

A SHADOW IN THE HILLS
Partial- first 34 pages
Website version

Written by
Marcus Howell

Email: contact@MarcusHowell.uk
Website: MarcusHowell.uk

OVER BLACK:

SUPER:

In the mists of time, evil demons prowled the land. They ruled the country in terror and misery for the common folk.

The evilest and most powerful demon was Lord Soulin.

Centuries later a brotherhood of Christian warriors headed by the Scallien clan used the powerful and deep magic of the Christian faith to defeat Lord Soulin.

They bound him forever using an amulet set in stone.

Attempts made to raise Lord Soulin, Failed as the amulet's magic called upon a descendant of the Scallien family to foil the endeavour. No one has raised Lord Soulin.

Until now:

EXT. ABANDONED GOTHIC CHURCH - PATHWAY - NIGHT

The church nestles in the shadows. Ancient gravestones line the path to the entrance.

The time-worn studded door to the church hangs at an angle from its smashed hinges. The wind moans and tugs at the door, as it slump even further.

INT. ABANDONED GOTHIC CHURCH - ALTAR - NIGHT

The faint light from a lone streetlamp slices through the stained glass windows. It reveals a gathering of men and women.

They surround a large pentacle within a circle marked out on the ancient flagstones. Eerie patterns from the light form on the stones.

A man lights two ancient torches that hiss and sputter as they take hold.

The gathering CHANT softly at first, but it becomes stronger. 'Soulin dominus ad nos'.

A brass brazier bursts into life and it's flickering light illuminates the man poised above it. This is MILES ARMSTRONG, in his late fifties.

A distinguished man with a shock of silver hair. An air of ruthless domination pervades his demeanour.

The brazier flares as he pours a liquid into it. Miles's cultivated voice sounds hollow as it booms and reverberates over the chanting:

MILES
Come, Lord Soulin...

He flings his arms up and in a controlled frenzy:

MILES (CONT'D)
We break the binds, we call you,
Lord Soulin.

Smoke from the brazier billows up into the vaults. Imperceptibly at first, a huge man's figure, appears formed from the smoke.

The chanting reaches a crescendo. As the eddying smoke starts to solidify. Fierce red eyes gleam from the head forming in the darkness. But...

The figure in the smoke wavers and becomes indistinct. It disintegrates and leaves a cloud of smoke, which fades away. The chanting gets ragged and stops.

The torches and brazier die, the church goes dark.

A deathly silence... Miles kicks the brazier over and a shower of hot cinders flash across the floor.

He bellows out his exasperation as lights from cell phones switch on. The men and women mill about in confusion.

SOULINIST #1
What happened?

SOULINIST #2
It's failed.

MILES
You saw... I can do it--

Miles's maniacal face is illuminated by the cell phones.

SANDEEP, early forties, stands next to Miles. He is a towering, powerful Indian man wearing a white turban.

SANDEEP
-- I told you... It is the
Scallien Amulet stopping us.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICES - DAY (ROCHESTER NY)

In the scruffy offices of J. Axelrod, WORKERS in their cubicles concentrate on their business to the sound of clicking keyboards. The corporate logo looms above them on the wall. The re-cycle cans have not been emptied and overflow.

Annoyed -- really annoyed -- ALICIA COLE (29) pounds at the keyboard. She is neat and well put together. She does not suffer fools gladly -- especially the idiots around her. She glares at her workstation. She will break the keyboard if she thumps those keys any harder.

Her nameplate proclaims 'Alicia Cole Project Manager' and the workstation screen shows a 'Word' document entitled 'F.I.R.E' Enhancement project, Handover'

The phone warbles and she lunges at it.

ALICIA

Alicia Cole... Hi Bill... OK...
 OK... I should be ready by the end
 of the week... Sure...
 (checks diary)
 Friday should be OK.
 (Makes appointment)
 I'll do the invite. See you then.

Heaves a very irritated sigh as the phone slams down.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

So don't be such a dick about it.

Lurches to her feet. She spots PETER over the cubical division. Peter is a owlish co-worker, a little overweight, he snacks on a bag of chips.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

Peter... here for a minute.

Peter regally holds up his hand and carries on with his work. Ignores her.

She stands and glares at him. He still ignores her. She spreads her hands out in disgust.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

Is it so important?

Peter sighs -- deliberately slow -- he saunters over with chips still in hand.

PETER

What?

ALICIA

Don't ignore me.

PETER

I was in a flow.

ALICIA

I... How did you get on with the reqs. from the lab?

PETER

Errr... I didn't. Bob James is off for two weeks -- got a sprained back... So--

ALICIA

-- There are others in his team, couldn't you organise with them?

Peter's laid back 'don't care' look says it all.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

Why didn't you let me know?

Alicia fumes. Voice raised:

ALICIA (CONT'D)

You've done it again. You're the business analyst-- why don't you do your effing job!

Peter glances around at the other office workers, all staring. Some embarrassed, others hide giggles. This is a big deal.

PETER

There really wasn't anyone--

ALICIA

-- Who's Bob's stand-in

PETER

I thought that--

ALICIA

-- Did you know I'm leaving? I've got to hand this shit-show over to Bill Yates on Friday.

PETER

Oh... I didn't--

ALICIA

-- Well I am! Get on to them and set up a meeting with whoever... I don't care who.

PETER

Your leaving? I didn't know... definitely?

ALICIA

Yes... in a week or so.

Peter exchanges fist pumps with other co-workers, as he plods back to his desk. Alicia is back to her keyboard bashing.

Co-workers look delighted at the news.

INT. CAFÉ - DAY (ROCHESTER NY)

The café is upmarket shabby chic. Alicia cuts a lonely figure at a limed table with a huge coffee cup.

BARRY, similar in age, shambles in and plonks himself down opposite her. He wears a high-viz jacket and working clothes, but looks solemn and unsmiling.

BARRY

You got it?

Alicia reaches into her purse. She draws out a little box and places it on the table.

BARRY (CONT'D)

You don't want me to sell it and split the difference?

ALICIA

No, I've already told you. You bought it... it's yours. Why don't you listen?

BARRY

You change your mind!

He checks the engagement ring as a waitress hovers. Alicia makes a throat-cutting gesture. Barry misses it.

BARRY (CONT'D)

What are you up to now?

ALICIA

I'm going to work abroad.

What!! Barry is -- mouth open -- shocked.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

Yeah... All agreed. New start, new country. I hate my job, the people are bastards--

BARRY

-- Wow... This is so not you!
Where are you going? Are you sure?

ALICIA

The UK -- Northeast.

BARRY

Really... really big deal.

ALICIA

Yeah. I know. I'm doing it.

BARRY

It's going to be hard. You know they're a very different culture, they don't like...

He stares at her -- he is about to say 'pushy like you,'-- but thinks better of it.

ALICIA

Oh, you've lived there have you?
Know all about it do you? Don't be so fucking negative.

INT. THE COLES'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A neat middle class American suburban home. On the wall are certificates, among others, from the Institute of Biomedical Science. EDWARD COLE, over sixty, contemplates the certificates. They are all for Alicia. Some family pictures of Alicia. He smiles, he is a proud dad.

TESSA COLE, a middle sixties mom, slightly overweight, bursts into the room.

TESSA

She's late!

She stomps over to the window and peers out.

TESSA (CONT'D)

There's no sign of her. We need to get to the airport an hour before. Traffic will be awful. Call her... Oh, where is she?

Edward peers out of the window onto the road.

EDWARD

She'll be here, we've got time.

He sees a taxi draw up and through the window we see Alicia clamber out of a taxi. She pays the taxi driver and struggles up the drive with a gaudy suitcase.

TESSA flings open the front door.

TESSA

Finally... You're late!

ALICIA

I lost my 'last minute' list and had to check everything again.

Alicia looks red eyed, she has been crying.

INT./EXT. CAR ON THE WAY TO THE AIRPORT - DAY

Alicia is in the front of the Cole's family Chevy Malibu with Tessa in the back and Edward drives.

TESSA

We won't have time to say goodbye to you properly. You know the traffic is always bad around the airport--

ALICIA

-- Course you will. What else are you going to say except goodbye?

TESSA

Why you had to leave and go all the way over there--

ALICIA

-- Mom, I wasn't going anywhere at Axelrods-- I split up with Barry.--

TESSA

-- You could have just got another job. There are plenty of boys--

ALICIA

-- Why do you always assume I want a boy friend? I don't want a boyfriend. I need a reset. I have got to rescue myself... I need to feel better about myself..

Tears start. Having a pity-party.

EDWARD

Don't talk negative on yourself. We are proud of you.

ALICIA

-- Dad, I have got to shape up. I'm not a kid... Anyway, I have always wanted to work abroad.

TESSA

Why? When it all goes wrong--

EDWARD

-- Tess, stop it, now!

TESSA

I'm sorry... we don't want to lose you.

Tessa now only a moment away from tears. Alicia with big sobs.

ALICIA

Mom, it would be too awful if it went wrong. So it won't... I won't forget you, I'll keep in touch. I have gotta do this for myself.

Tessa puts her hand on Alicia's shoulder. Alicia clutches at it. Tessa gives a sob.

TESSA

I will miss you.

ALICIA

I will so miss you too.

INT. VICTORIAN TOWNHOUSE - DINING ROOM - EVENING (UK)

The elegant dining room is wood panelled with dark red velvet drapes. Weird paraphernalia of occult and sorcery adorn the walls along with glass cases of stuffed birds of prey.

Miles and his fellow Soulinists sit around a long mahogany dinner table. Pictures, maps, charts and ancient diagrams cover one wall.

The elegant door is flung open to reveal DAMIEN, a sophisticated, well-dressed guy in his early thirties. He is the epitome of a cool, flashy, city Brit. He has a laid back laconic air as he strides to his chair.

MILES

This is Damien, our newest recruit. He works in the City and key in our financial dealings.

Damien acknowledges their greeting with a curt nod.

The men and women all stretch out a hand except Damien. A BALL OF LIGHT springs into being and FIZZES as it hovers over the centre of the table.

It rolls around and turns towards Miles. He places his hand on it, and the ball gives a burst of fire and dies.

MILES (CONT'D)

The fraternity has chosen. I call this meeting to order...

Damien is astonished at the display.

MILES (CONT'D)

I failed to raise Soulin--

SANDEEP

-- You failed because of the protection from the Scallien amulet. How can you be our leader if you failed us?

Miles pauses and picks up an ancient book on the table He cradles it and scowls back at the hostile faces.

He shakes the book at them

MILES

This is the Scallien epistle. I have studied it my whole life. I calculated the amulet's power had waned.

Damien coughs politely. They all turn to gaze at him.

DAMIEN

I joined this organisation to bid for power. I don't intend to fail.

He points to the diagrams on the wall.

DAMIEN (CONT'D)
Where is this amulet?

SANDEEP
The amulet is at Scallien manor in
a village called Ainsbury, up in
the North East.

DAMIEN
So... Let's get the Amulet... and
destroy it.

He looks around at the brotherhood as they murmur to one
another.

SOULINIST #1
We should have done that first--

SANDEEP
-- This could be a task for our
new recruit.

Damien gets up and peers at the map on the wall.

DAMIEN
I'm up for that.

MILES
The amulet is sentient -- it will
know we are preparing an attack.
It's magic will raise someone to
defend.

CRASH CUT

INT./EXT. HIRE CAR - DEEP NORTHUMBRIAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Alicia drives her hired Ford Focus down the tiny county
lane as she yells out along with Sum 41's 'In Too Deep'
as it thunders from the car system linked to her phone.

ALICIA
(sings)
Maybe we're just trying too hard.
When really it's closer than it is
too far.

EXT. NORTHUMBRIAN COUNTRYSIDE B ROAD- DAY

We track Alicia's car as the road twists and turns through the rugged hilly landscape.

The cast iron village sign proclaims 'Ainsbury Village. Home of Scallien Manor.' flashes by.

EXT. AINSBURY SERVICE STATION - FORECOURT - DAY

Alicia swings the car into the empty service/gas station. Clammers out the car. She stretches -- been a long ride -- she peers at the pumps, then off to the shop.

INT. AINSBURY SERVICE STATION - SHOP - DAY

The service/gas station doubles up as a grocer. It is empty except for the attendant LUCY KNOLES. She is about the same age as Alicia, has an open, honest, and homely manner. Despite the threadbare patches in her skater jeans, this woman has an intelligent air.

Alicia offers her credit card to the bemused Lucy.

ALICIA

Ten gallons?... Please.

LUCY

I guess by your accent you're an American? Over here we fill up first, pay after. Is it chip and pin?

ALICIA

Don't think so.

Lucy inspects the proffered card.

LUCY

Don't think it is.

ALICIA

Will it work?

LUCY

Should be okay. I can swipe it.

EXT. AINSBURY SERVICE STATION - FORECOURT - DAY

Alicia finally finds the petrol cap release in the car and cautiously picks out the correct petrol nozzle and fills the car. She checks the price. What! How much?

INT. AINSBURY SERVICE STATION - SHOP - DAY

Alicia strides back into the shop and hands the card to Lucy.

ALICIA

Do you always pay after you pumped the gas here?

LUCY

Yeah, everywhere.

ALICIA

What happens if I drove off?

LUCY

The local cops will finally have something to do and will chase you all over the country.

Lucy swipes the card on the till

ALICIA

Oh... Okay, hope the card works?

The till spits out the receipt.

LUCY

Yup... All okay... we are all chip and pin here... Been in the UK long?

Alicia examines the receipt. Face drops -- Is she being stung here?

ALICIA

(indignant)

Excuse me?... It said forty one something at the pump this is fifty four pounds. I thought tax was included here.

Lucy looks at the receipt.

LUCY

That's the litres, see, forty one litres, the actual cost is fifty four, fifty five.

ALICIA

What! Seventy dollars... I thought... new to all this.

LUCY

Is this your first fill up?

ALICIA

Yeah, only just arrived. I've got an Airbnb place in this town somewhere.

LUCY

Your staying here? In Ainsbury? You must be in Cloudesmead cottage.

Alicia nods as she takes the card.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Wow! An American in our little village -- It's a village, not a town.

Alicia shows her 'I can't win' expression.

ALICIA

Ugh... this is a steep learning curve for me. Village is different in the states.

LUCY

No probs... I don't think they will deport you...

Alicia smiles in relief.

LUCY (CONT'D)

(laughs)

Yet.

EXT. AINSBURY SERVICE STATION - FORECOURT - DAY

Alicia exits the store. After a beat Lucy appears out of the store and calls to her:

LUCY

Hey, as your staying, why don't you and me get together? It's music night up at the 'Sally' tomorrow. We could meet up.

ALICIA

Sally?

LUCY

We have a grotty pub called the Scallien Arms. The only bit of excitement in this place.

ALICIA

Oh... Okay... Thankyou, that'll be fun.

LUCY

The pub's full of hairy-arsed farmers -- you'll be quite a novelty.

ALICIA

I'm Alicia.

LUCY

I'm Lucy.

ALICIA

Good to know you. Looking forward to it.

LUCY

Believe me. Not that exciting.

INT./EXT. ALICIA'S HIRE CAR - DAY

A quiet narrow country road with high hedges. Alicia swings around a bend and:

In front of her a herd of massive cows block the road.

She slams on.

The cows falter and then lurch towards her car as she switches off her music.

ALICIA

Oh -- They are big! -- what the fuck are cows doing in the road... what do I do? They're coming -- Get out of here.

She grates the gears and kangaroos the car into reverse.

Behind her, the ROAR of a FAST CAR and into view comes an open top Mercedes S-Class Cabriolet driven by Damien.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

No, no! Go away... they're coming.

Damien's car pulls up behind Alicia's car. The sound system blasts out 'Starboy' by 'The Weeknd'.

Panics as she reverses the car up onto the grass verge.

The cows stop dead at the music from Damien's car. He switches off the music. Moos from the black and white cows as they get going again. They plod past the two cars. One knocks the wing mirror on Alicia's car.

Into view, on a quad bike it is JAMES who herds the cows. He is the local aristocracy, 18th Earl of Northumbria. In his early thirties. He is scruffy, his clothes are rugged and so is he. He wears a cloth cap which he cheerfully doffs to Alicia.

JAMES

Afternoon...

Alicia ignores him:

ALICIA

(sotto)

Thanks for nothing you fucking imbecile farm hick... You've broke my car -- Can they do that in this country? -- Cows just walking on the road?

The window winds down and she pushes the mirror back. It is not broken. There is a beep from the car behind as Damien bangs the music back on.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

Alright, you impatient fuck-wit, I'm going.

She flaps her hand uselessly out of the car window. Revs the car and... The wheels spin.

She is stuck.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

Oh no. Come on! Puh-lease.

EXT. NARROW COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Wheels spin uselessly. Well and truly stuck. A beep again. She flings the door open. Jumps out -- gets very flustered.

ALICIA

I'm stuck!

Music off again. Damien springs out.

DAMIEN

What's up?

Alicia eyes Damien. Looking good -- Not a fuck-wit at all.

ALICIA

Will you stop your honking for Petes sake. The car's stuck. Those cows...

They both peer at the front wheel, which half hangs in the ditch.

DAMIEN

Why did you drive in the ditch?

ALICIA

The cows... Do you think I did it deliberately? Can they do that? Cows just wandering about.

DAMIEN

They've been doing that since before cars were invented... Just needed to stop. They would have walked around you.

ALICIA

I'll know next time.

A deep sigh.

DAMIEN

You'll need a tractor to pull your car out... where are you going?

ALICIA

I've got an Airbnb in the town...

Gets emotional.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

This is shit.

DAMIEN

I'm staying in the village, at the pub. Why don't I run you into your Airbnb?

ALICIA

Oh... I'm not sure...

DAMIEN

Up to you... I'm not an axe murderer. Although an axe murderer would probably say that anyway... You can get settled and we can find a local farmer to pull you out... It's only two minutes away.

INT./EXT. DAMIEN'S HIRE CAR - DAY

Alicia's huge gaudy suit case sticks out the back seat as Damien navigates past Alicia's car.

Damien grins at Alicia with interest.

DAMIEN

Not going to miss that suitcase in the dark.

ALICIA

Yeah... got it cheap. Everything was going so well.

DAMIEN

It'll be fine, but you need to be careful around here. This is the back of beyond.

EXT. ON THE ROAD OUTSIDE CLOUDESMEAD COTTAGE - DAY

Damien's car pulls up with a flourish outside of a cute country cottage.

Alicia, not so elegant, as she struggles with the low car.

Damien, hauls the case out and swings it onto the ground.

DAMIEN

You sure you'll be OK.

ALICIA

Yeah! Think so. Why did you say I need to be careful around here?

DAMIEN

Very ancient part of the world. Lot's of weird things that go bump in the night.

ALICIA

I think you're teasing me. I don't believe in all that.

DAMIEN

Maybe... I'm staying at the Scallien Arms pub, once you've settled in, come down and find me and we can sort out a tractor.

ALICIA

I will. Thank you.

EXT. CLOUDSMEADE COTTAGE - FRONT DRIVEWAY - DAY

'Cloudsmeade' is a charming, picture postcard cottage with a well kept front garden.

Alicia tramps up the driveway as she tugs her case. She rummages in her purse and consults the contents of a huge envelope. She sidles through the gap in the fence to the cottage next door.

EXT. NEXT DOOR TO CLOUDSMEADE - FRONT DRIVEWAY - DAY

An ancient Landrover with a snorkel and fat tyres sits in the drive. Herbs sprout in flower pots that surrounds the flaking front door. The garden is well cared for. But the tatty cottage can best be described as 'lived in'.

Alicia taps on the paint blistered front door.

Nothing.

She stands back and examines the house, still nothing. Alicia thumps on the door, slowly and hard.

There is the sound of a conversation. Alicia looks around. Nothing. She stands back further.

A woman's voice, out of nowhere:

WOMAN (O.C.)

Hellooo--oo

ALICIA

Hello?

HAMMER HOLMES peers around the corner from the path down the side of the cottage. She is a late middle-aged woman. A tie die top and a long colourful sarong skirt. Lots of new age bangles and bracelets complete the effect. A tough old bird. She carries a trug filled with just-picked lettuces from her garden.

She wears a weird, well-worn, knitted hat with strange leaves and herbs pinned to it.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

Oh, there you are. Sorry to interrupt.

HAMMER HOLMES (WOMAN)

Interrupt what? --Thought you were coming on Thursday--

Strange -- wasn't she talking to someone?

ALICIA

-- thought you were... Some one was with you.

HAMMER HOLMES

Oh... just a special friend--

ALICIA

It is Thursday... They said you have the key.

Alicia looks around. Where is this special friend?

HAMMER HOLMES

Oh, is it? Are you sure?

Hammer Holmes stretches her left wrist away and tries to focus on her watch.

HAMMER HOLMES (CONT'D)

Blasted thing, gets smaller every day. You had better pop in... The key is indoors. Could have sworn it was Wednesday.

Hammer Holmes shoves open the creaky unlocked front door.

INT. HAMMER HOLMES COTTAGE - KITCHEN - DAY

An old-fashioned but comfy country kitchen. There are accoutrements of a wise woman with corn dollies, many jars of curious things, along with modern articles like cornflake packets and tea. A microwave that looks like it has never been used, balances on a stand.

Alicia gazes in awe at the odd and messy kitchen.

HAMMER HOLMES

American?

ALICIA

That obvious?

HAMMER HOLMES

Your accent. Was that your car that got stuck?

ALICIA

Yeah, I need to have it pulled out. How did you know?

HAMMER HOLMES

My friend saw you. We'll get someone to pull it out tomorrow.

ALICIA

Oh it's Okay, I was going to get... I met someone...

(thinks better of it)

Thankyou. If you know someone. Will it be alright for tonight?

HAMMER HOLMES

Should think so... Now, where is that key?

She rummages in an old OXO tin.

HAMMER HOLMES (CONT'D)

There's food in the cupboards and a stocked fridge. Any problems just pop in...

She brandishes a key at Alicia with a big wooden fob.

HAMMER HOLMES (CONT'D)

Welcome to Ainsbury.

INT. CLOUDSMEADE COTTAGE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

A big double brass bed dominates the room. A vintage mahogany dressing table as well as 1950's cupboards surround the fussily decorated room. Wooden floorboards with a well worn central carpet.

Alicia's suitcase is open but not unpacked. She is in her pyjamas perched on the bed.

A big drawn out sigh.

ALICIA

It was all going so well, and then. Disaster! Caused by cows... and the next door neighbour has a friend that no one can see!

Phone buzzes, she answers and clamps it to her ear.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

Mum... Yeah it's eleven o'clock here... I feel a bit tired, but it doesn't feel like eleven... Yes, no problem, all went like clockwork...

She gets up and wanders around the room

ALICIA (CONT'D)

Oh, the car is a stick shift... but I'm getting used to it... you have to specify if you don't want a stick shift... I didn't know that, so... Mom it's OK, it just takes getting used to. I'm a good driver... I'm fine... No there is no garage here, no one is going to steal...

She looks out of the window onto the empty drive.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

It's on the drive... Of course I'll lock it... Yes there's food already here. I've had dinner... How's dad?

LATER:

All is calm, and a gleam of light slices through the gap, in the garish curtains, to fall on the faintly snoring Alicia.

A soft SCRAPING NOISE does not wake her.

Someone or something is moving around.

The bedside digital clock shows it is three o'clock and the red glimmer from it outlines the shadow of a small moving figure. SHARP CREAKS causes Alicia to arouse in her sleep and turnover, but still, she does not wake.

EXT. HAMMER HOLMES COTTAGE - FRONT DRIVEWAY - NEXT DAY

A shocked and scared Alicia darts up to the front door of Hammer's Cottage. She pounds on the door. After a beat, Hammer Holmes wrenches the door open.

HAMMER HOLMES

What on earth?--

ALICIA

-- Someone in the house.

HAMMER HOLMES

What? Who? Are you OK?

Alicia waits a beat to catch her breath.

ALICIA

Someone's messed all my things.

INT. CLOUDSMEADE COTTAGE - BEDROOM - DAY

Alicia's bed is unmade and her huge suitcase lies empty. It is as if a kid has unpacked it. There are neat piles of clothes, but in daft places.

Tucked in the ornate bookcase is a neat pile of underwear-- folded tops balance on the night stand. Bras hang from a brass hook on the back of the door.

ALICIA

See?

HAMMER HOLMES

I think... this is, what you know as a poltergeist, but we know them locally as a Hob or Hobthrush.

ALICIA

Hobthrush? A ghost?

HAMMER HOLMES

Sort of. Harmless, though-- more like a familiar. Considered quite lucky to have one.

ALICIA

I don't believe in ghosts... Someone was in my room! When I was sleeping!

HAMMER HOLMES

A Hob is supposed to help people in trouble. They are like helpers when there is a dire problem.

Alicia is still open-mouthed.

ALICIA

Problem? What dire problem? How can a poltergeist -- which I don't believe in -- help?

HAMMER HOLMES

This one has kindly unpacked your case--

ALICIA

--I don't believe this... I don't need my case unpacked! It's scared the living daylights out of me-- We need to call the police or something?

HAMMER HOLMES

And say what? There's no sign of a break in -- was anything taken?

ALICIA

No... this is absolutely daft. Has anyone been here? What about your friend?

HAMMER HOLMES

What friend?

ALICIA

You were talking to someone yesterday when I came.

Hammer looks evasive.

HAMMER HOLMES

No one has been here.

Anna sits down on the bed. Big sigh and the dejected look tells it all.

ALICIA

What's to stop them doing it again.

HAMMER HOLMES

They won't... We need to get your car sorted.

EXT. SCALLIEN MANOR - TRADESMEN ENTRANCE - DAY

Hammer Holme's battered Landrover lurches to a halt in a cobbled yard behind the resplendent stately home. Even The tradesmen entrance is huge. Hammer yanks a well worn PULL-CHAIN by the side and a BELL JANGLES from the depths of the manor.

Alicia emerges from the Landrover and peers up -- very impressive.

ALICIA

This is so cool! The eighteenth lord of the north lives here?

The estate manager LAZENBY a black man in his late fifties opens it. He has a shaved head, and a laid back air. He speaks in a refined British accent. Really pleased to see Hammer judging from his broad smile.

LAZENBY

So nice to see you. What can we do you for Hammer?

HAMMER HOLMES

Is he in? I can never get hold of you lot by phone.

He brandishes a walkie-talkie.

LAZENBY

These work for us. I can call him down for you. He's up at the yard.

HAMMER HOLMES

Yes, please.

(then)

Alicia this is Lazenby... Lazenby, Alicia.

MOMENTS LATER

A quad bike lurches to a halt and James leaps off.

JAMES

Hammer! Good to see you... who's this?

HAMMER HOLMES

This is Alicia, she's staying in Cloudesmeade. You ran her off the road yesterday with your herd. Alicia this is James, 18th Earl of Northumbria. James... Alicia.

JAMES

I remember you...

Alicia stares at him. He's not a farm hick. He owns the huge manor house!

ALICIA

I didn't expect cows to be wandering the road and reversed into the gully by the road... I got stuck.

JAMES

The ditch,

ALICIA

Excuse me?

JAMES

The ditch, you got stuck in the ditch. In England we call it a ditch.

ALICIA

Oh, Okay... the ditch.

JAMES

So, are you Canadian?

ALICIA

I'm from the states -- Why Canadian?

JAMES

Canadians hate being mistaken for Americans, but Americans don't mind being taken for Canadians. Hedging my bets.--

ALICIA

-- Technically Canadians are American too.

JAMES

You're right. I meant the U.S.--

ALICIA

Oh... Well --

HAMMER HOLMES

--Well that's settled then

ALICIA

Nice to meet you. Errr... Lord?

He grins.

LAZENBY

We're not at the opening of parliament, so call him James.

HAMMER HOLMES

James, Can your people pull her car out? You owe me one and you did cause it.

JAMES

How did I cause it? It was Daisy, Gertie, Sally--

Nervous half smile from Alicia

HAMMER HOLMES

-- James, this is serious. The woman's car is in a ditch.

JAMES

Sorry, couldn't resist.

LAZENBY

No worries, I'll get one of the guys to pull it out. Got the key?

HAMMER HOLMES

You're a star.

Alicia fumbles in her purse for the key. A bit unsure she gives it to Lazenby.

ALICIA

Thankyou so much... do you need--

HAMMER HOLMES

-- No need! Calling in a favour.
James show her around the manor
while they get the car out...

James makes a face.

JAMES

We're a bit busy--

HAMMER HOLMES

-- Show her around. She's had a
tough morning. I expect she'd love
to see around the manor.

(re: Alicia)

Wouldn't you?

ALICIA

Yeah... that would be fun.

INT. SCALLIEN MANOR - LOBBY - DAY

James and Lazenby leads Alicia and Hammer into Scallien
Manor's entrance Lobby. As they walk through:

LAZENBY

Tough morning?

HAMMER HOLMES

Yeah. Alicia had a hob visit her
last night. A bit scary for her.

JAMES

A hob? You must be lucky if you
get a Hobthrush.

ALICIA

I don't believe in ghosts or
Hobthrushes, someone was in my
room. I wasn't lucky.

HALLWAY

She takes in the splendour of the magnificent panelled
hallway.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

Wow...impressive!

JAMES

Thankyou.

LAZENBY

Strange a Hobthrush visited
Alicia... There have been quite a
few odd incidents lately.

HAMMER HOLMES

And why her?

Alicia draws herself up; this is too much for her:

ALICIA

There is no such things as a Hob,
or Hobthrush -- there has to be
another explanation.

LAZENBY

If there are signs of supernatural
activity. Usually means the forces
of evil are rising--

ALICIA

-- What! Are you listening... I'm
sorry to pop your bubble, but I
live in twenty-first century...
Whatever happened last night is
not a sign of anything. It was
just weird.

James chuckles to defuse her rudeness.

JAMES

The country folk around here...
daft as a March hare.

LAZENBY

It probably won't happen again,
You'll be fine.

Alicia catches sight of a display cabinet.

She gives a little squeak as she looks at the figurines
in a glass topped brass display cabinet.

ALICIA

These are Meissen. I have just
started to collect them! There
are...

(counts them)

Twenty in here... I've got
three... There's a duplicate in
there, did you know?

James peers in the cabinet.

JAMES

I inherited them, but I do find them fascinating. Well spotted.

INT. SCALLIEN MANOR - LIBRARY - DAY

James and Alicia emerge from another room into the typical eighteenth century library. It is sumptuous and set with portraits around the walls

JAMES

Impressive isn't it. I have read every book, of course.

Alicia grabs a random book and slides it out.

ALICIA

Oh, yeah... so what was this about?

(she reads)

'Reflections on the American contest in which the consequence of a forced submission and the means of a lasting reconciliation are pointed out.' By Edmund Burke esquire.

JAMES

Good old Eddie Burke! I read him all the time. That one is all about the reflections on the American... What was it again?

ALICIA

Sounds like one I ought to read myself. You probably haven't read any of them --

JAMES

-- How dare you, we landed gentry are well read.

Alicia doesn't listen as she catches sight of a portrait of a man. He has an odd necklace.

ALICIA

-- He's buff... Why is he wearing that necklace?

JAMES

Errr... He's an ancestor of mine. The Amulet on the necklace has special powers.

They peer up at the dim old painting. Alicia stifles a yawn.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Am I keeping you up?

ALICIA
Still jet lagged. I was listening.

Alicia examines an old globe, she gives it a spin.

ALICIA (CONT'D)
This is cute.

James laughs.

JAMES
I suppose so... The amulet is still here at Scallien Manor, lodged in a stone in the dungeons.

Alicia does not look so bored.

ALICIA
I'd love to see the dungeons -- and the amulet.

INT. SCALLIEN MANOR - CELLAR CORRIDOR - DAY

The corridor is dank and gloomy. Ancient brick vaulting is occasionally lit with cobweb festooned, low wattage, lightbulbs. The sound of their feet ECHOES as they traipse along the uneven surface.

ALICIA
Creepy.

JAMES
I used to play down here when I was a kid. These are cellars really, but they locked up a few highwaymen in the eighteenth Century.

James flashes the torch on to the wall of the cellar. He looks for something. He slides his hand along the dusty and cracked wall.

With a CLICK, a HIDDEN DOOR reveals itself.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Here we are.

The low door GROANS and CREAKS as James tugs it open. The door is heavy, but he holds it back with a frayed piece of string that hangs from the door onto a rusty hook.

INT. SCALLIEN MANOR - SACRED CAVE - DAY

He snaps on his torch and it cuts a swathe of light through the pitch black. Steps lead down into a narrow corridor.

They descend the uneven steps, James's torch flashes into a chamber at the end of the corridor. A gothic shrine draped with cobwebs and dust has a stone plinth set in front of it.

A necklace protrudes from the stone plinth, that glistens in the torchlight,

JAMES

The house was built over this cave, which dates back to a pre-Christian era.

James's Walkie-Talkie bursts into life. Alicia jumps and grabs James.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Excuse me, are you all right? I don't get reception down here, do you mind?

She lets go his arm and smiles.

ALICIA

No, not at all.

James offers her the torch and goes back to the entrance.

Alicia plays the torch over the gothic shrine and catches sight of amulet and necklace. She stoops down and brushes away the dust from it. As she touches it the amulet moves, just as James comes back. She whips her hand away.

JAMES

Sorry about that. Someone up at the farm. Did you see it?

ALICIA

Yeah... fascinating. It's another cute sword-in-the-stone myth.

JAMES

Very common around here, swords and things stuck in stones all over the place. It wasn't only King Arthur. But this one is for real.

He goes up to the shrine and attempts to move the amulet. It doesn't budge. He strains at it.

JAMES (CONT'D)

See... Last time it was moved was over three centuries ago... the guy in the painting upstairs. Never been moved since by anyone... Try it.

Alicia is puzzled. She frowns, didn't it just move?

ALICIA

If you can't move it, I don't think I will--

Behind them momentary sound of some one climbing the stairs. Then: CRASH. The DOOR leading to the cave slammed shut.

JAMES

-- Oh crap!

James darts back to the door and tries to open it. It won't budge. He shakes it, but it is solid.

ALICIA

Was that someone there? Don't tell me we're locked in?

She checks her phone. No signal. James calls on the walkie-talkie.

JAMES

James to Lazenby...

Just static.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Does your phone have a signal?

ALICIA

Nothing!

JAMES

Bugger... we may have to wait until they miss us.

Alicia flips into serious project manager mode.

ALICIA

You relied on that ancient flimsy
bit of string. Not very sensible
was it? Give me the flashlight.

James hesitates... going to retort back. Thinks better of it and hands his torch to her. Alicia peers through the crack between the door and the frame.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

It's latched. All we need to do is
lift it, have you got something
thin we can slide through the gap.

He fishes in his back pocket and pulls out a comb.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

Might be too thick.

He still carries a comb!

James tries to ram the comb into the crack to flip the latch up.

JAMES

You're right... something thinner.

Alicia trots back to the chamber as she looks for something thin to lift the latch. Her torch shines on the amulet. She hesitates and grabs at it.

It readily comes away, and she raises it up

ALICIA

I found something!

She returns to the closed door, kneels down and slides the amulet through the gap, she flips the latch up and she shoves on the door. Light from the corridor floods in.

JAMES

Well done... That was close.

ALICIA

Job done. Get a new bit of string!

JAMES

I thought we would-- Hey... where did you?

He stares at the amulet in her hand.

ALICIA
I'll put it back.

JAMES
Whoa! Wait a minute.

Ignores him as she tries to slip it back into the slot.
It won't go in.

ALICIA
What?

JAMES
How can you take it out?

He takes the amulet from her and tries to get it back in.

JAMES (CONT'D)
It hasn't been moved for bloody
centuries.

ALICIA
Have I ruined your little myth?