

## chapter 8

### see-through nuns

The doorbell rang at ten past nine. Peter Barr stood scowling on the doorstep. He was a short, barrel-chested man with a bald head but an enormous old-fashioned walrus moustache. He was scowling because he was a martinet about being on time.

“Sorry sorry sorry,” he bellowed quietly. Jenny raised her eyebrows. “Not my fault,” said Peter. “Got a new guy come along, Martin, he was late.”

“Okay,” said Jenny. She hefted a bag full of sandwiches and flasks of coffee, passed it to Peter. He stood on tiptoe to peer over her shoulder.

“Any sign of – uh?” he whispered. “The shade.”

Jenny turned. “You there Harry?” she shouted. “Peter says hi!” After a few moments during which nothing at all happened, she turned around again. “He must be out,” she told Peter gravely. They had this conversation every time the investigative group got together. Jenny didn’t know whether it was out of maliciousness or some ghost-wide agreement not to reveal themselves to investigators, but Harry always stayed low when Peter or any of the group was there. She got the tape recorders from the back of her car. “New guy?” she asked.

“Yeah, hope it’s all right. Met Markus, Markus said it’d be okay, I said he should of checked with you but too late now. What d’you think?”

Jenny shrugged. “The more the merrier. Any experience?”

“Don’t know,” said Peter. “Only met ’im half an hour ago, here you go.” This last as he pushed the provisions through a back window into his beaten-up van. Jenny could see vague movements inside. “Got it!” sang out AJ. Peter held open the door for Jenny, slammed it behind

her. “Hi,” said a voice. “Jenny?” said Markus from the shadowy depths. “Jenny Pewsey – head of Spooks Anonymous – Martin Campbell. Martin, Jenny.”

Jenny froze. She heard her grandmother saying Love makes a fool of all of us, Jenny-bird. Love makes a fool of all of us. Love makes a fool of all of us.

“Jenny?”

“Martin?”

Neither of them could see the other in the darkness. Peter, oblivious to the exchange, climbed into the driver’s seat and slammed his door. “Up up and away!” he boomed cheerfully. He turned on the lights, started the engine. “Tonight’s the night, we’re gonna be all right! See-through nuns on camera, hail Mary’s on tape, what d’you say?”

“You two know each other?” asked Markus.

“Say what?” bellowed Peter, driving away from Spook Corner, back past the church.

“I think so,” came Martin’s voice.

“You bastard,” said Jenny. “You stood me up. I was all dressed up like an angel.”

“It was a long time ago,” protested Martin.

“Time heals all wounds,” sang out AJ.

“Shut the fuck up, AJ,” said Jenny.

“Here now, here now,” bellowed Peter. “We don’t want no negative vibes, do we? We need to even out those gamma waves, Jenny. Sock the bastard after the stake-out, okay?”

“Yeah, yeah,” muttered Jenny.

“See, told you you should of checked him out,” shouted Peter happily. The van bounced off the church track onto smooth tarmac. “He’s a bastard, see? He stood up our Jenny.”

“I was eleven,” said Martin.

“Bastard at an early age!” bellowed Peter.

“You’re not helping my gamma waves,” remarked Martin.

“Hold hands, hold hands,” sang out AJ. “There you go, Martin. Feel better now?”

“Just hands,” warned Markus.

“Listen, I’m sorry,” said Martin. “It wasn’t my fault.”

“Not your fault,” mimicked Jenny.

“My dad was ill, he couldn’t take me. Didn’t your mum tell you?”

“Hold on!” shouted Peter. The van hurtled around a corner into a narrow country road. Its headlights slewed up into the air, illuminating deep overhanging branches, before it levelled out and careered down the uneven road. “Hoochoo gonna call?” chanted Peter. “Spooks Anonymous!”

“Jesus,” said Martin. “That really doesn’t scan.”

“You shut up,” said Jenny. A sudden thought struck her. “You got the key, Pete?” For an answer, Peter fished in his jacket pocket and produced an enormous cast-iron key, parts of it glinting in reflected light but most of it covered in flaking rust.

“Whoo hoo,” remarked Markus. “Never seen one as big as that before.”

“You,” giggled AJ. “One track mind, you have.”

“Eyes right!” bellowed Peter. “Should be a whatsit, a turning, drive, whatever. Holler if I pass it.”

The van thundered on for another mile or so, everyone peering out at the dark woods on the right. Eventually a sign indicated that Burrford Abbey was half a mile further on, and right on schedule two small brick towers with a huge iron gate between them came into view. Peter hauled the van to a stop. He and Jenny got out.

“See that?” said Peter. “A great huge gate and what’s on the sides? Nothing, that’s what.” He was right. Unless the trees concealed some sort of wall further away from the road, the gates stood in splendid isolation. “Shows how old it is, yes?” boomed Peter, fitting the key into the hasp of a gigantic padlock. “Gates still here, towers rebuilt, wall long since. Eh?” He pushed on the gates and they creaked open. He paused. “Sorry about the new guy, knew we should of checked.” Before Jenny had a chance to reply, he got back in the van and drove through. Jenny pulled the gates back together before climbing in after him.

“What’s this place?” asked AJ. “Markus said it’s all ruined.”

“It is,” said Jenny. “It’s an old abbey. You never heard of Burrford Abbey? The last time it burned down was when a monk carrying a candle fell over, knocked himself out. He never made it, got burned to death.”

“Then how d’you know that’s what happened?” asked Martin.

“You shut up,” said Jenny. “They found his body at the foot of the West stairs. His neck was broken.”

“Ooooh, an abbey,” mused AJ. Jenny surmised she must be thinking about having sex in a consecrated place. “I don’t think we’ve ever—”

“Thar she blows!” bellowed Peter. “This is it! This is really gonna be it! Dontcha just feel it?” He hauled the van to a stop again and killed the engine but, for the moment at least, not the headlights. None of them spoke. The building in front of them, even ruined and burned, stretched high into the darkness, its uppermost crenellations whitened by cloud-filtered moonlight. Ivy crawled all over the lower levels. One or two tall windows boasted old, small-paned glass but most were gaping holes in the sides of the abbey. The van headlights illuminated wide steps leading up to a huge, fire-blackened door. It was standing only partly open, but even so there was room enough

for two or three people to pass through side by side. “Jesus,” muttered Peter. “If this ain’t the place then there ain’t no place, what d’you say?” He turned off the lights. “Hoochoo gonna call?” he said quietly. “Over to you, boss.”

The team climbed out of the van and stood stretching their limbs on the hard, part-gravelled area in front of the abbey. Markus was a tall, thin, black student. He insisted on wearing his hair blown up in an afro fashion, even though everybody told him that style went out of favour some years before. He was studying mathematics at the local university and the reason he had answered Jenny’s call for volunteers to form Spooks Anonymous was, he said, because he had seen the ghost of his grandfather. “Day he died,” reminisced Markus when he first met up with Jenny. “Well it was night-time here, he came and sat on the end of my bed. I wasn’t dreaming, I wasn’t dreaming it.” He had eyed Jenny belligerently. “No, I’m sure you weren’t,” she said. “Did he say anything?” Markus had nodded. “He said, I’m going, Marky-me-boy. Don’t be being upset. I’ll be seeing Mame there. That was my grandmother,” Markus explained. “I never knew her.” He had sniffed and dragged the flared sleeve of his velvet jacket across his eyes. Everyone told him that the jacket was out of fashion too, but he ignored them. “So he wasn’t really a ghost,” said Jenny thoughtfully, “because he wasn’t quite dead.” Markus glared at her. “D’you want me to be joining your group or don’t you?” he said stiffly. “Oh yes, yes indeed,” Jenny had said hastily. “But we have to be objective and logical, don’t you see?” Markus had ignored her. “You’ll be needing to take on my girlfriend, then,” he said. “Where I go, she goes. Or comes,” he added with a small smile which at the time Jenny had failed to understand.

Now, Markus stood peering upwards at the one remaining tower of Burrford Abbey. Curiously, it started at the base in a rectangular shape, but gradually smoothed out to be a more typical round shape further up. Parts of it were smooth stone, other parts more modern brick where

it had been patched up over the years. Something moved in the topmost part of the tower. Markus started.

“What—?” he began.

AJ, clinging onto his arm, gave a shriek.

An owl, silent on outspread wings, drifted from the tower and swerved away from them, into the trees.

“Sorry,” muttered Markus.

“Oooh, I thought I was going to die,” said AJ happily.

Alison Jones was a short, blonde girl who worked as a hair stylist in Upshorrt Uni-Sex Hairdressing and Beauty Salon, known to most of its clientele as Yubes. Although she knew all about layering, giving perms and blow-dries and generally catering to the whims of older women who came in to recapture some lost youth by sprucing up their hair, what she really enjoyed was giving a haircut, being laid, giving a blow job and generally satisfying the sexual whims of the younger males who came into Yubes. Over the three years that she had been working at the salon, she had developed to a nicety the technique required. In the first place, when she spoke initially to a man she fancied, she would smile coquettishly, avert her gaze and blink rapidly. Sometimes she was even able to muster up a blush. Then, as she cut his hair, she would brush against him with her body, and especially with her full breasts, as she moved round the chair. “Is this all right for you, sir?” she would murmur into his ear, practically nibbling at his earlobe. “Shall I take a little off, sir?” She would lean forward to pick up a shaver, giving her target an eyeful of bra-less breast and nipple. “Is there anything else I can do for you, sir?” She would drop a comb into his lap, pick it up with fingers which probed beneath the protective Yubes sheet. If she detected an erection there, she would look straight into his eyes, smile, and whisper, “Want to fuck?” The answer was

usually yes, or a nod of the head. One customer nodded so violently that he impaled himself on the scissors AJ happened to be holding at the time, and had to be rushed to hospital. But usually AJ was able to smuggle her target into one of the female changing rooms of the Health branch of Yubes, where she would give him a blow-job, a condom, and then bend forward over the wooden slatted bench to enjoy being fucked from behind.

Now, as the moon broke free of straggling clouds and bore down at full strength on what was left of Burrford Abbey, she clutched more tightly at Markus's thin arm and said, "Oooh, spooky."

"Well, that's why we're here," said Jenny. She had been trying to make out Martin Campbell, but even in the moonlight it was hard to make out detail. As far as she could see, he wasn't especially tall or especially thin, he didn't wear glasses, he had hair that was either dark brown or black and was either untidy or deliberately spiked in the modern fashion, and he was wearing dark-coloured trousers and a jacket which looked neither shabby nor especially smart. She felt that if he was instantly replaced with another nondescript average-sized male while she blinked, she probably wouldn't notice. She did blink. As far as she could tell, it was still Martin Campbell standing there. She noticed that he was staring at her.

"What?" she said.

"Um," he said. "It was just that when I last saw you, you were wearing pigtails and a school skirt. I was just imagining—"

"The last time you saw me," interrupted Jenny furiously, "shouldn't have been the last time you saw me!"

"Vibes, vibes," soothed AJ.

“Hey hey,” said Peter dreamily. He was only an inch taller than AJ and his bald head gleamed in the moonlight. “This is gonna be the place, doncha just bet?”

“Okay, let’s get to it,” snapped Jenny. “AJ, find locations. Markus, you better go with her. Torches in the duffel bag. Be careful. Martin, help Pete with the cameras. I’ll get the recorder and walkies.” She stalked stiffly round to the back of the van. Peter handed a torch to everyone. AJ and Markus hurried off, pattering up the wide stone steps and disappearing through the abbey doors.

“What they doing?” asked Martin, helping Peter to lift out a large metal box from the van.

“What d’you think?” snapped Jenny.

“The guy’s gotta learn,” said Peter.

“Then you learn him,” said Jenny. She picked up a smaller box and followed AJ and Markus into the abbey.

“Jesus, you really pissed her off,” said Peter.

“She’s got a long memory,” said Martin admiringly.

Peter lowered his voice to a booming whisper. “What you doing here? Cos of her?”

“No, nothing like that,” protested Martin. “I had no idea she was, um, the boss. I’m researching a book. Didn’t Markus tell you?”

“He did not,” said Peter. “What, a book on haunted houses, shades, like that?”

“Um, no,” said Martin. “It’s on – well, it’s on obscure clubs and societies.”

“Obscure clubs and societies,” repeated Peter.

“Yes.”

They stared at each other in the gloom. Peter blew a sigh which made his moustache lift briefly into the air. “You better not tell her that.”



“I got that feeling,” agreed Martin. “I’ll have to do it eventually though. Email might be safer.”

“Yes,” said Peter. They hefted the box of camera equipment up the steps. “AJ’s finding latent spots. She’s gotta whatsit, a knack for it.”

“Yeah?” said Martin as they eased through the door and joined Jenny inside. “You’ve seen lots of ghosts, then?”

“You shut up,” said Jenny.

“Shades,” grunted Peter.

It took them half an hour to get set up. Peter was installed in a small chamber with fire-blackened walls about half way up the strange-shaped tower. AJ and Markus settled down in a vast, empty space near the back of the abbey. None of them knew what its original purpose could have been, though Jenny wondered if in fact it was the remains of several rooms tumbled together. She and Martin took up residence on some ancient wooden benches not far inside the entrance. The light from their torches picked out evidence of more recent habitation – an old mattress, empty crisp packets, a burned spot where somebody had lit a fire.

“Modern-day druids,” said Jenny. She flipped a switch on her walkie-talkie. “You okay, Peter?”

“Fine fine fine,” came Peter’s voice. “Nothing to report. Coffee good. Over.”

“Markus?”

“Nothing here,” sang AJ’s voice into the darkness. “Nothing happening.”

This was not strictly true. As soon as they had been left alone, she and Markus had stretched out together on the floor, wrapped their arms round each other, and started kissing passionately.

Markus had already insinuated his hand up AJ's jumper to fondle her breast, and she was already cradling the unmistakable bulge of his erection through his trousers.

"Now what?" asked Martin.

"Now we wait, and try to stay awake," said Jenny.

"Look, I'm really sorry about the party. But it was a long time ago. Can't you forgive and forget?"

"Never understood that," said Jenny. "If you forgive, you can't have forgotten, and if you forget, how can you forgive?"

"Um," said Martin.

"Oh, all right," said Jenny grumpily. "What were you dressed up as, anyway?"

"Oh, ah, um, I don't remember," lied Martin. He took a sip of coffee. "You ever actually seen anything on one of these – what do you call them – stake-outs?"

Jenny leaned forward slightly. "You're blushing," she said.

"And these cameras, how do they take photos when it's so dark?"

"Little Lord Faunterloj, was it?" asked Jenny. "Velvet jacket and pantaloons?"

"No," said Martin. "If you must know, I was Tumnus."

Jenny dredged up memories. "Tumnus the faun? You had hairy legs, and little horns?"

"And a tail," said Martin glumly.

"P'raps it's just as well you didn't come." Jenny turned on her torch and shone it directly at Martin. He clamped his eyes shut, put up an arm to protect himself from the glare.

"What?" he squeaked.

"I just wanted to see what you looked like," said Jenny. She flipped the torch off and darkness flooded back, seeming more impenetrable than before now that Jenny had destroyed their

night vision. She nodded to herself. She recognised Martin immediately, mainly because he still sported a rash of freckles across both cheeks, just below his eyes. Jenny remembered that this was one of the features she had fallen in love with, all those years ago. She wasn't sure it was quite so endearing now.

“You nearly blinded me,” complained Martin.

“Sorry,” said Jenny, not sounding very contrite. “Here, have a sandwich.”

“Can't see it,” complained Martin. “Where is it?”

“Oh, for goodness sake,” said Jenny. She reached out and fumbled a sandwich into his outstretched hand. They sat in silence, eating ham sandwiches and drinking hot coffee, as their eyes readjusted to the night. After a while, Martin waved his flask of coffee vaguely at the darkness. “Is anything really going to happen?” he asked. “I mean, really?”

This was the tenth time Spooks Anonymous had staked out a likely building, not counting the visit to Spook Corner. On nine of those occasions nothing much had happened, except once a white cat had jumped through an open window and almost given Jenny a heart attack. But once the group had staked out an old, disused, open-mine quarry, on a warm summer's night just over a year ago. Jenny remembered how they had set up one camera at the entrance to the quarry, another at its lowest point, and the third in the shell of a building the purpose of which was long forgotten. It might have been for storage, or it might have provided worker accommodation. At a little after midnight, Peter had reported feeling cold. “Temperature's dropping,” he had said. “Like a fridge here, over.”

“Getting cold,” squawked Peter's voice from the walkie-talkie. “Over.” Jenny jumped. Was he reading her mind? She thumbed the button on her handset.

“Eyes peeled,” she broadcast.

AJ was going to have difficulty complying with this instruction, as she was now kneeling in front of Markus with his cock in her mouth. All she could see was his pubic hair and the smooth expanse of his stomach, though truth to tell even those were hard to make out given that his skin colour blended almost perfectly with the surrounding darkness. Markus, on the other hand, was now on his feet, a hand placed on either side of AJ's head, and he dutifully looked around. "Walkie," he instructed AJ, who without taking his cock from her mouth groped behind her and found the handset. She waved it up into the air, and Markus grabbed at it. AJ slid her tongue round his glans. "Mmmmm," he moaned. She sucked steadily, cupping his balls. "Mmmmmm, mmmmm," he moaned.

"What was that?" came Jenny's voice.

"Mm, nothing," moaned Markus. "No change."

"Keep us posted," instructed Jenny. AJ giggled and almost choked as Markus's cock slipped down her throat. "Anything, Peter?" came Jenny's voice.

"Nope nope nope, just freezing," Peter responded. "Over."

"Keep us posted," instructed Jenny.

"Betcha," came Peter's voice.

At the quarry stake-out, Peter kept reporting that the temperature was dropping. At the other two locations it remained a warm, balmy summer night. "Got 'em rolling?" Jenny had asked. "Y-y-y-yes," Peter had shivered. "B-betcha. Over." He had seen nothing, except what might have been a patch of freezing mist drift silently from the cold stone ground and hover momentarily before dissipating into invisibility. It had been too faint for the camera to see – or at least, it had not been caught on the film. Only the thermometer had confirmed that the temperature had indeed dropped to a fraction over zero, for the space of just over half an hour. Then it had risen steadily

again. Peter swore this had been a genuine paranormal event, nothing to do with cold ground or unsuspected ice formations below ground. “The temperature went down, I saw a whatsit, something, might’ve been a shade, whatever, the temperature went back up again,” he insisted. “If that ain’t a para event, what is?”

Jenny put her walkie-talkie down. “This happened once before,” she told Martin. “Peter said it was freezing, then he saw something. Camera didn’t catch it.”

“What was it?” asked Martin curiously.

Jenny shrugged, then realised he probably couldn’t make that out in the darkness. “We don’t know. Looked like a patch of mist, apparently. Cameras and film are specially designed for night shoots, but even so – nothing.” She picked up the walkie-talkie again. “Peter – anything?”

“Say what?” came Peter’s voice. “Over.”

“Anything happening?”

“Nope nope,” boomed Peter. “Just friggin’ cold. Over.”

“Markus?” Silence. Jenny shook the walkie-talkie in case it was playing up, then tried again. “Markus? Anything happening?”

“No – oh!” came AJ’s voice. Once again, this was not strictly accurate. She was now standing on her feet, legs wide apart so that Markus could explore her pussy with his lips and tongue. He had just located her clitoris and flicked it gently. “Oh – no!” sang out AJ breathlessly. “Nothing happening.”

“They all right there?” asked Martin.

“I expect so,” said Jenny grimly. On two occasions she had come upon Markus and AJ fucking on a stake-out. Once AJ had been lying on top of a sarcophagus which had been just the ideal height to allow Markus to stand in a comfortable position between her legs. The other time,

Markus had been lying on an unmade bed, his genitals conveniently on the edge, and AJ had been kneeling on some sort of Persian rug, giving him a thorough blow job. On both occasions, Jenny had crept away without being noticed. She had spoken privately to Markus later. “Yeah, yeah,” he had said dismissively. “So we want to fuck in all the haunted houses, so what? We keep our eyes peeled, don’t we?”

“What’ve you come for?” asked Jenny. “Don’t tell me your grandfather came to see you after he died.”

“No, nothing like that,” said Martin.

“Well, what then? Have you had something happen to you?”

“No, no. My mother once thought she saw the ghost of her mother, but I was only two at the time.”

“Well, what then?” repeated Jenny.

Martin shifted uncomfortably on the ancient bench. “Um, actually I’m researching a book.”

“Wow,” said Jenny. “A book. You a writer?”

“Amateur.”

“Going to get it published?”

“I hope so.”

“Do we get a mention? Spooks Anonymous?”

Martin shifted again. “Oh, I expect so,” he said. “Long way to go yet.”

“I’ve read a lot of books on haunted houses,” said Jenny. “My own cottage is haunted.”

“Your own cottage?” said Martin, seeing a way to change the subject. “You never got married?”

“No,” said Jenny. “You?”

“Yes,” said Martin. “Two kids.”

“Wow,” said Jenny. It struck her as most peculiar that somebody she had not seen since primary school now had children of his own.

“Yes,” said Martin proudly. “Ben, he’s four, and grphhh.” He choked on coffee. “Excuse me,” he said. “Went down the wrong way. She’s two.”

“Nice,” said Jenny. “What’s her name?”

Martin munched furiously on a sandwich. “What?” he said. “Was that the radio?”

Jenny leaned forward again. “You’re blushing again,” she said.

“I am not,” said Martin. “The coffee went down the wrong way.”

An awful suspicion dawned on Jenny. “You didn’t –? She isn’t –? You called her Jenny, didn’t you?”

“Jennifer,” said Martin defensively. “There aren’t that many names that go with Campbell.”

“No? How about Sarah? How about Naomi? How about Jill, Mary, Anne...?”

“All right, all right,” muttered Martin.

They sat in silence for a few minutes. Jenny was trying to work out how she felt that Martin Campbell, of all people, had named his daughter after her. She decided she rather liked it.

“Did your wife choose Ben’s name?” she asked suddenly.

“Yes,” said Martin, surprised. “Hey, what are you—?”

Peter’s voice squawked from the handset. “Jesus Christ.” And then, after a few seconds, “Over.” Jenny and Martin looked uncertainly at each other. “That’s an ambitious call,” murmured Martin. Jenny grinned in spite of herself. “Jesus H fucking Christ,” squawked the handset. Jenny reached out for it.

“Peter, what—?”

“Jesus H Christ on a fucking bicycle. Am I going mad? Over.”

“Peter, what’s the matter?”

Heavy breathing from the handset. “Nuns,” gasped Peter. “See-through nuns. Jesus, I—”

“On tape?” interrupted Jenny.

“I’m rolling,” whispered Peter. “One come up through the floor, the other…”

Jenny cut off his voice and paged Markus. “You getting this? Anything there?”

Markus, who by now was on his knees and had just entered AJ from behind, took a few moments to look round. Stars glinted through a distant glassless window. High ceilings and vast buttresses cast deep shadows across the uneven floor. The air was cool. Markus felt his cock stiffen as the fresh air on his backside contrasted nicely with the wet heat radiating from AJ’s pussy. “Anything?” he whispered to AJ, but since she was on all fours and could only see a few square yards of hard stone floor, she just shook her head. “Nothing down here,” she whispered. Markus pumped his cock gently in and out of her.

“Ooooooooooh,” squawked the radio. For a moment Markus thought it was AJ emitting sounds of enjoyment. Somebody was certainly emitting sounds of enjoyment although as far as he knew nobody was in a position to watch what he and AJ were getting up to. He checked round once more. Still nothing. He reached out for the handset. “Nothing here,” he reported, pumping more energetically.

“Ooooooooooh,” moaned AJ.

“What was that?” came Jenny’s voice. Markus felt his cock swell to gigantic proportions. Fucking one girl practically outdoors in a public place while talking to another on a walkie-talkie was quite a turn-on.

“Nothing,” he gasped. “Nothing here.”



“Peter, what’s going on?” came Jenny’s voice. “What’s with all the ooh’s?”

“Ooooooooooh,” moaned Markus.

“Markus?”

“Still... aaaahhhh... nothing,” gasped Markus. He was leaning forward, hands on the floor on either side of AJ, who had spread her arms wide so that the top part of her body sank lower, and her bottom tilted up at a steeper angle.

“Nothing here,” Jenny was saying. “Nothing with Markus.”

“OhmyGodmyGod ooooh,” groaned Peter’s voice.

“What?” wailed Jenny.

“I didn’t know —” gasped Peter.

“What?”

“— nuns did that.”

Markus, deep inside AJ, suddenly stopped moving. He stared at the handset. AJ turned her head to look over her shoulder to do the same. “Do what?” came Jenny’s voice. Markus reached out for the walkie-talkie. “You sure you’re getting this on tape, man?”

“Oh oh oohGod,” moaned Peter.

“What, do what?” shrieked Jenny’s voice.

“She serious?” giggled AJ.

Markus looked from the walkie-talkie to his cock embedded in AJ’s wet and willing pussy, wondering whether he ought to take it back out and go to see what was happening in Peter’s tower. This was not a decision he had ever had to make before. “Ooooooh,” he moaned. AJ waggled her bottom so that his cock moved in small circles within her cunt. “Maybe we better—” began Markus, when Peter screamed.

About twenty minutes earlier, when the temperature had started to fall, Peter had noticed a faint radiance on the floor of the round stone room where he sat surrounded by camera, recorder, walkie-talkie, sandwiches and coffee. At first he didn't pay much attention to it. He thought it was just moonlight, gradually increasing as the moon sidled round to shine more directly through one of the windows. But after a few minutes, he noticed that the radiance wasn't white. It was pink. He had already started the camera rolling. Now he checked that he could actually see the pink radiance through the viewfinder. He remembered reading about a well-known ghost hunter who had recorded an entire unearthly experience with the cap still on the lens of his camera.

More radiance glowed and brightened on the wall a little to the right of where he crouched behind his equipment. No, that wasn't quite right. The radiance seemed to come from within the wall. It was brightening as if something was coming closer, through the patchwork of stone and brick. Peter's eyes started from his head as the faintly glowing outline of a woman in long, flowing robes drifted into the chamber. He jerked his gaze back to the first source of radiance, and to his utter astonishment saw the figure of another woman draped across the floor. Her head was several inches above the floor, her body slanted gently downwards so that her feet were still concealed in stone. As Peter watched, the figure swirled, giving off faint streamers of light. Its robes parted. Peter could see pale limbs. He could see through them, to the wall opposite. The robes swirled and fell away.

He had almost forgotten the second figure, which drifted by some invisible means so that it hovered above the first. Its robes shimmered, bunched higher. The unmistakable shape of a woman's bottom swam in and out of focus, moving forward, thighs parting. Peter gasped. The outline figure on the floor stretched its neck upwards, hair flowing like coruscating fire, until its face was buried between the legs of the standing wraith. The bodies merged, parted, merged. Peter

could not tell whether he could see eyes or gaping mouth. The naked bottom sank lower, pressing the glowing face lower, to the floor, into the stone. The head of the standing woman was thrown back, staring sightlessly at the bleak stone roof of the chamber.

Suddenly the standing figure turned so that it faced Peter directly. He cowered back, arms over his face to avoid eyes filled with an inner fire. But the wraith ignored him. It bent down so that its head joined between the thighs of the woman on and in the floor, while the wraith underneath bobbed upwards as if released from a constricting weight, and pushed its face between the legs of its companion. The gaseous shapes writhed and roiled in a classic sixty-nine position, the brightness of their bodies merging, flashing white and red, emitting sparks and streams of unearthly luminescence.

“OhmyGodmyGod ooooh,” moaned Peter. The walkie-talkie was chittering at him. His thumb pressed the send button of its own volition. “I didn’t know – ooooooh – nuns did that.”

The temperature in the chamber abruptly began to rise. The coruscating streamers bloomed and flared, their colour deepening. Peter suddenly became aware of a third figure, a black silhouette, that he could see beyond and through the sexually conjoined wraiths. Its hands were shaped in fire. Suddenly the female wraiths were writhing not in ecstasy but in agony, and fire erupted in silence, scouring the walls. Peter screamed. He gathered up his camera and lunged from the chamber as it was engulfed in silent, roaring flames. Red-black shadows flickered on the narrow stairwell just beyond the chamber entrance, but below yawned darkness. Something tangled Peter’s legs – a tripod, a wire, or something else. He plunged downwards, screaming.

Markus yanked up his trousers, pulled on his shirt. AJ was crawling round in a circle trying to find her underwear. “Don’t leave me alone!” she wailed, but Markus grabbed up a torch and ran

from the gigantic chamber. Jenny and Martin were approaching rapidly, torches bobbing in the darkness.

“What’s happening?”

“Peter.”

“How should I know?”

“Where’s AJ?”

“She’s – uh, coming,” said Markus. *Well, almost*, he found time to think. They rushed in the direction of the tower. Martin tripped and almost fell over a block of stone concealed in heavy shadow. “There,” gasped Jenny. “What’s that?”

It was Peter, lying awkwardly at the foot of the stone steps. Their torches shone randomly, approaching. Something glinted on the wall. It was a brass plaque with the words ‘West Tower’ engraved on it.

“Oh my God,” said Martin. He remembered Jenny saying, “They found his body at the foot of the West stairs. His neck was broken.” He bent low, shone his torch into Peter’s face. A shallow gash ran across his forehead, seeping blood, and the right side of his face was already beginning to flame with the colours of a tremendous bruise. His eyes flickered open. “What you doing?” he asked aggressively.

Markus touched Jenny on the shoulder and she leapt up into the air with a small shriek. “For goodness sake,” muttered Markus. He directed his torch towards the foot of the steps. Peter’s camera lay there, its lens smashed, its case gaping open.

“We set up yet?” asked Peter.

“Don’t you remember?” said Jenny.

“Shouldn’t happen,” muttered Markus. “You got to unscrew the backs of these cameras. They don’t just pop open. Know what I mean?”

“What’s to remember?” said Peter. “Jesus, stop shining that torch in my face. Let’s get the show on the road.”

“Markus! Wait for me!” Another torch was heading towards them across the cavernous spaces of Burrford Abbey. “Wait for—” With a sickening thud, AJ tripped over the stone which had almost upset Martin. Her torch blinked out. “For goodness sake,” muttered Markus.

“What am I doing down here anyway?” asked Peter suspiciously. “I’m a bit tired. Wake me up later, Angela.” He lay back down and was instantly unconscious.

“Markus!” wailed AJ from the darkness.

“Is it always like this?” asked Martin.

“Who the sweet fuck is Angela?” wondered Markus as he set off to rescue AJ.

“No,” said Jenny. “Let’s get out of here. Who knows the shortest route to the hospital?”