The unexpected recoil sent the barrel of the gun flying upward.

And the bullet flew over Scissorman's head and grazed the fresco far behind him.

Scissorman looked at Helen, as if aware for the first time of her presence.

Helen remembered what her firearms instructor had told her long ago: *Double-action revolvers aren't very accurate. If you're a novice and you want to be certain that you're going to hit what you're aiming at, you have to pull the hammer back before you aim.*

Helen cocked the hammer with her thumb. The grip had grown slippery with sweat.

She once again thought back to her instructor's words.

It's extremely difficult to hit a target with a revolver without considerable proficiency. As a novice, you've got to do two things to hit your target: One, get as close to the target as possible, and two, choose a large target. If you're aiming at a person, don't aim for the head. Aim for the stomach.

Helen lowered the barrel and aimed at Scissorman's stomach.

Scissorman stared dumbfounded at Helen, as if waiting for a problem student to give an answer to a question.

Helen fired.

The barrel flew upwards yet again.

Call it an accident - Helen didn't mind. But the bullet had struck Scissorman square in the shoulder.

His giant scissors fell to the floor. Leaving them there, Scissorman opened a door in the back and fled.

"*Jennifer!!*" cried Helen, running to the cross. She feared that Jennifer's hands and feet had been nailed to the cross, but she found that the girl had merely been fastened with rope instead. Using the altar as a stepping stool, Helen reached over to the cross and unfastened Jennifer's bonds.

Jennifer had lost consciousness. Getting the girl down from the cross by herself was no small task. At last, Helen finally lowered Jennifer to the floor, and after making sure that she was all right, she left her there and proceeded to open the inner door.

It led to a small room.

Was this the priest's sacristy? An assortment of vestments lined the walls. But they were all moth-eaten and shrouded with dust, and now were no better than tattered rags.

A trail of bright red blood continued in splotches.

There was a statue here - of the Madonna in the fresco, of about the same size. A gentle smile graced her face; and two thick spikes had been driven deep into her eyes. The blood that flowed from them was a venomous red.

There was a man seated at her feet.

Blood from Kay and his own, still-flowing blood stained his clothing red and black - his elegant English suit tailored from the highest-quality fabric.

In his hand, he held a rubber mask - the same one Gotts had shown to Helen.

"I suppose I must congratulate you for managing to make it this far." So said the older man, breathing raggedly.

"Professor Barton..."

Even as she spoke his name aloud, Helen couldn't believe it. Even with the professor himself before her very eyes, she entertained the idea that this person might be another man entirely - one who only looked a great deal like Barton.

"In my scenario, you were supposed to die earlier. Yes - when you fell in the hole..."

"Professor, you...*you* did all this?"

"'All'? What do you mean by 'all,' Helen? Starting from what point?" Barton looked at Helen with the same expression he had sported when she had sat at his first lecture, detached and looking down on everyone.

"The previous Clock Tower case was not my doing - unfortunately." Barton winced slightly from the pain in his shoulder. "But in this case, the one in which you have been involved, I played a part in nearly everything."

"Why.....?"

"'Why'? That's a problem for *you*, the profiler, isn't it? Or are you merely seeking the professional opinion of the professor of behavioral science at South Oslo University?"

"No!!!"

Helen turned to look behind her.

There was Jennifer. The Jennifer from when Helen had first met her - the long, black hair; the big, doe-like eyes; the charming lips. But inside, she seemed to be a completely different person: one filled with confidence, with a resolute attitude that could only be called divine.

Barton stared at Helen, a smirk upon his face - one, Helen thought, that seemed to challenge her: *Well, what are you going to do now?*

Two doors have appeared before you.

If you believe Jennifer and refuse to listen to Barton, click [here](#)!

If you would like to listen to Barton, you should click [here](#).

Now, which will you choose?

Hurry up, before the Professor starts talking again.

CHAPTER SIX

"I have no intention of listening to you," said Helen. "Save it for the interrogation room."

"I see. That may be wise."

Helen approached Barton and tried to lift him up.

"What are you trying to do, Helen?"

"We're getting out of here together."

"It's no use. Before you shot me, I was also shot by that assistant inspector. Didn't you realize?"

The professor tried to open his jacket; it clung to his skin, sticky with blood. A bullet wound gaped near his stomach. It was small, but given the area, the bullet would surely have disrupted his internal organs. Helen was astonished at Barton; it must have taken tremendous willpower to be able to speak calmly with such a wound.

"Death's not far behind me," Barton spoke absentmindedly, as if he were dreaming. "Helen, leave the castle and report on these events. I regret that I will be unable to read your findings. Jennifer will perhaps be able to lead you out. She is our final sacrifice - and your trump card. All that I know is within her."

"Jennifer..." Helen looked at Jennifer. Her eyes were pointed in Helen's direction, but they saw nothing. "Post-hypnotic suggestion. I see, Prof. Barton. After she wakes from hypnosis, upon some sort of trigger - probably after experiencing great terror - she acts as your secondary instructions direct her. Her current personality is of your creation, isn't it?"

"You are an exceptional student, Helen." Barton gave a slight smile.

"Hurry - leave this castle. You're not out of this trap yet. Not even with my death."

"Let's go." So saying, Jennifer turned on her heels and left the room without looking back. Helen scrambled after her.

It was as if Jennifer knew the interior of the castle by heart; they were probably taking the shortest route to their destination. After several minutes, they left a corridor Helen had never seen before and exited into an abandoned garden.

A garden in the castle atrium.

Helen's eyes narrowed in the blinding light.

The sun was already in the west. However weak and dim the sunlight seemed, though, it was nevertheless a great change from the dim lamps of the castle.

Sunlight filtered through a row of trees. Helen was reminded anew of how nature had the power to calm one's heart.

"This way." Jennifer strided ahead, leading the way. The garden was wide, and the trees had flourished in the eighty years they had been left to themselves. Helen followed the girl, her feet snagging themselves on the gnarled roots of the pine trees.

Jennifer stopped still before a small man-made pond ringed in stone. It had dried up, and Helen could see the bottom caked with dried mud. In its center was a square hole, from which hung a ladder. The hole was wreathed in darkness; how far down it went, Helen couldn't tell.

Without saying a word, Jennifer went into the pond and went down the ladder. Helen also descended into the darkness.

It felt like they were plunging into the depths of hell itself. Helen's palms were soon damp with sweat. Her hands slipped as they attempted to grip the ladder; she had to wipe her palms on her clothing several times.

The ladder kept going further and further downward. Jennifer continued her climb in silence; even when Helen called to her, she did not answer. But Helen could hear the sound of her footsteps on the ladder below. The only other sound that met Helen's ears was that of her own quickened breath. She wondered how long it had been since they had started their descent. Her hands grew numb as they gripped the ladder. She forgot in the monotony whether they were even ascending or descending.

Finally, her feet felt ground beneath them.

There was a tunnel - a tunnel bored into slate, much larger than the one through which they had been traveling. Lamps, positioned at even intervals, illuminated bare, damp rock. The wet, flickering light made the environment seem like the innards of a strange beast.

Helen spotted Jennifer walking ahead of her. "Hold on a minute, Jennifer!" Helen entreated many times, but Jennifer seemed to have no intention of waiting; Helen was unsure if the girl even heard her. Like an automaton, she advanced single-mindedly toward her goal.

Led by Jennifer, Helen proceeded into the depths of the cave.

Was it four, five minutes that they had walked?

She could see a door straight ahead of her, set into a man-made hollow in the rock. It was made of the same jet-black metal as the idol. The wooden door in the castle that had been painted black had perhaps been fashioned after this one. The cross-and-skull design had been carved into its center.

Jennifer opened the door.

When Helen entered, she was absolutely floored at the sight.

It was huge.

Yes, huge was the word for it. Light filtered in from somewhere, faintly illuminating the entire cave in a pale, eerie blue. Helen had never seen a cavern so huge before - not even in photos. When she looked up, she could see a stone ceiling far, far above.

And when she looked around, she found a forest of stalagmites on a prickly surface. They looked like bamboo shoots cultivated by a giant, and they did not seem to suit this desolate place. Something about the cave just set one's nerves on edge. The landscape seemed to reject human presence, as if warning that this was not a

place where man should tread.

To Helen's right was a cliff. Before it was installed a fence - made, naturally, of that same unknown metal. A look down from the cliff yielded still more stalagmites. The pointed rocks seemed to be just waiting for someone to fall.

On the other side of the cliff were countless bizarre creatures. Not real, of course - they were carved out of stone, in relief - but they were so realistic they seemed alive.

A man with the head of a fish holding a lance. An insect-like woman who was thrusting a sword through his stomach. A centipede aloft in the sky, its hundred legs all human - and all, of course, properly clad in leather footwear. The centipede was using its curved, bow-like teeth to maul to death an angel with bat-like wings.

All the monsters were fighting each other, killing each other. And in the center of all these twisted creatures stood a woman - the Madonna. Was she the model for all the others? The Madonna stood in proud beauty, imbued with a majesty that brought everything she surveyed to its knees. Again, there were thick spikes through both her eyes; the carver had even captured in loving detail the blood that ran like tears down her cheeks.

While Helen was taking in this wondrous sight, Jennifer had forged ahead alone. Helen scampered after her.

"The sons of the Great Father are undying. They exist in an alternate dimension," Jennifer began, not bothering even to face Helen.

The dark religion worshipped by Theodore Barrows called Scissorman the "son of the Great Father." There was no way Jennifer could have that information.

"Therefore, Scissorman cannot be destroyed. The same was true of Scissorman's twin when Jennifer 'destroyed' him. She purged his younger brother, Bobby, of his flesh, but he himself was not truly purged, as his spirit can yet be summoned. Bobby dwells even now far on the other side of the Dimensional Gate. And Jennifer herself thought that she had accidentally burned his older brother, Dan, to death with a container of kerosene - an erroneous conclusion. The flames only hastened Dan's metamorphosis."

Jennifer referred to herself in the third person. And her manner of speaking, and the words she spoke, were not her own.

So, then, who was borrowing her voice to speak?...

"You're Barton, aren't you? Or, rather, a second personality programmed by Barton via post-hypnotic suggestion."

"The giant fetus Jennifer saw was the larval form of the Son of the Great Father," Jennifer continued, ignoring Helen's question. "You could call it a chrysalis. For about ten years' time after their births, they remain in their cocoons - and then they emerge, in their true, perfect forms. It is a Son in that perfect form whom we are presently aiding." Jennifer continued her lecture in Barton's tone of voice.

It was then that Helen realized the implications of Jennifer's strange behavior.

What he had left within Jennifer - was what remained of his conscience.

With his genius-level gift for profiling, Barton was probably the first to realize the identity of Scissorman.

And he contacted him. To Barton, Scissorman was the ultimate lust murderer; he probably thought there was no finer research subject. And so he analyzed Scissorman firsthand.

Exceptional prudence was required when conducting direct interviews with murderers. Approach them with simple objectivity, and you wouldn't be able to get anything out of them. There had to be a bond of trust between the murderer and the profiler. You had to make the murderer's delusions your own - to pull the other's mindset into your own until the question becomes not "Why did he commit murder?", but "Why did *I* commit murder?". It was extremely difficult to do all this and yet maintain an analyst's objectivity.

He, too, fell under Scissorman's sway, and he himself became a murderer. Perhaps he was seduced by his Voice. But Helen knew Barton well, and she wondered: as Scissorman began to assert an aggressive influence on Barton, could not the psychologist have exerted his own influence on Scissorman?

Barton had committed murder after murder. For to Barton, would this not be view this as an opportunity to accumulate field research?

But even to him, there was a line a person must not cross. He thought he could control Scissorman, but the killer proved more powerful than he thought. Barton feared his recklessness. So in preparation for the critical hour, he created his trump card - Jennifer. Just as Quentin Barrows had left a note behind, Barton had left his own note inside Jennifer.

Everything that had happened up until this point could be considered an experiment of Barton's. But Helen thought it to have been Barton's conscience. She hoped that it were so.

"We cannot destroy them. But we can send them back to their own world." Jennifer stopped directly in front of the cliff. Part of it jutted further out into the abyss. There was no fence there. And at the tip of the protrusion, there was a great plate made of black metal that stood like a tombstone.

"They open the door to come through. We must therefore open it again - to return them whence they came."

The twisted cross emblem was drawn in the middle of the metal plate. And on top of it was a hole that looked as if it had been hollowed out.

Helen recognized its shape. It was in the shape of the idol.

"Professor Maxwell!"

A voice came from behind her.

"Help me, Professor!"

She turned around, and there was Edward, running to her.

"You're safe!" Helen began to run toward him.

But then -

Jennifer said in Barton's tone of voice: "He's Scissorman."

She was pointing at none other than Edward.

Helen stopped in her tracks.

"*He's Scissorman,*" Jennifer repeated.

"Get back!" Helen held Edward, who had been running toward her, at bay.

"What are you saying, Professor? It's me! Edward!" The boy said, walking toward Helen.

"Please, stop right there." Helen aimed the gun at Jennifer. The safety was already disengaged.

"Professor, stop!" cried Edward in a piteous voice.

But Helen cocked the hammer.

"Shoot. Then you'll see. Shoot him," said Jennifer in a level voice.

My, oh, my, this door will be the hardest!

Two doors have appeared before you.

First, if you choose to shoot Edward, open the fifth door [here](#).

Otherwise, if you choose not to shoot, open the fifth door [here](#).

Which one shall you open?

Now's the time to use your head.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Helen pulled the trigger.

She took Barton at his word.

Despite Helen's previous indecision, the bullet hit Edward square in the stomach.

A pure black mucus, like tar, spurted out of the wound.

Edward screamed.

Screamed? No - it was a cry of joy. A moan of pleasure.

Writhing, Edward opened his mouth wide. His jaw unhinged like that of a snake.

His arms flailed about, as if they had become unjointed; they folded up into his body like accordions.

And from his open oral cavity appeared a hand - a hand that sported claws. It grabbed hold of his own head.

And from its wrist came an arm; from the arm, a shoulder - all crawling out of Edward's mouth. The arm entwined around Edward's head like ivy - and after it emerged, another followed.

Edward's frame fell to the ground with a thud.

His shoes slipped off and plopped to the floor - and his legs, retracting like car antennae, began to fold up into his torso.

The cavity between the pair of arms that had appeared from his split lips contracted like a sphincter. And from there, toes appeared. And from his toes, ankles, then knees, then thighs - all birthed from the cavity.

Edward's body was turning itself inside out.

Finally, in one smooth motion, his head inverted itself. A long, purple tongue slithered out from between a jumble of jagged fangs and licked its lips.

"Pain is our pleasure."

So the figure said, lifting its crushed, bruised head. It wasn't a human voice; it was the voice of a beast imitating that of a human.

"Death is our salvation."

It stood, opened both arms wide, and raised them above its head.

"And terror is our strength."

Darkness ran from its hands like flowing ink. The substance seemed to swallow up all light and congeal in its hands.

"He is the son of the Great Father - the one called Dan," Jennifer stated simply.

The darkness became a giant, black pair of scissors, which Its hands gripped.

"...Scissorman," Helen muttered. She felt as if her very life force had been drained from her. The barrel of her gun was pointed at the ground.

"I thank you for bringing Jennifer all this way." The tone was Edward's, but the pronunciation was clearly not that of anything human. "On extremely rare occasion, a woman of the Barrows family will be born with a door within her own body. Like Jennifer here."

Edward Scissorman opened his shears wide and took a step forward.

"Jennifer is a Barrows?..."

"Her mother was a Barrows. Otherwise, Jennifer's father never would have been summoned to the Barrows

mansion. Why would we have need of a little obstetrician who lived so far from the manor? Because he knew about it all. He knew, and he still would help."

It was no longer even attempting to maintain Edward's tone of voice. "Jennifer is the final sacrifice." Barton's lecture continued using Jennifer's tongue. "By offering her up to the Great Father, Bobby will be reborn. The two sons of the Great Father will become one. And when this conjoined form is perfected and complete, the true Ragnarok will begin - and humanity will have no chance of survival."

"So the damned old meddler wants to interfere with his parlor tricks!" Edward howled.

Jennifer, unflinching, continued. "But it is pure malice that I want. And malice is a human concept. That means that this world must exist in order for malice itself to exist. I have no interest in a war between holy gods and evil demons. Now, Helen. Open the door."

"*Shut up!*" Edward raged, his voice assaulting Jennifer with the force of a physical attack. Helen, standing next to her, felt the shock; a pain ran through her as if her entire body were growing numb.

All strength left Jennifer's body. She dropped to the floor like a limp dishrag.

It was then that Helen took the idol out of her backpack. She knew how to destroy Scissorman. And to do so, she needed the idol and the spell that Quentin Barrows had left behind.

"Hand that over, Helen," Edward said, holding out his hand.

Ignoring him, Helen pushed the idol into the hollow of the plate that had been crafted of the same metal. The idol was drawn in like a magnet.

"STOP, HELEN!" Screaming, Edward ran toward her.

BOOM. The earth rumbled. The ground rocked beneath their feet. Even Edward couldn't keep on running. Scissors in hand, he braced his legs in an attempt to keep his footing.

Helen clung to the black metal plate and sat down where she had stood.

She knew what she had to do.

She screamed:

"OPEN THE DOOR, AND SHOW ME THE WAY! N-HA EE SH*!"

The last of the spell was drowned out by the uproar.

She saw the blinded Madonna crumble away. A cloud of dust rose up, and dislodged boulders tumbled down with crashes and bangs.

Beneath the collapsed Madonna, something appeared that was the color of coal. It was a door. A giant door as black as night.

The door slowly began to open. Beyond the door yawned endless darkness.

It was a darkness that exceeded contrast to any sort of illumination. It was the Void itself, swallowing up every last ray of light.

Pure Darkness.

The world beyond the door - that was where the evil soul that could be said to be Scissorman's true form found its roost.

Beyond the door teemed countless things that lusted for blood and slurped up terror. All of them shapeless, all of them wicked souls that gnashed their teeth out of a craving for slaughter.

Scissorman had emerged from beyond that door. And when it opened again, he would have to return.

The only way of sealing away the undying Scissorman.

A wind began to blow.

The air in the chamber began to be sucked through the other side of the door.

The wind grew stronger. Jennifer, who was unconscious, began to be dragged toward the door.

The force of the wind was tremendous.

Buffeted by the wind and quakes, Helen had to hold tight to the metal plate and could not move.

Jennifer's body was about to pass by Helen on one side.

Helen held out a hand - and, somehow, she managed to grab Jennifer's wrist.

The wind grew ever stronger.

Jennifer's body was already halfway over the cliff - and her lower half had already been taken aloft.

Edward was already no longer able to stand. His limbs were pasted to the ground like a lizard.

His giant scissors, separated from his hand, whirled end over end over Helen's head to the door.

And then, as if to chase after them, Edward's body was swept from the ground and flew threw the air.

And so he was blown toward the cliff.

His hands latched onto Jennifer's waist as he passed her. His sharp claws dug into her sides. Even through her clothing, they pierced her down to her muscles.

Helen heard Jennifer's unconscious groan.

She didn't think herself able to support the weight of two bodies with one arm. Helen clenched her teeth and endured.

Her fingers were losing their strength.

Jennifer's wrist seemed to be slipping away from her.

She heard voices.

Children's voices - completely out of place.

At first, she thought it an auditory hallucination - but that was not so.

A white haze began to filter in amidst the wind that was blowing toward the door. It was thin, then thick, then wove about Helen and Jennifer before finally coiling around Edward's body.

The voices were clear now, raised in song:

*Little John from the big castle
Found another friend
Slash, slash, slash
Straight to his tummy
Out his sides, red and yummy*

It was the nursery rhyme sung by the spirits of the dead children whose bones were piled in a heap in that room - and the mist that had ensnared Edward had at some point morphed into the forms of those very children. And that wasn't all: mixed in with the singing voices were moans of hatred - of long-harbored grudges and the spirits' pent-up rage. The fluid white souls took on the appearance of wailing faces and latched onto Edward's arms and head and waist.

Of course. What Theodore Barrows feared wasn't an enemy of flesh and blood. It was the vengeful ghosts of his own victims.

"*GET AWAY!!!*" Edward screamed; the children were pulling his fingers back one by one.

He howled like a beast.

It was his final cry.

His hand let go of Jennifer, and he was swallowed up by the door.

He melted into the darkness.

The door slowly began to close.

And with that, the wind began to abate.

Mustering the last of her strength, Helen pulled Jennifer's body toward her.

The rumbling still continued.

At last, Helen pulled Jennifer's body up from the cliff. At the same time, the black metal plate shuddered and collapsed, then fell to the bottom of the abyss.

Cracks began to develop in the base of the jutting precipice.

Helen hoisted the unconscious Jennifer onto her back.

With a rumble, the stalagmites began to crumble one after another, falling just like dominoes.

Small bits of rock rained down, clattering, as the ceiling began to crumble.

The stone walls surrounding them gave a roar as they cracked and fell.

Half-dragging Jennifer, Helen desperately tried to escape.

I will save her.

*No matter what happens, I **will** save her.*

The thought alone propelled Helen forward.

"Is it over?"

The question came from behind her. It was Jennifer.

"Is it over?" Jennifer asked again.

Helen answered with confidence: "Yes. It's all over."

She could see the door leading from the cave right before her eyes.

EPILOGUE

Helen didn't recall a bit of through what they had passed in their escape or how. Somewhere along the way, Jennifer had returned to consciousness, and they were able to run away together - which was their salvation. That was all she could say she remembered.

When Helen came to her senses, she realized that the castle was being destroyed right before her eyes.

It was a strange annihilation.

The tower; the huge roof; the ramparts of piled stone - all were being drawn toward a point in the center of the castle. Every single fragment of rock - every last speck of dust - was being swallowed up, like a little ship being drunk down by a giant whirlpool.

Eventually, nothing by the stone foundation remained, the rest having disappeared into the void.

There wasn't a cloud in sight. Only glittering stars and a big crescent moon adorned the dark sky.

Even Helen couldn't believe there once was a castle here.

"What happened?" Jennifer said, looking dazed at the destroyed castle.

"You don't remember?"

"No. ...I feel like I met Harris. And that I was in Barrows Castle, wasn't I? But I don't remember anything after that."

"It's all right, Jennifer." Helen put her arms around Jennifer and held her tight, as if she'd never again let her go.

Just over Jennifer's shoulder, framed by the moonlight, was a black figure.

Helen's grip on Jennifer tightened as she caught sight of it.

In the remains of the vanished castle, the dark shadow rose to its feet.

Had it noticed Helen and Jennifer? It was dragging itself toward them - a pair of giant scissors in its hand.

The arms holding Jennifer tensed. Jennifer looked up at Helen with a curious look on her face.

"...Jennifer," Helen whispered in Jennifer's ear. "Stay still."

Jennifer looked at Helen with questioning eyes. But Helen kept hers fixed on the shadow and continued to whisper: "When I say 'run,' you run. OK?"

Jennifer nodded silently.

Helen removed one of her arms from Jennifer.

She took out the gun tucked into the waist of her pants.

Its entire form shaking, the black shadow doddered toward them, edging ever closer to the two women.

Helen put both hands on the grip and cocked the hammer.

She gulped.

The chamber revolved with a metallic *click*, and then--

"*ACHOO--!!*"

A huge sneeze. Coming, unmistakably, from the dark shadow - which doubled over and began sneezing constantly.

Could it be?...

Gun at the ready, Helen slowly advanced toward the shadow.

Crouching on the ground, the shadow put down the scissors and murmured in a weak voice: "Man oh man oh *man*...I can't *stand* this."

Helen uncocked the gun, put it back in her trousers, and ran toward the figure. And she cried out: "*Gotts!*"

The receding hairline. The strong, solid build. There was no mistaking it: there sat Gotts, the perpetual middle-aged grouch. He had torn up his own undershirt and wrapped it around his waist.

His white shirt was stained dark red. His face was visibly pale, even in the night.

"You liar," Helen said, coming alongside Gotts. "And you said you weren't a tough guy! You're a *real* tough guy."

Gotts looked up at Helen, the sour expression ever-present on his face. Naturally, good old Gotts hadn't a word to spare on excess conversation; he just gave a grimace and stood.

"Jennifer, it's all right! It's just our stubborn old assistant inspector." As Helen spoke, she tried to lend Gotts her shoulder to stand. Gotts silently pointed to the ground: there were the giant scissors. They seemed to be telling her to pick them up. If only to bring them back to her workplace as evidence.

Helen took them in hand.

The giant scissors weren't as heavy as they looked. Freed from the curse, they'd become light as a feather.

As she watched Jennifer run toward her, Helen knew it in her heart - that the Clock Tower case was truly, finally over.

Unforgivable.

Your choices were absolutely unforgivable.

But there's no cause for concern.

No matter how wretched the conclusion, the story never truly ends.

Do you think that those who have witnessed such senseless and brutal deaths with their own eyes will ever know a day's peace?

That they will now simply forget this?

Sooner or later, those memories will have their revenge.

I am a disciple of the Great Father, he who holds sway over tales of the putrescent darkness and the Dead.

And I will be praying for a reunion.

~FIN~

**ENDING COMPLETE.
YOUR ENDING RANK IS ▲**

[Proceed to Afterword from author Osamu Makino](#)
[and Commentary from *Clock Tower* director Hifumi Kouno](#)

CHAPTER FIVE

"No! I can't do that."

"Teach--"

Helen put a silencing finger to Gotts's lips. They were dry and cracked, having already lost their color.

Helen took a vinyl sheet out of her backpack and began to wrap Gotts's stomach with it. She ripped his shirt above it and tied it tight with strips she'd made from the material.

The blood continued to flow all the while, and Gotts's face became as white as a sheet.

His lips moved. Helen brought her ears closer.

"This world's.....so full of tragedy.It all makes you wanna.....just give up.But even so.....I.....I don't want to die."

"It's all right! You're not going to die, Gotts! Whatever happens, you're *not* going to die. You *will* be all right. Gotts?.....Gotts.....*Gotts!*"

He had already stopped breathing.

Helen took his arm and felt for a pulse. His arm was cold - just a lump of meat.

"Gotts, you're joking, right?! If you die, who'll fight with me?" Helen bent his head back and checked his airway. "I won't let you get away with this. Fine, quit while you're ahead, *coward!*" Continuing, she opened Gotts's mouth and pinched his nose shut. Watching his chest, she blew air into his lungs. Making sure that his chest swelled out slightly, she then let go of his mouth. His chest naturally fell when she did so.

She repeated this twice, then put one of her palms on the center of his chest. She put her other hand on top of it. Keeping an eye on the clock, she sharply compressed his chest fifteen times to the rhythm of once per second. When that was finished, she once again resumed artificial respiration.

The ABCs of CPR. Just as per the textbook.

Over and over, Helen administered artificial breathing and heart compressions.

CPR taxes the strength of the one administering it more than one would think. In a particularly desperate situation, it drains one's very life force.

Even so, Helen persisted. For over thirty minutes, Helen continued artificial breathing and heart compressions without a moment's rest.

She checked his pulse. She examined his pupils. She passed a hand in front of his face.

In the end, she was forced to accept that it had all come to nothing.

Helen sat down on the spot and for a while stared at the ceiling like an abandoned doll. She probably would have stayed like this until Gotts's corpse had rotted away.

But she was not to be permitted that.

She heard a scream from beyond the door behind which Scissorman had disappeared.

That was...

A name came to Helen's mind, which had before been unable to think of anything.

Jennifer.

I have to save her.

The thought brought back a small bit of Helen's vanished willpower.

"That's right. I have to go."

Helen staggered to her feet and headed for the door.

Beyond the door was a chapel. There were four rows of pews, with an altar at the very front. Behind the altar was a fresco that covered the entire wall; its lower half was covered with naked, wounded men. Their rib bones protruded from their chests, and their fingers were gnarled in agony, grasping at the sky. The cruel painting brought to mind the prisoners of Auschwitz; it had been painted with such realistic brushstrokes that the twisted spirits practically seemed alive.

The men lay at the feet of a figure in the center of the painting - a Madonna. She looked just like a statue of Mary, but she held two children. The children were swathed in black cloth, and their skin was covered in festers.

Before the mural stood a cross - backed by a sun, with wings like those of a bird outspread.

And on that cross was Jennifer, crucified.

"Jennifer..." Helen murmured. And a voice came from the back pew:

"You're too late!"

Helen gently turned a bit.

"You're too late."

Helen could see her in profile. It was Kay. She was busily moving a thick needle and red thread about, as if she were sewing something.

"It's too late to save Jennifer or me. I warned you! But you didn't listen. *Ohhh...*" Kay clicked her tongue. "I sew and sew, and it all just comes *unraveled*."

Helen turned around to face Kay.

Her dress was open in front, and she was passing a needle through the skin of her stomach. Rough stitches covered her stomach, which had been split open lengthways.

From in between the stitches, the pink of her intestines jutted through.

"You're too late," repeated Kay, who then absorbed herself in sewing her own stomach.

Helen felt no fear. Ever since seeing Gotts through his death, whatever it was inside her that regulated her ability to experience emotion had been broken. But this wasn't the return of Scientist Helen. She simply could no longer feel.

The processing in her brain had slowed to the speed of molasses, and she had lost her mental clarity.

Helen slowly headed toward the cross. Somewhere along the way, she became aware of what had happened to Jennifer.

She was bound to the cross with rope. Her throat gaped open wide, as if she were yawning. The blood that had been spilled had already dried, staining her body red and black.

"Jennifer," Helen murmured beneath her breath. But Helen's clouded mind was no longer able to grasp the significance the word once held. She had just a desolate sense of loss.

Jennifer.

She whispered it again, and as she did, a door opened in the back of the chapel.

Was it a priest's sacristy? It was a small room, with a row of vestments lining the wall. But not one of them looked decent to wear. The passage of eighty years had rendered robes that were once most probably quite impressive into rotting rags.

Within this room, there was a statue of the same Madonna depicted in the fresco. In front of it stood a man. Several spots blemished his high-class English suit. They were clearly blood. In his hand, he held a rubber mask - the the same one, perhaps, that Gotts had showed her.

"It's all over, Helen." So said the man, turning around.

"Professor Barton..." The name popped into Helen's clouded consciousness.

"Apathy, is it? Or perhaps a third personality has surfaced. Perhaps that is a blessing. This is the end for you. You've struggled so to reach this point. In my scenario, you were supposed to be the first to die. When you fell into that hole, you know."

"Your...scenario, Professor?"

"Yes, my scenario. I've been able to collect some invaluable data."

Deep down within Helen's muddled consciousness, a small spark lit.

It was rage.

Within her filmy, leaden consciousness, rage began to smoulder.

"I've had quite the time myself. Can you imagine how much pleasure the terror and the deaths wrought by my own hands has given me?" Barton gave a carefree smile.

The words were like a rush of fresh oxygen to the flames of Helen's anger. They flared like a white-hot explosion. The apathetic figure was vaporized in the blink of an eye. Helen's mental faculties became clear, and she had an unclouded grasp of her situation.

She continued to feign apathy. She dropped her backpack and began to absent-mindedly root around inside it.

"What's wrong, Helen? Did you forget something? It won't matter what you find at this late hour! You're already--"

Within the backpack, she got a firm grip on the handle of her survival knife and nonchalantly stood.

And with one smooth motion, she stuck it in Barton's stomach.

It was so easy, it was almost fun. The knife was buried in Barton right up to the hilt.

Helen looked up at Barton.

An expression that could almost be described as pity crossed his face. He laughed.

"I thought you were smarter than that. How unfortunate."

Helen let go of the knife and stepped back. "Professor, you're--"

And that was all she said. The next words would not come.

Barton pulled the knife out of his stomach. A dark brown, mucus-like fluid oozed out. And that was all.

"I have been given death by him, and been reborn. Death was such sweet agony - an incomparable pleasure! And I wanted to share it with the world. I consider myself a philanthropist, but what do *you* think, Helen?"

"No, you're too late. And I went out of my way to warn you!" Helen turned around, and there was Kay. A long length of intestine drooped out of her stomach.

Professor Maxwell. I would be grateful if you, too, would lend me your aid.

The words slithered directly into Helen's mind. It was viscerally repulsive, like a filthy finger being forced into her mouth.

From behind Kay, with an almost bashful smile on his face, appeared Edward.

He held in his hands a giant pair of scissors.

"Edward. You're..."

"That's right! I'm Scissorman! I was so *happy* when I cut open Jennifer's stomach! I'd been waiting a whole

year!"

".....Then, you're the Scissorman from the Clock Tower case."

"That Scissorman was the *other* Barrows twin, Bobby. I am his older brother, Dan. I was that giant fetus Jennifer thought she'd burned to death."

Barton approached Helen, the knife he'd pulled out of himself in his hand. He explained to Helen in his habitual lecturing tone: "One could call that form a chrysalis. The sons of the 'Great Father' born in the Barrows mansion adopt that form for about ten years. And then they finally emerge. Upon maturity, they take a form like Dan--like Edward here."

Helen took a step backward.

There was Kay.

"It's so fun! To be dead and yet alive. Edward's killed me so many times. But I suppose you can't understand how *good* dying feels until you've experienced it yourself." Kay turned her vacant eyes skyward, as if remembering the pleasure. Her breath became ragged with newly-inflamed desire.

The beautiful boy at her side opened his scissors wide and put Helen's neck between its glittering blades. "You'd be a good person to join me, Professor. Like Professor Barton and Kay, and Harris. They all kept a black beast within their hearts. A brutish beast with a smell like mud from a ditch. *You* know."

"No. I don't--"

"Helen. Those who are attracted to criminal profiling all keep a black beast within their hearts," Barton declared. "And it is because of the very presence of that beast within us that we wish to know its true form. As I do. As *you* do."

"No. Not me." Helen turned her head to the side, like a child refusing the nasty food put before her.

Again, the Voice forced its way into Helen's head. *Now, join us, Professor. Even if you just think it in your head! That you want to join me, I mean. I control death. Death is my plaything. Join me, and you would continue to live even if your flesh were destroyed. And you can savor it again and again - the pleasure of dying.*

"No. *Never!*" Helen said, practically in tears.

"Jennifer wouldn't join us. She couldn't. And do you know what we're going to do with her body?" Now speaking out loud, Edward narrowed his eyes.

Helen could only stare at the beautiful boy in terror.

Without waiting for a reply, Edward continued: "We're going to *eat* her. Scoop out her guts and chew them *all* up. For, you see, with bodies that have experienced enough terror before they die, the terror, the *fear* seeps into their organs. And that is our nourishment. We *feed* on terror. Terror is our *strength*."

Now, Professor. It's time to decide. Join us - or be eaten by us. Personally, I *want* you to join us. Tell me - even just with your mind, Professor! Tell me that you want to meet the undying death."

"**NO!!**" Helen screamed.

And so the scissors closed.

EPILOGUE

Was the air conditioner on a little high? thought the student. But before his eyes, on the sofa, sat Prof. Barton, the most powerful person on the campus beside the university president. And he was famous among the students for being completely intolerant under any circumstances of any interference. In class, of course, he would allow no interruptions from the likes of students.

Scratching his goose-bumped arm underneath the table, the student said: "Your paper was just superb, Professor. I mean, I know that me getting the wrong idea and praising you for the wrong reasons might make you *upset* more than anything, but..."

"I'm pleased," Barton said, looking not a bit pleased at all.

Looking at him, quite another thought came to the student's mind. He could stand the cold still. But the smell...

He took a surreptitious glance around the research lab.

He'd heard about the smell from other students - the smell in Barton's lab, of something rotten. There were rumors about the campus - nasty rumors, about the source of the rotting smell in the criminal profiling professor's office. That there had to be a dead body hidden somewhere in there.

"So, what drew you to my paper?"

The student, who had been looking around for a decomposing body, glanced nervously at the professor. "...I thought the best part was how you said that it's murderers who speak of death in the first person. I mean, well, it seemed really realistic..."

"My thesis is not a novel. I do not believe that realism has any purchase in that context, but..."

"Oh - yes. Forgive me." The student nodded, with a serious face.

"Well, there's no need to apologize."

The research student changed the subject. "I'm sure that case - the second Clock Tower incident - gave you a lot to think about, Professor."

"Indeed. The case certainly changed me."

The student realized that he smelled rotting meat every time Barton opened his mouth.

Was it the professor's bad breath? Did he have stomach issues or something? Come to think of it, the professor seemed an awfully frightful color. Was it cancer?

"That the perpetrator of a case that had claimed so many lives had come from the research lab was a smirch upon the department's name, but it also left me a great deal of research material."

The student had once seen the perpetrator, research assistant Harris Chapman. He was a short man who seemed to be a mass of insecurities - just the type of man who had the makings of a psychotic killer.

"There were only three who survived the incident, counting myself. Poor Edward - he had a hard time of it again."

There was no one who fit that description better than that boy, thought the student. Only thought it, of course; he didn't dare utter it out loud. "He was the lone survivor of the first Clock Tower incident, wasn't he?"

"There was another survivor, but, unfortunately, she was lost in the second case. So, then - you wanted to assist in the research here?"

"Uh - y, yes. Yes, I did." It was true that he had been drawn by Barton's research. He knew that there was now not a single assistant left in Barton's lab, and so he came to speak to Barton directly about it.

But he had a few misgivings now. Barton was a stranger man than he had heard.

"What *is* the act of murder to a murderer? Consider that, and you will eventually touch upon the meaning of death itself. That is clearly explained in my paper, but..."

Barton continued talking, but the student's attention ever so slightly drifted.

He was staring at Barton's lips. There was something there.

Something small and black, that left the professor's head from the tip of his lips.

It was a fly. Fat and plump and black as coal.

It crawled to Barton's cheek, then flapped its wings and flew off.

The student stared at the fly. It gave a grating buzz as it flew.

The smell of rotting meat grew ever heavier in the air.

Pleasant ending, wasn't it?

You made some pretty good choices. I liked them.

Death is the final pleasure left to humans.

If you think I'm lying, try it yourself.

If you like, I would not mind being your guide.

I am a disciple of the Great Father.

He who holds sway over tales of the putrescent darkness and the dead.

Call me when you begin your journey toward the other side.

~FIN~

ENDING COMPLETE. YOUR ENDING RANK IS **D**

[Proceed to Afterword from author Osamu Makino](#)
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CHAPTER SIX

"Don't listen to this man!!" Jennifer's words rang out like a divine edict.

"Jennifer, you are--"

Jennifer fixed Barton with eyes like daggers. One look was enough to silence him - silence Barton, who had never listened to a word anyone else had said in his life.

There was fear in those eyes, Helen realized.

It was an extraordinarily sight. It piqued Helen's curiosity.

"Jennifer, I want to hear what the professor has to say. It's all right, Jennifer."

Jennifer said nothing in response. She only gave a slight, silent nod.

"You have her permission, Professor."

".....You well know how difficult it is to interview murderers directly."

"The balance between objective observation and empathy for a murderer." A scientist had to take a thoroughly objective approach toward murderers. But it was difficult to gain a killer's trust through sheer objectivity alone. In addition, in order truly to understand the delusions unique to the killer, it was necessary to possess just enough empathy to make those delusions one's own. And if you were too empathetic, it was naturally impossible to maintain an objective viewpoint. If that balance were destroyed, the profiler himself might assume those delusions - a phenomenon known as infectious madness.

"I deliberately destroyed that balance."

".....Deliberately?" This was unthinkable. It was a taboo among profilers.

"Scissorman is magnificent. A perfect lust killer."

"You met Scissorman?"

"If I didn't meet him, I wouldn't be able to interview him, now, would I?" Barton said, a mocking smile on his face. "And *I* obtained his power."

Even if it were only once, Helen was ashamed of ever having had intimate relations with this man. She felt as if she wanted to scrape off any parts of herself his fingers had touched.

"Let us trace the actions of a lone killer. With bated breath, he lies in wait in an alley for a victim. He has the knife in his hand. A victim arrives. He thrusts the knife into her throat. The victim is frightened. Terror rules her. And the one who has given her this terror is the killer. As she pleads for her life, the killer sinks his knife into her stomach. And he decorates her with her own innards like a Christmas tree. Let us cut off her ear for a souvenir!" Barton took a gulp of his own saliva.

"And what does the killer feel when he does this? Putting ourselves in the killer's shoes - thinking, "how would *I* feel if *I* were doing this?" - is vital to criminal profiling. And I wanted to know - what would happen in *my* mind if *I* were a killer. So I tried it. It's simple, if you only try. And I knew - that, deep down, there is a thrill killet/lust murderer within *all* of us."

"What lies."

"They're not lies. I've already proven my hypothesis experimentally. I awakened the lust murderer within Harris myself. He was my first test subject."

"You're crazy," Helen spat.

"And what about you?" Barton fixed his cool grey eyes upon Helen.

"Me?..."

"You lost your father when you were seven years old. Your father had angina. He had an attack while he was in the bath. The attack *itself* posed no serious threat to his life - all he had to do was to take his medicine. And his medicine was in the bathroom. He never let his nitroglycerin out of his sight. He probably called for help many times. But, in the end, he drowned in that huge bathtub. There was no one in the house.But, where were *you*, Helen?"

".....I was in a park nearby."

"Yes, playing in the park. So you say. But there was not a single witness to this story."

"What are you trying to say, Professor?" Her voice was shaking. Her fingertips were cold. She wiped her palms, damp with sweat, on her clothing.

"I haven't psychoanalyzed you, but I can draw general inferences. You were afraid of your father. Afraid of him, yet you loved him. And what was it that you feared about your father?"

"Stop, Professor," Helen said, her head down.

"The teachers at your kindergarten and elementary school reported that you always came to class with cuts and bruises on you."

"W, when did you find out about this?"

"I make it a point to perform a thorough check of anyone who wants to become my partner. Particularly a superior assistant such as yourself. ...Now, about your childhood. The broken bones, the burns, the bruises...the list of wounds goes on and on. When you were asked about them, I understand you said at the time that you'd fallen down the stairs or burned yourself on the stove, is that correct? It wouldn't take *me* to figure out what was happening to you. Your elementary school teacher put a word to it: child abuse."

"Enough of these baseless accusations."

"They're *not* baseless. They are supposition grounded in fact. To speculate further, personalitywise, it was most probably responsible for your abnormal prudishness and your masochistic tastes during--"

"*Stop this!*" Helen screamed. "***Stop talking of such things in front of Jennifer!***"

"*She* doesn't mind. It's no concern of *hers*..."

Indeed, when Helen looked, she saw that Jennifer watched the two of them with indifferent eyes, no more interested than if she were watching a quarrel between two dogs.

"Well, then, here is what I think. You were sexually abused by your father."

"No....." Helen said listlessly.

"You loved your father. And you wanted to be loved by him. But your father did not love you in the way you wanted him to do so."

"*No!*" She tried to suppress her emotions, but her eyes brimmed with tears.

"That is why...you killed your father."

"*No!*" At some point in the proceedings, Helen had seized the gun. She pointed its barrel at Barton. "Please, *stop!*"

"You were in the house when your father had the heart attack. You heard your father calling for help. But you didn't try to save him. All you had to do was to bring him his medicine. If you had done so, he would have lived - you knew that. But you left for the park nearby. And waited there. Waited for him to die."

The sound of knocking in the bathtub.

Help me, help me.

Running to the bathroom and seeing him flailing like a madman, flapping his legs, his head occasionally bobbing with bubbles beneath the surface. Sinking. Sinking.

Turning her back to the voice and softly closing the bathroom door, leaving the house, going to the park, the swing, the swing, the pigeons are flying! Yes, the pigeons. Just quietly playing on the swing, until dark, until Mother comes.

Mother knew. She knew what I did. But she'll keep quiet - just like she kept quiet about what Father did. Forever. Forever.

"So, tell me; how did it feel - to kill?"

"It wasn't me. *It wasn't me! I didn't do anything!!*" Helen sobbed like a little child. The hand that held the gun was bobbing up and down wildly.

"It was fun, wasn't it? You enjoyed it, didn't you? It must have been a release for you. You must have felt *deliverance*."

"Stop!! I'LL SHOOT, I SWEAR!" Helen half-screamed. Her thumb cocked the hammer.

"Go ahead! Shoot me! Shoot me - then you'll understand. Understand the *joy* of killing. You should know it better than anyone. Go on. *Shoot me!*"

She tensed her trigger finger.

"SHOOT!" Barton screamed - just as the gun rang out.

It struck him right in the forehead, turning his interbrain and hindbrain to liquid, and exited via the back of his head.

He died instantly.

He's dead.

I killed him.

Of my own free will.

At this truth, Little Girl Helen instantly turned and fled into the deepest recesses of Helen's heart. But Scientist Helen did not appear. Logical analysis would not allow Helen to escape unscathed from her previous actions. Scientist Helen no longer held the power to rescue Helen's mind from this situation.

And so a third personality crawled out from the dark depths.

It was born to protect the Helen Who Had Killed. Born to convince her that killing was the correct way. It knew the joy of killing. The joy of murder she had tasted after letting her father die - the joy that had just now been released from the deep darkness and given free reign.

It's over, Helen.

A voice slithered into Helen's mind. Not of sound; of thought. Thought flowing directly into Helen's head.

Barton's role is over. Now we'll play together.

Jennifer was watching Helen. And at her side was Edward. They were a beautiful pair - they looked just like brother and sister.

"That's right." Helen nodded. "*You were Scissorman, weren't you, Edward?*"

Barton couldn't have faked tricks like coming out of the painting on the wall. Or the Voice. Those were the feats of something other than Barton - something other than human.

"I'm Dan," Edward said out loud. "I was that huge fetus Jennifer thought she had burned to death. But that wouldn't kill me. Our kind takes over ten years to mature in the form Jennifer saw. And then we emerge. Like a caterpillar turning into a butterfly! The heat only accelerated the process a little bit; that's all."

"So you're a butterfly, hm? And Jennifer?"

"The Barrows blood flows through my veins. My mother was a Barrows," Jennifer said merrily.

"Otherwise, we never would've called her father all the way to the mansion," Edward added.

"*Poor Father,*" Jennifer giggled. "He really loved my mother. He'd do anything she asked. Even if he knew it'd mean his death."

"When did you discover this?"

"After coming here. Edward told me."

Helen didn't know whether Jennifer was truly a Barrows or not. Edward could be just manipulating her with his Voice. But none of that mattered to Helen.

"You're safe. I'm glad."

Helen's words were heartfelt. Jennifer was safe. Nothing else really mattered. They could go back to their old life. Yes - everything would be as it was before.

EPILOGUE

Helen took a long vacation. The university was quite amenable to the idea upon learning of the incident.

Jennifer was at her side, in her pajamas. Helen had long dreamed of the two of them staying up late like this.

The television was airing a report on the second Clock Tower incident. It had been playing *ad nauseum*, the story being a staple on the newspapers, magazines, and TV as of late.

It was only natural, one supposed, considering that the culprit in this latest psychotic mass murder had been a profiling expert and premier scholar of psychology.

"Let's start soon!" Jennifer said.

She has such an adorable smile, Helen thought, her heart warmed at the sight.

"No! It's still too soon! We only just now managed to get the blame pinned on Barton, after all. We'd draw too much attention to ourselves if we started now. Let's wait six months. Edward will be settled in with his new parents by then."

"If we do that, do you think he'll invite us along?"

"Of course! His new father's a doctor. He runs a general hospital in the Oslo suburbs. I'll have him invite me over. Then, we'll chase him around with a giant pair of scissors!"

"What about the mask?"

"We don't need *that*, do we?"

"I'm so excited!"

"It'll be fun, won't it?"

"It'll be fun!"

And the two shared a laugh like the closest of sisters.

I have to hand it to you.

You made some pretty good choices.

Every keeps a dark beast within their hearts.

You've thought about it, haven't you?

About that person you want to kill.

About how good it would feel to bash their head in with a rock.

When that occurs, two doors appear before you.

I am a disciple of the Great Father, he who holds sway over tales of the putrescent darkness and the Dead.

And when that time comes, I will be waiting.

~FIN~

ENDING COMPLETE. YOUR ENDING RANK IS **C**

[Proceed to Afterword from author Osamu Makino](#)
[and Commentary from *Clock Tower* director Hifumi Kouno](#)

CHAPTER SEVEN

"No. I can't shoot Edward." Helen lowered the barrel of her gun.

"Thank you, Professor." Edward began to walk toward Helen.

"Thank you - for bringing Jennifer this far."

Edward leapt.

His movements were quick and smooth, like those of a monkey. They were, at the very least, not human.

His hands both latched onto Helen's neck. He straddled her hips with his legs.

"What--"

His fingers dug into her throat, and she could no longer speak.

Helen looked upon Edward, crouched upon her body. Even now, his skin was white as porcelain, and he was as beautiful as an angel.

Helen grasped Edward's hips and tried to throw him off. But his fragile flesh held unbelievable strength, and his grip on Helen's throat continued to tighten.

She swiftly began to lose consciousness.

Her vision was narrowing.

She was about to black out.

Like snow in the palm of her hand, her consciousness began to melt away, into blackness. But from within its

fading depths, Helen willed her fingers to tighten around the handle of her gun.

She pointed the barrel at Edward's thigh.

And she pulled the trigger.

She felt the pressure around her throat relent slightly.

But it was only for an instant.

Then, Edward's fingers once again clamped around her throat, their grip even tighter than before.

Helen raised the barrel of the gun and immediately took a second shot. Her target was Edward's stomach.

Twitch. Edward's body convulsed. But that was all. There was no change in the pressure around her neck.

And Edward laughed and said: "I am Dan. A son of the Great Father. My body is inviolable. You can't kill me with a *gun*."

"Helen, where'd you put the idol?" A voice called from behind Helen. It was Jennifer.

Edward's eyes shot to Jennifer. "You brought the idol?" he said, a shocked look upon his face. Jennifer had his attention, it seemed - and for a moment, the pressure around Helen's neck abated.

It was the opening for which Helen had been waiting. She thrust the gun beneath Edward's jaw and fired.

Black mucus flew out of Edward's open mouth with a *splat*.

His eyes had rolled back in his head.

And at that moment, Helen threw Edward's body off her with all her might.

Even Edward, strong as he was, was thrown to the ground.

Helen took off her backpack and took out the idol.

Edward, his eyes fixed upon Helen, slowly stood. A black, viscous fluid like tar dripped from the opening in his jaw. He expectorated something from his mouth, like he was trying to spit up saliva.

It was the bullet that had been fired into his oral cavity.

"Hand it over." Edward held out his hand.

"Jennifer!" Helen cried, throwing Jennifer the idol. Catching it, Jennifer pushed it into the hollow in the center of the metal plate. It snapped in like a magnet and fit perfectly.

There was a shock - a great upheaval, a giant *BOOM*.

The earth rumbled.

The ground began to shake. Helen crouched down by the metal plate and sat right where she had stood. Jennifer, too, sat down at the ground at the same time.

Even Edward was frozen in his tracks.

Jennifer raised her voice: "Open the door, and show me the way! N-ha Ee Sh*!"

It was the spell on the note left behind by Quentin Barrows. The one that said "Return thy child thou didst nestle to thy breast to the Darkness once more." *It* was the spell that could seal Scissorman away. And Barton had already known it.

The last words of the spell were almost inaudible under the roar.

The giant image of the Madonna on the wall crumbled in a cloud of dust. Huge fragments of rock were dislodged, cracked, and fell, revealing something pitch black beneath.

A door. Giant and terrible, the color of the darkness.

The door slowly began to open.

Beyond was an endless void.

The wind began to howl - and the air in the chamber began to be sucked through to the other side.

The wind grew stronger. Jennifer and Helen crouched down and grabbed the metal plate so that they wouldn't be blown away.

But Edward, who had nothing to support him, began crawling like a lizard on all fours toward the pair.

"The women of the Barrows family are born with a door within them. Like Jennifer, here." Jennifer began to speak in a composed tone completely at odds with the surroundings. "Her mother was a Barrows. That was why her father was called to the Clock Tower mansion."

Edward couldn't make any headway. His body began to be dragged back toward the cliff. His grasping nails left gouges behind as they clawed the earth.

And so Edward's body was borne aloft.

"Jennifer is the final sacrifice." Barton's lecture continued using Jennifer's tongue. "Through consecrating the door possessed by a Barrows woman in the name of the Great Father, Bobby would be reborn. The two sons of the Great Father would become one. And when their perfect, unified form was complete, all things evil would descend through the door, and our world would come to an end. But if the door is opened beforehand, then Scissorman will return to that absolute darkness, his original home."

The wind was horrendous.

The gales continued to push Edward toward the cliff.

Swept off his feet, whirling round and round, Edward passed by Helen. As he did so, he latched onto her hips. His sharp nails dug into her sides.

Dragged along by Edward, Helen, too, began to be blown toward the cliff. She was hanging on to the metal plate by the tips of her fingers. Her body was more than halfway over the precipice, flying out over its edge. Edward's own body, clamped onto Helen's, was waving like a banner.

Jennifer reached for Helen's hand.

"But it is pure malice that I want," Jennifer began, her expression utterly unchanged. "And malice is a human concept. That means that this world must exist in order for malice itself to exist. I have no interest in a war between holy gods and evil demons. I was successful in creating a creature of pure malice. And she is the only one I wish to survive. Farewell, Helen."

Like a child playing, Jennifer pulled Helen's fingers up one by one.

It took hardly time at all to peel them all off the plate.

And then Helen, along with Edward, was swallowed up by the door that brimmed with deepest darkness.

In the blink of an eye, Jennifer's face, which watched her with a smile, receded to a speck in the distance.

And so, the door closed.

EPILOGUE

The morning sun was dazzling.

It was a clear, bright day without a cloud in the sky - uncommon for these environs.

The old castle atop the cliff bustled with a rare sight: visitors. The castle had never played host to this many guests - not even eighty years ago.

But its current occupants were not royalty attired in high finery; merely officers in decidedly unromantic uniforms. Outside, newspaper and television reporters besieged the castle - to give their own lighthearted spin on the proceedings, to be sure.

But in all probability, there was no one who knew what had transpired here. All would end in mystery.

And the girl who had been embroiled in two mass murder cases would most certainly be the focus of media attention.

But they most probably wouldn't be able to understand *her*, either. How was it that she alone survived? What were her plans - what was it that she wanted to do before anything else upon going back to Oslo?

And so, the creature of pure malice was returned to Oslo two days later. It would be a year before, in that very city, the third case would begin.

Congratulations.

I would say this would be the optimal ending.

The tale proceeded just as I had anticipated.

Well? Did you enjoy the terror to its very end?

What? You want more terror, you say?

Ho, ho, is that so?

Well, then, I shall lead you there. Through the final door.

I am a disciple of the Great Father, he who holds sway over tales of the putrescent darkness and the Dead.

Allow me to show you to the end of this world.

~FIN~

**ENDING COMPLETE.
YOUR ENDING RANK IS B**

[Proceed to Afterword from author Osamu Makino
and Commentary from Clock Tower director Hifumi Kouno](#)

The quotations used at the beginning of each chapter were taken from the following works:

Part One:

Deviant: The Shocking True Story of Ed Gein, the Original Psycho, by Harold Schecter

Part Two:

Son of Sam, by Lawrence D. Klausner

Part Three:

The Encyclopedia of Modern Murder, by Colin Wilson & Donald Seaman

Afterword

[Translator's note: Osamu Makino's Afterword is spread out across both the Jennifer's Part and Helen's Part novels. Both halves are presented here.]

It was a long, dark winter night.

I was gazing at the setting sun, my mind darkened by melancholy thoughts.

Behind me, my son, not even a year old, was crying. His voice was weak. No wonder; he hadn't been given milk in two days.

My wife, suffering from consumption, said from her damp futon: "Dear, it's time to give it up. You haven't had a single book come out since the critically-acclaimed, on sale now! *Mouse* was published last year, have you? It was foolish of you ever to have thought of becoming an author! ::HACK HACK HACK::"

"Perhaps..." I nodded.

Ever since writing the critically-acclaimed, on sale now from Hayakawa Publishing! *Mouse*, about boys who play with illusions, I indeed hadn't written a single book. My savings were already exhausted. The only path left to me was...

FAMILY SUICIDE

The words in bold Mincho type, wrapping around the front page of the paper, floated through my head.

"Dear...take this---:cough cough cough:: ::HACK HACK HACK:: ::HAAAAAACK::"

Rocked by coughs, my wife hacked up blood. Wiping off where the fresh blood had fallen on the mat with a rag, I looked at what my wife held out. It was a medicine bottle marked with a skull. It was poison - that fact was clear to me as daylight.

Then it happened - the phone rang. Flustered, I picked up the receiver, and in my frenzy, I ran my lower lip into the phone with such force that I broke off my two front teeth.

"Hewwo?"

"Hey, it's K from ASCII. Sorry for being out of touch."

It was a call requesting a manuscript.

Thank you, K. Thank you, ASCII. Now, I have rice to eat.

Crying rivers of tears, I continued to dance with joy like a madman in gratitude to my editor.

Several days later, I went to a coffeehouse in Shinjuku; I had a meeting there. Finally, K, who was in charge of this whole affair, appeared, brandishing a giant pair of scissors. I was impressed; it was the type of

fashionably-late entrance one would expect from someone involved in horror.

"I'm K, from ASCII. Pleased to meet you! I brought these; I thought they'd provide some inspiration for you." K put the scissors beside the table, wiped the sweat from her brow, and handed me her business card.

"Me too. Pleashed to mee' you." (By the way, my two front teeth were still broken.) But I still made it through the meeting all right, and several days later, a Playstation and a copy of *Clock Tower 2* arrived at my home. And so began my several-days-long battle with Scissorman.

Now, here, at this point, you have to choose one of two options. If you think, *this book seems interesting*, please buy it, bring it home, and read it from the beginning. And if you want to know how this Afterword turns out, please buy the *Clock Tower 2 Adventure Novel: Helen's Part* book and read that, too.

Makino and Makino's family will be praying for you to make the right choice.

And so, I extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who's given me their support in the process of writing this book..

- Osamu Makino, March 1997

Afterword, Part 2

Summary of previous Afterword: *Impoverished author Osamu Makino is commissioned to write a novel by ASCII. Having escaped family suicide, Makino begins to play Clock Tower 2.*

So, anyhow, I was sent *Clock Tower* and a PS itself from ASCII.

The theatrical-trailer opening grabs me by the heart. The game's set in Northern Europe. Oh! Here comes a pretty girl! It's decided that my heroine shall be Jennifer. OK, OK, good. Good. Oh--I got killed. Oh, no, my son's crying in the back room - my infant son, only three months old. I pause the game to hold him and rock him. He's stopped crying. I continue. Run away, Jennifer! Run, Jennifer! Oh--my food's burning. I stop the game and go to the kitchen. I'd been cooking rice gruel for my sleeping wife, who's ill with consumption. After I have her eat, I begin again. AAAAAAAAAAAAAAH! Scissorman's here! Hide, Jennifer! I click on the locker. WAAAAAAAAAAAAAH! My son's crying. I have to give him milk. Holding him, I do so. Oh, good; he's asleep. I continue. Ohhh, Jennifer's dead. I forgot to pause it. Dammit! Let's continue. Oh, damn; I forgot to save, too. ::HACK HACK HACK:: I rub my coughing wife's back. "I'm all right; go back to your work. I'm being a bother to you." "Don't worry about my work," I tell her, continuing. I've played through this so many times, I'm beginning to get the hang of it! *Ding-dong!* A package? I hurry to the door. Hello, what's this? *The Lusty Licks of Dog Boy*? No! Who asked for video home delivery?! This is the *neighbor's*! Tossing it aside with a shout of anger, I continue. The phone rings. I pick up the receiver. It's my contact from ASCII, Ms. K. "Is the manuscript coming along?" "Ah, ahahahahaha. It's coming along!" My son's crying; he's awake. I hang up the phone and pick up my son. The phone rings again. "Mr. Kantou in sales, please." A wrong number! With an angry yell, I hang up. Scissorman's here! I give Scissorman some milk. The phone rings. "::pantpantpant:: Hey, *baby*, what're you doin'?" A prank call! I slam down the receiver. The phone cracks. Jennifer's coughing. Ms. K's here with a giant pair of scissors. *Is the manuscript done yet~~!?*

Yet?!?!

The end of the game's still way far away. I haven't written a line of the manuscript. Me and my wife and my three-month-old newborn son slam our heads on the tatami mat in a kowtow, scraping our foreheads, and I say: "Sowwy. Nothin' done yet."

(It's a long story, but I busted out my two front teeth in the afterword in *Jennifer's Part*.)

That's a pity! But I suppose it can't be helped! So saying, K left behind a book and went back to her office. *This* book was the *Clock Tower 2 Official Guidebook*. With this, I can make a beeline for the happy ending. The same can't be said for writing the manuscript, though.

Hang in there, Makino. You can do it, Makino. The day's coming when you can pay your heat and electric bills, Makino.

Finally, I'd like to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who's given me their support in the process of writing this book.

- Osamu Makino, April 1997

Commentary

At last, the novelization of *Clock Tower 2* has been released - and within it, we were able to incorporate a good deal of background information we couldn't in the games. The reasons why we couldn't include this material in the games would take some explaining, but to keep it short, for the time being, let us say that our players had so many questions that needed answering and that we just had so much to get out of us that this novel was, from all perspectives, cause for celebration. There are, however, numerous hints and a good deal text in the game along the lines of this material, so once you've finished reading these novels, try playing the game again afterward. I think you'll have quite a different and interesting experience in many parts. And, of course, if you haven't played the game yet, please do so - along with reading Jennifer's novel.

To give just one example, in the novel, there's a scene where Quentin Barrows conducts a ceremony to create a magic bronze dagger, and the girl he sacrificed then appears in game Jennifer's story as a mummy when you get the dagger. What sort of relationship existed between her and Quentin Barrows? That is something you all must imagine for yourselves.

Well, I think pretty much all of you reading this have to have played the game, so what do you think? For those of you for whom this book did not meet your expectations, I apologize, but there are concepts hidden here that you could say express my outlook on horror. The one I wanted to prioritize above all was a "B-movie feel." When it comes to horror, the more B-movie it is, the more fun it is, I think...but what do you all say? Actually, I first became aware of B-horror in grade school, when I saw a signboard in front of the Shinobazu Pond movie theater for a film entitled *Motel Hell*.

Hmmm...*Motel Hell*...

...what an utterly wonderful title, isn't it?! You have the sleaziness of the word "motel," and the directness of "hell." It has a disreputableness that sticks to you like humid air on a hot day, and you can't call it anything but

superb. Like the freak shows once seen at temple festivals all over the country, the hanging curtains and the taglines on the signboards there, the disreputableness lives on in my heart to this day. If you get a sense of this disreputableness and cheapness from this work, then that would be the highest honor I could receive as a director.

Along those lines, I've recently become convinced that maybe instead of *Clock Tower*, I should've chosen a title like *The Demon Scissor Man*.

- Director Hifumi Kouno (Human), April 17, 1997, in front of a 17-inch monitor

Novel by Osamu Makino. Translation by R. Capowski at RACapowski@sceneryrecalled.com, November 19, 2013. Clock Tower is copyright Human, ASCII, Agetec, and Capcom, none of whom are associated with or sanction this document.

Translation notes:

- The endings are not overtly ranked in the novel; the letter grades are my own addition. However, given the progression of the novel, the hierarchy of the endings is quite self-evident. - All previous instances of "Burroughs" in previous versions of this document have been changed to "Barrows" just for simplicity's sake, as the Barrows surname is the only proper name (er, outside Anne and Rolla) that possibly might not be the same from the Japanese to the English version. (~~But I forgot: the voiceover in the Japanese version's opening refers to the "Barrows Castle" as well, so maybe there is no discrepancy between versions on this point. Note from 8/28/14: I am dumb; the Japanese-version voiceovers do indeed use "Burroughs."~~)
- Part One, which was initially translated a good time before the rest of the novel, has undergone some minor rewriting primarily for purposes of readability and flow. A few significant corrections, however: 1) The narrator of the interludes and forks in the road is a "disciple" of the Great Father, not a "child" of said god; 2) the aides in the psych lab know about Helen's fling with Barton due to Prof. Jackass openly blabbing about it; and 3) when Helen has her mini-breakdown in the guardroom during the first Scissorman chase, she ends her "I'm going to die" spiel not with "No," but with "Forgive me."
- I do not own the books cited as the sources of the quotations that open each part. While the prefaces to Parts Two and Three are direct quotes from famous murderers and easily researched, the preface to Part One is a translation of a translation of a police report excerpt, and my text almost certainly does not match its text word for word.
- Furigana in the text identify the early Barrowses as Marcher Lords ("maachaa roodo"). To my understanding, however, Marcher Lords concerned themselves with the border between England and Wales; the Barrows Castle is on the Scottish border, where the equivalent (and confusingly similarly-titled) office was a Lord Warden of the March. I've taken the liberty of substituting the appropriate title, though it is a deviation from the original text.
- No, I don't know why Gotts claims he's at Barton's office at the end of his Scenario 2 when he and Helen meet down at the police station.
- The bit from the *Völuspá* that Edward's reading in the library scenario is a slight mash-up of two different translations. I know that's inadvisable, but no single English translation of the verse was reflecting all the nuances of the Japanese translation. My apologies to Carlyne Larrington and Henry Adams Bellows.
- I've used the English versions of "Little John from the Big Castle"; it's worth noting that the Japanese game uses the same English-language vocals and lyrics as the U.S. release. The Japanese lyrics printed in the novel are close enough to the English lyrics for a direct quote of the latter to be serviceable in the novel translation. A literal translation of the Japanese yields a few slight differences, recorded for posterity here:

"Little John from the big castle/plays with a happy boy/chop chop chop/he slashes his head/and out comes red water"

"Little John from the big castle/plays with a cute girl/chop chop chop/he slashes her eyes/and out comes white water"

"Little John from the big castle/plays with a little boy/chop chop chop/he slashes his stomach/and out come red cords"

- I believe that there's a typo in Edward's transformation in the A ending. It details Edward's old arms folding up into his body, whereupon a single new arm emerged from his snake-mouth - after which (preceded by a "followed by"), the text repeats the snippet about his arms folding up. After the transformation is complete, though, Edward indeed has a proper, externalized pair of new arms. I think that Edward's first new arm was supposed to be "followed by" his second and that the repeat of the folding-up text was an error. I've amended the text accordingly, but please bear in mind that my judgment may be incorrect.

- I actually sampled a bit of geitost for research purposes. Nolan is indeed correct about how sweet the cheese is - the frequent comparisons to fudge and caramel are quite apt. It does, however, have this yogurty, salty tang that, while not unexpected for a cheese, is kind of out-of-place among geitost's mellow notes, and I preferred using a good unsalted cracker or piece of bread to mute it.

I probably should note that the only variety of geitost available in my area, Ski Queen, is apparently not true-blue geitost, as it is made partially with cow's milk instead of completely with goat's milk, so YMMV. (YMMV in any case regarding survival-horror-related cheese opinions, of course.)