

## UNDER THE MOON, UNDER THE EARTH

By Shelley A. Marshall

The pale light of morning displayed itself in hazy shades of pink and amber. Shalani smiled contentedly as she gazed over her teacup at the warm play of light filtering through the kitchen window. Today she would be completely free to soak in what warmth was left of the Indian summer sun and to do what she loved most, tend to her garden.

Stepping outside, Shalani inhaled deeply, savoring the coolness of the palate of autumnal scents in the early October morning. She looked up at the orchestra of rhythmically swaying trees, whose leaves were turning from pale shades into vibrant fall colors. With a lightness in her step, Shalani headed down the path leading to the gardening shed. Its aroma of aged, dried wood, top soil, and manure was earthy and comforting. Softly humming a song learned from her grandmother, she grabbed a basket and continued down the path toward her prized vegetable garden.

When she walked back toward the house, her late-blooming tomatoes, Kentucky Bluegrass string beans, and Bell peppers filled her harvest basket -- some of these vegetables would be served in a quiet dinner with her husband that night, before the season of holiday parties and lavish entertaining began.

Just five years ago, she married Carlton Alexander Lampure IV, a successful attorney seven years her senior. Having immigrated from India during college, Shalani had just opened a computer software design business when the debonair Carlton, whose captivating eyes stole her heart, whisked her away to Kilgara, his family's modest estate. She felt a twinge of guilt over the luxuries afforded her by a successful husband; India was beautiful, but also a poor country, whose poverty remained an indelible part of her past.

She stepped from the shower, toweled off, and checked the time on the large grandfather clock at one end of her bedroom. Then she turned her attention to her mirror. Brushing her long raven tresses from her exotic, gently angular face, she let her towel fall to the floor. Her dark eyes followed the contours of her body as she gently ran her hands over her skin and imagined Carlton stroking her body and whispering how lucky he was to have such a beautiful wife...

Carlton would be home by 7:00 p.m., so she had time for a long-awaited, yearly visit with her friends, the gypsies. Having loaded her Mercedes convertible (a birthday gift from Carlton) with home-grown vegetables, she skillfully navigated the many bends and twists in the pavement between Kilgara and the beginning of the country road which led to the small caravan of the gypsies.

The straight, uninhabited road greedily accepted the force of her foot on the accelerator. Soon, in the distance, she saw the outlines of the familiar wagon caravan that passed through Fort Edward once a year. Her arrival was apparently anticipated; a large gathering awaited her. Hugs and kisses were exchanged, while some of the young men lifted the heavy baskets of produce from the floor of the car (recognizing the value gypsies place on skillful thievery, even among non-gypsy friends, Shalani had left her valuables at home). Suddenly, from behind, two delicate hands masked Shalani's eyes. Knowing only one who did this, she guessed it was Marina. At 21, Marina had shed her lank, girlish figure for that of a desirable young woman. The time passed quickly as the friends exchanged stories and events of the past year. Perhaps it was the common ancestry of the young Indian woman and the gypsies, but she was something more than a *gadjo*, or non-gypsy, to them. Promising to return to her friends' camp very soon, Shalani waved goodbye to the band of onlookers.

Over the next two weeks Shalani felt, at different times, nervous, excited, frustrated, and apprehensive as she prepared her home for the end of October Annual Harvest Gala, when Carlton invited his office staff, close old friends, clients, and potential clients to share in an unforgettable evening of exquisite dining, big band entertainment, and inviting conversation. Despite her fears, the Gala was a huge success. Shalani was a splendid hostess, with beauty, wit, and the gift of making people feel comfortable. Together, Shalani and Carlton waved goodbye to the last departing guest. Carlton pulled her close and brushed a fallen strand of black hair from her eyes. "Do you know how lucky I am?" Without waiting for an answer, he softly kissed her ruby lips. Taking her face in his hands, he grew more serious: "I love you, Shalani."

"My darling... You spoil me -- but never stop," she giggled finally, as she took his hand and lead him upstairs.

A white November frost dusted the lawn and clung wishfully to every fallen leaf as the rising sun gently erased the frost's magic. Shalani found herself thinking back to the Gala and the warmth that filled the great hall; this evening she and Carlton would entertain some "close" friends at an "intimate" dinner party for 20. She planned her day carefully, hurried through her errands, and was

finished by 2:00 -- guests would begin arriving at 7:00 for cocktails.

Satisfied that she was ready for the evening's event, she dashed off a note to Carlton and was on her way down the familiar roads to the gypsy camp. Nervously, Shalani shifted her gaze to the car's digital clock every few miles. The emerald numerals burned into her mind's eye as she maneuvered through each turn. She had been terribly busy since her last visit and feared that today might be her last chance to see her friends before they moved on.

Magda, the gypsy matriarch who had caught up with the caravan, welcomed Shalani to the camp and beckoned her to enter her tent. Magda had recognized the magic that was buried deep inside Shalani -- the magic of their shared ancestors -- and loved her for it. As they embraced, Magda spoke into Shalani's ear in a whisper that was like dried leaves blowing across a bleak and lifeless field: "Be careful beautiful one. I see the black shroud." Shalani pulled back from the old fortune teller and searched her eyes, but they did not reveal what was behind this unexpected warning. Magda's eyes, usually gay and inviting, now bore deep into Shalani's soul. She motioned to a small stool, and, obediently, Shalani sat. Candle flames danced fluidly as the outside breeze penetrated the sanctum... or did it? Magda sat opposite Shalani, looking at her over a rickety table draped in black cloth. Magda wore the dark colors of a gypsy madam, with the exception of a blood red scarf, tied loosely about her throat, which dangled like the tongue of a serpent. Shalani was shaken by the matriarch's determined movements and prolonged lapse of speech. She heard a rustling behind the walls of the tent, and sensed the unseen force the gypsies knew so well.

In a practiced movement, Magda jerked the silk scarf off the table, leaving an opaque crystal ball in its center. Magda reached out for Shalani's slender hands. "Ah, your hands are ice, beautiful one. Do not be afraid of Magda, but listen carefully to every word which passes my lips." She placed Shalani's hands on the sides of the crystal ball, closed her eyes, and chanted in what Shalani recognized as *Romany*. Within moments the murkiness of the mysterious ball deepened and Magda opened her eyes to peer into its depths. Rubbing the sphere, the old gypsy foretold of a dark presence around Shalani, of days of trial, and a moon that would cast light on her destiny. The ball had spoken to Magda, but she could offer no hope, only a warning. Later, as Shalani, drove away, Magda shed a quiet tear for what she had not told, and could not tell Shalani.

With great effort, Shalani forced the gypsy's words from her thoughts and focussed her eyes on the road ahead. Despite the cool weather, she drove with the top down. The breeze on her face

and the wind in her hair lent her a feeling of security; then a sprinkling of rain landed upon her bare hands as if messengers of the dark and foreboding clouds above. Shalani pulled to the side of the road, depressed a button on the instrument panel, and the canvas top rose and nestled into place with a firm "Clunk." As she accelerated again, the pleasant breeze of just moments ago became a menacing, invisible beast that thrashed wildly at all objects in its path. Thunder boomed loudly and torrents of rain fell in huge droplets. Shalani tightened her grip on the steering wheel in an effort to hold the car in her lane. She shot a quick glance at the digital clock. "Damn! Twenty five to seven!" As she came out of the turn, a dark object crossed the road, lightning crashed before her eyes, and Shalani lost control.

In the weeks that followed the accident, Carlton and Shalani went from one specialist to another. She walked with a cane, but the prognosis was for a full recovery. Her physical therapist, who was working with her each day, was noting marked improvement in her badly bruised and sprained knee and ankle. What the doctors could not fix was the raised crimson scar which began beneath Shalani's right eye, crossed her cheek, and ended on her chin.

A few days after the Lampure's returned home from the hospital, Marina appeared at the door of Kilgara. Carlton, who had been working at home, answered the door. Hearing Marina's soft, sweet voice inquiring for her, Shalani called out to Carlton to let her in.

"Two days after we left camp heading south Magda took me aside and told me that I must return... you needed me," Marina said mysteriously. Marina's offer to stay and assist Shalani was welcomed by both Shalani and Carlton.

In the weeks following her accident, Shalani noticed a difference in her relationship with Carlton. Although he had stayed at home to help her in those first days back from the hospital, she could tell he was relieved to return to his practice. No longer did Carlton bring guests home; he would entertain his clients at the country club or meet friends at restaurants. It was the horrendous, awful, ugly scar on her face -- she knew this because even she could no longer look at herself in the mirror.

Carlton sank down into his leather chair. The rain outside was soothing, helping him focus his thoughts, as did the empty pipe which he constantly placed in his mouth. Trying to sort out his feelings, Carlton thought, "She's still the same person... It's not her fault, it's me..." His thoughts

turned to the long crimson scar and he suppressed a shudder. The scar was changing his whole life. He admitted to himself that he did not want to be seen with her in public -- he did not want his friends to have to look at it... at her... Despite this admission, he did not feel better, for he knew his disgust went against what he was taught to believe, and what he wanted to one day teach his son or daughter. With a sickened laugh, he acknowledged this would never happen -- how could he have children with a woman to whom he could no longer stand to be close?

He knew the scar was holding Shalani prisoner in her own house; she refused to go where people might see her. Despite Marina's presence, Shalani felt frustrated in her isolation, and, in the evenings, tried desperately to spend time with Carlton -- but he would always find an excuse to be alone. He pushed himself from the chair and crossed to the window, searching in the rain for an answer. No matter what he thought, or what he tried to push from his mind, he always saw the scar... the disfigured wife. He *had* the perfect marriage, the perfect wife. Now he had a marriage that was crumbling, and a wife that... he no longer wanted. And everywhere there was Shalani, there was Marina, whose dark hair, dark features, and youthful beauty were constant reminders of the wife he used to have. But it wasn't that easy. It wasn't a loss of beauty, it was a loss of self. He was used to making decisions and leading an orderly life, but now he was a hostage to a wife who was becoming increasingly reclusive and dependent on him for her happiness. It wasn't as easy as getting a divorce, for now he felt more committed than ever to take care of her. He was suffocating under the burden of her need for him.

Carlton had weighed his options. He was backed into a corner. And then he thought of India. It was the perfect solution, she would be around her family and friends and would get the support she needed. "If she goes to India," he thought, "she may stay there."

Shalani was excited and surprised, but at the same time reserved -- they hadn't talked in so long... she questioned his motives for sending her home. She told Marina that Carlton wanted her to go home to visit her family. She'd be gone for 3 months and didn't want Marina staying alone with Carlton at Kilgara for whatever reason... they were her own private thoughts.

The day before her flight, Shalani gave Marina some money and put her on a bus to Florida... "to catch up with the caravan..." "See you in March," she called out, and waved as the Greyhound pulled away.

Feeling the psychological noose begin to loosen as the sun nestled down and the moon rose to keep a vigilant watch over the hushed hills which surrounded Kilgara, Carlton's spirit began to dance. He made his famous chili for dinner, while Shalani finished packing. They had a quiet evening, and the conversation was less restricted than in weeks past. Shalani went up to bed, and left him smoking his pipe in the library.

Carlton stepped silently across the bedroom in a path of moonlight that poured through the window and cast his dark shadow upon the floor. She was sleeping on her side... the crimson mark lost in the downy pillow. A satisfied grin settled over his face, and a soft relieved sigh issued from deep within him, as he thought to himself in the shadowy stillness, "Just one more night." A moment after he closed his eyes, Shalani's whisper broke the tranquil silence.

"Carlton, are you awake?" she asked hopefully.

He hesitated. What could she possibly have to say now after so many quiet nights? "Yes."

"I've been thinking... tonight... tonight was good for me... it's just that... it's just... it's been so long since we've been alone together," she said.

Carlton's mind was swallowing every word. "Where is this going," he thought quickly. Eyes fixed on the ceiling, he remained silent.

Shalani rolled over and looked at him. He was motionless. With determination she said, "Carlton, I'm not going."

His mind did somersaults. "What!" he thought. "How can this be happening?... I need time to myself... time away from you... time away from what you've become." But he said nothing.

After a few moments, she slid from the bed, reached for her robe and left the room. He heard her descend the stairs, and the arrhythmic tread of her injured leg accompanied his descent into his dark thoughts.

Panicked, Carlton got out of bed and crossed to the window to draw the curtains closed. Just then, he heard the front door slam. He wiped away the night's condensation and peered out of

the window. There she was... hobbling down the path, in a left to right motion, toward her garden. For several minutes he watched her with keen interest. The moon silhouetted her small white-robed form against the earthy background. Leaves were lifted from their comfortable resting place and were circling with the wind. The moonlight gleamed on her dark black hair. From behind she was still beautiful, but that face... That permanent reminder of the day his life ended...

Shalani was humming the Indian folk song learned long ago. She rocked back and forth. Her soft tones were smothered by the whistling wind, and the creak of the ancient trees bowing in the icy breeze. Tears poured from her eyes, but she made no movement to interrupt their cascade over her lips, and their tumbling to her lap. She was far, far away from that garden plot... she did not shiver from the cold. Shalani's magical senses were awake. She froze for an instant, looked to the stars, and slowly turned her head over her shoulder. The moon reflected eerily on the gray steel the instant it met the tear streaked face. The chill in the air made the moon particularly bright the night Shalani became one with the earth.

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The winter was yielding to the warming powers of a beautiful spring. The grounds of Kilgara were bursting to life in an artist's palette of colors -- an impressionist, for the scene was smeared by the weeds that were taking over the landscape around the estate. Carlton's life had returned to some degree of normalcy; this ended when he answered the ring at the door.

It was Marina standing before him with her bags on the ground beside her. It had been going so well -- Carlton never expected the young gypsy to return. He thought quickly, told her Shalani had extended her stay in India indefinitely, and, fearing the questions that might follow if he turned her away, he offered her old room.

The days passed and still brought no word of Shalani's return. Marina missed her friend, and decided to plant some flowers in the empty beds to welcome Shalani home.

The shed was dark, except for the filtered sunlight peeking through a window on the back wall. Marina searched for the tools she needed, and found all but the shovel. There it was -- it had fallen to the floor in the corner. She reached for the wooden handle and drew back quickly as though her fingertips had brushed hot coals. She closed her eyes, saw a flash in the darkness, and

wincing with pain. She sensed Shalani's presence, and, suddenly frightened, she ran from the shed.

That night, Marina locked her bedroom door, lit several candles she had gathered from the empty rooms of Kilgara, and pulled from her traveling bag a small bundle wrapped in red silk. The bundle became a deck of aged Tarot cards from which she chose a Significator card to represent Shalani. The Queen of Pentacles. A dark woman of generous and perceptive spirit who is a devoted wife; magnificent, opulent, and secure. She shuffled the remaining cards, faces down, three times. Then she cut the pack into three piles and placed them down to her right. She picked them up again, from the right, placed the first card atop the Significator, and said, "This covers her." The Five of Pentacles was revealed upside down, signifying a general atmosphere of dissonance in marriage. She put down the second card across the Significator and the Five of Pentacles and said, "This crosses her." The card of Judgment was revealed upside down, indicating that the nature of the forces which opposed Shalani were evil, and had threatened her physical health. The third card was laid above the Significator and Marina said, "This crowns her." It was Justice, a card in which a crowned woman held a scale in one black gloved hand and a sword in a gray gloved hand; she was framed by tall, purple irises. It was a card which stood for accountability. This was what Shalani hoped for. The fourth card was turned over below the Significator. "This is beneath her." The card showed the foundation of the matter; that which Shalani had already experienced relative to it. The card bore the picture of a skeletal knight with a fluttering pennant. The card was Death. Marina continued to deal the cards, and, on the tenth and final card, turned over the High Priestess, revealing that the outcome of this matter would lie in the hand of the person suggested by the card. She prepared for Magda's return.

The blue Ford pickup was a faded, rusting eyesore. Tall wooden poles extended upward from each corner of the bed and secured a large, stained canvas tarp which was loosely tied to the poles. The excess canvas flapped in the wind, and to motorists trapped behind the truck, it appeared to be a long, undulating tongue, reaching out to draw them hungrily into its folds. The driver's shoulders were hunched forward -- he appeared to steer the truck with his chest. His hair stuck to his head in black, greasy strands which the wind could not lift as it passed through the open windows. His face was unshaven; a long unkempt mustache framed his mouth. Rotting, discolored teeth held a toothpick between them. Magda sat beside him, bedecked in jewelry. The driver guided the truck to the turn off and lazily coasted down a long country road. The truck pulled up the drive to Kilgara and stopped in front of the house, where Marina was waiting. Carlton was on a business trip.

Standing with Marina in front of the house, Magda said with total certainty: "The beautiful one is dead. Josef and I left the others when I knew there was work to be done here."

Marina led her guests to the gardening shed and pointed to the shovel that lay innocently on the floor. Josef leaned forward and picked it up for Magda to examine. It was heavy, cast iron securely welded to a sturdy wooden handle. Magda placed her hands on the wood and moved them deliberately from the wood to the indestructible iron. Marina and Josef watched with intense curiosity. Magda saw what they could not. She spoke in *Romany*. They followed her path toward the garden plot, where she sank down on her knees and relayed the story of the night that Shalani died.

"The moon was bright. The beautiful one walked outside and was kneeling here on the ground. She was kneeling her on the ground, crying. She rocked back and forth as if in a trance. He crept up behind her; she turned and looked at him. High into the air he lifted the shovel, and brought it down swiftly. She lurched forward, unconscious. He swung at her again and again." Magda was perspiring, her eyes remained closed, and she hadn't moved from where she sat. She continued, "The clouds formed, and the rain began to fall, washing her blood into the earth. He started to dig at the ground, sinking the shovel into the earth. Like a wild beast, he dug hurriedly and deep. The sweat on his face mingled with the rain and he looked demoniacally at the moon. He rolled her body into the dark hole and covered her with moist earth. Then he rubbed his soiled hands on the wet grass and returned the shovel to the shed." By now, Magda was physically exhausted, as if she had relived the episode she was seeing. Josef and Marina helped her to the house.

The gypsies searched the house for Carlton's discarded hair, nails, and personal items so dear to him that they held his energy. Marina scraped up Carlton's whiskers from the bathroom basin, and Josef sifted through the garbage and found nail clippings. Magda meticulously went through his wardrobe and found a pipe, carefully wrapped in a velvet bag, where he had put it after Shalani had left. The pipe bore the letters "CAL IV" etched in gold upon the bowl. Satisfied, the gypsies carried their claims outside, and proceeded back down the path to Shalani's resting place.

Josef built a fire, and the gypsies knelt before the flames. Magda withdrew tiny vials and small metal tins from her bag and laid them on the ground. In *Romany* she uttered words that were old before man was young. Throughout the chant she withdrew items from the vials and tins and

tossed them into the breathing flames. Magda then sprinkled the beard and nail clippings over the flames. Holding the pipe above her head, she threw her face to the sky and let out a loud and venomous string of words, before throwing the pipe into the inferno. She pried the top from the one tin that remained unopened and hurled a live toad into the fire.

Carlton returned in better spirits than when he had left, although he was puzzled and concerned by the neat rows of fresh furrows in what had been Shalani's garden, he did not question how Marina had planted a garden by herself. But he shuddered when he thought of what lay buried deep beneath the soil.

Carlton was also curious about the dead toad that lay on the stoop. He was surprised Marina hadn't swept it away.

The Kilgara harvest was more plentiful than in years past. Carlton was at first reluctant to eat the vegetables from the garden, but he was afraid abstinence would betray his crime to Marina. As the summer passed he ate the fresh vegetables Marina prepared almost every day.

Standing before the bathroom mirror, Carlton nicked his face with the razor, and it fell from his hand into the warm, soapy water. He fished around in the cloudy water, his nails hitting the porcelain. He pulled his hands from the sink, and, thumbs extended, he curled his eight fingertips to his palms. He studied the length of his nails and shook his head in disgust. "Damn!" he said aloud, wondering what was going on. He had begun trimming his fingernails every two days. Never in his life had they grown so quickly.

Dressing for work, his fingers moved nimbly from button to button. He stood before Shalani's mirror and gave himself an approving nod before going downstairs. He said "Good morning," to Marina and grabbed his driving gloves and keys from the countertop. The gloves slipped on with ease, and Carlton stared confusedly at the sagging leather. He shrugged it off. He had dropped several sizes in his clothes, so the gloves did not really come as a surprise. He started the engine, and departed for work.

During the lunch hour, Carlton went to his barber, an old world figure named "Joe."

"Life mus' be good to you, my frien'! Your hair is tickier and darker than before! You

wouldn't be using any of dat hair colorin' garbage sold in de grocery, would you?"

Carlton chuckled uneasily. Now that Joe mentioned it, he had noticed a change. Later, checking his appointment book, he found he was visiting Joe more frequently this summer.

At the beginning of the summer, Carlton had begun a regimen of running every evening before dinner. One night, making his way back to Kilgara, he stopped in the road and rubbed his leg. Spasms of pain shot from his right knee to his ankle. The road was flat, and he hadn't had a misstep. He couldn't understand the pain. He slowly limped home, with the aid of a stick he found in the roadside brush. The next day the limp had worsened. X-rays revealed no sign of injury, but the doctor prescribed medicine for pain and suggested that Carlton use a cane to keep the weight off his legs for a few days.

At home Marina made him feel like a king. She propped his leg up with pillows and massaged his sore ankle. She brought dinner to him in the library, where he spent the day reading and napping. One night, late in the summer, Carlton fell asleep in his leather chair and Marina smiled wickedly while she turned off the light.

The limp was becoming a nuisance; Carlton could go nowhere without his cane. He was frustrated by the doctors' inability to diagnose his condition and agitated by his weakness. He became moody, and brooded in silence.

In early August Carlton received word that some of his college fraternity brothers would be in town and wanted to get together. They invited Shalani, but Carlton explained that she was on an extended vacation in India.

The Saturday evening Carlton was to meet them for dinner, he napped. Outside, the misting rain that cleansed the air also sheltered the sun as it set. He had forgotten the alarm, and when he rolled over and looked at the clock, he had little time to get ready. Still in bed, he stared at the ceiling, and then rubbed his eyes for several seconds. He stopped abruptly, when his fingers passed over a bump beneath his right eye. He purposefully touched it again and felt that it was not merely a bump, but a curved, raised line that stretched over his cheek and halted at his chin. Panic seized him in its icy clutches. Ignoring the pain from his leg, he sprang from the bed, hobbled to the bathroom, and looked in the mirror. There his worse fear stared back at him hauntingly. The scar was

Shalani's; the face was his own.

He stumbled back, his gaze still fixed on the mirror. His outstretched fingers searched for something, anything to pull himself away from the horrible sight. "Marina! Marina!" he shouted. From the kitchen she heard his cries and rushed up the staircase. He was slouched on the bed when she knocked at his door. "Come in!" he said hastily. Marina entered with a puzzled look on her face.

"Carlton, are you all right?" she asked with concern in her voice.

Breathing heavily, he said, "I don't know... How do I look?" His eyes pleadingly searched hers for denial of what he had seen.

"You are very pale, and sweating. Are you not feeling well? Are you in pain?" She leaned forward and touched his forehead, "You do not have a fever."

"Marina, look at my face! What do you see!"

"A man in need of a shave. Your friends will be expecting you. Shall I tell them you will be late?"

"No, No. I'll get ready," he said, shaking his head in disbelief. "Do you see anything else?"

"Is this a... test?" she asked, teasingly. "No. Nothing else. The same handsome face I have become accustomed to.

He shook his head. "Thanks. I'll get showered and be down in a few minutes."

With that, she smiled, turned, and left him alone in the bedroom.

Carlton stepped into the shower and stood motionless, letting the water course over his body, in a vain effort to wash away his sins. He fought off the impulse to touch his face, and began mulling over the events since that fatal night. The changes to his physical characteristics... his nails and hair he had explained to himself as a consequence of a healthier diet. The limp, although

medically undiagnosed, was perhaps just a badly twisted joint, and over time, would heal.

Carlton dried off and, with his wet towel, wiped the steam from the bathroom mirror, hoping not to see the imperfect face. But the sinister scar, crimson and swollen, leered back at him. At that instant it all came together. The gypsies... the vegetables... his nails and hair... the limp and now this... the final cinching evidence, the unhealable scar that matched that of his wife... There was but one way to escape the curse which had been cast.

Carlton steeled himself to walk upright without the cane. He crossed the bedroom to the closet, grabbed his robe, and pulled the shotgun from the top shelf. He then walked to the window and peered out at Shalani's garden -- the ground in the garden was upturned and the moonlight gleamed on a puddled liquid. He moved slowly down the stairs, pausing for a moment on each step to conquer the pain. He walked out of the house and down the stone path toward the garden, where he fell to his knees in the wet, scarlet earth. He dug his fingers into the soil, pulled up huge clumps dripping with fresh blood, and let the sodden dirt fall through his fingers. Then he picked up the shotgun.

Although she anticipated the shot, Marina jumped as the blast shattered the peaceful silence. It all ended where it had begun... in the garden at Kilgara, under the moon.

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The pale blue pickup rumbled down the bumpy lane, by the garden with its fresh furrows, leaving Kilgara for the last time. Its passengers did not look back. The tarp flapping against the wind waved a grotesque goodbye to what lay under the earth.