

New York September 2008: outside New York City Public Library

Waiting.

The worst part of this job was the waiting.

The Hunter could wait 60 years for the return of THE DIVIDER, which was how long it took. But when he had an appointment booked for 6.00pm and it was 6.10, he got tetchy. Maybe the kid had changed his mind; after all it's not every day that you get a call telling you to drop your life and fight demons. This kid was in college, studying law, not demonology. Two hundred years ago it wasn't this hard to recruit the members of The Measure. But in these post millennium 3 minute attention span insta-fix societies, believers are hard to find. But Morgan Driscoll is the young man, who completes the three. The Hunter checks his watch again.

6.15.

The kid isn't coming. The Hunter is unsure of what this means, no-one has ever spurned their destiny. The Measure is always a trio, it has to be a trio. They have no power as a pair. With just two years until the return it was going to be close, getting him ready. Checking his watch again, the Hunter decides to leave. A new bridge to cross, but one that can be crossed.

Folding the paper he was pretending to read, he turns to leave.

Now fate, it's a funny thing.

The Hunter had been waiting since that day in Germany to meet the girl from the East. He'd often looked at the crowds he moved through, wondering if she was there. He'd dreamed of what would happen when they met, what he would say. But this day the codex was the last thing on his mind. He was thinking about where he was going to next when...he felt something hit him.

He looks up; he had walked into some-one. He had knocked them to the floor. It is a girl. She sits, staring up at The Hunter. She looks angry.

"Excuse you then," she snaps the words at him.

The Hunter continues to stare at her. She is young, about 24. Her small frame is, to The Hunter's eyes, perfect. She has long dark hair that cascades around her shoulders. Her eyes dark brown and draw him in. She is pretty, very pretty. And she is Asian. The Hunter stares.

Sakura Takahashi has only been in New York a month, she was going to Columbia Law School and was kind of home sick. The graduate law programme she was on was great. She was far from home but having fun, until now. Morgan Driscoll was on Graduate Law with her, he had suggested they meet at the library at 6.30. She had arrived early and now here she was sprawled on her ass, looking up at huge guy who had just knocked her over and now all he seemed to do was stare at her. She narrows her eyes, the man still stares.

"What an asshole." She says to herself.

The Hunter is interrupted from his staring as he hears her speak.

"Excuse me."

Sakura flashes him a smile and offers him her hands.

"Help me up, please."

The Hunter lifts her up, forgetting himself he sweeps her into the air with his strength, before depositing her on her feet. Looking at him with a bewildered stare she brushes herself down. The words of the codex are flashing through his head again. He feels something that he has never felt before. He is nervous, he furrows his brow. Why am I nervous? Sakura looks up at him.

"What is it?" She re-examines herself.

"What?"

The Hunter shakes his head, the nerves haven't cleared.

"Nothing, it's not you. Well it is you. There's nothing wrong with you..."

Sakura smiles again.

"Thank you."

"...It's just that you're great...looking I mean, and there is something that reminds me of something. But I'm not sure what it is."

Sakura brushes her hair behind her ear. Something in The Hunter moves, like butterflies. He feels...

“Well that was confusing.” She laughs.

The Hunter feels...

“I’m sorry about knocking you over; I wasn’t paying attention before and...”

“That’s OK...accidents happen.” She touches his arm.

The codex: “She will give him strength forged of love.”

“Hunter...my name is Solus Hunter. Sol Hunter is me.”

“Sakura Takahashi.” She extends a hand.

Not thinking of the time he’s in instinctively takes her hand and kisses it.

“Solus Hunter, the only Huntsman, interesting name.”

The Hunter feels...

“I’m sorry, I don’t mean to stare, but I...I...I’m...”

Sakura’s phone starts ringing.

“Excuse me a second.”

The Hunter watches her as she answers the call. Her smile as she answers turns to surprise, to worry as she listens to the caller talk. He picks out parts of the conversation.

“What happened...Morgan’s hurt...attacked...on the street...by an animal...is he OK?...in hospital...where?”

The Hunter knows that this was Morgan Driscoll, he doesn’t know how. But it is.

Sakura ends the call, in a panic.

“I’m sorry but a friend I was supposed to be meeting here has just been attacked.

I’ve got to go see him.”

The Hunter decides to be direct.

“Morgan Driscoll?”

“Yes, how...?”

“I was meeting him as well; I kind of had a job offer for him.”

“A job?”

“It’s a very long story, very long. But if he’s been hurt then I too need to make sure he’s alive.”

“Alive?”

“I mean alright.”

Sakura is shaking slightly. The bad news combined with the unusual way this conversation was going has scared her slightly.

“He’s in St. Lukes.”

“We’d better go then.”

The Hunter takes Sakura by the arm, and starts to lead her off. She pulls herself free. She folds her arms in defiance.

Before this day The Hunter would have done what had to be done. But now he was sure the codex was coming to be. He looks at Sakura, he was still feeling...

“Look, I’m sorry, but there is something really important that Morgan should be doing. In fact I’m now sure we are all involved.”

Sakura looks at him, quizzing him without words.

“OK, I’m going to see him; you’re going to see him. Let’s share a cab.”

Twenty minutes ago Sakura would never have got in a taxi with a total stranger, but the man who stood before her somehow made her feel safe. She should be making her way on her own to see Morgan. What was it about him? It didn’t make sense. There is no such thing as love at first sight.

Stupid.

But here she was; this man was strange but she knew that he would not harm her. Something inside her said trust this man. So she will.

“Let’s go then.”

Sakura leads The Hunter by the hand to the curb side. Together they get into a taxi. This is the beginning.

New York September 2008

The Hunter watches Sakura as she stares out of the window of the taxi. The feeling of butterflies continues. He finds himself staring at this girl. He wants to say something to her, but he doesn't know how to start the conversation. There is also the thought of Morgan; people don't get attacked by animals in New York. Experience tells The Hunter there are no such things as coincidences, everything is fated. Whether you want to believe it or not, the major events in your life are predestined. You can only affect the outcome; you can not stop it happening. The fact that he was supposed to be meeting Morgan, as was Sakura, and the fact the young man was attacked strongly suggested to The Hunter that this was all the prophecy coming true. The events recorded were being set in motion. The Hunter, The Measure & the girl from the east. It was certainly the start of something, but what?

His train of thought is interrupted by a question.

"What job?"

Sakura's attention is now on The Hunter.

He comes out of his thoughts, not quite hearing the words.

"Are you some sort of lawyer?" Sakura fires another question at him.

"Because you don't look like one!"

She was right, although he wasn't sure what a lawyer looked like. He just knew he didn't look like one.

"It was sort of research job. My line of work requires a lot of book reading and I don't always have the time."

"What is your line of work then?"

The Hunter thinks for a second. To tell the truth or invent a lie.

"I'm not sure you'll believe me, but here goes."

The Hunter looks at Sakura as she sits back, inviting his explanation, ready for what she is sure will be a fantastic tale.

"I... am...a..."

Sakura's expression was already one of disbelief

“Research chemist?”

Sakura shakes her head.

“Political analyst?”

Again Sakura shakes her head. The Hunter knows it is time for the truth.

“I’m a demon hunter. I have been all my life and Morgan is to be part of a group who help me fight them.”

Sakura nodded her way through his last explanation. It shouldn’t have made any sense, but it did. She doesn’t know how but it did. Something in her clicked on when he said he was a demon hunter. Like something had woken up inside her. Did she believe in fate, she didn’t think so? At least not before today. Coincidences occur everyday, and she would have written meeting Sol off to coincidence, but there seemed to be more than just the fact that she knows Morgan and Sol was waiting to meet him. So how did she fit into this? He said that all of them were involved. Involved in what? This was crazy. She was in a taxi with a man who claims to be a demon hunter, who was hiring her friend to help him fight the demons and she wasn’t sure but she thought he was attracted to her. And she was attracted to him. There was something about him. He was mysterious, even with the revelation of his job. There was a lot about himself that he hadn’t revealed and she wants to know what it was.

The Hunter himself was curious; he had met the girl from the East, but knows nothing about her. Her name is Sakura Takahashi. Her name translates as cherry blossom, unsure of how he knows this he muses further. It didn’t tie her to the prophecies but still, he was sure she was the one. He likes her, he feels...
...again he can’t put a word to it, but he feels. In 400 years he had never experienced a feeling like the one he experiences when he looks at her. But he likes it. He likes her. And he takes the codex seriously; he would protect her from whatever came their way because she would help him defeat THE DIVIDER and THE WAY. He had questions though, should he ask them? Why was she in New York? How did she know Morgan Driscoll? What was he to her? Questions weren’t what he did, but he had to find out.

“So, how do you know Morgan then?”

“We’re both on graduate law at Columbia.”

Columbia University is near St. Luke’s, so if Morgan was attacked on campus there was a good chance he was alive.

“Law, you’ve come a long way to study haven’t you?”

Sakura laughed to herself, a private joke maybe.

“I wanted to travel, I’d graduated back home and when I got here I decided that maybe I could do a graduate course.”

“You’re dream job a big shot lawyer then?”

“I don’t know, I thought it was; but maybe public service, international relations, something like that.”

“Really, you don’t seem the sort...”

“...sort of what?”

“That lawyer sort. You know? Blood sucking parasite type.”

“You’ve got a low opinion of lawyers, that doesn’t bode well for us.”

“Just bad experiences.” Most of the familiars he’d ever come across at some point had practised law. Of course he could have been generalising.

What did she mean “bode well for us.”?

“Are you with Shakespeare, kill all the lawyers?”

The Hunter is still thinking about the end of her previous sentence.

“What? Yes, well no. Not all the lawyers, just the evil ones.”

“And what if I’m evil?”

“You couldn’t possibly be.”

“And why not?”

“You are far too pretty.”

The Hunter had never been in a situation like this before, and as the words leave his mouth a small wave of panic comes over him. What is she going to say to that? Has he said too much too soon? Damn the prophecies, they tell him how to fight and kill demons, where and when to find them. That he will meet and receive love from this girl, but nowhere is it written how to talk to her. He feels the taxi come to a halt and the driver asks for fare. He jumps out of the car to avoid the discomfort he

perceives. Sakura gets out smiling at his embarrassment. They stand in front of the hospital. Things are moving on.

New York September 2008: St. Luke's Hospital

The Hunter and Sakura make their way through the automatic doors into the hospital. The emergency room is full of activity. Doctors dart about between patients that are lying in rooms, on trolleys, on chairs and some even lie on the floor. This hospital seems very busy. Nurses rush about with x-rays and medicine, from the outside it appears to be a well oiled machine. But ask any member of staff and this day is the busiest that they have ever been. Sakura nods towards the information desk and the pair head in that direction. Taking the lead Sakura goes up to the desk. A large middle aged nurse is trying to deal with her colleagues, the patients, the ringing phone and now Sakura's questions. The Hunter finds the scene interesting. He has been in his fair share of emergency rooms, but he has never seen one this busy. He overhears doctors complaining about the number of slash wounds they have received, the police are doing nothing. They have also been inundated with people suffering from psychosis. This was strange indeed.

Sakura returns from the desk.

"Morgan is on the third floor. The admission nurse said it went crazy in here around the time he was brought in. She's never seen it like this."

The Hunter follows as Sakura leads the way to the elevators. People lying on trolleys are wheeled by them as they wait for the elevator to come down. The traditional ping announces the arrival, along with a recorded voice.

"Ground floor. Please stand clear of the door."

Sakura follows The Hunter into the elevator. He stands in front of the door, preventing others from joining them. From behind him she pushes the button for the third floor.

"Thank you. Third Floor. Stand clear of the door."

The door closes and the journey upward begins. She looks at The Hunter. He has tensed up. She thinks that the end of the taxi ride has made him nervous again. He had relaxed somewhat whilst they were talking. Now he was stoic. He hadn't said anything. She didn't like the silence.

“Thanks.”

“For what?” He doesn’t turn around.

“You know, for what you said in the taxi. That I was pretty.”

He turns, “Well, you’re welcome.”

She can see he is blushing. The lift pings as it stops on the third floor. Again they are told where they are, and told to mind the door. They walk out onto into a large foyer area, signs on the wall point to various departments and wards. They work out where Morgan’s room should be and turn left.

They come to a stop outside of room 3114. Morgan’s chart is on the wall outside. Through the small window in the door The Hunter can see a woman is in the room, and she is not a nurse.

“There’s some-one in there.”

Sakura moves around so she can see into the room. She knows the woman.

“That’s Laura, his girlfriend.”

That should have relaxed The Hunter a little, but it didn’t. There was most definitely something up. And he didn’t like that he didn’t know.

“Perhaps you should go in first, and then I can come in after you’ve spoken to him.”

“OK, hi Morgan. How are you feeling? Sorry about the attack? By the way that big guy who wanted you to fight demons is outside. The job offer is still open.”

Her face shines with playfulness.

“How does that sound?”

“I wouldn’t mention the demons, just yet.”

“OK, you wait here. I’ll come and get you.” Sakura enters the room and The Hunter can hear the muted words of their talking.

As Sakura pushes the door open Laura turns around. She has been crying. Her hands rest on top of Morgan’s. Morgan is sitting up in the bed. His face is bruised and has some cuts. Laura walks over to Sakura and the pair hugs.

“Thanks for coming.” Laura’s voice is soft and subdued.

“How are you doing?”

“I’m fine, but Morgan got pretty badly beaten. The police are saying it was a wild animal. In New York?”

Sakura looks around at Morgan. He winks at Sakura and mouths that he is fine really. She moves over to the bed and rubs Morgan's arm.

"You look terrible. What did this?"

Morgan Driscoll is sporty, athletic and good at his studies. He isn't overly tall or well built but could hold his own in a fight. He did boxing training and had a couple of amateur bouts. He'd had his ass kicked.

"I didn't see, it growled though. It came up behind me and just started pounding on me. I'm fine."

As his girlfriend begins fussing over his sheets and pillows he decides to speak to Sakura alone.

"I'm fine. I could use a drink. Can you get me some coke?"

Laura smiles warmly and leaves.

"I think she's more shaken up than me. It was weird but you know I like weird. I was supposed to meet this guy before I met you today. He was weird. He said he had some sort of job offer for me. Big guy, kind of serious looking."

Morgan saw that Sakura had that look on her face. That look that said "I know something you don't know."

"What, What do you know now?"

Sakura launches into an explanation of the events so far this evening; her waiting for him at the library, of bumping into Solus Hunter, the strange connection between them, of his connection to Morgan, but not the demon hunter part. Morgan sits there listening; his jaw seems to physically drop as the story gets more fantastic.

"Hunter is outside now, he wants to see you."

"OK" Morgan is confused.

Sakura gets up to bring The Hunter into the room.

After Sakura goes into Morgan's room The Hunter looks both ways down the corridor. Deserted.

He looks at Morgan's chart.

Facial abrasions.

Facial contusions.

Some internal bleeding.

Morgan was lucky. Whoever disturbed whatever was attacking him had saved his life. The Hunter was wondering if he should get a copy of the police report for good measure. He makes his mind up to do so when they were finished here. He checks his watch.

8:42.

It was now night and probably time to check in with The Measure. He scans the hallway for a payphone. He sees a sign indicating there is one around the corner. Just as he is about to head that way Laura comes out of the room. The Hunter spins around to prevent her seeing his face, instinct he supposes. As he turns he spots a pin on her collar. A very unusual design, but one he recognises. But from where? He watches as Laura heads in the direction of the payphones. Best not to follow. He'd wait to speak to Morgan. The pin was still bugging him. He is lost in the recesses of his memory trying to recall where he had seen the pin when Sakura exits the room.

When The Hunter sees Morgan, he is relieved. The young man looks surprisingly good. He isn't too battered, and conscious. He could still join The Measure. The Hunter is confident that he would, despite the attack. He walks up beside the bed and nods a hello to Morgan.

"Hello, Mr. Hunter. Quite a day for both of us."

The Hunter is not one for small talk; he is used to dealing with The Measure in a direct fashion.

"I trust you're not too injured, I still need you."

Morgan tries to sit up slightly and groans under his breath with effort.

"What exactly do you need me for?"

The Hunter looks toward Sakura; she gives him a nonverbal gesture of encouragement.

"This might be hard to believe, but I'm a demon hunter."

"OK." No scepticism permeates Morgan's voice.

"And you are the newest member of The Measure, a trio of men who guard the secrets of goodness for The Hunter to fight the demons."

"Sure."

“There is a young man, who is the apprentice. That’s you. An older man who has trained in weapons and has some knowledge of the words, his name is Chijioke. And then there is the old man, he has been the apprentice and fighter. Now he guards the words. The old man is Sinclair.”

Morgan sits listening to what would have been a fantastic tale, if he had not been attacked earlier by a giant lizard.

“Is part of this job getting attacked by things?”

The Hunter knows it shouldn’t be. He gets attacked. The Measure is only in danger when they follow him into battle.

“You know what attacked you?”

Shaking his head Morgan said,

“No, but it was big. It looked like a big lizard but moved like dog. And it smelled. I mean really smelt bad.”

A fairly good description, but there were so many demons that fit those features he would need The Measure’s help.

“If The Measure can tell me what it was that attacked you then we can find it and stop it attacking anyone else.”

The Hunter turns to Sakura. He motions for her to move away from the bed.

“You stay here with him. If the girl that was here comes back, keep her out.”

Sakura gives him a puzzled look.

“I don’t know why, just trust me.”

He knows she will, like he trusts her. He turns back to Morgan.

“I’ll be back shortly. Hang tight.”

Sakura walks to Morgan’s bedside as The Hunter leaves the room.

The payphones are further away from the room than The Hunter had first thought. Compared to the chaos in the emergency room this floor is deserted. A solitary patient shuffles by as he searches his pockets for change. He waits until the old man has rounded the corner before depositing his quarter and dialling the number. It rings the usual 5 times before Sinclair answers.

“Hello, this is Martin Sinclair.”

“Sinclair, it’s me.” There is an edge to The Hunter’s voice.

“Mr. Hunter! Well this is a fairly late call. I trust all went well with young Mr. Driscoll?”

“Not exactly. There has been a complication.”

“My, my. What has happened?”

The man maybe old, but he is full of life. The Hunter explains what has happened. The attack, the injuries to Morgan and the fact that he knew it was a demon that attacked. Before Sinclair could question him The Hunter continues.

“I also met her today.”

“Met who? Who did you meet?”

“The girl born in the East. The one who will give me strength born of love.”

It takes a moment to sink into Sinclair’s mind just what The Hunter is saying.

“You’ve met the girl from your prophecy?”

“Yes.” Every word The Hunter says drips with excitement.

“I bumped into her whilst waiting for Morgan. She knows him. They are on the same course. She is just like the codex says. I feel... something connects us.”

Sinclair knows what this means to The Hunter. He has known him know for 30 years. He knows how The Hunter harbours the thought of the girl, how it gives him purpose. He also knows the prophecy; truly the end is in sight.

“I’m very happy for you, my friend. And the world itself can soon celebrate. But we must not get carried away.”

The words from the old man steady The Hunter.

“Now describe the demon that attacked poor Morgan.”

“He says it was big. It looked like a lizard but moved like a dog. It also smelt bad.” There is a short silence whilst Sinclair thinks.

“This time of year...it sounds like THE HAND. A foot soldier of THE GUIDE.”

“But I killed THE GUIDE.”

“Yes but just as it was an acolyte of THE DIVIDER, so it has its own followers.”

“What do I need to know?”

“Well THE HAND is a puppet master, but not afraid to do its own killing. It has the most direct control over humans of any demon. It controls them using a symbol that is on the host’s body. A triple sword mark surrounded by flame.”

The girl, the one from the room. That was the symbol on her pin. She is controlled by THE HAND. The Hunter opens his mouth to impart his realisation but is cut short.

The lights in the hospital all go out with a loud thud, as though the generators had literally died. Hospitals have back ups, The Hunter waits for the lights to return. They don't. The lights remain off and the corridor is shrouded in darkness. There are no windows to the city outside, so its neon blanket can offer no help. The generators fire twice.

Thump.

Nothing.

Thump.

The second time brings a new sound. Life support machines and monitors in every room fail and immediately begin sounding alarms. The Hunter expects a rush of activity but the hall remains silent. Something is very wrong here.

Sakura.

The Hunter moves along the edge of the corridor. Although his sight is good he can barely see in front of him. Guided by the wall he reaches the corner to turn onto the hallway with Morgan's room on. As he nears the end he can hear movement, a slow deliberate pace of maybe ten individuals. He waits, waits for a clue as to who is there. Are they confused patients lost in the darkness? Are they doctors and nurses; or something more sinister? The shuffling continues. Then one of them speaks. The Hunter does not recognise the words but he does know the sound. It is a demon language. He crouches down as far as he can, and leaning against the wall sneaks a look around the corner.

Humans!

Or at least they were. These are puppets. They are there to stop him. They are headed to Morgan's room. Time to stop them. But stop them with what? He doesn't have any weapons. In the dark he spots the janitors trolley. He pulls it towards him. He holds his breath. Willing the wheels not to squeak.

Closer.

Closer.

Closer.

With inches to go the wheel gives him away. As one the puppets turn and start to move toward him.

“Oh well, no time like the present.”

Grabbing the mop he rushes the crowd of former humans. He spins the mop behind his back as he charges, and then at just the right moment he brings it over his head and crashing into the first. The wood cracks against the head of his foe and the momentum of the mop forces the creature to the floor. The Hunter drops across the throat and puts all his body weight on it, crushing the larynx. The creature dies. Just as quickly as he dropped The Hunter is up again and on his way to his next opponents. Two former porters lurch toward him. He ducks the first's attack and swings at the second sending him crashing to the ground on top of the first. The two puppets struggle on the floor to return to their feet. The Hunter moves on, some swift kicks and fast blows put down the next two. In front of him now is what was once a family. The father, mother and two children, now tools of destruction for a demon. The adults come first. The father attacks. As he is about to strike The Hunter spins, places a hand either end of the mop and breaks it across the neck. The father is sent down to the floor by the force, which also breaks the wood in two, sending splinters into The Hunter's cheek. Now The Hunter has a weapon for both hands. The mother screams as she attacks, she is swiftly followed by her children. The Hunter crouches down as the mother approaches, and then jumps up. With all his body weight behind him he catches the mother under the chin, lifting her off the ground. She is sent flying back, and down to the ground.

The two former children begin their attack taking one leg each; they get The Hunter off balance. He kicks out as he falls; one child is sent flying, hitting some plastic chairs. There is a dull crack, the body doesn't move. The Hunter rips the other small attacker from his leg. Just ten minutes ago this was a five year old child, now it is a vessel of evil.

“Forgive me.”

The Hunter brings the body up; it flails widely as he places pressure on its neck.

There is a sudden sickly snap. The struggling stops. The Hunter places the body on the ground. By now the parents are up again. One is behind him the other one in front of him. He waits for the puppets to make their move. They both come at the same time. An insane hatred seems to be burning in their eyes. Jumping onto the chairs The Hunter flips over his attackers who crash together, then spin to face him. They come again, the father in front of the mother. Timed to perfection The Hunter spins hitting the pair in succession straight across the face, forcing their nose's into the brains. They drop.

Inside the room Sakura and Morgan had been talking when the lights went out. They both jump as the generators attempt to restart. Morgan's room has a window, outside the rest of New York is still aglow. The light from the city reaches the door, but doesn't show any detail from the corridor. Sakura makes her way towards the door. She puts her hand on the knob as she squints to see through the window. Darkness is all she can make out. She is about to turn the knob when she hears a crash. She stumbles back from the door and stops as she hits Morgan's bed. As the sounds of a fight make their way into the room she turns her head to look at Morgan. They both stare at the door, willing the battle to stay in the corridor to stay just there. They hear the two dull cracks. They hear the smack of the wood on bone. They hear the bodies hit the floor. They hear footsteps approach the room. As the footsteps get closer they both hold their breath.

"Don't breathe, you won't be found if you don't breathe."

Repeats in their heads.

As the door opens they both freeze, unmoving, not even blinking. As The Hunter comes through the door they sigh in unison. Sakura can see the wound on his face, she moves over to him.

"Are you alright?" She puts her hand on his face. Raising his own he takes her hand in his, the pain melts away.

"It's nothing, we need to move now. Can you walk Morgan?"

Morgan is already getting out of bed; he holds his arm across his body to protect his ribs. He winces in pain as he moves.

"Sure I can, just try and keep up."

The Hunter looks at Morgan, then at Sakura. Time for a short explanation.

“A demon called THE HAND is out to get Morgan, to break The Measure.”

The Hunter moves to the window to check the streets below.

“It controls humans; it has control of your friend. She may have led it here.”

The Hunter is going through the cupboards; there must be something he could use as weapon. His search comes up short.

Morgan struggles for words, some beast has Laura?

“We need to save her then.”

The Hunter is closing the blinds, he gestures for Sakura to close the other set.

“Who?”

“Laura, if this thing controls her. We have to rescue her.”

“You’d have to resurrect her.”

“What?” The Hunter is moving too fast for Morgan.

“She’s dead, it kills then controls.”

Morgan looks for answers on the floor, there are none.

The Hunter moves Morgan to the door. He takes Sakura’s hand in his.

Until he had taken her hand, Sakura felt like she was falling, but she couldn’t run away. Being told about demons is one thing but being trapped in a hospital with one is something else entirely. When The Hunter took her hand the fear evaporated. She knew he would get them out. His whole body stated how confident he was of that. She watches him as he checks the corridor.

“When I open the door,” he looks first at Morgan then at her,

“We go right, and don’t look back.”

The Hunter opens the door and guides Morgan out, then taking her hand again he leads Sakura into the darkness. As they are more able, Sakura and The Hunter move ahead of Morgan. With her left hand in The Hunter’s she runs her right along the corridor wall. The sense of the wall provides some additional security. Behind her she hears the sounds of the former porters attempting to stand, she moves closer to The Hunter. They turn right again into the second elevator area on the floor. Next to the elevator doors is the emergency exit. She watches as The Hunter forces the door and he then takes her hand again and they make their way down the stairs.

The Hunter feels Sakura's hand in his, he feels her strength running through him, they are going to get out of here. They reach the exit to the street. Morgan has impressed him, clearly in pain he has made it this far but is now struggling. He grabs Morgan as he is about to fall.

"Hold onto him for me, I'll be back in a second."

He pulls the door open and sticks his head outside.

"Don't be too long." Sakura whispers after him.

The fire exit leads onto a parking lot. There are plenty of cars in the lot, but where are the owners? It hadn't struck him as odd when they made their way down, but now it did. There should be hundreds of evacuated people out here, where are they?

Lost in thought he doesn't sense it until it is too late, he looks up just as THE HAND comes crashing down into the middle of the cars in front of him. The force of the beast landing sends The Hunter flying into the wall next to the emergency exit. The door crumples and Sakura and Morgan are revealed to the demon. It moves off the wreckage onto the asphalt. It begins to stalk the two helpless humans before it. The Hunter forces himself to his feet. He moves into the doorway. He stares at THE HAND. It is about twelve feet tall when standing erect; it is built like a bear but has the skin and head of a lizard. It takes several paces forward, it is sizing him up. The stand off continues. The demon knows it can not fight The Hunter now. They would do battle later. It seems to laugh. The Hunter tilts his head to the left.

"Did that thing just laugh at me?"

As he finishes his question the corner of his eye catches a car heading straight for him. He dives out of the way and the car crashes into the concrete and steel of the building. It crumples instantly, flinging the occupant clear. Groggy from this attack The Hunter shakes his head and tries to stand. He gets to his knees then falls forward on to one hand. He fights again, the world is spinning. He can hear the beast coming.

Sakura has watched as THE HAND stalked them, as it stalked The Hunter. She screamed as the car ploughed into the wall in front of her. She pulled Morgan to floor as the wall exploded towards them. Now she watches the beast move towards a semi-conscious Sol. She wonders what to do; then she decides. She jumps up steps

over Laura's body and climbs over the car. Sakura puts herself between the oncoming demon and The Hunter. The beast begins its charge. The Hunter tries to pull her behind him, but she pulls his hand off her. He must be weak. The beast is barely 6 feet away when there is a flash of metal and THE HAND pulls up. A large spear is stuck in its side. To Sakura's left a black van has pulled up and from a hatch in the roof a bald African man is reloading a spear gun.

The Hunter rasps his friend's name.

"Chijioke."

"I suggest you get in the van people."

Morgan has made his way behind Sakura and into the side door of the van.

Sakura places her hands around The Hunter's waist. He feels her pulling him and together they make it to the vehicle. Just for good measure Chijioke fires the second spear; it misses THE HAND which is still writhing around. With the side door closed Sinclair pulls out of the car park and speeds away to safety.