

Carruthers and the Chaostorm

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I first noticed it during the afternoon, on the M25. It would have been imperceptible to the untrained eye, but I could sense that there had been a change. The other cars were all taking it a little slower. Overtaking a little more carefully. I may have noticed it but I wasn't sure what it meant until the evening when I finally reached my Town House.

When I turned on my Television it was obvious that things had intensified somewhat. The news carried reports of a Menstruating Bishop in Bath and Wells and, the real give away, of an albino Cow giving birth to a two headed hermaphrodite calf. There was a whole mess of tainted chaos out there, randomly altering things, but in an oddly specific way. Order in chaos, chaos in order. All very deep.

I decided that it was high time to take steps. I turned the TV to a dead channel, began meditating, and started to tune in. Now some people will tell you that you have to use a crystal ball for scrying. Well that's just Medieval bollocks. All a crystal ball is good for is bumping up the profits of your local one-stop occult shop. It will keep your New Age'rs and Pseudo-Occultists happy, but anyone who knows their craft will laugh you out of earshot. A properly re-tuned TV is all you really need. And anyway the receptions better.

I concentrated on finding where the Chaostorm was, and slowly a picture appeared. It was heading, slowly, into the centre of London. It had just passed a group of construction workers who were now spontaneously lactating. As there was no immediate danger to myself, I started to focus on where it had come from. I followed the path of improbabilities north, until I hit a black spot. Now that threw me. Someone was using an active scrying defence. Thirty miles of Lincolnshire had gone missing. To me that was practically an invitation to come investigating. I decided that the prudent thing to do was to take some of my friends along.

I gave Delbert a call on his mobile. Now I've always thought, along with many others, that Delbert was a pretty stupid name. But when it's attached to a Voodoo Priest who has more money and designer clothes than a gaggle of Hollywood stars, then you really have to give it some respect. Luckily Delbert was already up to speed with the situation. Seems his sacrificial Cockerels had started laying eggs, much to their surprise. He suggested coming round to pick me up, and I agreed. I then made another call. I still had no real idea what we would be up against, so I needed all the insurance I could get. Even if that meant calling "the Freak". Now Delbert and "the Freak" really don't get along. And I knew neither of them would be happy working together, but I felt I had no choice.

While waiting for Delbert to arrive I busied myself creating some protective charms and amulets. They're something of a speciality of mine. I got badges for them in the Scouts. Half an hour later Delbert turned up in his chauffeur driven BMW. As I got in I caught a glimpse of the driver's soulless, blank eyes. Then the lush leather seats enveloped me, and the car jerked off, down the road. Delbert was sitting beside me on the back seat, he shrugged,

"Good Hatians are had to find." he said. I told him we had to pick up "the Freak", and he just stared right through me. I explained that this looked like it was both big and dangerous. The Chaostorm was growing exponentially. Its manifestations were getting stronger and were clearly under some form of control. If we were going to face someone who could have control over this much chaos then I wanted "the Freak" in my corner.

Finally Delbert relented and issued new orders to the driver. Within moments we were streaking towards the less fashionable part of town. To an old warehouse, late Victorian. As we arrived "the Freak" was just exiting the building. He turned to give us a serene look, and smiled. He was a vision in Orange. Tall, thin (well gaunt actually) with the kind of facial features which you knew made him look odd, but you could never quite explain why. Which, of course, was the exact effect "the Freak" wanted. Off balance was exactly where he wanted you.

The car slowed and he got in.

"Delbert, Carruthers" he said "such a pleasant day for a drive."

I could feel the tension between Delbert and "the Freak" growing. It was almost palpable, but Delbert was far too savvy to let it show.

"You know what's going on?" asked Delbert

"Actually" replied "the Freak", "It's very odd, but I have no clear idea. A disturbance this big should have appeared in the psychic ether long ago. But nothing. Someone has clearly been shielding it for some time."

"Well, at least I know where the source is." I said.

And off we rushed into the dark pit of occult madness that is the English countryside.

The nearer we got to the source of the Chaostorm, the more powerful its resonance became. Eventually the driver lost all cohesion and turned into a frothing mix of bile and bone. Delbert had to take the wheel. I stayed in the back with "the Freak", who was quietly chanting to himself. Before we started off again I passed out the protective charms and amulets. Putting them on didn't make us feel any safer, but they would make us safer.

As I looked out of the car windows, I could see the all vegetation begin to ripen and become fruitful. "The Freak" went silent and turned to me.

"Carruthers," he said "Do you have a plan of attack?"

"No" I confessed "I'm just hoping something will turn up. Otherwise we're all up the spout without a paddle."

"I wouldn't worry about that" he said casually "I have it on very good authority that Armageddon won't be for a few years yet."

That was the problem with "the Freak", he would talk to anyone. But he was right, we really did need a plan. I signalled for Delbert to stop and we parked beside a field of pregnant Rams. We could all tell that things were rapidly getting out of hand. As we discussed our next move we kept getting glimpses of long gone buildings and landscapes. There was so much power in the Chaostorm that it was starting to create time fractures. The physical anomalies were bad enough, but this was all getting a little too cataclysmic for my liking. No matter what "The Freak's" special friends had told him.

So far the charms I had prepared were protecting us from the unseen forces of the Chaostorm, but I was worried that they might not hold out for much longer in the face of such raw power. I'd had a vague idea who was behind in all from observing the

specific results of the chaos, but what we needed to know now was exactly where they were operating from. As usual it was "the Freak" who had the answer. He pulled five pebble sized crystals from his pocket and held them between his hands, while chanting over them. Delbert shook his head and muttered to himself. A few moments later "the Freak" threw the crystals to the ground, where they formed a perfect arrow. They pointed across the field and over a small hillock. "The Freak" flashed us a smug smile each and climbed over the wire fence into the field. Delbert looked at the muddy field, then at his shoes.

"Armani." he protested, but I wasn't there to hear him. I'd jumped the fence and was catching up to "the Freak".

"What about a plan?" I said

"Oh you'll think of something" replied "the Freak", "you always do." Then he paused, and added "and you always will".

Behind me I could hear Delbert's mutterings getting closer. He was repeating the words "never again" and "that smug bastard" I felt in complete agreement with him. Behind us there was the disconcerting sound of twisting metal. The BMW, a bastion of male phallic pride, was slowly turning inside out. The metal shrieked in protest but within moment the stain was too much for it, and the car exploded.

"Oh no." said Delbert Quietly.

"That'll look bad on the insurance claim" I said, and Delbert gave me a cold, hard stare. He was working on a good rage now.

"Stop lagging behind" shouted "the Freak" from the brow of the hill. Delbert stormed passed me.

"First, the bastards who killed my car. Then him." he said. I always admire someone who can priorities properly. As Delbert and I reached the top of the hill, "the Freak" was already descending into the wooded valley below.

"There will be a path down here." he asserted cheerfully. And when we followed him down, sure enough, there was a well worn path. As we followed it we could hear the faint sound of seeds germinating and popping open. The canopy of trees swayed gently as it was pushed higher by sudden spurts of growth.

Then the trees were gone and the three of us were standing in the well manicured garden of an English country house.

"Well?" said "the Freak".

"It certainly looks right." I said.

Delbert was silent.

There was the sound of low droning, like a motor running on idle, and a strong, sweet, smell in the air.

"I suppose we'd better knock" I said.

We walked round to the main entrance without seeing a soul. I had half expected some reaction to our presence, some guards, some dogs, but to be ignored. Well it was just rude. There were no protection runes carved anywhere. No sigils. No signs. Nothing to indicate that this was the epicentre of an arcane maelstrom. But I was sure that this was the place, and "the Freak" also looked as if he was convinced.

The main entrance to the country house would normally have been quite impressive on its own. There would have been the usual flight of stairs up to a huge wooden door, flanked by Georgian columns. However, a mass of vines had covered the walls of the first two floors, and so we were confronted by this massive wall of green housing the wooden door. We stood there, looking at the door, unsure of what to do next. After a few moments I climbed the stairs. Took a deep breath. And knocked.

The Door swung slowly open.

I paused, taken aback. I motioned for Delbert and "the Freak" to join me, and together we entered the hall.

The Stench of cheap incense was overpowering, and the three of us fought to catch our breath. The whole of the great house seemed to throb to the sound of moaning and chanting.

Then I noticed the figures. Walking through the hallway. Ignoring us completely. Now this did confuse me, and it took me a few moments to realise what they were wearing. They were all in either Victorian or Edwardian clothes. These people were not actually there, they were just ghost images of the previous inhabitants. The Chaostorm was so strong that it had weakened space-time itself. It was all getting a bit serious.

I shouted to Delbert and "the Freak" that we had to find the source of the Chaostorm, and quickly. I lead of into the house and Delbert followed. But "the Freak" was still standing in the hallway, transfixed. One of the Edwardian ghost images was staring right at him. Through the weakened space-time they had made a connection, and "the Freak" could not break free. The Edwardian was gaunt, but handsome, and I had the distinct impression that I had seen him before.

"We can't leave him like this!" I shouted to Delbert. He just Shrugged.

The Edwardian was slowly moving towards "the Freak". Not walking, just gliding towards him. I was not sure what would happen when they met, but with all this raw chaos around, I knew it wouldn't be good.

"Delbert! Help him!" I shouted.

Delbert swore under his breath, then turned and ran down the hallway to "the Freak". As the Edwardian moved closer Delbert Leaped. Now, I'm sure he meant to grab "The Freak", but he only caught the amulet. As it was ripped from "the Freak's" neck he fell to the ground screaming. His orange robes turned blood red. The Edwardian disappeared, but now "the Freak" was a twitching, gurgling, mass on the floor.

Delbert and I were transfixed. The droning and chanting forgotten. Then the biomass, that was "the Freak", started to coalesce. It twisted and solidified until it was back into a vaguely human shape again. But it was no longer a male shape. "The Freak" was now a woman. As the new feminine face of "the Freak" resolved itself a rasping voice came from it,

"Shall we get on with this?" she said.

This shocked me back to my senses. "The Freak pulled at her robes until they properly fitted her new body. Delbert picked himself up off the ground and offered the amulet back to "the Freak", but she refused it.

"Can't do any more to me now, can they." she said. Her voice now sounded more naturally feminine. I glanced down at my own amulet, and silent thanked myself.

Now it was time to take stock. I listened carefully to the chanting.

"It's coming from the direction of the ballroom" I said, "it should be this way." and off I went, deeper into the antique building.

"So who was that?" said Delbert to "the Freak".

"Oh just a past life" she said "he didn't want to stay in the past and tried to psychically overpower me. I really was more powerful in my previous incarnations."

By the time we reached the ball room the chanting was a roar. Inside we could see over a hundred naked women dancing round and round, wild and primal. Covering

their bodies were arcane tattoos which seemed to move and twist across their skin as they danced.

In the centre of this great circle stood their high priestess. Her hands outstretched. Her body rigid with arcane energy. Floating above her head was a pebble sized ball of light. The Chaosphere. The eye of the Chaostorm.

"Who the fuck are they?" shouted Delbert.

"They call themselves the Sisters of the Left Hand Path" I replied

"It looks like they are trying to make their high priestess into a living goddess."

"How do we stop them?" Delbert yelled.

"The Vodun" I cried "Delbert you have to ride the Vodun!"

He looked at me with shock and surprise. Then shook his head.

"I hope you understand what you're asking" he shouted, then he started his trance. With all the mystic energy flying around it didn't take long for the trance to work. Delbert's body jerked twice, then he let out a scream. From his mouth the Vodun spewed forth. An ancient force, the snake god. Immediately it started attacking the Chaosphere. "the Freak" and I grabbed Delbert's crumpled body and made a dash for the nearest exit. As the Vodun and Chaosphere met there was an almighty backlash. We were knocked through a nearby window as the great ancestral hall was ripped apart, brick by brick. Dust, earth and wood spun into a huge inverted funnel, sucking the shattered hall high into the air. Where it vanished. And with it the Sisters also disappeared, most likely into whatever dimension they had summoned the Chaosphere from.

We picked ourselves off the ground, and surveyed the patch of bare earth, which was all that remained of the hall. Wires and pipes protruded from the ground, water spraying from the plumbing was already beginning to turn the earth to mud. We looked at each other silently, then began hobbling back towards civilisation.

With the Chaosphere gone the Chaostorm blew itself out. As it ebbed away everything started reverting to normal. All except "the Freak", who now has a whole new outlook on life.