



LUCIUS FOGG  
MALICIOUS INTENT

DAN WICKLINE

LUCIUS FOGG: MALICIOUS INTENT

# **LUCIUS FOGG: MALICIOUS INTENT**

By Dan Wickline

## LUCIUS FOGG: MALICIOUS INTENT

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*Dedicated to Debbie for encouraging me to keep going and always having my back.*

## Chapter One

I jiggled the key in the lock of the old brass door handle. It seemed to be getting worse as the weeks went by. I had offered to replace it at least a dozen times, but Fogg rebuffed each proposed change with no explanation. He hadn't allowed any modifications to the brownstone since I'd been in his employ. He gave me a spell to use that would open the door, but I didn't like to use magic unless it was specifically for a case and as a last resort. Instead I'd taken to coming in through the kitchen to avoid the delay. This evening though, I had a guest with me and felt the front door was more appropriate.

"You're sure you still live here, Jimmy Doyle?" Emma asked, allowing just a hint of a giggle into her sultry voice.

"I did as of a few hours ago. But then Fogg suggested you stay with us instead of a hotel, so I'm not sure what's real anymore." I finally found the sweet spot and the key turned, allowing us access. "Here we go."

I opened the door and stepped aside to let her through. I'd been dating Emma Martin for about six months. She was a graveyard shift nurse over at County Hospital and with the way things usually went it was inevitable that we'd meet. Surprisingly, the hospital stay that finally brought us together wasn't mine. Her sister had been the victim in a case Fogg and I were working, a pitiful revenge plot that involved a demon. Luckily she lived, unlike the other victims. I questioned Emma in relation to the case. We both felt a spark that we pursued once things were cleared up.

The woman was gorgeous. Long black hair that fell like a waterfall over her shoulders. Creamy skin, rich brown eyes and curves that made whatever she wore cling in the most seductive ways. She lived in a little apartment not far from the hospital. That was usually where our dates ended. I had never brought her to Fogg's brownstone before. Partly because of all the crazy things that happen around there, but mostly because it felt like bringing her home to meet the parents. Had I any family, it would have been easier to introduce her to them than to my boss. I wouldn't have brought her by at all if it wasn't for her building being painted.

I'd told Fogg I would be away that evening but he insisted that would be impossible. He said Halloween night was too dangerous of a time for me not to be available. He suggested that Emma stay there. It took both my hands to pick my jaw up off the ground. Fogg hated having people visit. He never let anyone stay over. Before I could respond, he dashed out of the office saying he needed to tell Ariel to prepare a room.

"Are you sure about this, Jimmy?" Emma stood in the foyer looking uneasy.

"It's going to be fine. And if I know Ariel at all..." I took her hand and lead her into the dining room where two settings were waiting. "She'll have dinner ready for us."

The table was prepared with the nice china, the good silver and a pair of lit candles. Not how I normally got my meals. On the menu were sautéed carrots, baked potatoes and fresh rolls. All of it surrounding a perfectly prepared Beef Wellington. Emma saw the food and her eyes lit up.

"My mother made Beef Wellington for us on holidays, this exact meal. I haven't had it since she died." Emma smiled at me. "How did you know?"

"As much as I'd like to take credit, I can't. This was all Ariel."

"She's amazing." Emma took a seat.

"She certainly is." I was about to sit down next to her when the door bell rang. "That's never a good thing."

"It's probably just a trick-or-treater." Emma pointed at the window. "It's dark out now. This will probably be the first of many."

I headed back to the foyer where I found a tray of candied apples lined up perfectly on the table next to the door. A glance through the peep hole revealed only the top of a head which went

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along with the trick-or-treat theory. I opened the door to discover a tiny pale kid with fangs and another kid in a suit with a badge.

"Trick or treat?" the two boys shouted in unison.

"I'll go with treat. What are you supposed to be?"

"I'm a vampire and he's an FBI agent," the pale kid shouted. He didn't seem to have a lower level on his voice.

I made a note to tell Conrad Black, Fogg's pocket vampire, that the young were out there spreading the disease. I grabbed two candied apples and paused before putting them in the bags.

"You sure you want these? Vampires don't eat apples and FBI agents shouldn't eat sugar or they'll get too fat to chase bad guys."

"Yes, please!" the pair shouted in unison again.

I dropped the apples into their out-stretched bags and the boys turned and ran off towards the next brownstone. As I closed the door I thought to myself that maybe this was why Fogg wanted me home -- to handle the door. A job not exactly fraught with danger as he led me to believe. I went back to the dining room and took my seat. Emma had dished out food for both of us and was waiting for my return.

"Won't Mr. Fogg be joining us?" Emma asked.

"No. He doesn't eat."

"What do you mean he doesn't eat?" Emma showed the concern that any nurse would upon hearing that. "He has to eat something. Do you mean he just doesn't eat with you?"

"No, he doesn't eat at all." I took Emma's hand. "There are a great many things about Lucius Fogg that defy all logic and reason. I don't understand most of them, but you can't think of him like a normal person."

"That's crazy," she insisted.

"Any crazier than a demon possessing unknowing men and making them shoot innocent women?" I hated bringing up that, but I needed to get my point across before she spent the whole evening trying to understand things that couldn't be explained. Or in some cases wouldn't be explained.

The rest of the dinner went well. We spent most of the time talking about how good the meal was or how amazingly close it was to how Emma's mom had made it. By the end of the meal we were joking and laughing again.

When we finished, Emma grabbed the plates. "Which way to the kitchen?"

"It's better that you just leave them. Ariel will take care of it."

"I'll do no such thing. She made a wonderful meal for us. The least I can do is clear the table." Emma continued to pick up the plates.

"I did that once." I took the plates out of her hands and put them down. "By the time I got into the kitchen, Ariel was standing in front of me giving me a look that chilled my soul. I never tried it again."

"Is there anything normal about this place?" Emma looked at me.

"No," I answered honestly. "Fogg should be at his desk, might as well introduce you two."

I led her from the dining room to the office across the way. Fogg was sitting behind his desk as usual, books spread out everywhere. This always meant that he was researching something and wanted to be left alone. I hesitated saying anything, trying to decide if we should just quietly turn around. Fogg looked up before I made a choice.

"You must be Emma Martin." Fogg got up and walked around his desk, a warm and friendly look plastered on his face. "I'm Lucius Fogg. It's a pleasure to finally meet you."

Fogg was wearing his best suit. Pinstripe black three-piece that was custom fitted to his slender athletic build. A solid black tie pulled up tight against his white dress shirt. Every strand of his salt and pepper hair was perfectly in place. This wasn't the odd thing as he always looked

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immaculate, even on days with no appointments. The weird part was never in the years I had worked with him had I seen him get up to greet someone.

Emma put out her hand and Fogg kissed the back of it. "Jimmy talks about you all the time, Mr. Fogg. I feel like I know you already."

"Call me Lucius, please." Fogg was being extremely charming. "And if Jimmy has been telling you tales, then I am surprised you accepted my offer to stay here."

"He speaks highly of you, I swear."

"A sign of excellent manners, knowing when to tell a white lie." Fogg put his hand on my shoulder in a friendly gesture. "I trust your meal was satisfactory."

"It was amazing." Emma noticed the furry little creature lying on my desk. "Oh... you kept Mr. Whiskers?"

"It seemed like the right thing to do," Fogg answered.

Emma crossed over to pet the cat while I stood and stared at Fogg. I was trying to find some sign of demonic possession or mind control. This was not the Lucius Fogg I spent night after night working with. My detective instincts were screaming that something was up but I couldn't put my finger on what. Just then I noticed Ariel out of the corner of my eye. She was standing in the doorway.

"Emma, this is Ariel." Fogg gestured to the silent woman who had just appeared. "She will show you to your room."

"Thank you." Emma walked across, said hello. Ariel nodded and led her up stairs.

Once we were alone I turned to Fogg. "What is wrong with you?"

"What do you mean?" He sat back in his seat.

"You're being nice. You're never nice."

"It's obvious Miss Martin is important to you. I thought you'd appreciate the effort." Fogg began looking over his books again.

"I do. It's just..." I was at a complete loss for words. After a moment or two more of trying with no luck I decided to drop it.

I crossed over to my chair, ran my fingers over Mr. Whisker's soft black fur and looked at the stack of mail on my desk. I was about to sit down when I heard a loud crash from the other room. I raced back to the foyer. Fogg was right behind me. The first thing I saw was Ariel lying on her back at the bottom of the stairs. She was trying to get back to her feet. Then I glanced up to the top of the stairs where I saw Emma floating a foot above the floor. Her jet black hair was blowing in a non-existent wind. Her eyes were glowing like searchlights. I looked to Fogg. He seemed just as stunned as I was.

The silence was broken when Emma spoke. It was a hollow, unearthly voice. "Hello, Lucius. It's been years."



## Chapter Two

"Why is my girlfriend floating?" It seemed like a perfectly reasonable question for a somewhat irrational situation.

"I'm not exactly sure." Fogg took a step up the stairs towards Emma. "Who are you?"

I moved over to check on Ariel. She was able to get on her feet. She didn't look hurt, but I wasn't sure how I'd tell if she was. Ariel always seemed the exact same, happy, friendly and glowing with warmth. Even now, she was smiling at me. The fact she never spoke was really annoying right then.

"Are you Emma Martin?" Fogg asked.

Emma let out a maniacal cackle. "Have you ever seen Emma do this?"

She raised her right hand and a bolt of lightning shot out of her fingers. The flash of energy raced right past Fogg and struck me dead square in the chest. I was thrown off my feet and back into the door. Felt like I had been rammed by a charging bull. It took me a few seconds to catch my breath.

Fogg moved up a few more steps. "You have entered my house without permission. I demand you identify yourself immediately."

"Oh, but I had permission. You don't remember?" Emma's voice still sounded hollow, but it now had a sad tone to it. "I know it's been a long time. I'm not sure exactly how long. But you did invite me in and were quite happy to see me when I arrived."

Fogg paused. I wasn't sure if he was trying to make sense of what she was saying or if he was dealing with the realization of who she was. Either way, he figured it out and his whole stance changed. He went from opposing an enemy to a more open, unguarded stature.

"Natasha?"

"Yes, Lucius. It's me." Emma floated down a step or two.

"But how? You died sixty-five years ago." Fogg didn't move. "You can't be here."

"I thought you were supposed to be the world's greatest sorcerer." Emma... or Natasha rather, moved closer. "I've been here this whole time."

I got to my feet, not sure what to do. Ariel stood watching as well. I was concerned for Emma first, but I was also stunned by Fogg's reaction. He seemed to have the rug pulled out from under him. My hand ached for the revolver in my desk drawer, but I couldn't shoot anyway. I couldn't shoot Emma. I had to see how this was going to play out.

"Why don't we sit down and talk?" Fogg gestured towards his office. "You can tell me how you ended up in Miss Martin and what I can do to help."

Emma floated down the rest of the stairs and glided across the hall into Fogg's office. Her body never actually moved, just hovered as she went. I could feel a combination of anger and frustration building up inside of me. Whoever Natasha was, I wanted her out of my girlfriend immediately.

Fogg turned to Ariel and spoke quietly, "Go back to the kitchen and make some strawberries and chocolate. Use the special chocolate I've been saving."

Ariel nodded and headed off to do as she was instructed. I stepped in closer to avoid being overheard.

"What do you want me to do?" I asked eager to do something.

At that moment, the doorbell rang and a young voice shouting 'trick-or-treat' could be heard. Fogg nodded towards the door. I gave him a confused look.

"Please take care of the boy at the door."

"You're kidding?" I was completely dumbfounded. "You want me to give away a candied apple while all of this is going on."

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"Yes. That is exactly what I want you to do." Fogg turned and headed for his office. "Come join us when you are done."

I turned around and grabbed one of the apples, snapping the stick in two. I stopped for a second and took a breath, then selected another apple with a gentler touch. I opened the door to find a boy of maybe nine years old standing in baggy pants, a gold sash, a vest and a turban. He was carrying a scimitar in one hand and a bucket in the other.

"I'm Sinbad and I'm here for treasure!" the boy shouted.

"That sword wouldn't happen to be real, would it?"

"No. It's plastic. Mom wouldn't let me have a real one." The boy's frown showed he had actually tried to convince his mom to give him a real sword.

"Shame. I may need something like that tonight." I tossed the apple into his bucket. "Have fun."

"Thanks, mister!" The kid ran off with his newly acquired booty.

I closed the door and headed into the office. Fogg was sitting behind his desk like always. Emma was sort of sitting in the red leather high-back chair across from him. I say 'sort of' because she was about six inches above the cushions. Whoever this Natasha was, she was really big on floating. I entered without saying a word and took a seat at my desk.

"You said you've been here all along. How is that possible?" Fogg asked.

"Isn't that obvious?" Her hollow voice couldn't disguise her sarcasm and anger. "The moment the spell was cast on this house, I was trapped here."

"You were dead." Fogg kept looking Emma in the eyes, but he was slowly closing the books on his desk that he had been reading earlier. "The spell shouldn't have affected you at all."

From what I could guess, the spell they were talking about was a spell that Fogg had put on the brownstone to keep himself alive. What the spell was or how it worked or even why it was necessary I didn't know. He never told me. What I did know was that inside the house time didn't pass. He also admitted to me that if he left the house, he would die instantly. Like one foot out and he'd drop dead. And since Natasha was supposed to have died the night he cast the spell, that meant Fogg hadn't left his home for sixty-five years.

"I had astral projected prior to being attacked." Emma was glaring at Fogg now. "I wouldn't have lasted long with my body being dead, but your spell has kept me in limbo this whole time. I have been trapped in that room for sixty-five years. It's like being in prison with no one to talk to. No one to touch. You might as well have condemned me to hell."

Ariel returned to the room with a plate of strawberries and melted chocolate to dip them in. She placed them on the desk and looked at Fogg. He nodded and she left the room.

"Oh, you remembered my favorite dessert." Emma picked up a strawberry, dipped it in the chocolate and was about to take a big bite then stopped and sniffed it. She put it back on the plate. "Added a little sleeping draft? A nice touch. I think I'll pass."

"You have to believe me, Natasha. I honestly had no idea you were trapped in there." Fogg's voice cracked as he spoke. "I would have found some way to help if I had known."

"Oh, but you did." She ran her hands up and down her torso. "You sent me this delicious new body to live in. I'm going to have so much fun in here."

"Don't get comfortable." My frustration was overflowing. "You won't be in there very long. I promise you that."

Fogg put his hand up towards me, telling me to calm down. "You have to forgive my assistant. The woman's body you're in means quite a lot to him. I'm sure with a little research we can find a more suitable vessel for you and return Miss Martin to..."

"Oh, I'm not giving up this body." She grabbed her own breasts and moaned erotically. "I can see all of Emma's memories and I like them. Jimmy here can be a very naughty little boy."

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I picked up the gun from my drawer and pointed it at Emma. It was a stupid move, but my emotions were clouding my logic. "Get out of her, now!"

"Or what? You're going to shoot?" She let out a cackle. "All you'll end up doing is killing the woman you love. You do love me, don't you?"

"It's better than seeing her being used as a puppet!" I cocked the hammer back.

"Jimmy, please." Fogg stood and took a few steps towards me. "This won't solve anything."

I held fast, aiming at Emma's forehead. "I won't let her be used like this!"

"You have to trust me." Fogg stepped between Emma and me, blocking my shot. "Give me a chance to resolve this."

I lowered my gun and looked at Fogg. I hoped he had a plan of some kind. He usually did, but the look on his face didn't give me any confidence.

"Wise move. There's only one thing that will resolve this situation." Emma was back floating on her feet, both hands outstretched towards us. "The death of Lucius Fogg!"

She started hurling lightning bolts at us. Fogg ducked under one while I side-stepped the next. She could launch multiple shots quickly, but with very little accuracy. Still, if she threw enough of them eventually one would find its target. We couldn't stay in one place for too long.

Fogg grabbed my arm and pulled me towards the door. "Follow me!"

Lightning continued to strike all around us as we made our way down past the kitchen to the back hallway. Fogg led the way, ducking just in time as another bolt hit inches above where he'd been. I followed, but I worried that the confined space of the hallway would make it easier for her to hit us.

"Where are we going?"

"We need a place to regroup and plan." Fogg pointed to a door down the hall on the left. It looked like all the other doors and not particularly secure. The only difference was this one had a black handle instead of brass like the other nineteen doors.

"What's in that room?" I asked.

"Absolutely Nothing. Abre-a-Porta!" He reached the door and turned the handle.

"How is that going to help us? She'll be able to blast through that door in a heartbeat." I jumped as a bolt struck at my feet. My leap vaulted me into the open door.

"I know." He shut the door and locked it. "But it will do her no good. This is the Random Room."

## Chapter Three

“You’d be surprised at just how many questions I have in my head right now.” I took a seat against the wall since there was nothing to sit on. “Sure, there are the big questions like ‘Who is Natasha?’ and ‘Why does she want to kill you?’ but there are also smaller ones like ‘How does a guy with a cane suddenly move so well?’ or ‘What in the hell is a random room?’ Is there any chance of getting at least some answers?”

Fogg walked back and forth in front of me. He was using his cane as normal. The strikes of the brass tip on the floor reminded me of the clicking sound a clock makes. Every three seconds another tap on the wood. Fogg didn’t respond to my questions. I wasn’t sure he even heard them. He was deep in thought and I knew I couldn’t dig him out yet.

I glanced around the room. It was about twelve feet square with beige walls and wood floors. There was nothing special about it at all. I tried to think of reasons why it would be empty or called random. Then I noticed something odd. The door we had entered through was no longer there. I hadn’t seen it vanish. I didn’t hear Fogg say any spells or anything once we were inside. It was just gone. We were in a room with no way out.

Fogg paced for over fifteen minutes. I knew this because his cane tapped the floor over three hundred times. I’m not a fan of waiting. I hate it. But Fogg wasn’t someone you could rush. He did everything in his own time. As much as I wanted to shake him until he told me what was going on, I knew I had to wait patiently. Lucky for me it wasn’t much longer.

"I need you to get something for me," Fogg finally said.

"What do you need and where in the house is it?" I jumped to my feet ready to get to work.

"It's not in the house."

"You want me to leave you and Ariel alone with my possessed girlfriend?" I crossed my arms to emphasize my point. "I'm not going anywhere."

"There are only two of us," Fogg explained. "We're not sure where Ariel is and we can't remove Natasha from Miss Martin without this item. So one of us has to go get it and I can't leave."

"I have a different plan." I grabbed my notebook and pen from my jacket pocket. "Now tell me what it is and then show me how to get out of this room."

After he told me what he needed, Fogg finally decided to answer one of my questions.

"This is called the Random Room because it’s always moving. When there are no occupants it floats between all the doors in the house, momentarily taking the place of an actual room and then moving on. It's never in one place for more than ten seconds unless the door is open."

“What if there are occupants?”

“Then it sits in space between dimensions until told where to reappear.” Fogg gestured with his hands to help explain. “The room exists outside of reality, like it’s sitting in an alley between two buildings. It’s only accessible when pulled into a building.”

"Why haven't I wandered in here before?" I couldn't believe I had missed it by chance all these years.

"It will only open with the incantation. You probably did find it and just thought the handle was stuck."

"Is that what's wrong with the front door?" I asked.

"No. That's just an old lock." He looked me square in the eyes. "And no, you can't replace it. Use the spell I gave you."

I gave him my best dirty look. "How about the way out of this room?"

"Simple." He pointed at the wall. "Just think about the room you want to be in, walk towards the wall and open the door."

I thought about mentioning that there was no door. But years of experience with Fogg has led me to just do what he tells me when it comes to magic. It's worked out for the best most of the

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time. And I just don't talk about the times it didn't. I stepped forward and by the time my hand reached the wall, there was a black doorknob waiting for it.

"Abre-a-Porta" I cautiously opened the door. Once I was certain no one was there, I walked through into Fogg's office by way of the side entrance.

I kept quiet, tucked into the corner of the room that you couldn't see from the hallway and waited. I had everything prepared. It was now just a matter of needing a little help.

The door bell rang and I could hear a muffled, "Trick-or-treat?"

Fogg insisted that above all else the kids were not to be ignored. I made my way across the office and out into the foyer. I had just reached the candied apples when I heard the hollow voice behind me.

"There you are, Jimmy. You haven't been hiding from me, have you?"

I turned back towards her and held up my finger. "Hold that thought for just a minute. I have a kid waiting for his treat."

I turned back around and opened the front door. On the stoop was a furry little boy growling at me.

"Don't you look savage. Are you a werewolf?"

"No, I'm a Bigfoot!" He brought up one of his feet to show me his greatly oversized shoes covered in fur. "I fight werewolves!"

"You have a great imagination, kid." I dropped his reward into his bag. "Have fun."

I closed the door and turned around to find Emma floating directly in front of me. She was hovering just high enough for us to look eye to eye.

"With that ability, you really don't need high-heels."

"Where is Fogg?" Her cold breath poured out of her mouth as she emphasized every word.

"Fogg? He's not with you?" I did my best to keep my anger in check.

"Don't toy with me. I can kill you where you stand."

"Why don't you?" I asked. "Why am I alive at all? You could have killed me when my back was turned. Why not just get it over with?"

"Because I know how much you care for this body." She took a deep breath and pushed her chest forward. "I'm having too much fun torturing you to end it so quickly."

"I thought all you wanted was to kill Fogg?"

"Oh, I do. And I will as soon as I find him." She placed her hand around my throat and released a tiny bit of the electricity. "I may not want to kill you, yet. But I can sure make you scream in pain. Now where is Fogg?"

The pain running through my neck was sharp and building with each second. "Since you asked so nicely, did you try the attic?"

"The attic?"

"Yeah, top floor of the brownstone. Fogg goes up there all the time to get away from psychotic women who are trying to kill him. You didn't think you were the first, did you?" I pointed up. "I'd definitely try the attic. There's a stair case to it at the end of the hall on the third floor."

"This better not be a trap!" She glared at me as she spoke.

"A trap for you or a trap for him? I mean, you didn't specify. If you're going to go up and there's only the one way in or out, then it's a trap for Fogg."

"Shut up!" She turned and headed for the stairs. "If he's not there, I'll have your head!"

"I didn't say he was there, I said you could *try* there!" I called up after her. "Not my fault if he's not there!"

"Shut up!" With that she vanished up the stairs.

I raced down the hallway again, this time turning into the kitchen. I was stunned to find it empty. I had hoped to see Ariel. I wasn't sure what Emma had done while we were in the Random Room, but as Ariel was the only other person in the building, I was concerned for her. I was about to

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go check the other room when I saw something small moving out of the corner of my eye. There on the shelf next to the marmalade and jams was a standard sized mason jar with the lid screwed down. Inside the jar, waving to get my attention was Ariel.

"I'll get you out of there." I grabbed the jar and twisted the lid.

Ariel was frantically waving at me, crossing her arms back and forth.

"You don't want me to open the jar?"

She waved her arms again. Then she made motion with her hands that I took to mean an explosion. I wasn't sure if that was right, but I couldn't think of anything good associated with the gesture so I screwed the lid back in place.

"You want me to leave you in there until Fogg can get you out?"

She nodded.

"Are you safe in there for now?"

She nodded again.

"Don't you need air?"

She shook her head.

"All right, I'll do as you ask. But I'm going to move you to some place safe. Some place she can't get to."

I didn't know how much more time I'd have so I ran back into the office and opened the big safe. This was the safe where Fogg kept all the magical items too powerful for anyone to just happen onto. I had the incantation and combination in my notebook for emergencies. I figured this counted. I made sure I was alone and got it open. Then I placed Ariel gently on the top shelf next to a simple chrome sphere the size of a baseball. I had no idea what that was about, but it looked safe enough for the moment.

"I'll be back for you as soon as I can." I gave her my best reassuring look.

She was tiny, stuck in a Mason jar, but Ariel gave me a smile that told me she had confidence in me. I closed the safe, spun the dial and then dashed for the staircase. I only hoped that Fogg was still alive.

## Chapter Four

By the time I reached the ladder to the attic, I could hear a horrendous commotion above me. I climbed up until I could just see into the poorly lit space. The main source of light, not counting the energy bolts flying around the room, came from the opening I was currently in. I saw Emma standing in the middle of the attic, flinging lightning around randomly. Each strike would cause a fire wherever it hit. Then suddenly the fire would be gone. It took a few seconds for my eyes to adjust to the darkness, but I finally saw Fogg in the far back corner. After each of Emma's strikes, he'd do a quick and silent counter spell to put the flames out.

He was distracting her, buying me enough time to find Ariel and get her safe. That part was done. Now it was my job to help him trap Emma. The next step of the plan meant I had to get to him. I climbed into the attic and pulled the ladder up behind me, cutting off the light.

As I tried to cross the floor towards Fogg, I stepped on a loose board and instinctively dropped to a crouch as soon as the wood creaked. I heard something slam into the wall just above my head. I felt debris fly down at me driving a few splinters into my arm and shoulder. I did my best to ignore the pain. Natasha was smart. With the lights cut off, her blast would only pinpoint where she was, so she had changed to a non-luminescent concussion spell. I fished through my pocket for a quarter and tossed it across the room. A split second later I heard more wood blow apart at the other end of the attic. I began moving towards Fogg again.

"You decided to join us, Jimmy?" Emma's voice was still a mix of sultry seduction and hollow evil. "You know, once Fogg is dead, there's nothing that says we can't pick up where you and Emma left off last week."

She was goading me. Trying to get me to reply and give away my location. I wasn't that stupid. I reached Fogg. He knew I'd locate him before closing the attic door and stayed put until I reached him. It was part of the plan. I tapped on his arm twice, letting him know Ariel was safe. The next step sounded simple. There was a door at the far end of the attic. It opened to a small room where most of the plumbing pipes started. The room was no bigger than four feet square. It was exactly what we needed.

Fogg tapped me on the shoulder once and started out for the door. I dug through my pocket for another quarter. A quick flick of the wrist and Emma fired another concussion blast to an empty part of the attic. The noise allowed Fogg to move a bit faster. I waited, not making a sound. The next move was Fogg's.

"I'm not a fan of the silent treatment." Emma shot off five blasts randomly. "I'll blow this whole room apart if necessary."

I heard another stray noise, nowhere near the door. That told me Fogg was in place. She didn't fire this time.

"I'm tired of playing your games, Lucius. Elatee!" Emma cast a spell lighting the area around her. She put her hand against her chest. "I may be in control of this body, but Emma is still in here. She sees everything I see. She feels what I feel. So, Jimmy, if you don't come out right now... I'm going to make her scream."

"I thought you saw her memories?" I took a gamble, got to my feet and made myself a target. "Emma likes it when I make her scream."

She fired a concussion shot in the blink of an eye. I tried side-stepping, but still took the brunt of it in the shoulder. It knocked me off my feet into the wall. I was alive but I wouldn't be throwing a football for a few weeks. I hoped I bought enough time for Fogg.

"Abre-a-Porta." Fogg spoke softly and opened the door. The light poured in from the other room, making everything in the attic visible.

Natasha screamed, "No! You won't get away from me, Lucius!"

## LUCIUS FOGG: MALICIOUS INTENT

She flew across the attic, literally. The door was closing quickly. She fired off a blast, throwing it back open. She continued firing as she crossed into the room. The door slammed shut behind her and the attic went dark again.

I heard the sound of a chain being pulled and a light bulb burst to life. Fogg stood under the wall mounted lamp looking none the worse for wear.

“Well done, Jimmy.” Fogg walked over to the attic ladder and lowered it. “Your timing was satisfactory.”

“You owe me two bits. How long do you think she’ll be stuck in there?” I followed after him as he headed down the ladder.

“The idea of a Random Room isn’t unique. I’m sure she’ll figure out where she is shortly.” Fogg stepped down onto the second floor. “But I was able to change the incantation to work the door before she went in.”

“It doesn’t have to be ‘Abre-a-Porta’?” I dropped down and pushed the ladder back up.

“Not at all.” Fogg made his way down the flight of stairs towards his office. “That was just Galician for ‘open the door’. The incantation just needs to be some variation of that.”

“So what did you use this time?” I followed him.

“Welsh.”

Just as we reached the first floor, the doorbell rang. Fogg didn’t need to say a word this time.

“I know, I know.” I headed over to the front door.

On the porch I found three children, two girls and a boy, dressed in identical costumes. They had on gray furry coats, drawn on whiskers, dark sunglasses and carried white canes. The taller of the two girls seemed to be the spokesperson for the trio.

“Trick-or-treat?” she said confidently.

“And what are you kids supposed to be?”

“Bored,” the little boy said, which got him an elbow to the stomach from the tall girl.

The shorter girl finally spoke. “We’re the three-blind mice.”

“A very grim fairy tale, indeed.” I grabbed three apples from the side table. “I have no cheese for you little rats. You’ll have to make do with apples.”

“Thank you, sir.” They ran off in a single file with the tall girl in the lead and the boy trailing behind.

I closed the door and headed back into the office. Fogg was sitting behind his desk and had gone back to scouring through his books. I took a seat in the red leather chair opposite of him. I waited a moment for him to start talking, to tell me something. To tell me anything. He just kept reading.

“Who is Natasha?” I finally asked.

Fogg didn’t respond again. He just kept flipping through pages. I stood up, took the book he was looking at out of his hand and slammed it down on the desk. He gave me a look of anger which I chose to ignore. I sat back down and tried again.

“Who is Natasha?”

“Does it really matter?” His question seemed genuine. “Does who she is change this situation at all?”

I leaned forward, closer to his desk. “Well, the only way I could answer that is if I knew who she was.”

“Fine.” Fogg leaned back in his chair. “Since you are obviously not going to drop it. Natasha was the wife of my rival, Kieran Drake.”

He stopped there, not saying another word. I realized that getting the whole story was going to be like pulling teeth.

“Does this have to be a game of twenty questions or can you just tell me what happened?”



## LUCIUS FOGG: MALICIOUS INTENT

He looked away for a moment then back at me. It was hard to read him most of the time. At that moment it was impossible.

“Kieran was as skilled in magic and the occult as I was. Maybe more so. We both learned under the same teacher. He craved power and tried to dominate everyone around him. That brought us to odds. After a while, he became too much for Natasha to deal with. She decided to leave him. She came here, asking for my help. She was afraid he’d see her leaving as a betrayal and lash out against her. That’s exactly what he did.”

I watched the look on Fogg’s face. After sitting in a room with him for years, I thought I had seen all sides of the man. But the look of sorrow and pain in his expression now was something I had never seen before.

He continued, “I responded too slowly. Kieran was my match but not necessarily my enemy, so I didn’t expect the worst. He came in through the kitchen before I even thought of putting up defensive spells. By the time I heard the shouting and got up stairs, he had apparently killed her already. She was a talented sorceress, but nowhere near his level. I tried to stop him. We fought back and forth until he got in a clean shot. It nearly killed me. In truth it did kill me, a quick time-shift spell kept me from taking my last breath.”

“What happened to Kieran?” I asked.

“He assumed I was dead and turned his focus away. I didn’t hesitate.” Fogg looked over towards the foyer. “He headed for the front door and I blasted him to ashes while his back was turned.”

I had never heard the actual story of how the time-shift spell got cast and as much I was curious about Kieran, my bigger concern was his wife. “Was there ever anything more between you and Natasha? She didn’t just come here out of the blue did she?”

“I sometimes underestimate your detective skills, Jimmy.” Fogg turned and faced me. “There seemed to have been something there but we never had time to find out what. I’ve spent the last sixty-five years wondering about it.”

Silence filled the room like a cloud cover on a stormy day. I couldn’t think of a damn thing to say and Fogg no longer seemed chatty. He dove back into his books and I sat quietly, hoping that Emma and I would get the chance to figure out what it was between us.

The doorbell rang again followed by a scratchy and oddly familiar, “Trick-or-treat?”

## Chapter Five

“What the hell?” I stood in the open door with my jaw on my chest.

“Heya, boss.”

Standing there was my young friend Patches. He was an eleven year old kid off the streets who did some errands for me from time to time. I tried to get him into a foster home on two different occasions, but he kept running off. He got his name because everything he wore was hand-me-downs and covered in patches. Except now he was wearing a tie fastened to his dirty shirt and a suit jacket three times his size falling off his shoulders. To add to the strangeness, he was carrying a twenty-four by thirty-six inch frame held up in front of him and was speaking to me through it.

“Your note said to come in costume.” He flashed a huge fake smile. “I’m the portrait of Dorian Gray.”

“Nice cover, but we don’t need it at the moment.”

Patches shifted his grip on the picture frame. “Is everything okay in there?”

“It will be if you got the information I asked for.” I put my hand out, trying to hurry the exchange along.

“Would I ever let you down, boss?” He handed me a slip of paper. “Ernie and Ryan are across the street, ready to help. You give them the heads up and they’ll be running in with guns-a-blazing.”

Having not wanted to leave Fogg alone with Natasha, I had come up with a plan. I’d write out a note asking the person reading it to call Howard’s bar and ask for Ryan Aquino. It had instructions for Ryan that told him the information I needed and to have Patches deliver it in costume. I was certain that Ryan would call Ernie Psikla, my friend and police officer to get the information. Normally I wouldn’t trust a kid in a Bigfoot costume to deliver the information, but Fogg added a somewhat powerful compulsion spell that would make anyone in a few feet of the note want to read it.

“Tell them thanks, but this situation is more in Fogg’s world than ours.” I handed him a candied apple. “You can all go home.”

“Ryan knew you’d say that. He said we’ll wait at the diner on the corner.”

“Oh, did he?” I glanced across the street and saw the two men standing by the street light. “Was there anything else he said?”

“Yeah, I’ll come trick-or-treat again in an hour to check on you guys.” Patches gave me a devious look. “My second costume is even better.”

“Hopefully this will be resolved before you need to put it on.” I tugged at his tie. “Be careful with these neck nooses, once you put one on they’re hard to get off.”

“They won’t get me!” He ran off towards Ernie and Ryan. I waved to them before closing the door.

I appreciated them having my back, but there was nothing they could do to help. I wasn’t even sure how much I could do. I’d dealt with possessions before, but that was demonic based and we didn’t actually save the affected person. As much as I wanted to just rip Natasha out of Emma, I couldn’t. And Fogg couldn’t either. He said he had a plan but didn’t give me the details. Which usually meant I was going to hate it.

I approached his desk and handed him the slip of paper. He read it over and nodded. He then pulled out a piece of parchment and copied the information onto it. Once done, he folded the parchment to about an inch wide and rolled it up tightly. From a wooden box on his desk he pulled out a necklace. It had a small silver tube-like pendant. Fogg unscrewed the pendant from the necklace, slipped the paper into the hollow tube and reassembled the necklace. He then chanted some words that I believed to be Latin.

“Sit down, Jimmy.” Fogg gestured towards the seat across from him.

## LUCIUS FOGG: MALICIOUS INTENT

I didn't move. "I'm fine. Tell me the plan."

He looked at me for a moment, as if he was hesitating. I really wasn't going to like this plan.

"All right." Fogg sat up straight in his chair. "I have looked for any alternative way to do this and there isn't one."

I picked up the necklace and examined it. "So tell me the bad news."

"Once a sorcerer takes possession of another body, as long as it's alive they control it." He made direct eye contact with me. "The only way to get them out is to make them want to leave."

"What would make her do that?"

"If the body was no longer functioning, she'd leave," Fogg suggested.

"Not functioning?" I was stunned. "You want to kill Emma to get Natasha out?"

"Of course not." Fogg got to his feet. "I have no desire to hurt Miss Martin. I have a serum, it can be injected or ingested, and it will put her into a profound state of unconsciousness."

"A coma?" I felt the bottom drop out of my stomach. "You want to force her into a coma?"

"Yes." Fogg had to know I'd react badly to this idea. "It will give Natasha no other option but to leave Miss Martin's body."

"And what's to prevent her from jumping into one of us or someone on the street?"

"She couldn't get out of the house before because of the time shift spell and she still can't unless she's in a body." He held up the necklace. "My personal defenses kept her from possessing me. The Celtic pendant you wear protected you. Once she is out of Miss Martin, we put the necklace on her to make sure Natasha can't return."

"What was the information for then?" I motioned to the note Patches had brought.

"Your friends found Natasha's maiden name for us. To affect a spirit in any way, you need a person's true name. With her full-name written out and in this pendant, she won't be able to re-enter once Miss Martin has regained consciousness."

I pointed towards the large safe. "What about Ariel, aren't you afraid of her getting possessed? And why haven't you let her out yet?"

"It's safer that Ariel remains where she is for now. Natasha's spirit couldn't enter her anyway."

"Someday will you tell me exactly what Ariel is?"

"If it becomes necessary, yes. For now it's irrelevant." Fogg's expression softened a bit. "I know this a lot to digest in a short amount of time, but the decision needs to be made and it should be by someone who cares about Miss Martin."

I sat on the edge of the desk and thought about what he was suggesting. I had spent three months in a coma after I got shot in the war. It's not something I'd wish on my worst enemy. Having to decide to put someone I loved in one, even for their own good – I didn't know if I could do that.

"Can you control it?" I turned and faced Fogg. "Once we render her unconscious, can you pull her back?"

"I'm not going to lie to you, Jimmy." Fogg pulled a syringe out of his pocket and held it up. "This is a very potent mixture and I have no idea of Miss Martin's physical or psychological history. I might be able to pull her out in five minutes or we might waste the next five years trying to make any kind of progress. There are huge risks with this strategy, but the only other alternative is to leave her to Natasha's whims."

I wasn't sure what to do. I'd put my life on the line more times than I cared to remember. Some of them for Lucius Fogg, others for Uncle Sam. But it was my choice to do it. Emma wasn't getting to choose. She was never given an option. She was just sucked into this battle of good and evil that had surrounded me since the day I started working there. The brownstone was a chaos magnet and I was an idiot for bringing Emma anywhere near it.

## LUCIUS FOGG: MALICIOUS INTENT

“I don’t want to rush you, but we don’t know when she might get out of the Random Room.”

“That’s okay.” I stood up and was ready. “As my elementary teacher used to tell me, when you have no choice it’s easy to make up your mind.”

“I’ll do everything in my power to bring her back.” Fogg put his hand on my shoulder.

“I know you will.” I looked at the concoction in the syringe. “How do you want to play this?”

“First we have to let her out.” Fogg grabbed his cane and headed out of the office. “I think it’s best we face her here in the foyer. More room to move.”

“Let her out the kitchen door?” I asked.

“Yes.” Fogg stood by the candied apples. “You open the door then duck into the bathroom. When she comes out she’ll see me first and we go from there.”

“All right, let’s do this.” I walked over and stood by the kitchen door. I spoke in my best Welsh accent. “Agorwch y drws!”

I waited long enough to see the handle change from brass to black. I took a deep breath, pushed the door open and then spun back into the bathroom. I expected to hear yelling, energy bolts flying, cursing of Fogg’s name. None of that happened. I looked over to Fogg. His shocked expression mirrored my own. I slowly poked my head into the room and looked around. It was completely empty.

“She’s not in here.” I turned back to Fogg. “You think she knows Welsh?”

“I have a better question.” Fogg looked around. “Where is she?”

## Chapter Six

I made my way down the long back hallway. Twenty rooms in total to check. Fogg headed upstairs to check the two upper floors and the attic. He said to yell if I found her. I asked if screaming like a little girl while she flung lightning bolts at me counted. He frowned at me. Being the only one in the house with a sense of humor was difficult at times.

I was told to check each room thoroughly if the door opened. Some of them were spell protected and that should've been enough to have kept Emma out. The Random Room opened its door into whatever room you were thinking of in the house. Since she was alone in the place for a while it was possible she could be in any of the rooms she might have come across when she was looking for us earlier. At least that's how Fogg was trying to explain it to me. I told him to stop and I'd just check inside any door I could open.

The first knob was locked so I moved on to the second. This one turned and opened into a library. It was no wider than any other room in the house, but it stretched up all three stories and every inch of wall space from floor to ceiling was covered in shelves filled with books. A thin, slatted landing went around where the room would be separated into both a second and third floor and ladders allowed you to go up and down between them all. Besides the books and a few comfortable looking cloth chairs, the room was empty.

After two more locked doors, I came across one that opened onto a stairwell leading down. Odd since we were on the first floor. I figured it was best to see where they headed, so I quickly moved down the first flight of stairs, hit the landing and started down the second. At the next landing I found myself looking at what appeared to be the same door I entered through and another set of stairs going down. The door was ajar exactly the same as the one I had entered through. I dug my knife from my pocket and cut an 'x' into the jamb. Then I turned around and went back up the two flights to where I started. The 'x' in the jamb was right there. I went back into the hallway and continued on.

I checked a few more rooms including the memory viewing room we had used on a previous case and a gallery room where some of the most amazing pieces of art hung. I had already decided that the concept of space inside the house was irrelevant to the size of the house itself – and then I found the store room. I stepped in and found rows and rows of pallet racking full of miscellaneous items. The room was bigger than all the warehouses down at the docks combined. It would take me hours to search the place. I wondered how Fogg found anything in there.

I heard a scratching sound to my right and turned to discover a green chalkboard on the wall with words just appearing. "Ask me for what you need."

"Can you tell me what's in this room?"

The word 'Yes' appeared on the chalkboard.

I decided to try it. "How many vases are in this room?"

The words on the board vanished like they had been erased, and then a second later they returned as if each letter was being written individually. "There are three hundred and forty-seven vases in the room. Would you like a listing?"

"No, thank you." Figured it was worth a shot. "How many humans are in the room and where are they located?"

Words wrote out on the board, 'Living or deceased?'

"Deceased? Living humans, please." I tried to ignore the creepiness of dead bodies being stored there.

"There is one living human in the room. James Michael Doyle. He is located at the entrance."

## LUCIUS FOGG: MALICIOUS INTENT

I thanked the board for its help, not knowing if it was necessary but there was no reason not to be polite even to a magical object. And it had kept me from having to search that room row by row. I was about to close the door then changed my mind and leaned back in.

“How many deceased humans are in this room?” I asked.

The board wrote out, “There are twenty-three deceased humans in the room. Would you like a listing?”

“No, thanks.” I closed the door, regretting I had asked. Damn creepy.

I crossed the hallway to the next door in the line. I took a deep breath and prepared myself for whatever strangeness I was about to find, yet I was still surprised by what I saw. I stepped out onto a dirt path surrounded by trees and vines. I could taste fresh air and hear the sound of running water. I took a few steps forward and then turned to look back at the door. The jamb was wedged into the side of a cliff that went up for a hundred feet easily. If it wasn't for seeing the hallway through the open door, I'd have sworn I was outside.

“I heard the door open.” Emma's voice called out. “You should come join me. The water is perfect – as always.”

I made my way through the trees towards her voice. A few feet ahead I could see a clearing where the sun was breaking through the canopy. A waterfall crashed down from the rocks above and into a steaming pond of crystal clear water. A hot spring under a waterfall, that was something that only magic could create.

“I'm surprised. I figured Lucius would come looking for me here.” Emma stepped through the falling water. Her naked alabaster skin was glistening in the sun, her long wet hair cascading down her back, the water tracing along every curve of her body until it spilled out onto the rocks below her. She looked more beautiful than ever. Only the hollow sound in her voice reminded me of the dire situation.

“Sorry to disappoint you.” I glanced away, feigning disinterest.

“I'm not disappointed.” She lowered herself into the hot water of the pond. “Emma and I are both very excited to see you. Why don't you slip off that suit and climb in here with us?”

“Because it's *us* and not just Emma.” I took a seat on a large rock to the side of the hot spring. “You've been in this room before? With Fogg?”

“Didn't he tell you?” She moaned and stretched out seductively. “This was one of our favorite rooms when I'd come to visit. Have you ever made love in a waterfall, Jimmy?”

“He told me you came here to get away from your abusive husband, Kieran.”

“That's right.” She stretched her arms over her head, making her bare breasts bob up out of the water. “I got away from him once or twice a week for six months before I decided to leave for good.”

“So that night, sixty-five years ago, you came here to be with Fogg?”

She sat more upright in the water as the subject of that night came up. “Kieran and I got into another fight. I couldn't tell you about what, we were fighting over everything then. I had enough, took my coat and told him I was leaving. He grabbed my arm and wouldn't let me go. Screaming at me that I belonged to him and I wasn't going anywhere. In his rage, he must not have thought I'd use a spell. I blinded him, just long enough to get away. I came here. What I didn't know was that Kieran had suspected something was happening between Lucius and me. He immediately came here.”

“I know the rest.” I had gotten her talking, figured I'd try defusing the situation. “You loved Fogg, didn't you?”

Melancholy washed across her face. “He was always there for me, no matter how many times I went back to Kieran.”

“Then why do you want to kill him?”

## LUCIUS FOGG: MALICIOUS INTENT

She looked down at the water for a second. When she raised her head again her look had changed to something very stern and serious. “Sixty-five years. I was trapped in that room alone for sixty-five years. He just accepted that I was dead. He never even entered the room. He never even tried to make contact. I waited for him for sixty-five years!”

That backfired on me, badly. I had hoped to re-connect her to her feeling for Fogg. Instead she was angrier than ever. Her body floated up out of the water and hovered over the spring. A dark purple cloak appeared out of mid-air and wrapped itself around her naked body. Energy started crackling at her finger tips and her eyes glowed with power. She started moving forward, right towards me. I stood up as she got within five feet of me.

“This vessel cares for you deeply, Jimmy.” Her voice was even colder than before. “If you care for her, tell me where to find Fogg and I will release Emma once I am done.”

“And do what, find someone else to possess?” I asked.

“Does it matter as long as you get your love back?”

There was only one thing I could do. I had to save Emma. “He’s searching the upstairs for you. We’re supposed to meet back in the foyer to regroup if we don’t find anything. He should be there any minute now.”

“You made the right choice.” She started floating past me. “Leave now and don’t come back. This is your only chance. I am going to kill Lucius Fogg and if you interfere in any way I will not hesitate to kill you as well.”

“Natasha!” I called after her, making her turn back around. “Know this. If you break your promise I will hunt you down no matter how long it takes and I will kill you regardless of whose body you are in. You won’t be able to hide from me.”

She glared at me for a moment and then finally responded, “Funny. For a moment there, when you were threatening me – you sounded just like Kieran.”