

# CHAPTER ONE

SATURDAY, MARCH 13

**S**ome people believe an adept can use magick to move backward and forward through time and change the things that happen. Since I can do neither, I'm stuck here, now. My name is Elizabeth Tanner and I'm a magician. The story I'm about to tell you is true.

First you should know that I am thirty, single, have brown, shoulder length hair, and stand about five-foot-four. By day I work in a printing shop as a general office clerk doing everything from writing letters, to copy machine repair, to billing and payroll. I'm a home-owner and college educated.

Now when I say I'm a magician I don't mean the kind of magician that pulls rabbits out of hats. I'm actually a grimoire working, Daemon invoking, spell casting, spirit conjuring, occult loving, necromancy practicing magician. Had I admitted that in the middle ages I would have been burnt at the stake.

I do not routinely dress in black. I am not covered in tattoos; I do not run around in Renaissance Faire garb donning a fake accent hoping to be taken seriously. I do, admittedly, listen to heavy metal, though I love rock, classical, opera, jazz, and electronic music all the same. I am not sleeping with Daemons, plotting the downfall of mankind, at war with the Abrahamic version of God, making pacts or selling my soul to the Christian (or any other) devil. And while I love a good psychological horror film, I detest splatter gore. Basically, I'm well beyond my teenage rebellion days and for the most part you wouldn't be able to pick me out of a crowd of soccer moms. No, really. I am that normal.

I belong to a collective group of practicing Daemonolaters and Daemonolatory groups known as the Ordo Templi Serpentis (OTS or The Order for short). Yes, many pagans and occultists are this organized. I am also the head of the OTS public relations team. That means I am the public face of The Order. Keeping some of The Order's more prominent members out of the public eye and deep in the closet is a huge part of my job. Keeping that in mind, it's not really surprising what happened next.

I received the fax at ten thirty a.m. on a Saturday in March. There it was, in black and white, the question the head of public relations of any 'occult' organization never wants to get.

*"We had a source tell us Senator Steve Mitchell is a Daemon Worshiper and a member of your organization. We have photos of him participating in some sort of Satanic ritual. Can you confirm this?"*

My heart caught in my throat. Good Gods. The truth was Senator Steve Mitchell was a Daemon Worshiper. A dedicant of Anubis to be precise, but I wasn't telling a

reporter that. I threw the fax on the table, poured myself another cup of coffee and turned on the TV.

“If Senator Mitchell does really worship the devil, the people need to know this,” the blonde conservative told Ken Perdot, one of the most liberal political commentators on television.

Ken, with slicked back black hair and sophisticated black glasses framing his deep blue eyes spoke then, “So do you think his career is over now that the Evangelicals, in particular the Reverend Robert Elroy, has cast Senator Mitchell as a servant of Satan? Is his political credibility ruined regardless whether or not these allegations are true?”

The blonde on the screen next to him shook her head. “I don’t know Ken. Senator Mitchell has yet to publicly respond to these pictures. The Republican base is made up largely of Christian conservatives. I think he’s going to have a hard time convincing them that the pictures are false. We’re talking about people who are deathly afraid of the devil.”

“What about claims that he was framed?” Ken asked.

“Well, he’s still going to have a lot of explaining to do. Like the allegations of the maid who claims she found black robes in his closet and pentagram jewelry. Not to mention those pictures of him, his girlfriend, Chloe Brigid, daughter of Gary Brigid, head of the Brigid Printer Cartridge empire, and other unknown participants allegedly in a room in the basement of his Cherry Hills home,” the blonde explained.

I could feel the skin around my temples tighten. The pressure started behind my eyes and throbbed forward. I muted the television, took a deep breath and picked up the phone. I took another long look at the fax. One of the reporters was already on the right track. How long before they were all knocking down my door asking me for

confirmation of Senator Mitchell's involvement and membership in The Order?

I said aloud to the television, "If you people only knew."

One thing was clear; someone who was in the room that night had taken those pictures and that someone was also a member of The Order. There was a security breach and I needed to find it.

I dialed Mark's direct office number, knowing that he always worked Saturday mornings during the spring months. Mark was the head of the Western State chapter of The Order and a close friend. This was his jurisdiction.

"Mark Levinson," he answered.

"Mark?"

"Liz?"

"Yeah. We've got a problem." I put the reporter's written inquiry face down on the fax machine, pressing speed dial, two, and send. "I'm sending you a confidential fax right now." I watched the fax machine suck the letter through before it finally beeped to let me know it was done.

Mark was silent on the other end of the phone for about five minutes.

"I heard about it when the pictures first surfaced a couple hours ago. Monica called me. When did you get this?" he finally asked. There was a slight hint of panic in his voice.

"Today. It came by fax."

"How did they find out about The Order?"

"I'm guessing the same way they got the pictures. Not to mention we're not really hidden if people know where to find us."

He kind of laughed, "No shit? You think? I meant – how did they link him to us?"

"Don't shoot the messenger," I told him. Order security hadn't been my first choice in positions, but I gladly

did it. I wasn't taking his, or anyone else's, crap. The outing of Senator Mitchell hadn't been my doing.

"Have you told Steve yet?" Mark asked, referring to the Senator.

I groaned, pulling at my hair. "What do you think? He has enough on his plate trying to find a way to debunk the pictures. I'm going to call him from a disposable cell phone off I-70 near the airport. It can't be easily tracked that way." The reality was I didn't want to have to call the Senator at all, mostly because it was a pain in the ass. The security protocols outlined in The Order handbook seemed silly. When it came to our more famous members, we had to make sure no phone records could connect us. Who was I to argue with The Order's procedures for such things? It sounded like a good idea, in theory.

"Well, you have to call him. We need to know his side of the story and who was at that ritual the photos came from. I'll send out an encrypted bulletin to some of our other high profile members just in case there's someone out there thinking pictures of celebrities practicing Daemonolatriy is a profitable business." He let out a deep sigh.

"I know, we'll get to the bottom of it," I assured him. "When I find out who did this..."

"Liz?"

"Yeah?"

"We need to find the leak fast. We don't know who might be next. We don't need The Order all over the media, either."

"I know." I hung up, slightly annoyed that Mark seemed to be angry at me. It wasn't my fault Senator Mitchell got caught. I wasn't even part of his group. The bigger the lower echelons of The Order got, the harder it was to keep tabs on people. Whoever the leak was however, he or she likely wasn't among the lower degree holding

members. Lower order members didn't make it into Set's Temple for Euronymous Anpu Mass. Couldn't be. It had to be someone on the inside. In the Inner Circle. That thought alone made me shudder.

Resigned, I drained the cup of coffee sitting in front of me and hurried out the door with the disposable cell phone and Steve's private number in hand. It was time to get it over with.

I got into my Subaru, drove through the suburban Lakewood neighborhood where I lived, and headed toward the highway, careful to follow all the speed limits and stop at all the stop signs. I'd just gotten my first speeding ticket a few weeks back and I didn't want a repeat incident.

It was a warm July night just after my eighteenth birthday when I was initiated into Daemonolatry. I remember being blindfolded and led into the clearing, the hymn of Leviathan, the great serpent, lifting to the sky, the beautiful chorus of voices carrying on the warm night breeze. The excitement was palpable and I anticipated my rebirth, at long last stepping over the threshold and into the circle. I took the sacred vows. I let my blood onto the imprinted sacred oath I signed and later burned in the offering bowl. All those present wore cowl hooded black robes. I had worn blue and an amulet with the sigil of Leviathan to symbolize dedication to my Patron. This hadn't been my first foray into the occult. It all started when I was twelve and developed an interest in ghosts, divination and palmistry that, by age fourteen, had developed into a fascination with Satanism and Christian Devil Worship. My charismatic, Evangelical Aunt hadn't helped matters any. It was because of her that I was left running scared from the confines of Abrahamic religion to begin with.

"Thank you aunt Marge," I whispered at the memory, merging onto I-70 East.

It was when I was sixteen that I met Stacy and her boyfriend Devin. Both Daemon Worshipers. It was as if it had happened yesterday. My friend Jake invited me to a party at one of the local apartment complexes inhabited by poor college students. It wasn't until I found myself in the bathroom, where I discovered copies of the Satanic Bible and Goetia on the back of the toilet that I realized I was in the company of other occultists.

That night, after everyone but Jason and I had left, I was formally introduced. It was that moment, I realized, when I left my Christian Satanism tendencies behind and began learning about the old religions, the three great pillars of magick, and Daemon worship. Daemon from the Latin meaning *replete with wisdom*. Later evolving into the Greek Daimon, meaning divine intelligence. They worshiped the elder Gods, in a soft polytheistic pantheistic way. The same Gods later labeled devils and Satans by the conquering Abrahamic religions that destroyed the Old Religions through forced conformity. And despite the neo-pagan movement refusing to claim Daemonolaters as their own, calling them devil worshipers, the Daemonolaters were just as Pagan as them, just more honest about it. The few things setting Daemonolaters apart being their beliefs that one could use execration magick, animals could be sacrificed provided they were consumed at feasts following the rites (properly cooked of course), and the fact that those who worshiped the Daemons openly used their own blood during ritual and magick. Many didn't realize Daemonolaters still acknowledged the turning wheel, nature and the natural universe around them.

Now, years later I had finally emerged into the inner circle only to learn The Order had secrets. Big secrets that needed keeping because the Abrahamic dominated culture was still terrified of occult religions thanks to Hollywood and stupid teenagers. *Like I used to be.*

Finally, on a stretch of moderately busy highway that seemed to go on forever into a desolate wasteland, I pulled off on the shoulder somewhere near the airport exit and dialed the number. The phone rang three times before Steve answered.

"Steve, it's Liz from OTS. Can you talk?"

"Yes."

"I don't think this was an innocent breech. I think someone is trying to *out* you on purpose."

The fifty-one-year-old, single and quite sexy (in my opinion at least) Republican Senator, whose family had been Dedicants of Anpu for at least a hundred years or more (so they privately claimed), cleared his throat. "Do you know who it was?"

"No. Not yet. I need a list of everyone who attended your annual autumn rite," I paused, really not wanting to tell him. "You should also know I got an inquiry about your membership status in OTS from one Dirk Jorgenson at CNN."

Silence, then finally, "You haven't responded?" He sounded mortified.

"Are you kidding? No! Of course not." I was almost offended he would even think such a thing. What was it with people talking to me like I'd done something wrong? "I'm the public face of the OTS for a reason. I'm not prone to blabbing to the media."

"Good. Tell him no, or," he paused, seeming uncertain. "Maybe you shouldn't respond at all or would that be an admission of guilt? I'll send the list of people who were at Eury-Anpu. In the meantime I'll just keep attending the Universal Unitarian church. Eh? Now you know why I do that..." his voice trailed off.

A lot of the more celebrity members of OTS publicly attended church just in case something like this happened. "I'll tell him you're not a member. It would be

more professional that way. If we don't respond we look like we have something to hide. Any ideas how you're going to explain the pictures away?"

"Photoshop?" He laughed. I could tell it wasn't genuine. Then he went on, serious now. "Chloe and I are going to tell people they're photos from a Halloween party. We think the media will buy it. As for the maid's story, what she saw were the costumes we wore."

Chloe Brigid was Senator Mitchell's long time socialite girlfriend who was maybe just a little older than me. I could hear someone in the background talking, then the muffled voice of Senator Mitchell.

"I'll be in touch," I finally told him.

"Do me a favor," he said.

"Anything."

"Look into Jason Fogerty."

I gasped. "Jason? You let Fogerty into your sect ritual? By Gods!"

Had it been funny I would have laughed out loud. Jason had issues, sure, one of them his being gay and still in the closet even though everyone knew. The other being he had recently been nabbed for marijuana possession. He was an outsider, a stoner and a Goetic magician. He had also played both sides of the fence in Order politics before, and was removed from the inner circle because of it. How he'd managed to get into a Set's Temple ritual confounded even me. But then I knew he was a social climber and had probably been looking for a way in for years. He finally made it. Obviously.

"He came with a friend of another member," Senator Steve confirmed, as if reading my mind.

I tried not to groan. Of all the people *not* to invite to a sect ritual, Jason was on the list of my top ten. Of course Jason also wasn't the sharpest knife in the drawer. It was very likely he didn't even know who Steve was, but that

didn't mean Sandra Farel, an excommunicated priestess and enemy of The Order, didn't tell him before she died. It seemed unlikely. Sandra had been dead for three years and Jason had a short memory. Then again, Chloe Brigid was famous, right up there with the Kardashian girls and Paris Hilton. Who she was dating was common knowledge to anyone who followed pop-culture. "Do you guys just let anyone into your rituals?"

"No, like I said, he came with a friend of another member. A Jerri Masterson? She's seeing my aide, Aaron," Steve said casually. "I just didn't like the looks of the guy and people were introducing him by his forum name. Alrick, I remembered that name from the forum. Kind of arrogant and obnoxious. And wasn't he friends with that woman the council threw out?"

Have you ever had one of those moments where you wanted to reach out and smack the person you were talking to while simultaneously bashing your head against something hard? That's kind of how I felt at the mention of Jerri Masterson. That's probably the second person you don't want to invite to your sect ritual.

"Yeah. I gotta go." It was time to end this conversation.

The Senator bade me goodbye with a quick thank you and the line went dead.

My heart sank. Same people, new drama. Jerri and Jason were tolerable one-on-one, but wherever they went together, calamity almost certainly followed. I knew that from personal experience. At one time they both had considered knowing me a privilege, until they realized there were people higher up than me. I didn't matter after that. I was expendable.

Or maybe, I told myself, just maybe, those two weren't involved at all and Steve had simply been careless and invited another *wrong* Daemonolater into his groups'

private ritual. Shit happens. The pictures getting out could have been an honest mistake even. Maybe someone posted the pictures to their social networking site quite innocently. The feeling in my gut said otherwise. Who was I kidding? I could see Fogerty or Masterson outing him, motivated by money or revenge. Whichever.

I threw the phone onto the passenger seat and started back home. I was hungry and tired and just wanted to put the entire day behind me.

When I got home I returned Dirk Jorgenson's phone call. Thank Daemons he didn't pick up. I left a brief message telling him I didn't know of a Steve Mitchell in our group. The phone calls seemed to have subsided. I listened to, then erased, the additional messages on the answering machine and turned the ringer off. It was a good thing I'd had the foresight to get OTS its own phone number. That way I could just empty the answering machine once a day for a few days and maybe the reporters would get bored and move on. After all, something more interesting was bound to happen to take the heat off of Senator Mitchell.

Later that night, after a frozen dinner and a hot bath, I called upon Ashtaroth, a Daemonesse of Divination, and performed a skrying session. It put my natural abilities as a medium and seer to good use. I first discovered my abilities as a seer and medium as a child. I would often know things about situations before they happened. I also learned I could see spirits after an incident with a dead blackbird. It was a gift that ran through the female side of my family.

I lit the incense and cleared my mind, inhaling deeply. The mirror faded to black then went foggy as my clairsentience kicked in, giving me information without any vivid visual pictures.

Senator Steve Mitchell kept his inner circle tight. His aides, his secretary, and his girlfriend all worshiped with

him. They all had just as much to lose by going public with their religious beliefs and practices as he did. But there were a lot of people at that ritual, and even though they specified no cameras in the ritual area, someone had gotten one in. Probably on their phone. There were a lot of people there he hadn't known. It was no different than the twenty rituals before that. Except this time, the cowl hood was off and someone snapped a picture, clearly showing the Senator standing in front of an altar, holding a ritual knife and a chalice of wine.

I could see hazy images now. It was innocent enough, probably during the Abyssal Communion and wine blessing part of the rite. But it looked worse considering the large statue of Anubis, clear as day, against the wall behind the altar. Next to that the large silver inverse pentagram symbolizing man in control of the elements. It almost looked like a scene straight out of a 'B' Hollywood horror flick. It was his own carelessness that got him into this mess.

The fog began to clear, and the clairvoyance kicked in full force. I could see them clearly now.

*Chloe came up behind Steve Mitchell and put her hands on his shoulders. "We can make it go away. My PR people are on it. Besides, by the time re-election comes around, the issue of the moment is going to foreshadow someone's silly misinterpretation of some party photos. Right?"*

*She was so optimistic.*

*"I know," he said.*

*"Wanna see my interview? I saved it for you." She hopped up from the couch and turned on the flat screen on the wall opposite them, changing to the DVR and pressing play.*

*"Chloe, is Senator Mitchell a devil worshiper?"*

*She had given the media a carefree smile and shook her head.*

*"No. Steve is a Christian. He attends the Universal Unitarian Church every Sunday. What has come out in the media as alleged devil*

*worship photos were photos taken at a Halloween costume party we attended last year. He was hamming it up for the camera. I can see how someone might misconstrue something like that...*

*The clip cut, and the newscaster sat in front of the camera. "So it looks like what we've seen were nothing more than some Halloween snapshots. The Senator's press secretary has confirmed that this is, indeed the case and said the Senator did not release an official statement right away because he was out of the office today, and in meetings about the upcoming air quality control legislation..."*

*Chloe turned down the television. "See? All gone."*

*"A reporter from CNN contacted Elizabeth Tanner," he replied quietly.*

*Her bright smile faded. "What did he want?"*

*"I guess he asked if I was a member of The Order."*

*Chloe let out a soft gasp.*

The fog returned and the images faded. Something was wrong. Very wrong.

The fog of the mirror turned black instead of gray and what came out of the fog sent me falling backward, terrified. A bone deep chill ran the length of my body and sudden tears stung my eyes.

The terrifying, blood-drenched face of something evil and inhuman stared back at me. I flipped the skrying mirror over and heard distant sobbing. Then realized it was coming from me.

I broke the circle and ran from the room then put wards on the closed door just to make sure whatever I saw in the mirror couldn't follow me. After calming down, I fell into bed, exhausted.

## CHAPTER TWO

SUNDAY, MARCH 14

The phone didn't ring once Sunday morning. It rang a hundred times. Each reporter left a message and after reporter twenty-five, the machine was full. Thank goodness I'd turned the ringer off the night before. I emptied the machine then went to take a shower. When I finished showering, I got dressed slowly, prolonging the inevitable. I took my time having breakfast (a bowl of cold cereal). Finally, I sat down to listen to more messages. Most of the callers wanted to know more about The Order, some wanted to know if the Senator was an active member. The last message catapulted me out of the chair.

"Hello. I'm Gary McKenzie from the Chicago Sun," the gruff voice said. He sounded like he'd already rehearsed what he was going to say. "I am curious about your Order's reaction to the Satanic murder of Chloe Brigid and Colorado Senator Mitchell's arrest. Please call me back. My number is..." I jammed my finger down on the stop

button so hard that a pain shot through it. My breath caught in my throat and the shock of the news sent waves of nausea through my gut.

“Oh Gods,” I whispered, remembering the ‘thing’ in my skrying mirror the night before. That *thing* had been a warning something terrible was going to happen and I had misinterpreted what I’d seen. I should have known and yet, hindsight is twenty-twenty and there was no way the imagery I saw could have foretold *this*. My visions weren’t always crystal clear in their meaning anyway. That same cold chill ran through me again, this time making me light headed. Trembling, I grabbed the TV remote and turned it on.

There it was, splattered all over the 24/7 news channels. Fox News even reported Senator Mitchell as a Democrat, already disowning him as they were famous for doing when a conservative politician did, or was accused of, something so appalling that no one in their own party wanted to claim association. Senator Steve Mitchell, fifty-one-years-old, recently outed as an alleged Satanist (evidently the murder put the *Halloween pictures* defense on the back burner), was the prime suspect in the occult style murder of his thirty-two-year-old girlfriend Chloe Brigid, heiress to the Brigid printer cartridge empire. I fell back onto the couch in shock. My cell phone began to ring with AC/DC’s *Hell’s Bells*, a ringtone I assigned to all members of The Order.

The screen quickly told me it was Aaron McCray, Senator Mitchell’s Aide and fellow sect member. I reluctantly answered. Evidently we’d thrown the guidelines for anonymous communications out the window?

“Hey, Liz, it’s Aaron McCray. I just finished talking to the police,” he started abruptly. “They’re on their way to your house right now.”

“My house? Why? How did they find out about me and what did they ask you?” My face tightened and a throb started in my left temple, probably due to a surge in my blood pressure.

“I was asked who to contact from The Order for information. You’re head of Order publicity. They asked if I had been at the ritual the pictures were taken at and where I was last night. I gave them my answers. They’re your problem now.”

“I thought they thought it was Steve who killed her. Furthermore, wasn’t there an official story about Halloween pictures we were all sticking to? And who told you that you could talk about The Order publicly?” I didn’t pull any punches. I was pissed. This guy had a lot of nerve.

“Look, I’m not lying to the police, not for you or The Order. Besides, I think they’re just making sure he didn’t have an accomplice or they’re trying to figure out his motivation, or maybe they just don’t want to rule anyone else out. They’re police, it’s what they do. Look, my girlfriend was here and we went to a movie last night. Had our ticket stubs. They said they’d get back to me with any additional questions.” Aaron stopped short, as if waiting for my reaction to his defensive attitude.

I hadn’t accused him of anything so why he was defensive with me and giving me his alibi was anyone’s guess. What a weirdo. I never did like the guy. I’d only met him once or twice before and each time he gave me a nasty feeling.

Finally I managed, “Great. Yeah, thanks for the heads up. I should go.” I could have said a lot more to Aaron, but it was clear to me he had no loyalty to The Order, or the senator and clearly he thought the senator did it. It was every man for himself, and as far as I was concerned Aaron threw me under the bus for a clean getaway. Coward. I’d remember that next time he came to

me wanting something. Or when someone asked me about his character.

I hurried and threw on a solid black t-shirt, a clean pair of jeans and pulled my hair back in a ponytail. I even put on a little powder and eyeliner just so I looked put-together. I was still in shock when the doorbell rang.

I answered reluctantly, having had only a few minutes to rehearse some responses in the mirror to make sure I didn't sound or look as suspicious as I thought I would, despite the fact that I had nothing to hide and nothing do with Chloe Brigid's murder. I wasn't comfortable around cops because the only interaction I'd ever had with them was when I got pulled over. "Can I help you?" I tried to look surprised.

"Ms. Tanner?"

I felt myself nod. "That's me." There was a brief moment of panic when I realized I hadn't bothered hiding the numerous books about magick, the occult paintings that hung on the walls, or a few stray ritual tools on the kitchen counter waiting for cleaning. I would have had to relocate to properly conceal it all. I managed to keep a straight face.

"I'm Detective Katz of the Cherry Hills Police and this is Detective Smith from Denver PD. We're investigating the murder of Chloe Brigid. Could we come inside and talk with you?"

Now let me tell you, being questioned by the police about people you know is a somewhat surreal experience; especially when the detectives are named Smith and Katz, which sounds almost ridiculous when you think about it. "Sure." I stepped aside and opened the door wide. *Here goes nothing.* I motioned toward the sofa. "Come on in and sit down."

The detectives looked around my meager home and I suddenly felt self-conscious. My house isn't that big and it's very lived in. The living room, dining room, and kitchen

are practically one room and when one room is messy, they all look a bit cluttered. The sliding glass door leading into the small backyard had a film of dirt on it. I hadn't washed it for a month or more. I was not Martha Stewart, that's for sure. I thanked the Daemons I'd had the foresight to close the doors to the three bedrooms down the hallway. The only door left open led to the small main bathroom, which I'd just cleaned.

I led the way to the living room which held a rich tan couch, loveseat and recliner set I'd gotten on sale at a local furniture shop. The set was probably the most expensive furniture I owned next to my oak bedroom set. The rest of the furniture house-wide consisted of second hand items. I had an older model television on an entertainment stand to the left of the fireplace whose mantel held a few pictures of my family and friends. None of the frames matched. On my walls hung paintings done by my artist friends; all of them depicting Daemons, sigils and abyssal landscapes.

Katz and Smith took the couch and I sat on the edge of the recliner. The coffee table was covered in books about Enochian Magick, a recent passion of mine. Don't think they didn't look, either. Both detectives sat down as if they had just been lured into the lair of the spider queen, afraid to touch anything as if being a magus was contagious. Their eyes were wide as they surveyed the images on my walls. It was almost funny.

"Would you like some coffee?" I offered. There was always a fresh pot on the counter over the weekend. I could drink an entire pot by myself.

Detective Katz, late-thirties, black hair, deep brown eyes and at least six-foot-two of sexy, gave me a quick smile and straightened his suit jacket. "No, thank you." He seemed to want to say more, but his eyes were transfixed on

the book about Enochian Sex Magick sitting in front of him.

I fought back a smirk.

His partner, Detective Smith, looked at Detective Katz helplessly. He was probably the younger of the two, about five-foot-seven, very lanky, pale, and with thinning brown hair cropped short.

Katz finally found his voice, probably after realizing he was staring. “Do you know Senator Steve Mitchell and his girlfriend Chloe Brigid, Ms. Tanner?”

“I know Steve Mitchell. We met briefly at an Order event several years ago. But we weren’t close friends or anything like that. I never met Chloe. That wasn’t my crowd,” I told them honestly.

Katz seemed taken aback by this. “Don’t you both belong to the same group?”

I smiled, this was going to be a longer conversation than I’d intended. I began to wonder if I should just shut up and contact an attorney because I’d signed non-disclosure agreements. At the same time, something, call it intuition, told me to answer the question. “Yes, but there are different sub-groups and cliques within the main group. A lot of people are members of The Order. However, there are different sects within The Order itself.”

“Hmm,” said Detective Smith. It was the first utterance I’d heard from him.

Detective Katz gave me a quizzical look.

“Well, for example, I belong to a group within Ordo Templi Serpentis that practices a pantheistic, non-familial type of Khemetic-Canaanite Daemonolatry. The people I worship with are all middle-class working stiffs. Senator Mitchell, on the other hand, belongs to a sect of Khemetic Daemonolaters who practice according to familial traditions. Their group consists of upper-class, wealthy, and beautiful people who only hang out with other upper-class,

wealthy, beautiful people. It's not my crowd. The closest I've ever gotten to Senator Mitchell was an Order wide regional get together three years ago up at Yellowstone." I paused to gauge their reaction to what I was saying. It was a combination of disbelief and deep interest. I added, "And we've talked on the phone a few times about Order business, but only because we're both group leaders and I'm the head of Ordo Templi Serpetis public relations for this region."

Katz nodded. "So when was the last time you talked to him?"

At this point, the truth was going to be better than a lie and I knew it. "Yesterday, when the pictures came out. He wanted to give me a head's up because the media would naturally begin contacting me because I'm listed on the website as media relations for Colorado."

"And what, exactly, did he tell you?"

"Well, we discussed whether or not to admit he was a member of The Order and decided that the information was private and that it was our policy that prohibited me from sharing that information. And I got the official story on the pictures so everyone was on the same page." I began picking at my nails, fighting the urge to outright start chewing them, a habit I'd recently broken myself of.

"When did you hear about Ms. Brigid's murder?"

My cell phone, now on vibrating mode, started dancing across a copy of John Dee's *Hieroglyphic Monad*. I brought my hand down on it and turned it off, knowing it was probably Mark wanting to know what was going on. "This morning after I got out of the shower and listened to my answering machine. A reporter who left a message mentioned it, so I turned on the TV."

"Okay. And where were you last night?"

"Pardon me?" The question threw me off guard.

“Where were you last night? It’s a standard question, Ms. Tanner.” Detective Katz’s inquiring gaze held me in its grip. Damn he was intimidating. He began biting his lip. Sexy.

“Here. Alone.” I motioned toward the hallway at the back of the kitchen, “In my temple actually. Skrying.”

“Skrying?” he repeated it as a question.

I nodded. “It’s a form of divination.”

“Ah.” Katz’s raised a dark eyebrow. He stood, glanced down and the coffee table again, and then began walking toward the front door. Detective Smith followed. “Those are all the questions I have at the moment Ms. Tanner, but I might need to talk to you some more. You really seem to be into this *stuff*.” As he said ‘stuff’ he motioned toward all the books on the coffee table.

I must have looked surprised because suddenly they both seemed very interested in what I was about to say. “Okay, but you already know what I know. I’m just as shocked as anyone by what happened.”

“Yes, but we might be able to use more information about your religion and practices and could possibly use some help deciphering some symbolism found at the crime scene.”

I was bewildered. “Don’t you have *cult investigators* who will gladly pour over all that stuff and tell you what’s what?” Yes, that came out sarcastically, I admit it. Most of the cult or occult investigators know about as much about the occult – the *real* occult - as a misinformed, terrified Christian who gets their information from old horror films like *Brotherhood of Satan* or fictional stories like Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*.

Detective Katz smiled as if reading my mind. “Sure. But it would be nice to get the perspective of someone who actually practices this *stuff*. Besides, aren’t you the public relations officer?”

There it was again, the off-handed dismissal of my religion and magical practice as *stuff*. Regardless, he was right. I was the OTS Public Relations Officer. “You got me there,” I half mumbled.

“Can I get your contact information?”

I smiled politely and grabbed a pen and paper, giving him my home and work number and e-mail address. Clearly he already knew where I lived. There was no escaping Detective Katz.

“Thank you,” he said politely, stepping out the door. Detective Smith just nodded at me in acknowledgement as he stepped over the threshold and out into the bright sunlight of midday, following Detective Katz to the car. I smiled and nodded, closing the door gently behind them. And once I was again alone in my house I let out a sigh of relief and poured myself another cup of coffee.

While I was thinking about it I went to the answering machine and changed the incoming message.

“You have reached the public relations office of the Ordo Templi Serpentis. If you are calling to ask if Senator Steve Mitchell is a member of our Order, he is not. If you are calling to inquire about the murder of Chloe Brigid we cannot help you as she was not a member of our Order either. If you have other questions or inquiries, please leave a message after the tone.”

I pressed stop, then listened to the message again to make sure it recorded well. Perfect.

Yes. It was Mark who called during my visit from the detectives and no, I didn’t call him back. At least not then.

I was in the middle of cleaning and clearing my temple from the previous night’s terrifying skrying session when the phone rang. I answered the phone with a thurible, smoldering with frankincense and myrrh, swinging on a chain in my left hand. It was Detective Katz. I set the

thurable down and gently set the chain neatly on the kitchen counter so I could pick it up again without it tipping the thurable over. White smoke curled up and dissipated into the air around me. I glanced at the clock. It had only taken the detective two hours to utilize my contact information.

“Ms. Tanner?” He paused in such a way it was as if he’d caught me with my hand in the cookie jar. “Senator Mitchell and his lawyer have requested you come down to the station. Evidently he really wants to talk to you before his arraignment tomorrow.”

I froze. Why would Steve Mitchell ask to see me? “Okay,” I finally managed.

I imagine I sounded somewhat confused, which was good because I think Katz picked up on that. If I’d sounded too nonchalant he may have misconstrued it to mean Senator Mitchell and me were close friends.

“Evidently he says you’re a *medium* and can help us find who *really* did this?”

I wasn’t sure if it was a real question or not or if he was mocking me so I didn’t answer for a moment. Finally I said, “I can leave now. I’ll be there in about thirty to forty-five minutes depending on traffic.”

Katz didn’t push the medium issue. Not then anyway. I took down the address, locked up the house, got into my silver Subaru Legacy, programmed the address into my navigation system and hurried to the Cherry Hills Police Department.

Cherry Hills Village is an affluent suburb on the southern edge of Denver metro. Let’s just say that if you can’t afford a million or more on a house, you don’t live in Cherry Hills. The police station was a lot smaller than I anticipated. Actually, I’m not sure what I expected. I guess I was expecting a huge municipal type building filled to gills with uniformed officers running around. It was nothing like that.

When I arrived I was escorted through a clean well-kept lobby into a back room with a table and six chairs. Detective Katz sat across from Senator Mitchell and a short, balding older man wearing glasses, presumably Mitchell's attorney. Senator Mitchell looked exhausted. His usual dark gray streaked hair was disheveled, and his blue eyes appeared dull and tired, not like he usually looked on TV. He was wearing jeans, tennis shoes, and a gray button down shirt. He looked relieved when I entered. The door closed behind me as the officer who escorted me in left.

"Ah, Ms. Tanner. I'll leave you to it then." Katz, who was wearing the same suit minus the jacket he'd been wearing earlier, stood and left the room with a brief backward glance.

I turned and looked at the window of glass behind me knowing there were people in there, watching. It seemed strange to me. Was this usually how it worked? Letting the 'medium' or 'seer' talk to the accused? No matter, I was here. I turned to Steve Mitchell, realizing I could be looking at a murderer.

"Liz," Steve Mitchell started. There was hope gleaming in his eyes. Great, that made us look much closer than we were. "I need your help. I need you to find out who did this. I don't think the police will be able to do it."

I just looked at him. Dumbfounded.

"You can't believe *I* did this!" he practically shouted, then lowered his voice. The tears began streaming down his cheeks. "I loved Chloe. I could never have hurt her."

"Senator Mitchell, Steve, I need to know what happened." I said, glancing over at the lawyer. He was a nervous looking guy. He didn't seem to like the idea of us talking. Not where the police could overhear. Of course he didn't say anything, which was kind of weird.

Steve Mitchell put his hands in his head. "I don't remember. I vaguely remember Chloe and I opening a

bottle of wine with dinner, and then next thing I know I'm in Set's Temple and there's a police officer standing over me. That's all I remember. I swear."

That gave me absolutely nothing to work with. But in that moment, I believed him. My gut told me something else was going on. I just didn't know where to start. The look the Senator gave me actually made me feel bad for him. I reached across the table and took his hand into mine. "I'll find out what I can."

Senator Mitchell nodded and managed a weak smile. Just then, the door opened and Detective Katz stuck his head in. "Can I talk to you before you go, Ms. Tanner?"

I stood and gave the Senator and his lawyer a reassuring smile, then turned and followed Detective Katz into the hallway.

"Come with me."

With some reluctance I followed him through another short hallway to an office at the end. There were two desks crowded into the small room, covered in paperwork. The walls were covered with posts and pictures of wanted criminals, and a whiteboard was affixed to the wall above two metal folding chairs.

"Pull up a chair and pardon our mess. The office usually isn't this chaotic. We're doing some remodeling." He sat down and motioned for me to sit.

I did as instructed.

"So what was that all about?"

"What was what all about?" I didn't follow.

"Why he thinks you can help him?"

I re-adjusted my position in the chair. "There is a belief among members of our Order that I'm a seeress with strong abilities," I explained. I began fidgeting with a lock of my brown hair.

"A seeress?"

“A medium. I skry and sometimes I see things. I can also see and speak with the dead sometimes. In my dreams mostly.”

He smiled, clearly in disbelief. “You *see* things? And dead people?”

I cocked my head to one side, feeling the anger boil up inside me. “Detective Katz, I did not come here to be insulted or to have my beliefs scoffed at. I came here at the request of an acquaintance and he’s asked me to try to help find the murderer of his girlfriend.”

Katz pursed his lips together and took a deep breath. “Ms. Tanner, finding Chloe Brigid’s murderer and bringing him to justice is my job, not yours. I use physical evidence to find and put away murderers. Not occult mumbo jumbo. No offense. As far as I’m concerned, we have our guy.”

My jaw dropped. No offense? What did he mean no offense? You damn well bet I was offended.

He put up a hand. “Look, I believe that you and others like you believe you have special powers. I believe that you believe what you believe, but you have to understand what this looks like to people who don’t share your beliefs. I’m not trying to insult or upset you. I’m just saying that the physical evidence at the moment points to Senator Mitchell. Right now, he’s our guy. He was found lying on the floor next to her, covered in her blood, passed out. Smelt like alcohol. His fingerprints were on the knife. It’s pretty cut and dry.”

I had a vision then, like a flash in my brain as if I was seeing through someone else’s eyes. Senator Steve Mitchell passed out on the floor. He was passed out before she died. Someone made sure of that. I pulled myself back from the images. Evidently not soon enough.

“Ms. Tanner?” Detective Katz was leaning over me, his deep brown eyes full of concern. Damn he was good looking. I sat slumped over in the chair. “Are you alright?”

“I’m fine,” I murmured, recovering from the light-headed feeling that engulfed me. I regained my composure and the detective sat on the corner of his desk, mere inches from me. “Detective, I understand you don’t believe me. I understand you think you have evidence, but someone made sure to give Senator Mitchell to the press. Someone could have drugged him and framed him for the murder of his girlfriend. If they went out of their way to try to ruin him, and that didn’t work...maybe they thought framing him for murder would. I don’t know.”

Detective Katz seemed to consider this for a moment. “Okay, suppose you’re right? Who would do that?”

“A rival politician? Someone in his group who didn’t like him? Someone from a special interest group he didn’t pander to? I don’t know yet. What I do know is that whoever tried to *out* him was a member of our Order and was at that ritual, or knows someone who was at that ritual.”

“And there’s also the possibility that the two incidents are unrelated,” he pointed out. He bit at his lip.

I nodded. “Yes. There’s always that possibility. It’s just that,” I paused, knowing what I was about to say would fall on deaf ears. “I have a strong feeling, an impression, that someone framed Senator Mitchell and it’s all connected.”

“Well then there better be some physical proof found fast because at this point, he’s the only reasonable suspect unless you know more than you’re saying, *Liz*.” He said Liz carefully because that’s how Steve addressed me. He’d been watching. Wasn’t that illegal?

“Everyone calls me Liz. Just ask. I knew you were going to misinterpret that.” I looked him straight in those deep brown eyes, determined to let him know he wasn’t going to intimidate me. “There were some people at that particular ritual that I suspect could have taken or released the pictures to the media. I’ll start my own investigation with them.”

“Why don’t you just give me their names and I’ll save you the trouble. Remember who the detective is, Ms. Tanner.” He gave me a quick smile.

“They won’t talk to the police. You do realize we’re dealing with ‘secret society’ *stuff* here, right? You’re an outsider.” I laughed. “No one will tell you anything.”

“You did.”

I gave him a curt smile. “That’s *my* job.”

“I can always get a search warrant for your house and computer and I’ll find these people on my own.”

My heart skipped a beat. Giving the police our membership list was not high on my priority list. “Look, if you want to come with me, fine. Just don’t tell anyone you’re a cop.”

“Let me see if that will fly with my boss. In the meantime, if you have a few more minutes, I’d like to show you some pictures of the crime scene. I’m curious to see if anything stands out to you or if you can lend some insight into the particular ritual Ms. Brigid was sacrificed for.” He picked up a folder from his desk.

I chuckled, causing him to look up from the blue folder. “What?”

I rolled my eyes. “We don’t practice human sacrifice. That’s another one of those stupid Hollywood myths.”

Wordlessly, he handed me a picture of an altar. On top of the altar sat two black candles and a center focus candle carved with the sigils of Focalor and Valefor. A

typical Daemonolatry altar set up. There were also a couple of amulets there. One was an amulet of Sitri; an amulet of Sitri that I had made over four years ago for someone who was now dead.

“What the hell?” It escaped my lips before I could stop myself. My confusion was evident. “That’s an amulet I made for someone over four years ago.”

“Something you made?” He asked, leaning over to look at the photo with me.

I pointed to the clay amulet. It was yellow and red clay swirled together with the sigil of the Daemon Sitri carved into the clay, then painted black. The amulet was still pristine after all these years. “This one here. I make amulets for friends. I made this one for someone who was a friend many years ago. But she passed away. I honestly don’t know how it ended up here.”

Katz said nothing, but I could tell he was waiting for me to continue.

“This whole thing happened in Senator Mitchell’s basement ritual space?” I pointed to the statues of Anpu behind the altar.

Detective Katz nodded. “Yes.”

I shook my head, pointing at the picture. “The Senator’s temple is called Set’s Temple for a reason. The sigils on the focus candle are Goetic. Senator Mitchell is a Khemetic Daemonolater, meaning he usually only worships and works with Ancient Egyptian Daemonic forces, or Gods. This doesn’t make sense.”

“So let me get this straight. Egyptian Gods are demons?”

I nodded. “The word Daemon, before Christian perversion of it, meant divine intelligence. Or a divine helper. One that imparted divine wisdom to humans. Socrates and Aristotle had personal Daimons,” I explained.

“It’s only been in more recent in history the meaning of the word Daemon has become synonymous with devil.”

“Oh.” He shrugged. “Maybe the Senator was trying to throw us off.” He handed me the next picture.

“Not likely,” I said, taking the picture from him. It took me a minute to register that I was staring at a photo of the corpse of Chloe Brigid, apparently stabbed in the stomach several times and laying in a pool of blood in the center of what appeared to be a chalk Triangle of Art drawn on the tan tiled floor. A larger than normal Triangle of Art. “Which direction was this triangle situated?”

“What do you mean?”

I felt myself getting annoyed but quickly reminded myself that Detective Katz was virtually clueless. “I mean the room. Is the altar on the South wall?”

He shuffled through some papers and photos. “I believe it was the West wall actually. Where the altar was, does this matter?”

I nodded. “So this triangle was situated South in relation to the altar?”

He nodded, “Yeah.”

I reached out for another picture. He handed it to me. This one showed me what I was looking for. The circle.

“What?” Katz was staring at me with baited breath.

“This entire ritual is Goetia, and even so – I don’t understand the sacrifice bit because that’s *not* a part of Goetic ritual.”

He shook his head, indicating he had no clue what I was talking about.

I let out an annoyed sigh. “Look, in your average Goetic ritual, first you don’t have an altar, that part is Daemonolatry specific. Second, the magician stands in the circle and invokes or evokes the Daemonic force into the triangle.”

“Are you trying to tell me a Daemon killed Ms. Brigid, Ms. Tanner?”

I snorted. “No. You’re missing the point. There’s not supposed to be *anything* except maybe a skrying mirror in the triangle.”

Again, he said nothing.

I continued. “The Triangle of Art is situated toward the directional point of the Daemonic force being invoked. This triangle is situated South and the sigils of Valefor and Focalor are on the focus candle, suggesting someone was performing some sort of execration. I’m pretty sure the body of Ms. Brigid in the triangle is symbolic of something. I’m just not sure what yet. Maybe as an offering to Valefor and Focalor? And I find it odd an amulet that I made and belonged to a dead woman was left on the altar. Unless after she died it was given to someone else and that someone left it there. It also means that whoever did this is somehow connected to the OTS.”

“Okay, now we’re getting somewhere.” Detective Katz nodded appreciatively at this new information.

“Where was Senator Mitchell found?” I asked, noticing he wasn’t in any of the pictures.

“He was passed out in front of the altar with the murder weapon next to him.”

“Was he actually holding it?”

Katz handed me another picture. “No. But her blood and his fingerprints were all over it. And he was covered in her blood.”

This time the picture he handed me was of a dagger with Egyptian hieroglyphs on it. It was probably Mitchell’s ritual athame, one he used often. So clearly his prints would be on it. “So what did your *occult investigator* make of all this?”

He smiled, clearly detecting my sarcasm. “She said it was a standard Satanic ritual.”

I rolled my eyes. “Figures.”

“You don’t think highly of the experts?” He seemed amused.

“Experts?” I laughed out loud. I’d seen what the experts were telling people; that pentagrams, symbols of the sky and moon, and the Jewish hexagram were ‘satanic’ (among other ignorant and paranoid fallacies). “Not when they’re so full of crap they couldn’t tell a Wiccan ritual from a Satanic ritual, or their ass from a hole in the ground,” I said, feeling a bit smug. “Not to mention they clearly have no clue about Daemonolatry or Ceremonial Magick or the various types of Paganism.”

“Oh.” He clearly had nothing else to say about that. Guess he was re-thinking introducing me to their ‘occult expert’.

“So could we reasonably argue that someone else drugged Senator Mitchell, committed the murder wearing gloves, and then somehow covered the Senator in her blood and placed the murder weapon next to him?” I asked.

“Yes, but his prints...”

I held up a hand and interrupted him, “Yes, but his prints are bound to be all over his own ritual tools and if someone else committed the murder, wouldn’t they have been smart enough to wear gloves?”

“I suppose...”

Then I realized that when I had seen Senator Mitchell in the interview room with his lawyer, he wasn’t covered in blood then. “Have the Senator’s clothes, the ones he was wearing, been put into evidence?”

Katz gave me ‘are-you-serious’ and ‘do-I-look-stupid?’ at the same time. “Of course. We have pictures of him wearing them.” He dug through the folder and pulled out a few more pictures, handing them to me.

I thumbed through them realizing the blood was mostly on the left side. “Did anyone even look at these?”

“Yes.” The detective seemed taken aback, even a little offended I’d asked.

“I think someone should test blood splatter and find out if Senator Mitchell is left-handed. I think he’s right-handed.”

“We’ll find out more from the autopsy report. In the meantime, I think *we* can take the forensics from here.”

“Sorry.” I looked down and handed him back the pictures. I was kind of acting like a know-it-all. My only real detecting experience amounted to watching *Law & Order SVU* religiously. “I didn’t mean to imply anything.”

He didn’t accept or acknowledge the apology. “Are you always so defensive?”

“It’s not intentional so I apologize if I’ve said anything to offend you. You’d think I was used to being mocked and treated poorly because I practice a non-standard religion. But I’m not used to it and quite frankly, it pisses me off.” I threw him a fake smile.

He nodded, seeming to pick up on my irritation. At least he had *some* empathy. “I understand. You must be tired. It’s been a long day for everyone. So should I pick you up about eight a.m. then?”

His question threw me off at first until I remembered that I’d offered to take him along in my internal Order investigation. “I thought you had to check with your boss?”

“I’ll be talking to him in a few minutes. I think he’ll go for it. If the plan changes I’ll call you early in the morning. So eight a.m.?”

It struck me then that I was going to have to call into work. “Yeah, that’s fine. I just need to call work and let them know I won’t be in. Oh, and drop the black slacks, white shirts, and suit jackets. You look like an insurance salesman or a Fed.”

He smiled. "Good, I'll see you then." He reached over and grabbed his jacket from the hook on the wall and ushered me from his office, turning off the light and closing the door behind him.

I caught a glimpse of the clock as I passed through the main lobby of the police station. It was already just past eight-thirty.



I missed a total of three calls on my cell from Mark and several other high level inner-circle members that day. I noticed the OTS answering machine didn't have a single new message. Evidently my outgoing greeting had worked. I settled down, deciding to call Mark and only Mark. He could call everyone else and keep them on top of the developments. No reason for me to call everyone.

Mark answered on the first ring. "Elizabeth!" he shouted into the phone.

I pulled the phone away from my ear. "Sorry – I was at the police station. I saw Steve."

"And?"

"He doesn't remember anything and get this, the detective working the case pulled me into his office to look at crime scene photos. He wants us to cooperate with them and I agreed." I paused, waiting for Mark to fly off the handle. He was anxious enough as it was. Throwing a police investigation into the mix, one The Order was cooperating with, was sure to send him into a freak out. Or so I thought.

I didn't get the reaction I was expecting. "Okay, that sounds reasonable. Do they suspect someone in The Order?"

"No. They suspect Steve. Or at least they did until I saw the crime scene photos and suggested that maybe it wasn't Steve and maybe it was someone within The Order. I

guess I threw some reasonable doubt into the mix. The detective wants to look into other possibilities."

I heard Mark swallow. Hard. "What do you mean?"

"Whoever did it performed a Goetic ritual with heavy Daemonolatry overtones. Nothing fancy. They just left a dead body in the Triangle of Art. And a few amulets on the altar. One being an amulet of Sitri that I made over four years ago. Guess for who?"

Mark was dead silent.

"Sandra Farel."

"Soror Emerald?"

"The one and the same. She's the only one I've ever made a Sitri amulet for. I remember my own handiwork."

"So it was one of her followers then." It wasn't a question.

"Looks like it. They did an amazing job framing Senator Steve, too." I walked into the kitchen.

"Are the police willing to keep this under wraps? Keep The Order out of the media?"

I shrugged and began pouring myself a glass of milk. "They don't want more media attention than what they're getting. I highly doubt they're going to herald The Order's existence from the rooftops. Cherry Hills is a posh community, brother. You should know. Murder is a black eye for the high society types. They want to solve this thing quickly and quietly."

Mark laughed. He lived in Cherry Hills with his wife and children. "Good point. Wouldn't want to curtail country club memberships. That would hurt city tax revenues. Well, do your best to keep it under wraps as much as you can and do me a favor..."

"You bet." It seemed I was doing a lot of favors this week.

"Call me if you see anything major coming down the pike. Okay? So I can tell everyone else."

"You got it, but I need you to do me a favor, too. Call Gerald, Corianne, and Matthew and share with them what I've told you. I would call everyone myself, but I'm exhausted." It wasn't a lie. I was ready for some down time.

"You got it. Keep me posted?"

"Yeah, you bet. Bye." I hung up. I hadn't bothered telling him I had put the media on *ignore* with my little answering machine trick. I was certain he probably wouldn't care.



That night I had a really strange dream. The sigils of Focalor and Valefor hovered in a black void. The sigils themselves radiated an electric blue energy. I heard chanting in the background. They were Enns, a type of Daemonolatry invocation. The Enns of Focalor and Valefor. Then the blackness began to lighten and I could see a shadow.

"Who are you?" I asked.

The woman stood only a few feet away from me, shrouded by the thick gray tendrils of fog. I could vaguely make out the green robes. Something about her seemed vaguely familiar. I couldn't quite pinpoint what.

She reached out to me. In response every hair on my body stood on end. Nausea overwhelmed me. "You took everything away from me and I'm going to take it all from you," she hissed.

I knew at that moment who I was seeing. My mind began to race. Had Sandra really come back from the grave? Was it possible she was influencing the living, those who remained loyal to her, with some sort of promise? Or were these people really so blind that they would do whatever she told them, even from beyond?

I bolted upright in bed, covered in a cold sweat. Sandra Farel was behind this. Or at least her spirit. One question remained. How was I supposed to prove a dead woman had arranged the murder of Chloe Brigid and subsequent framing of Senator Mitchell? And why?

Then I realized how dumb it had all sounded. It was just a dream brought on by seeing that damned Sitri amulet. At that moment I made a decision. I needed to cut back on the caffeine.