

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 TWO

THE JOURNEY TO PRACTOR

She first appeared when the first worlds of this pocket of existence began to be populated by intelligent beings. At first her arrival went by unnoticed by the All Seeing. They simply considered her to be one of these very same beings. She would travel the world that she was on, approaching people in their time of need, offering comfort and advice. The changes she made may have been perceived to have been small, but a small change at an early stage can become a great change on the grander scale, something that she herself was all too aware of.

And yet she still passed by unnoticed by the All Seeing. Despite their name they failed to see the changes that she was bringing. They failed to give this pocket of existence the due care and consideration that it deserved.

She was aware of the need to try and pass by unnoticed by them. She was aware of what they would do if they discovered her. But the goodness in her heart was strong, some would say too strong.

She felt a terrible darkness, one that would encompass a world. But this world was not her own. And yet she felt that she could not ignore the plight of that world. And so she left her world and travelled to the other world.

The All Seeing saw her on this new world, despite having already seen her on the old world. And when they saw this they were afraid. When they saw this they were terrified. This was a threat to them. A threat that they had every intention of dealing with.

The Apocolynium – II

Yesterday we left Lisa, Prion, and the others on the road on the outskirts of Yendal. Afterwards, they went and stayed the night at the local inn in Yendal. Lisa chose not to reveal her identity to the locals, which was a wise choice. She couldn't have anyone delaying her in her quest, or risk word of her return to Pyna reaching Welt in Practor.

Gramshaw queried the wisdom of spending the night in Yendal if they had to get to Practor as quickly as they could. Lisa explained that she knew of a way that they could get there in time, but to do what they had to do they had to get some rest.

At 8am on that first day they set out for Practor. Lisa was still wearing the same dress that she was wearing the preceding night, and was still walking in bare feet. The Tricerian border was due north of Yendal, but Lisa instructed the party that they needed to head southeast.

'OK,' said Parto, 'this is getting crazy. First, you want us to get to Practor by tomorrow, which is three days *ride* away, and we don't even have any horses. But, to top it off, you also want us to go in the *opposite direction* to Practor? How are we supposed to get there? Are you really the real Lisa?'

'Parto!' Sarna exclaimed. 'Of course she's the real Lisa. You saw that light last night, you felt it, as did the rest of us.' Parto said no more.

Lisa then said, 'I know a lot of this doesn't make much sense. But you have to trust me on this. I know where we're going.' And with that the discussion was closed.

They made their way down the road to the southeast. Lisa walked ahead of the party, and they all made a very brisk pace. They took just one short break that day for lunch in the village of Lam, and by the evening they were approaching the town of Travern. Fortunately, they didn't encounter any bandits on the road that day. They set up camp on the side of the road.

Whilst the others slept, or at least tried to, Lisa kept watch. She didn't need to sleep. Prion watched her pacing up and down the road. He could see that she was clearly agitated. The legends spoke of her as though she were a goddess. And he knew that when a goddess got agitated things could not be good. Prion did not sleep easy that night.

Back on Earth both Steve and Natasha had uneasy night's sleep. Little did they know it, but they both shared the same dream. They were both on Westminster bridge, facing the Houses of Parliament, when they could suddenly hear air raid sirens sound out across the city. The people around them looked bemused, wondering why the sirens were sounding. Then the ground started to shake violently, and buildings around them started to collapse.

The both woke up with a start. They had both had their fair share of unusual dreams during their lifetimes, but this one felt more unusual than most. Neither could work out what could have possibly triggered such an unusual dream. But, knowing that there was nothing else for it, they both tried to get back to sleep.

It was when they had the same dream for the second time that they really started to worry.

In Practor, Welt was feeling especially pleased with himself. He had heard some time ago that the Stone of Marloki was still on Pyna. Admittedly, it was just another legend, and one mainly told to scare little children into behaving themselves. But Welt, for some reason that even he could not quite work out, could feel that there was some truth to this particular legend.

Then, around two months ago, he himself had a dream. In it he could see clearly where the location of the stone was. It was located about halfway up Mount Aran, in a small cave that was very hard for even the most experienced mountaineer to access. When he awoke he felt certain that the stone would be there, and that he simply had to have it for himself.

He had become sick of the Council of Three. Whilst he was officially their advisor, they never actually paid any attention to the advice that he gave them. They were only interested in hearing his advice when he was advising them to do what they wanted to do anyway. But when he advised them to take a different course of action they chose not to listen to him, and to carry

on with what they had originally been planning to do in the first place. He found the whole situation to be rather pointless, and he was sick of it. He desired to remove the Council of Three and to replace them with himself. Once he was ruling Triceria he could finally give the country the service that it desired. For starters, he would reclaim the territory that had been lost to Allana 147 years ago, and then take some more to punish them for the last war. The stone of Marloki would give him the power he needed to both remove the Council of Three, and to take on Allana, and anyone else who dared to defy the might of Triceria.

But first he had to get the stone. There was no possibility of him going all the way to Mount Aran to find it himself, and so he had to send someone else to go instead. He chose Black Club. Out of all the mercenaries that worked for him, Black Club was the one that had enough intelligence to find his way to the mountain, to climb it and then retrieve the stone, but not so much intelligence as to question what he was doing. Welt didn't tell him what the stone actually was – he just told him that it was a rare and special mineral that would help him to perfect the art of alchemy, thus increasing the amount of gold that Triceria would have at its disposal. Black Club did not question this, he was just pleased about the extra money that he would get for this job, which he was confident he could complete successfully.

Black Club had not let Welt down, and, sure enough, he delivered the stone to him. Unfortunately, Welt could not risk any knowledge of the stone getting out to the wider populace, and so he had to kill Black Club. It also served as a useful experiment in exercising the stone's power. He had also taken the measure of having the surviving members of Black Club's party rounded up and quickly executed on trumped up charges. Such goings on were not uncommon in Triceria.

But now that he had the stone itself in his hands he could feel that it had powers far beyond what the legends said, and far beyond what even he could have imagined. When he held the stone in his hands he could feel the life blood of Pyna beating through it. And when he looked deeper into it he could feel the life blood of other worlds beating as well. A great many other worlds, spread out far and wide across the cosmos, which was larger than what could be seen in the heavens.

And one of those worlds that he could feel was the Earth.

Prion and the others in his party awoke early on the morning of the second day. He saw that Lisa was already standing by the side of the road waiting for them. Once they were all awake she said, 'Come on, we have to hurry.' She then turned and continued to walk down the road.

'Hey!' said Parto, 'Can't we have breakfast first?'

Without turning around Lisa replied, 'You can eat whilst we walk.'

The party then started to follow her again, walking at the same brisk pace that they had been walking the previous day.

'This doesn't make any sense,' said Parto. 'She says we're supposed to be going to Practor, but every step we're taking is only taking us further away. This is madness! There is no way we can get to Practor by going in this direction!'

'I'm sure she knows what she's doing,' said Sarna. 'Remember, she did save us from those bandits yesterday. If she hadn't, we'd all be dead now, so just be grateful for that if nothing else.'

Gramshaw then said, 'I'd gladly follow her to the end of the world if she asked me to.' Everyone fell silent as this, not quite knowing how to respond to it.

After a few hours of walking down the road like, this, following Lisa who was always walking a fair distance ahead of them, Lisa suddenly turned off the road to the left and started walking through a field. 'Now where is she going?' asked Parto.

'I don't know,' said Prion, 'But I think we'd better follow her.'

They all then followed her into the field. In the distance they could see a hill. And, at the top of that hill, they could see an almighty tree.

Both Steve and Natasha felt decidedly uneasy on that second day. The dream that they had both had was greatly worrying them. It hadn't felt like a normal dream at all. And they couldn't work out why they would dream of such a thing.

Shortly after they had got out of their respective beds their days got even more uneasy. At around 8am they both received a text message on their phones at the same time. The messages came from a private number and consisted of just three words: 'Destiny Will Fall'.

Now, not only were they feeling uneasy that day, but so was I. Not even I knew who had sent them those messages. Normally I would be able to see such things, but this is blank to me. And I do not feel comfortable when things are blank to me, not at all.

Steve was greatly worried by this text message. Like me, he had no idea who it was who had sent it. He also had no idea what it meant. But he suspected that it was probably going to lead to trouble of some description, and I suspect that his suspicions will come to pass.

He decided not to tell anyone else about it, thinking that no good would come of it. They wouldn't know who would have sent it or what it meant. He just tried to push it to the back of his mind. But, try as he might, it kept coming back to him, along with the dream.

Natasha was also worried by this text message, although not quite to the extent that Steve was. She, too, had no idea what it meant. But she suspected that it was either a message that was

sent to her in error, or that it was a foolish company trying some outlandish promotion of some product, and not realising that it's not acceptable to send out anonymous text messages, particularly where the recipients hadn't requested anything of that nature. Now, whilst I don't know who it was who did send those messages, I do know that both of Natasha's theories were incorrect.

She was able to put the text message out of her mind with a greater degree of success than Steve had been able to. But she was not so successful with the dream. This concerned her greatly. It had been a bad dream, and she never usually had bad dreams. She couldn't think of anything in her life that might be worrying her and that could have resulted in her subconscious in creating such a dream.

She thought about this dream all the way into work. Once she was there she spoke to John about her dream, describing it in detail. He responded with, 'Now, that is a strange dream. You're clearly deranged and in serious need of help. I'll call the men in white coats now.'

'Ha ha, very funny. But, seriously, what could it possibly mean?'

'I'm really not sure. Maybe it's to do with your nano-watsit...'

'NaNoWriMo.'

'Yeah, that's it. What's your novel about?'

'It's about a relationship between a young couple at the start of the Second World War.'

'Well, there you have it then. That explains the air raid sirens. You were just thinking of your novel, that's all.'

'No, it wasn't like that. In my dream I was in modern day London, not the 1940's. And it wasn't just the air raid sirens. It wasn't bombs from the Luftwaffe that destroyed all of those buildings, it was definitely an earthquake. Why would I dream up an earthquake?'

'I really wouldn't know, but try not to dwell on it. It was just a dream. I'm sure London is perfectly safe!'

'Yeah, I know...'

I, however, am now not so sure of that. I fear that London may very well be in danger, a danger that it has never faced before. And it is a danger that not only threatens London, but threatens the whole of your world, and that of many others throughout the cosmos. Yes, I fear that there are going to be some very dark days ahead...

In Practor, deep in the basements of the citadel, Welt looked deep into the stone of Marloki. He wasn't looking deep into it physically, he was looking at it through his mind. He found that the stone was far more powerful than he had ever imagined. Many people had theorised that there

may be other worlds out there in the heavens – the legends always implied that there were. But now Welt could see all of these worlds, their vast numbers throughout the cosmos. So many varied and different worlds.

But one world was of particular interest to him. One world that stood out from all of the others. A world that had its own, mysterious power. A world that was known to its people as Earth.

The technology that this world possessed was unlike any of the other worlds. They were able to see beyond their world without using such artefacts like the stone that Welt was using. They built their own tools to do so. They were beaming messages out from the surface of their world, out into the cosmos, in the hope that another world might pick them up, unaware that the other worlds of the cosmos had never developed such technologies.

They were also a very war like race. There were people who always wanted to kill other people for one reason or another. And they developed terrible weapons for doing so. Some of these were capable of destroying whole cities. Welt marvelled at the fact that this world possessed so many of these weapons that its people could wipe themselves out. He found this concept highly amusing.

And beyond that this world had its own unique power, a power that the people of that planet itself weren't even aware of. And this power was strong. If he could only get to it, then, with the stone he would be able to harness it. If only he could get to it...

As he looked deeper into the stone he felt that he could reach out towards this planet, that he could reach out and touch it. As he did so he slowly felt his strength drain, and then suddenly he opened his eyes and was no longer looking at the stone through his mind. He was out of breath, and feeling very weak. But he was still pleased.

Yes, that world pleased him very much. He wanted its power for himself. He wanted to get to that planet.

And he believed that he knew of a way that he could get there...

As Welt was looking into the stone, Lisa and her party were approaching the great tree. As they got to it she said, 'We're here.'

Parto whispered to Gramshaw, 'Do want to tell her that this isn't Practor, or shall I?'

Before Gramshaw could say anything Lisa called out, without turning round, 'I know perfectly well that this is a tree and not the great city of Practor.'

'Well, that's good. But I fail to see what a tree has to do with getting us to Practor.'

'Of course you don't, and I wouldn't expect you to, but you have to trust me on this.'

Lisa then started to walk around the tree, examining it. It was a great and mighty tree, and a very old tree. It was very similar to the oak trees that you have on Earth. Eventually, she walked up to the tree, placed her hands upon it, and then the side of her head. She stood like this for about a minute, with the others all watching her.

‘What is she doing?’ asked Parto.

‘Be quiet!’ said Prion.

Parto fell silent.

Lisa then said to the tree, ‘Thank you.’ She stood back from the tree, and, as she did so, part of the tree seemed to be glowing. The glowing section was in the shape of an oval, around six feet high. Lisa turned to the group and said, ‘This will get us to Triceria. It won’t get us all the way to Practor, but once we’re in Triceria if we keep on walking through the night we should reach Practor by the morning.’

‘I don’t understand,’ said Parto. ‘How will this get us to Triceria?’

Lisa sighed. ‘It’s hard to explain. I really don’t want to have the use the term “magic door” but that is effectively what it is. If we walk through here the trees have agreed to transport us directly to Triceria. Basically, if you step in here, you’ll step out in Triceria.’

Parto just nodded at this. Whilst he would normally scoff at such an idea, even he couldn’t deny that there was something magical about this tree, otherwise part of it wouldn’t now be glowing.

‘Come on,’ said Lisa, ‘We have to go.’ And with that she stepped into the glowing section of the tree, and disappeared.

The rest of the party stood there, stunned. Then Prion said, ‘I guess we’d better follow her then.’ He slowly walked towards the tree and stood in front of the glowing section, looking at it. He then slowly stepped through it, and he, too, disappeared.

He was then followed by Sarna and Gramshaw, leaving just Parto. He said, ‘Why do I always get myself caught up in these things?’ He then reluctantly followed the others.

The passage through the trees was instantaneous. As each member walked through the tree they saw a sudden flash of green, and then they saw themselves walking out into another field. It was clear that it wasn’t just the same field as before as, in the distance, they could see the great citadel of Practor.

Once Parto had made his way through Lisa said, ‘Good, now, let’s go. We have to get to Practor by the morning.’ She then set off in the direction of the citadel at the same blistering pace that they had been walking that morning.

As they set off Parto looked back round at the tree they had just exited from. It was the same mighty species of tree as the one they had entered. There was no glowing section on this tree, at least, not one that he could see any more. It just looked like an ordinary tree. He faced forward again and proceeded to follow the others.

Welt cut the palm of his right hand with his knife. He then held the stone of Marloki in his this hand and closed his eyes. This time he was able to look even deeper into the stone than before. Once again he was able to see that magical place, the Earth, and he began to reach out towards it. He felt he was getting closer to it, ever closer. He could almost reach out and touch it, but he couldn't quite reach it.

He was starting to get frustrated. He had to have the Earth, he simply had to have it. He had to reach it somehow. But he just couldn't get close enough.

It was then that he heard a voice in his head. It was a voice that spoke in no accent, and he couldn't even attribute it to either gender. He could sense that there was a great power behind that voice. It was a voice to be respected and feared. It said, 'He who holds my stone needs to be careful.'

Welt replied to the voice using his mind, saying, 'Your stone? Then you must be Marloki?'

'That is one of the names that I have been referred to as. Now, listen, we do not have much time. Even now she has returned and is making her way to you. She knows what is to come. You need to do exactly as I tell you.'

'Who is coming? Do you mean – '

'You know perfectly well who I mean. Now listen. I can get you to the Earth. I can guide you to the power that it holds. I was never able to leave Pyna myself. I was bound to her, and she prevented me from leaving. But you are not bound to anyone, and therefore you are free to leave this world, and I can help you.'

'Yes, please, help me reach the Earth. With its power I can restore Triceria to its former glory.'

'Indeed, if that is what you want to use it for, then that will be your will. But to get there you will have to listen carefully to me. Tomorrow, when the sun is at its highest point above the citadel, you will need to make your way to The Ledge.'

Forgive my intrusion, dear reader, for I am sure that you are keen to know what the outcome to this conversation is. But just allow me to briefly explain what The Ledge is. It is a horrible place, dreamt up by a most sadistic man. As I have already told you, the citadel was a huge building, over 2,000 feet tall. It's not in the centre of the city, it is to its northern side. At

the top of the citadel, on its northern side, is The Ledge. It juts out over the city wall. Beyond the city is a deep canyon. At the bottom of that canyon is a fast flowing river. The Ledge reaches out over this canyon. Without wanting to be too graphic, if I were to inform you that The Ledge is used as part of Triceria's justice system, a part that criminals never return from, I'm sure you will be able to fill in the gaps yourselves. Welt himself had been there before, but only as an administrator of justice.

'The Ledge?' said Welt, still in his mind. 'Why would you need me to go there? There is nothing there that will enable me to reach the Earth.'

'Oh, but there is. What you will need to do is walk out along The Ledge, right to its very edge. Then, at noon, you will need to hold my stone in both of your hands. Hold out your hands in front of you, and fall off The Ledge.'

'Fall off The Ledge? Are you crazy?! How will killing myself get me to the Earth?'

'You have to trust me! Now listen, I haven't got much time left. It is very important that you fall off the ledge, don't jump. You need to be falling with your arms out in front of you, your feet trailing your head. As long as you are holding my stone, and you do this at noon tomorrow, I can assure you that you will not die, but you will reach the Earth. Do you understand?'

'Yes, I understand, but –'

But then Welt's eyes suddenly opened, and he was back in his room in the basement. He wasn't sure what to make of this experience. That surely had to be the voice of Marloki he thought, and I can confirm to you, dear reader, that indeed it was Marloki's voice. But, he wondered, why would Marloki instruct him to jump off of the ledge? No, not jump, fall. Still, the results were normally the same. But would they be this time, he wondered...

Back on Earth, nothing unusual happened during the rest of Steve's and Natasha's day at work. They didn't receive any more unusual text messages. Nor did anything from their dreams come to pass. They got on with their work, and then they went home at the end of the day.

Once they were at home, before they did anything else, they both went back to their novels. They were both very committed to getting them written, and to do that they needed to write their quota of 1,667 words. Natasha was able to get hers done fairly quickly, taking her a little under two hours to get them written. After she had uploaded her word count to the NaNoWriMo website (which was running a little slowly, although not as bad as it had been last night when it was inaccessible for quite some time) she was able to relax and eat her dinner in front of the TV.

Steve, on the other hand, struggled with his. It was only the second day and already he was hitting the wall. He was struggling to come up with ideas to get his story moving forward. This was also not helped by the fact that the computer that he was writing on was connected to the web, and so he kept finding ways to distract himself from his writing. All in all, he failed to reach his target word count for the day, and was now around 500 words behind schedule. He figured that this wasn't so bad. He would be able to make up the shortfall on subsequent days. He just had to stay focused the next time he wrote. Or so he told himself. It's all very well and good telling yourself that you need to focus. It is quite a different thing to actually do so.

As they both went to bed that night they both thought back to the dream that they had had. Doing so was a little unsettling. Both were concerned about what dreams would come to them that night.

I fear that those dreams will not be good, dear reader. Welt is planning to come to Earth, and he has only evil in his heart. Lisa at least appears to be aware of the danger that both worlds face from Practor, and she should be able to get there in time. But should Welt somehow succeed in getting to the Earth then I fear what will happen next. Whilst I hope that Lisa will be able to prevent him, I have a feeling that she will not be able to do so. What do you think?

My sense of unease has increased this past day, dear reader, and I am greatly concerned. The wheels are in motion, and I fear that they will be leading to a terrible event. I only hope that I am wrong. I dearly hope that I am wrong. I do not wish to worry you so, for I am just here to tell this tale, but even I feel caught up in it.

I do hope you all sleep well tonight. Try not to worry about what Welt is planning to do tomorrow. Think instead of Lisa and her companions, and wish them success in the task that they have to perform tomorrow. Who knows, maybe with your thoughts being sent out towards them, you will provide them with some added strength? Who I am I to say? It certainly can't do them any harm. So, remember, at noon tomorrow London time, which corresponds to the time in Practor as it does in Yendal, Welt will intend to be on The Ledge, waiting to carry out Marloki's instructions. Lisa and her party will hopefully be there to stop him. Please, lend her your support. Welt can not be allowed to come to the Earth.

I sincerely hope that Lisa can succeed...