

THIRTY DAYS

by

Karl S. Green
(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:

1. You do not alter the file in any way, shape, or form.
2. You do not charge anyone for access to the file.

DAY TWENTY-SEVEN

THE BATTLE OF OLD REDDING

At the centre of every inhabited world is a beating heart. It sits at the very core of the planet, and reaches out to all living things on the planet. The one of the All Seeing that was assisting her went to the beating heart of the Earth. He knew that what he was doing was unprecedented, but he felt that he had no other option. He couldn't bear to see her suffering, and struggling in her fight against the Other. He knew that she was a force for good, and that this universe was a far better one with her in it.

He went to the Earth's heart, and extracted some of its power. It asked him why he was taking its power. He told it that it was necessary, that by doing so a great change for the good would take place. The Earth was not happy about what was happening. It knew of the battle that was taking place on its surface, and it was saddened by it. It reluctantly agreed to give up some of its power to the one of the All Seeing.

He returned to the Earth's surface, and sought her out once more. He found her back where the battle had started, in a southern corner of a large continent to the south, the continent that would later be named by the inhabitants of this world as Africa. He gave her the power of the Earth.

Once she had this power, the tide of the battle turned in her favour. She was able to finally defeat the Other...

The Apocolynium – XXVII

On the twenty-seventh day the Dragon Keeper awoke with a great sense of excitement. She intended today to be a great day for her. Today was the day when she intended to finally kill Lisa, and get what she needed in order to form the key to the Earth's power. She was convinced that there was nothing whatsoever that was going to get in her way.

She could sense that Lisa and her companions were still in the flat of the one known as Natasha. This was good (as far as she was concerned). They were in a confined space, away from the public. She would be able to form the key there.

Yes, she felt that today was going to be a good day.

Lisa and her companions had spent the twenty-sixth day in a subdued mood. They had been informed that they needed to be in Old Redding by midday on the twenty-seventh day, but that left them with nothing to do on the twenty-sixth day. The Pynarians in the group mainly spent the day watching TV, an invention that was still fascinating to them.

The humans in the group were not much in the mood for watching TV. Steve and Natasha had considered writing some more of their novels for NaNoWriMo, but they were no longer in the mood for it. They had fallen behind their word targets, and it was now the last thing that was on their minds. They spent the day mainly in Natasha's bedroom, talking about their lives before they had found each other. They talked about anything other than what it was they had to do

tomorrow. They were afraid about what the day might bring, with the Dragon Keeper out to target them and take away their essence.

Tom and Naomi found themselves spending most of the day together. Tom asked her lots of questions about her life, knowing that she wasn't of the Earth. At first Naomi wasn't too sure about this, but then she slowly opened up to him. She told him about all of the work that she had done on other worlds before she was assigned to the Earth. She told him all about Ian, and everything that he had done, especially for the Earth. She was deeply saddened that he was now gone. She was going to miss him a lot.

Tom was fascinated by all of this. He was starting to think that Naomi was an amazing woman.

She went on to tell him that she especially liked the Earth, and that she hoped that she could stay here once all of this business with the Dragon Keeper was over, presuming, of course, that they were all still alive and the Earth was still here.

Lisa spent the day by herself. She didn't like this period of inaction. It made her feel uncomfortable. She wanted to be out there doing something. She wanted to be proactive. But there was nothing that she could do. All she could do is wait here until the next day, and then find out what fate had in store for her.

She had no idea what the person who had been sending them the messages was intending to do. They had implied that they were helping them, and, indeed, so far they had been. However, they were also telling them that 'Destiny Will Fall', the most terrible words that they could tell them. It didn't make any sense to her that they would be helping them and yet telling them these words. And, dear reader, it doesn't make much sense to me either.

On the night of the twenty-sixth day, those who required sleep found that they had an uneasy night, and they in fact got very little sleep at all. Everyone was anxious about what the twenty-seventh day would bring.

On the morning of the twenty-seventh day everyone went about the morning routine of washing and eating in relative silence. They all wondered if this would be the last day that they would get to do such things. They all wondered if this would be the last morning that they would get to see.

Finally, at around 10am, Lisa said, 'I think we should start to head out. It might be easier for us to prepare ourselves if we get there a little early.' They all agreed, and they started to head out in the direction of Old Redding.

The Dragon Keeper had been spending the morning focussing on Lisa and her companions. As such, she knew straight away when she saw them leaving the flat. She was a little surprised at this. They had been in the flat for pretty much two entire days, and now, just before she was about to make her move, they were leaving the flat. She had no idea as to where it was they were going. But, for now at least, they were out in the open. If that remained the case then she knew that she wouldn't be able to form the key where she found them, and that she would need to bring the two halves back to her house. However, that was just a minor annoyance, it was something that she could live with.

She continued to focus on them, to see where they went.

Within about an hour Lisa and her companions had arrived at Old Redding. Lisa, Prion, Sarna, Parto, Gramshaw, Welt, Tom, Naomi, Steve, and Natasha all made for a rather odd looking group of people. But, thankfully, no one else gave them much attention. Lisa was concerned about what all of these people would be thinking once the Dragon Keeper got here. She was surprised that there hadn't appeared to have been any reaction to the events of a few days ago when the man was finally defeated on this spot. She suspected that the crystals had had some part to play in ensuring that no one from the area remembered anything that they may have seen on that day.

The all gathered together and looked out over Harrow, and again thought that this would be the last time that they would do so. They thought that soon all that they saw may end up being destroyed. They sincerely hoped that that wouldn't be the case. They hoped that whoever it was that was sending them the messages knew what they were doing, and that they weren't out here on some kind of suicide mission.

Those of them who had watches were constantly looking at time, watching the seconds tick by, getting ever closer to midday, the appointed time for them to be there.

The Dragon Keeper could see in her mind that they had gathered on the hill where they had last met each other. She thought that it was most odd that they would go there. Why would they want to go to such a place? What were they up to?

She did not know the answers to these questions, and she tried not to worry about them. She felt that, as she had more power than Lisa had, they were not going to be able to pose any problems for her. She would just be able to go up to them and take what it was that she wanted.

She was ready. She was prepared. Now was the time for her to make this happen.

She decided not to waste any time walking there. It didn't matter now if any of the inhabitants of this world saw her. She could just take Steve and Natasha and teleport them back to her house. It wouldn't matter if anyone in the area of Old Redding saw her and started to tell other people. That wouldn't prevent her from forming the key.

She teleported to Old Redding.

As midday approached Lisa and her companions started to become extremely nervous. Then, at midday exactly, the Dragon Keeper appeared before them. She looked at them all and said, 'So, you have chosen to come back to this place. How very odd of you. Still, it is of no matter. You are no match for me. My power is stronger than yours, and so I suggest that you just hand over the two halves of the key to me now. Don't make this any harder on yourselves than it needs to be. The Pynarians amongst you can go back to Pyna if you wish. You mean nothing to me. I will, of course, have to kill you Lisa, but if you don't give me any trouble then I'll make it quick.'

Lisa replied with, 'We're not going to be handing over anyone to you. We're not going to just stand back and let you destroy the Earth. If you want to take Steve and Natasha, you're going to have to fight for them.'

'As you wish!'

The Dragon Keeper then raised both of her arms and directed them towards Lisa. Lisa pointed her arms towards the Dragon Keeper. They both exerted their full strength upon the other. Lisa found that the Dragon Keeper was indeed stronger than she was, and she was forced down on to her knees.

'Why don't you just give up now, Lisa? You know you can't win this fight. The key and the Earth are mine now! Just face up to the facts!'

'Never!' Lisa kept on fighting back, but she wasn't sure how much more of this she could take. And she still had no idea why the sender of the messages had sent them here at this time. They just seemed to be in even more trouble than they were before, with no hope of success.

Then, all of a sudden, she heard the voice of the crystals talk to her within her mind. They said, 'Move to the spot where Ian's son was killed. Move there now, but do so slowly.' She didn't know what purpose this would serve, but she did as the crystals said. She slowly moved over to the indicated spot, one small step at a time so as not to alarm the Dragon Keeper. The Dragon Keeper herself noticed the fact that Lisa was starting to move, but she was oblivious as to any significance to it. She was only concerned with defeating her enemy once and for all.

Once Lisa finally made it to the required spot the crystals then said to her, 'Good, now, stay there, we will be coming to your aid.'

The crystals then started to direct their voice into the minds of Prion, Sarna, Parto, and Gramshaw. They told them, 'Move to circle Lisa as best you can. Do so now, but do so slowly. Do not alarm the Dragon Keeper.' The four of them looked at each other, and then started to do as the crystals instructed them to do.

Once they were in position the crystals then spoke to Tom and Naomi, saying, 'Move to behind Lisa. Do so now, and do so slowly, as the others have moved into their positions.' Again, Tom and Naomi looked at each other, seemingly knowing that the crystals had just spoken to the two of them, and only the two of them. They did as the crystals instructed.

Next, the crystals spoke to Welt, saying, 'Go and stand next to Lisa. You need to get as close to her as you can. Do so now.' Welt did as he was instructed.

Up until this point the Dragon Keeper had paid little attention to the movements that everyone was making around her. She could feel that it would now not be long until Lisa was finally defeated. But now that she saw Welt moving into his position she said, 'What are you doing? There's nothing that you can do to save her now!' Welt didn't say anything. He just looked at the Dragon Keeper with hatred on his face, and sadness in his heart as he remembered the girl known as Claire that the Dragon Keeper had been briefly when he had first encountered her.

Finally, the crystals spoke to Steve and Natasha, saying, 'Run until you are behind the Dragon Keeper. Do so now and stay there. Do not delay – run, now!' Steve and Natasha gave each other the briefest of looks, and then started to run. Again, this did not go unnoticed by the Dragon Keeper. She just thought that they thought that they could get away from her by just running away. But then she became a little concerned when they stopped just behind her.

At this point she noticed that everyone in Lisa's group had moved into some sort of formation. She didn't know what it meant, but it made her feel uncomfortable. She knew that something was up, but she wasn't sure what, and this started to worry her.

Then, the crystal's plan came into action. They all focussed what energy they had left onto Welt. Power from the ground then started to be drawn up and into Welt, attracted by the power that the crystals were putting into him, even though their power was only slight.

This was the point where I started to understand what was happening. The sender of the messages hadn't just directed them back to Old Redding randomly. There was a specific purpose as to why they had directed them there. The hill overlooking Harrow is one of only a few special places on the Earth, where the links to the power at the centre of the Earth are stronger than on the rest of the surface. When the man was killed on this spot, which may have somehow been part of the plan that the sender of the messages was aware of, even though the Dragon Keeper

had absorbed most of the man's power, there was still some that had seeped into the Earth, and had kept on travelling down to the heart of the Earth. Now that a few days had passed since his death, the link from the surface to the Earth's core was now stronger than ever, and so some of the power from the Earth could now be harnessed. (I should probably briefly explain that these links are not exactly physical ones that you would expect to find in volcanoes. These are purely links of energy.)

The small amount of energy that the crystals had given Welt was enough for him to be able to start channelling some of the energy from the Earth. The positions of Tom, Naomi, Steve, and Natasha helped to focus the flow of this energy – it would be repelled by them as they had no power of this nature, and be attracted to Welt who now did.

Welt knew what it was that he was meant to be doing next. Once he was able to draw up some energy from the Earth, he channelled it into Lisa, thus boosting her strength. Lisa was then able to stand up, and for the first time since the man had been killed, she had real hope that the Earth may not be quite doomed just yet.

When the Dragon Keeper saw what was happening, and saw Lisa standing up, she despaired. She felt that she had come so close to her goal, so close to realising her dreams, and now those dreams were being taken away from her.

Yes, dear reader, at this point you are probably thinking that everything is now going well for our friends. That they may yet win this battle, despite the odds that they had faced at the start of it. I too thought the same thing when I was watching these events take place. But not even I could have foreseen what it was that happened next.

In the sky above Old Redding what appeared to a tear in the fabric of reality seemed to appear. It wasn't a very big tear, it was barely perceptible to anyone who didn't have the ability to sense it. But I was able to, and so were the Dragon Keeper, Lisa, and Naomi. Through the tear another stream of energy appeared, this time flowing into the Dragon Keeper. This flow of energy was faster than the flow of energy that Welt was channelling into Lisa, and so the Dragon Keeper gained more power than Lisa was able to, thus tipping the balance into the Dragon Keeper's favour.

I looked briefly into the tear to see where it had come from. And what I saw there terrified me! I saw none other than Marloki! It turned out that all of the energy that was being expended on both sides of the battle had weakened the fabric between realities. Not by a huge amount, but certainly by enough to enable Marloki to form this tear, and to use it to send energy to the Dragon Keeper.

The Dragon Keeper laughed as she received this energy. She knew that this would be the final turn of events in the battle. That Lisa and her companions had no more cards left to play.

Lisa knew this too. There was nothing more that she could do to fight back against the Dragon Keeper. They had lost. But she would be damned if she was just going to let herself be killed so easily. She then tried a highly dangerous and desperate measure.

She closed her eyes and tried to focus on everyone that was around her. However, with all of the energy that was flying around this was extremely difficult. She tried to pinpoint everyone that she could. Then, using every last ounce of her strength, she attempted to teleport them to safety, or, at least, relative safety.

There was a bright burst of light as she initiated the teleport. When she came to, she found that she was successful if teleporting herself back to Natasha's flat. She suddenly felt pleased with herself, and she looked around her to see if everyone else was there. Welt was still next to her, and Prion, Sarna, Parto, and Gramshaw were all surrounding her. She could also see that Tom and Naomi were here. But she looked all around her, and could see no one else.

'Where are they?!' she said. 'Where are Steve and Natasha?!' She knew that the question was in vain, for she knew exactly where they were.

The Dragon Keeper was surprised to see Lisa attempt a teleport in such circumstances. Initially she was frustrated when she saw her disappear from in front of her. But then she sensed something behind her. Something that she could hardly believe was true.

She turned around, and there she saw Steve and Natasha, who both looked terrified. But joy welled up within the Dragon Keeper. She finally had them! She finally had the two halves to the key to the Earth's power!

She went up to them and said, 'You're coming with me!' She then teleported them to Claire's house, where she then tied them up to the concrete pillars in the basement.

The battle had drained her of strength, and she needed to rest. But she did so gladly. She had the two halves of the key, and nothing could take them away from her. Tomorrow, she will attempt to form the key.

Yes, dear reader, I fear that all has now been lost, and it will only be a matter of time before the Earth is destroyed. This is a sad day indeed...