Night, in a typical street in London, away from the centre. Elanor was walking with Luke, playing tourist. She was a tall, well built African woman, he was slim, wiry, Egyptian looking. There were cars parked along both sides of the narrow street, shops at ground level, apartments above.

Luke stopped, his head cocked. “Do you hear that?”

Elanor listened. “Someone screaming? You’d better help.” One of the limitations on his power - in purely human affairs he had to be asked to help. And that meant she’d be involved.

“Yes, down here, hurry.” He broke into a run. Elanor shook her head, following. This explained why he’d walked down here in the first place - Luke had a sixth or maybe seventh sense about trouble.

They were just in time to see a figure falling from the building. Somehow the figure landed on the only awning in the street, belonging to a street café that was closing up. The awning sagged almost to the ground before tearing and depositing a twenty something young man onto the pavement.

Elanor went towards the young man, Luke stopped her. “He’s fine, his girlfriend is still on the roof. Come.” The scenery shimmered, she stepped forward as Luke pulled at her, and found herself stepping onto the roof of a building. She’d probably never get used to this way of travelling.

There were figures nearby, struggling, and Elanor resolved them into six or seven males holding a struggling female down, ripping her clothes. One was threatening to cut the girl’s tongue out if she kept screaming. Her blood boiled, but Luke was faster.

One moment he was beside her, the next he was in the thick of it, hauling that man up by the scruff of his neck, without seeming to have crossed the space between. It was as if she had blinked. She took a step forward and Luke was already at the parapet, dangling his catch over the edge, holding him by the neck in one hand.

These people were worse than wild animals. Elanor grabbed the nearest man and punched him in the throat. He collapsed, choking. Luke was saying “That is your idea of fun? Well Damien, this is mine. How do you like it? You’re a petty thug, rapist, murderer, and you torture kittens and puppies. And now you are threatening to cut out a girl’s tongue before you rape her. I suppose you’ll kill her when you’re finished with her?”

“Mercy! Don’t kill me!”

“You just threw a man off the roof Damien. Did you show him mercy? And last week you murdered detective o’Neill. Did you show him mercy?”

The other attackers were beginning to react to Luke and Elanor’s presence. One swiped at her with a knife; she dodged, kicking his knee and snapping tendons, then as he collapsed grabbing and twisting his arm, breaking it near the elbow. Another swung at her with what looked like a length of steel pipe. Elanor stepped into the swing, using the edges of her forearms to block his arm, then smashing the edge of her right hand into his throat, at the same time trapping his right arm beneath her left armpit. She wrapped her left arm about his right, gripping behind the elbow, then used the palm of her right hand to strike hard behind the elbow, snapping the bone.

The others seemed to be slow in gathering their wits, but she watched in horror as the one furthest from her drew a gun. She held onto the collapsing attacker, wondering how effective a shield he would make, but for some reason the gunman ignored her and shot Luke in the back.

Blood blossomed on his jacket and Luke uttered a grunt. “It seems even your friends don’t like you, Damien. See you in hell.” He released the man, who screamed all the way to the ground.

Luke turned and moved like a tiger, which is to say, he was slow enough to take two more shots from the gunman before he wrenched the gun from the man’s grasp and hauled him into the air by the scruff of his neck. “Mike Kaiser, small time hit man, thug, thief, snitch who rats on his mates, Satanist, and generally unpleasant character. You’ve ruined a perfectly good suit. And you’ve ruined a young lady’s night out. The rest of you don’t move.”

The remaining would be rapists stopped where they were, as if glued to the roof. Elanor moved past them and went to help the girl. She was in her early twenties, covered with blood from several cuts, and hyperventilating and crying at the same time. She hiccupped and then asked “Brett? Where’s Brett? Is he all right?”

“Brett’s fine. A bit shocked, but unhurt. He landed on an awning, that saved his life. How are you?”

“A bit shocked too. I think I’m all right. They grabbed me from behind.”

Elanor hugged the girl, and felt her shiver in her arms. “You’ll be all right soon.”

Mike Kaiser stammered something unintelligible. Luke replied “You can’t kill me, I’m not mortal. You know why? I’m Lucifer, recognise the name?”

“Wha? Wha?” Mike stammered. “The demon? Aren’t you on our side?”

“Look into my eyes boy.” Luke growled. “Demons are there to punish evil doers. We can’t be killed or injured. We know your innermost thoughts. We can inhabit your dreams, and follow you in daylight. Do you want to join your mate Damien in hell?” In a blink, Luke was dangling Mike over the parapet without appearing to have moved. “Maybe my arm’s getting tired. You could slip from my grasp, it’s a long way down. Your body will stop at the pavement, kind of like street pizza, but your soul, that’ll keep on going, all the way down. They’re waiting for you down there boy, going to punish you good and proper. Your soul can’t die, but it can suffer, oh yes. Let me give you a taste.”

Mike screamed, a gut wrenching wordless cry of extreme agony that sent shivers down Elanor’s spine. The girl shuddered. A human throat wasn’t meant to make that sound.

“Did you like that Mikey boy? Last week you asked Satan to take detective o’Neill’s soul, before Damien killed him. That’s a taste of what you asked for. You want to sell your soul, that was just a tickle compared to what you’ll get when you die.”

“No, no! Mercy! Please, don’t kill me!”

Luke turned to the others. “See your great hitman, begging for his life?” He turned back. “What’s it going to be boy? I let you go right now, and send your soul to hell, or I put you back on the roof.”

“The roof! Please!”

“And what will you pay for me to put you back on the roof? And I don’t mean money, or blood and souls. What will you give? What will you do to turn your life around?”

“Anything! Just tell me!”

“So you don’t want to sell your soul any more? You don’t want to spend eternity in pain? You can choose - turn your life around, or go to hell. Eternity is a very long time, believe me. But that was what you bargained for last week. I might be here to collect that debt.”

“NO! NO! NOOOOOoooo!” his horror overwhelmed him, his voice broke into sobs.

“I can help you, Mike. All you have to do is ask.” Luke’s voice lost its growl, softened.

“Help me.”

Luke swung him back over the roof, but still holding him off the surface. “You will have to make it up to detective o’Neill’s family as well. When you go to sleep you will dream. One of us will tell you what you have to do. When I put you down Mike, run. The devil himself is after you. You have one chance, and only one.” He put Mike back onto the roof, and the man promptly ran to a door Elanor hadn’t noticed, and clattered down stairs.

Luke’s form shimmered, and his wounds vanished, along with all traces of blood. He turned to the others. “The rest of you, scarper. Now. The coppers will be here soon. And remember, you can run, but you can never hide from me. I’m watching you.” Freed from their paralysis, they ran after Mike.

“Thank you Elanor, you were a great help, as always. Now, let’s see to Jessie. How are you girl?” He waved a hand, and her clothes repaired themselves, and the blood vanished. “Now you look a lot more presentable. You too Elanor. Let’s get off the roof, and re-unite Jessie with Brett.” They walked down the stairs.

On the way down, Elanor asked Luke “What was that about detective o’Neill?”

“I read it from their minds. Detective o’Neill was murdered in a particularly gruesome manner last week. Mike conducted a Satanic mass, and offered the detective’s soul to Satan in return for powers. Damien slit his throat, then Mike collected the blood. Afterwards Damien cut out his heart. Damien’s DNA will match that on the detective, so the police will close the case.”

“Ugh, that’s horrible. Erm, did they get any powers?”

“No!” Luke snorted, “That’s not how it works. You can’t sell your soul, you don’t own it, it owns you, just like fingers belong to your own body. If they try to sell their own souls, they get useless trinkets that will fail them when they need them most; they try to sell someone else’s soul, they get collected, taken out of the game.”

An ambulance could be heard arriving. Luke said to Jessie, “Tell them what you like, tell them what you remember. Go to Brett.” They reached the street level and Jessie ran through the doors to hug Brett.

“Luke, has she forgotten about us already?”

“It seemed best. I always try to remove any evidence of supernatural involvement. She’ll remember she was attacked, someone chased the attackers away, and she ran down to find Brett. She will be fine, and so will he.”

“What about Damien?” The two of them walked through the doors and into the street. There were police there as well as the ambulance, but no one seemed to notice them.

“Street pizza I’m afraid.” Luke chuckled. “But he’s fine. Look.” He tapped Elanor’s forehead, and she saw a ghostly figure of Damien hovering near his body, talking with another shadowy figure that looked remarkably like Luke. “I told him I’d see him soon, and he’s aware he died. He won’t wander lost, though he may not be happy with where he’s going.”

“And the others? You just let them go? And I thought I knocked one of them out, and smashed another’s knee, not to mention broken arms.”

“You did all that, like a one woman army, but I fixed them. I thought it better that way. It will all seem like a weird dream to them tomorrow, but it’ll haunt them for a while. They might even change their ways.”

Elanor sighed. “Mike could have shot me, you know.”

“If I hadn’t been there, he might have. But I protect you, Elanor. That’s why he decided to shoot me.”

“I should thank you then. Was I in no danger? Could I have just stood and watched and come to no harm?”

“Had you stood and watched nothing would have happened to you, but Jessie may have suffered more harm.”

“Yes, I had to do something, and I suppose as a third dan black belt I can handle a few thugs. One thing though, you let Damien fall, but you saved Mike. Why?”

“Damien threw Brett off the roof, and he killed the detective. Plus he was party to trying to sell the detective’s soul. I don’t think he will change his ways. So I sent him off the playing field, and he will get another chance next life. Death is only a tragedy for those left alive. Mike felt some misgivings at what he and Damien were doing. Mike and the others have a possibility of changing their ways. That’s how things work - if you mess up badly enough, you get sent off. Remember that I cannot interfere with free will, I cannot force any of them to have a change of heart, they have to come to it themselves.”

“Could you have protected Jessie and handled everything yourself? I keep thinking you have all these powers, but you don’t really use them.” Elanor was miffed - every time she became involved in one of Luke’s little escapades she seemed to do most of the fighting.

“I’m sorry Elanor, most of the time I have little warning. If you prefer I won’t involve you.”

“Erm, I know you try to help people. I think I prefer being involved to not being involved. But why does it always seem that I have a fight?”

Luke chuckled, putting his arm about her to take the sting from his words. “You could try reasoning with them, but most thugs only respond to threats or physical force. You are skilled in karate, and I’m tempted to say that if all you have is a hammer you tend to see the solution to all problems in terms of nails. You know that my powers are limited largely by the powers of those around me. If you were to become a powerful sorcerer I could solve most issues with a wave of my hand.”

Elanor sighed. Luke was in many ways a very powerful person, but in other ways he was strangely limited. A year ago he’d cured her of cancer when she was down to weeks to live. Her hair had regrown black instead of grey, she’d put on weight - mostly muscle, and now she looked at least fifteen years younger, close to forty instead of her late fifties. But he needed to be asked to intervene in human affairs or he couldn’t. And when he did he was limited in what he could do. It was only when dealing with the supernatural that he came into his own.

So be it. She’d fallen in love with Luke, whatever he was. An immortal of some kind, someone who claimed he predated the pyramids, someone the ancients had called a god for obvious reasons, someone who wanted, needed, a human companion to remind him of his humanity, and to ask him to intervene in matters that were purely between humans. Luke was short for Lukeios, an ancient Greek word that meant both ‘bright, shining’ and something to do with wolf. Sometimes he called himself Lucifer the light bearer, but what ever he was, he wasn’t evil.

“Sorcery to me is something evil people use. Africa is full of stories about them. I’d be happier if you called it magic.”

“And magic is what stage magicians use to pull rabbits out of hats, and witchcraft is on old religion...”

“And in Africa witchcraft is considered mostly evil.” she interrupted. “While magic can be used for good. One day I’ll say yes, until then I’d prefer just to stick with energy work.”

“Ah, Elanor.” Luke smiled happily. “Energy work is the basis of any powers I would have you learn. The more power you have, the more power I can use in your company. And the more you can help. Just imagine if you could have frozen the attackers to the roof with a wave of your hand.”

“That’s tempting.” One day, she thought. One day I’ll say yes, when I understand more about what I’m saying yes to. But today we saved two ordinary people, and that feels good.