

THIRTY DAYS

by

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(for NaNoWriMo 2010)

I am writing 'Thirty Days' for National Novel Writing Month 2010. I am also writing it to raise money for charity. The specific charity that I want to help is St Luke's Hospice (Harrow and Brent). They provide care and support to terminally ill patients and their families from the Harrow and Brent areas of north London, regardless of their background. In May 2009 my father sadly passed away, but his final days were made more comfortable by St Luke's, and I'm grateful for the care that they gave him and the support that they gave to my family. And so I would like to raise some money for them as my way of saying thanks. You can find out more about St Luke's via their website at www.stlukes-hospice.org

If you would like to sponsor me you can do so via my Just Giving page at www.justgiving.com/karlsgreen I and St Luke's will be grateful for anything that you're able to give.

And finally, I've also set up a page on Facebook about the novel where I'll be posting any news about what I'm doing, and you can find it at <http://bit.ly/9OfC6p>

This file, and all other chapters, will be made available on my website at <http://www.karlsgreen.co.uk/thirtydays> You may freely distribute this file subject to the following two conditions:

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DAY NINE

THE DRAGON KEEPER

The man had a problem that she felt she could help with. This man was being ridiculed and ostracised by his community. He believed in things that they didn't, and they thought him foolish to believe in such things.

This was a world which the people then thought was flat, and that everything in the heavens above them revolved around their world. This was a common belief held by most worlds at some stage in their development. However, this man had put forward the idea that their world was, in fact, round, and that it moved through the heavens.

This man had been planted here by the All Seeing. They knew that there was a risk in placing a man who would give these people these ideas. However, they felt that this world would not be accepting to his ideas, that they would resist them and ridicule him. In this they were proven to be correct.

This was all to ensure that she would be appropriately fooled. To ensure that she wouldn't suspect what his true nature was.

The All Seeing's plan was working..

The Apocolynium – IX

Claire was a girl who lived in Queensbury. If you were to ask her how long she had lived there for, she would have told you that she had lived there for all of her life. If you were to ask her how old she was she would tell you that she was 21. She truly believed that these answers were true.

She could remember growing up in the area, going to the local schools, making friends with other children in the area, moving on to a nearby university where she studied English language and graduated with first class honours earlier in the year. She could remember her parents, both of whom had now passed on, and she now lived alone. She truly believed that all of these memories were real.

Other people who had met Claire and could remember her would tell you that she was a nice girl. She was friendly and caring. She would help her elderly neighbours carry their shopping. She would always greet people with a smile. She was a hardworking individual with a bright future ahead of her. They honestly believed all of this to be true.

On the ninth day she was awoken from a very, very long sleep.

When she opened her eyes at the start of the ninth day it appear that today was going to be just like any other day. It was another wet day outside, and she felt that this was depressing. It was also depressing that she hadn't yet been able to find a job. She had been trying her best, and had even had some interviews. But the competition for graduate jobs was currently fierce. There was

very little out there. Money wasn't a serious problem for her, at least not yet. Obviously, her unemployed status could not last forever, and she would need to secure a job sooner rather than later. Today would mainly be spent looking on job websites and sending off applications. Or at least that's what she thought she would be doing that day.

Before she did that she decided to go for a walk. Despite the rain she liked to get outside as often as she could. She liked to breathe in the fresh air – she felt that it helped her to gain clarity, to help her to think straight.

She had recently been having a series of bad dreams. In each of these dreams she was in a building of some description. Every time it was a different building. Sometimes the buildings were well known: St Paul's Cathedral, the Palace of Westminster, Canary Wharf, the Telecoms Tower, the Foreign Office, Wembley Stadium, the Tower of London. And sometimes the buildings were completely unknown to her: houses, schools, hospitals, offices. But each dream ended in the same way – she was trying to get out of the building, to escape. She needed to escape because the buildings were on fire. They then started to fall into the ground – and then she woke up.

She couldn't work out what these dreams meant, or why it was that she was having them. The only worry that she could think of in her life was the fact that she was struggling to find a job. She couldn't see how that could then lead to her having dreams of this nature.

Recently she was having the dreams at least once every night. Last night it had been a school that she had been in, only this was school that she recognised. It wasn't the school that she herself had gone to, but it was one that was nearby. And so on her walk that morning she decided to go by that school.

The school on question was Park High School. Unsurprisingly, it was situated in a nearby park. As she walked there under her umbrella part of her thought that perhaps the school really had fallen down during the night, and when she got there all that she would see would be a pile of ruins. Of course, she thought that was utter nonsense. Indeed, as she got closer to the school she saw students of the school walking towards it as they did on every other school day.

Once she arrived in the park she could see that the school was indeed standing, and that it hadn't burnt down or collapsed during the night. Everyone associated with the school could be seen going about their daily life, no different to any other day.

But the dream that she had had last night, as with all of the other dreams, had felt so real. She was convinced that one day she would wake up and the building that she had dreamt about that night really would be in ruins.

She continued her walk around the park, and then made her way back to Queensbury, happy and convinced that all was good and right with the world.

Queensbury itself is a rather large oval shape, that had been developed back in the 1930's. There was a large green space in the middle of this oval. As she returned to this oval shape she saw a black shape within this oval, a shape that was not normally there. She went into the oval to investigate it.

Oh, if only she hadn't! If only she hadn't seen him! If only she had just kept on walking to her home and carried on with her day as she had intended to! I am aware that if she had then what happened probably would have still happened another way, as it would appear that someone has intended it to happen and would ensure that it would happen eventually. But, oh, how I wish it hadn't happened. The knowledge that has come out of it happening is too great a burden to bear. Still, it did happen and it's now my job to tell you about it, to report the events as they happened.

As you have probably been able to work out the shape was that of a man, and that that man was none other than Welt. Claire walked up to him and asked, 'Excuse me, are you OK?'

'I am fine,' he said. 'Leave me alone. I do not wish to talk to anyone.'

'Forgive me for saying so, but you don't look fine to me. It's cold and it's wet and you're lying down on the grass. That's not a good thing. I'm not going to leave you here.'

'Go away.'

'Nope, I'm not going anywhere, mister. So you might as well just get up now.'

'What concern am I to you? Why can't you just leave me be?'

'Because there is quite clearly something wrong here, and I don't like seeing things that are wrong. I like to try and see what I can do to make them right. And so I can't just leave a man out here in the cold and the wet like this. And so you're getting my help whether you want it or not.'

'You have no idea who I am. You have no idea how far I have travelled. And it has all been for nothing. Nothing! I was summoned to come to this place, this Queensbury. I got a message telling me that what I sought would be here. But there is nothing here, nothing! Everything has been a complete waste! I have come all the way here for nothing! And I have no means to get back and I have nowhere else to go, so why don't you just leave me here in peace? Do not meddle with my affairs.'

Claire wasn't sure what to make of this man, but she felt that he may have been mentally ill, and so he would have to get some assistance. If she couldn't get him to come with her she would have no choice but to call an ambulance, but it appeared that she would have to do that anyway. Either way, he simply couldn't stay outside like this, and so she felt that she had to try and at

least get him to come inside out of the cold and the wet whilst she waited for an ambulance to come and take him away.

Oh, why couldn't she have just left him there! Things would still have been fine if she had just called the ambulance and had him taken away. If she had done that the world would be a far, far safer place. But, as I have said, it would appear to have been part of someone's design that this was to happen, and that it was something that was always going to happen, no matter what anyone did about it.

'Come on,' she said, 'I am not going to just leave you outside like this. Come with me.' She reached out her hand.

Welt looked at it. Who was this girl that was showing him kindness? He wasn't anything to her, he wasn't deserving of her help. Why would she wish to help him? He looked up into her eyes, and he saw that she was smiling at him. For a moment he forgot all about his desires to obtain the Earth's power, and to then use that power back on Pyna. His heart, for the first time in his life, was starting to melt. There was an overwhelming sense of goodness that he felt from her, and he liked this feeling. It brought a sense of contentment to him.

In that moment he thought about what possible course his life may take. He would go with this girl. She would help care for him, help him to settle into a new life on this world. He could just forget all about his struggle for power and domination, and just live. He wasn't going to be able to get the Earth's power, he wasn't going to ever be able to return to Pyna. He was stuck here forever. But would it have been so terrible a prospect to have been stuck here with her? She was so kind and so beautiful. She could have just ignored him, she could have just left him alone. But she had chosen to come up to him, to help him.

For the first time in his life he actually felt love for someone.

Yes, he could forget all about the reason why he had come to Earth. His real destiny was to love this girl, and to be loved by her. Yes, he was certain of that now. That was what it was all about.

He found that he was in a trance. He had come under this girl's spell. This would be the moment when his life changed forever.

Which was, indeed, the case.

He reached out, and took her hand in his own.

At that moment they both felt an intense surge of energy pass through their hands. But, no, this was no spark of love. This wasn't going to be a magical moment that started the whole new life that Welt had only just briefly dreamed of.

Her eyes widened as soon as she held Welt's hand in her own. For the first time in a long time she could now see everything. And she remembered. She remembered everything, She remembered the truth.

She could remember why she was here. She could remember what her purpose in life was. She knew exactly who this man was and why he was here and what his purpose was. And, yes, she was indeed meant to help him, only that help would not involve calling an ambulance.

She could remember everything about her life. Where she had come from. How long she had lived. The many, many things that she had done.

She remembered the many names that she had had. Claire was only the last of them. On every world that she had been on she had had a different name. But eventually everyone came to refer to her by one name and one name only.

For she was known as the Dragon Keeper.

21 years she had been on Earth. 21 years in blissful ignorance of who she really was. But now she was awake! She could see again! How pathetic her life of the past 21 years now seemed! How utterly pointless! Oh, she had wasted so much time!

But now she was awake, and the one that she was to help was here. Finally everything that she had been meaning to do with her life could now be put in motion. She could leave her disguise behind and continue on with her true purpose.

Welt felt that there was a change in her. He could see that goodness that had been Claire leave the person whose hand he now held. His brief dream of a happy life on Earth quickly disappeared, as he saw a new, terrible, beauty in this girl.

And he was terrified.

She looked at him and said, 'On your feet. Now.'

He quickly got up, and she started to drag him across the oval towards her home – or at least what she had been calling home for the past 21 years. Her real home was somewhere that was a lot, lot further away.

As she reached the other side of the oval one of her elderly neighbours, Mrs Harris, who was a widow who lived alone, saw her as she returned home from her morning visit to the local newsagents. She thought it looked a bit strange that Claire was dragging the poor homeless man who had been lying down in the oval behind her. Still, she still smiled at her and said, 'Good morning!'

The Dragon Keeper looked at her, with a look of pure evil in her eyes, a look that terrified Mrs Harris. She stood back and allowed the girl that she had known as Claire to walk past her.

Once she had gone, Mrs Harris didn't know what to make of this. But she was certain that she had just felt a terrible evil walk past her.

The Dragon Keeper for her part couldn't care less about Mrs Harris, or what she might do. Let her tell all her friends about how odd Claire had been behaving if she wanted to. It didn't matter. She was nothing to her. She was just an ant to be trod on beneath her shoe. She had far more important things to worry about. Far more important things to work on. She would need to focus all of her attention on these things. There was no time to lose.

She dragged Welt into Claire's home, and then into the living room, where she practically threw him onto the sofa. 'How long have you been here for?' she demanded to know.

'I'm sorry?'

'How long have you been on Earth?!'

'About... five... days...'

'Five days! It has taken you five whole days to come and find me! Oh, this is disappointing. I had been promised that someone would be sent here to help me, but I at least thought it would have been someone who knew what it was they were doing! Someone who wouldn't take five days to find me! Who knows what could have happened in that time? What it was that we could have prevented! Tell me, is she here as well?'

'Who do you mean?'

'Who do you think I bloody mean?! Is she here?! Did she come here also?! Did Lisa come here at the same time that you did?!?!'

Welt paused for a moment, took a deep breath, and then said quietly, 'Yes...'

The Dragon Keeper cried out in anguish. She then faced Welt, who cowered away. 'You allowed her to come here also?! You are an incompetent fool! In the name of Marloki why was I sent someone as useless as you?!'

'I'm... I'm... sorry. I didn't mean for her to be here as well. And I didn't know that I was being brought here to serve someone else...'

'So you don't know who I am?'

Welt shook his head.

'Where is it that you have come from?'

'I'm from Triceria.'

The Dragon Keeper rolled her eyes, 'How am I supposed to know where "Triceria" is? I meant what planet are you from, imbecile.'

'P...Pyna...'

‘Pyna, I see... No, I’m not aware of anything specific about that world that would need to worry us...’

Dear reader, I shall interrupt just briefly at this point. I think that it is important to note that the fact that the Dragon Keeper is unaware of anything specific about Pyna, specifically the crystal cave where the good citizens of Drydon are currently mining the crystal, can only be seen as a good sign. I am sure that whatever it is that will eventually be produced from the crystal cave will be of assistance to Lisa on Earth in helping her to prevent Earth’s power from being taken. Whilst I know not what it is specifically that will be produced, it surely must be something important for it had been prepared at least five hundred years prior to it actually being required. I do not know who made these preparations, but there appears to be some form of greater power at work here.

The Dragon Keeper then turned to Welt and asked him, ‘Why did you come to the Earth?’

‘I... I obtained the stone of Marloki. It showed me that there was a great power here. I wanted to come here and gain that power myself, for the good of Triceria, so that I can make Triceria strong again.’ Right now, Triceria’s strength was the last thing on Welt’s mind. He could sense a great power emanating from the Dragon Keeper, and it terrified him. He wanted to run, far away from here. He didn’t care about getting the Earth’s power anymore. He didn’t even care about Triceria. Every fibre in his being was telling him to run. But he couldn’t, he was trapped, much like Steve had been trapped by Welt only a few days earlier. There was no means of escape from the Dragon Keeper. He found that he both loved her and feared her in equal measure. He knew that he was being held under some sort of spell, he knew that there was some form of trickery at work here, but he was powerless to stop any of it. He knew that he was going to have no choice but to obey her.

She pondered what she said carefully, and then she giggled, which came as a complete surprise to Welt. ‘Very well,’ she said. ‘We will get the Earth’s power for you, and then we will fly to Pyna, to Triceria, and we will make Triceria oh so very strong, all for you.’

‘How do we get the Earth’s power?’

‘Now, now, patience my dear boy. It’s not as simple as that. You see, there were others who knew all about the Earth’s power, and so they took measures to try and prevent people from simply taking it. No, there are various things that we need to do first. My first step is to try and work out who else is here. Now, quickly, tell me everything that you have done since you arrived on the Earth.’

Welt quickly advised about what had happened over the past few days. About obtaining some limited powers, although he wasn’t sure how. About meeting Steve at Belmont Circle.

Questioning him about the Earth. Coming into London. And then losing Steve when they bumped into the mysterious woman. And then finally being told to come to Queensbury.

When he was done the Dragon Keeper said, 'I see. I think I know a little of what has gone on. You were very fortunate to have found one of the two halves when you arrived here. And you were able to keep him trapped. But then you were attacked by this woman. I think I know who she may be, and if she has him then we will have a fair bit of work to do.'

'You say that he is one of two halves. Do I take it to mean that the other half is out there somewhere, that we need to find them and bring them together, and then we will have the Earth's power?'

The Dragon Keeper laughed. 'No, you silly fool! It's not as simple as that. No, we must find and capture both of the two halves. But, and this is very important, they must never, ever, meet. Should they ever come into contact with each other they will realise who they are, and what their futures will hold for them. And once they know that we almost certainly won't be able to obtain the Earth's power.'

'Fine, so, what do we do with them?'

'We will need to extract their essence from them, and combine them in very controlled amounts. Once we have that, well, all you need to know is that we will be one more step closer to being able to obtain the Earth's power.'

Dear reader, I wish I knew exactly what it is the Dragon Keeper intends to do to obtain the Earth's power. What it is that she needs to do with Steve's and Natasha's essence – whatever precisely that may be – in order to obtain the Earth's power. But I am limited by what I can see of her mind, and this part of it is closed to me. But, needless to say, it is now imperative that Steve and Natasha meet each other. I do not know what their true natures are, or what will happen when they do meet, I only know that they have to meet in order to prevent the Dragon Keeper from carrying out whatever plan that she has in mind.

I do not know what she will do once she has the Earth's power. I do not feel that she cares much for the affairs of Triceria. No, I feel that she intends to use the Earth's power for a far darker purpose.

Lisa at least knows that Steve and Natasha have to meet, even if she does not yet know where Steve is. And Naomi also knows that they have to meet, although she does not know where Natasha is. Oh, I do hope that they are able to find each other soon.

And so the stage is set for a race – a race for the Earth. The Dragon Keeper and Welt, against Lisa and Naomi.

For the rest of the ninth day the Dragon Keeper kept Welt locked up in a small bedroom in Claire's house. He cowered in the far corner, petrified over whatever was going to happen next. This was not what he had been hoping for when he had come to the Earth.

The Dragon Keeper was using what was Claire's computer, although she was using a program that had been hidden deep within the computer, completely unknown to Claire. The program was very similar to the one that Steve saw Naomi running on her computer when he first came to at her house.

I do not know the exact nature of this program or what it does, but, from what I've been able to ascertain, it taps into the consciousness of London, in much the same way that Lisa is able to do without having to use a computer. I believe that she was using it to try and locate Steve and Natasha. At this point in time Steve was still recovering at Naomi's house. Naomi would appear to have erected some sort of field that helps to protect him from having his location revealed – that is why Lisa was unable to precisely pinpoint his location, and so I believe that the Dragon Keeper was also unable to.

However, Natasha doesn't have any such protection. Lisa isn't able to erect such a protection field. And so I fear that the Dragon Keeper now knows of Natasha's location.

For the rest of that day the Dragon Keeper sat on the floor, with her legs crossed, and her hands resting on her knees. Her eyes were closed, and so was her mind to me. What precisely she was doing, I do not know.

On the night of the ninth day, shortly after Natasha went to bed, she had a dream. The dream was much like the dreams that Claire used to have. She was in her block of flats, and it was burning. She was trying to escape, but found that every direction that she went in was blocked. She then started to see a face everywhere she looked. The same face. The face of a girl. She didn't know it, but the girl that she saw was the Dragon Keeper.

Dear reader, I am very afraid, and so should you be. The Dragon Keeper surely knows where Natasha is now. We can but hope that Lisa will be able to protect her...