

A Case for Pan

Pan has many meanings for each person that meets or studies his presence in literature. While PI Victoria Handle goes about her business, she is surprised Pan of all the nature devas and elementals should ask a favor from her. Find something that was removed from his garden and return it. Simple?

Chapter 1

Months have passed since I've returned from my two weeks in an RV away from my office/home. I had left on the trip with Night Owl, my cat familiar, but he chose not to return. I did return home with three kittens. On my return, according to Juliet, one of my magic group members informed me that I needed to investigate why I'm crossing timelines which is stressing many in our magic group. Considering our thirteen members are composed of beasties, vampires, ghouls, werewolves and humans, it seemed an absurd comment. My clientele is a mixture of humans, supernaturals, elementals and preternaturals, meaning I'm usually working in different realities, so was someone jealous because I'm human and should limit my practice? Such prejudice and jealousy is a waste of my time.

It stood to reason, as I thought about it for a few weeks, off and on, that we all had experiences of the strangeness of energies that surround our world, so determining just what Juliet's pronouncement is referring to could be anything, and I got over my annoyance that Allie, agreed with her, that I should look into why some of my work has me crossing over timelines. It's not something I do consciously. So, I've left that worry for another day while I became involved with my PI work.

I tighten my lips to prevent any giggles from escaping as I watch Allie, my office manager, trying to work around Ramses' play. His small silver body is stretched out in the middle of her work area, my kitchen counter, and as energetic kittens will do, he finds movement a reason to pounce with nails extended, making typing with more than one digit a challenge. I haven't said anything to Allie at how overjoyed I am that she welcomed the three kittens I adopted into her workspace. My previous cat, Night Owl and Allie were always at odds, both taking pleasure in antagonizing the other. To keep the peace when I was away on a job Night Owl was locked in my bedroom with a cat door in the utility room to the outside, while Allie worked in the front room that served as my office space. She used the kitchen counter that

separated the kitchenette from the front room as her workspace. It made reaching for the coffee maker just a stretch away.

Their differences could have been from Night Owl not really being a cat. He was a familiar that shape-shifted into cat form and was with me until my use to him and his real mistress ended. No hard feelings on my part but...well, that's another story. Anyway, I had adopted silver haired Ramses with the golden eyes and his two calico sisters from a gas station attendant who already had a large, rescued population of various critters that were left or abandoned along that stretch of the highway that her gas station serviced.

Alright, I will admit there was a big empty space in my relationship slot when Night Owl left. I didn't realize how accustomed I had become to his presence and conversations. A box of three kittens looking for a forever home filled that space.

I had originally called Ramses, Pharaoh but he chose the name Ramses. Yes, I talk to animals. I sort of sensed what they were thinking before Night Owl came into my life but when he left, I could hear most animals quite clearly, like these three kittens. It's a racket that I've learned to shut out when it becomes too distracting. I felt they were sensitive to my psychic energy in a few weeks of our being together, but I wanted to be sure. I had Anglea, an animal communicator friend of mine, check on them to make sure I was sensing correctly that they were little potential familiars. They are still developing as I am learning about what their strengths are in my spiritual practice as well as my PI work.

My attention was pulled away from Allie and the pharaoh to Cleopatra and her sister Callie who ran across my lap and over the top of my chair and back into my bedroom to see who got to the top of the cat pole first. Cleopatra, like Ramses, didn't like the name I originally gave her, Claira for Clairvoyant. Callie was the only one content with her name. It was Callie for Calico. Very simple to remember, I had thought. They have taken over my apartment and an important part in my life, which is keeping the energy in my apartment lively and playful. Between Allie and my neighbor Marvin when I'm away for long hours on a stakeout that could run into days away from my office/home, the kittens are well cared for. The only thing my cat sitters leave for me are the cat litter boxes to clean and the bits of litter I need to sweep up around the boxes.

My name is Victoria Handle, I am a private investigator. I investigate and find people or things. I pride myself that I have a stellar reputation as a PI and get enough business to hire an

office manager, that's Allie and have an accountant, Ginger that also prepares my income tax. It's important to have both since taking phone calls to set up appointments and making sure clients pay their bills as well as filling out tax forms for the IRS, are not things I have time for, because honestly, I'm not interested enough to be consistent in keeping track of those important paper collections. I'm busy investigating and finding lost objects for others. Over the years I've gone through a lot of office help, and it was Ginger that recommended Allie who has been a valuable assistant and friend since and not chatty about her personal life.

In my early days when I worked with my mentor in the private investigator business, I never saw Johnnie take phone calls since there wasn't a phone in his office, make appointments or pay bills. He always had jobs for us when I arrived at his office and paid me in cash for the time we spent on a case. When it was time for me to branch out on my own, imagine how my learning curve in running a PI business was. I needed to have a phone for clients to call, learn not to double book or book one client meeting in one part of the city and the next one on the other side of the city. I also had to learn how to first have the client pay a bankable retainer before I began working for them and then learn to collect money owed without getting arrested. The next important lessons were where to put my money I earned and have a roof over my head...to say nothing of a place my clients could visit, though I would rather they not. I didn't need to advertise which I've found as Jonnie mentioned that word of mouth is more reliable than plastering a face on a bus stop or in a cheap gossip newspaper. Most importantly, besides having a phone for customers to call, I learned quickly how important an office manager is to have. And so, my business has evolved as my clientele has become a mix of beings.

Preternatural and *supernatural* beings have become a large part of my clientele, so some of the jobs I'm asked to do I turn down without worrying about making ends meet. To avoid bad karma or immediate consequences of negative repercussions on me or others from something I'm asked to do, I cover all my bases and inquire on many levels about the job offer and the requester before I take the job, though with Allie, since she takes the calls, she has a good feel for the client, even if supernatural. Over our years of working together, I've been relying on her as the first point of contact for clients, to determine just what kind of client the job offer is from. So, there haven't been many refusals of service on my part after Allie has set up the appointment for me to meet the client. I like to meet my clients face to face to make sure both Allie and my

review of their request for my service over the phone is legit. Not all requests for my services are what the caller says over the phone are really what they expect.

Most people's view of the world is limited to the 3rd dimension in a physical sense. Sensitive humans can attest to the existence of many realities thus opening the prospects of all sorts of unusual, scary, dangerous and sometimes unavoidable experiences to me, so I need to be careful. I'm human and I don't have nine lives to debit my present life's account from. I carry whatever tools I can for protection or call on friendly spirits to assist me. Life is so interesting I'm amazed people would rather hide behind a wall of denial and live in fear than explore what they don't know. Fearful people are easy targets for the agents or con artists of hate, but then life insurance wouldn't be the same if everyone led an exciting life.

One of my last adventures was a complicated mix of working with elementals, vampires, and not in the same dimensions or maybe more like timelines. I've had experiences of getting caught up in working across timelines, which was not something I consciously chose. It just happened. I'm never sure where I'm going to be since it takes more than confusing mental gymnastics with twisting realities of just what I'm experiencing, so it's just easier for me to just be present...wherever I seem to be. Right now, I'm waiting for the next big event to appear or shift in reality so I'm again balancing one life...that is my present mundane life, with the strange and difficult to explain projects or case assignments from whoever it is that drops such events for me to find or investigate. I'm hoping the three kittens, which are nearing the teen stage of their lives, can be the helpers I have felt they have the potential to be.

I hear the click from Allie hanging up. "How are you doing over there?" Allie asks. "I don't see your updated notes, hours, gas milage, etc. etc., on the Lund file."

I look back at my laptop that has dimmed as if it was getting ready to go into screen saver mode. "I'm thinking of how to politely tell this client his past is causing an overactive imagination in his thinking she's unfaithful. Alice is true-blue and her time with the Community Park and Garden group is a legitimate garden community. She grows huge strawberries among other things. And they taste very sweet."

"The profile you did on Allan Lund shows he was heavy into porno and sexual fantasy plays before he met Alice. He must have worried more about STDs. You didn't add why he thinks she's unfaithful."

“I’ve asked him what he thinks she’s doing with her gardening friends, and he goes pale. I spotted him a few times, dressed in camouflage, standing out like a bogeyman among the children. Some of the mothers called the police thinking he was a pedophile.”

“What on earth was he there for? I’ve been sending him your weekly reports with his weekly bill,” Allie shook her head at the man’s foolishness.

Alice was not face beautiful but she had everything else including money. Her voluptuous Venus shaped body radiated sensual energy, and her self-assurance helped her establish herself in a competitive online business. Which means she works primarily from home with a few places she leaves for. One is the Community Gardens which she spends the most hours at when she leaves home. The other place she visits is Allans, which just twice I followed her to and waited to see if it would be an all nighter. She never spent longer than two hours at his place. When I interviewed Allan, her fiancé according to him, I saw him as insecure over his luck in finding a woman who enjoyed sex as much as he did. They met on a dating app because both are too busy to scope out the bar scene for a compatible partner, or that's what Allan told me.

"He admitted to me Alice is exactly what he wished for in a woman, though I didn't feel his heart was in his statement. So maybe he's worried he can't keep up with her. I was thinking of suggesting herbal alternatives so he can keep..."

"You will not!" Allie said quickly, interrupting me. "If you give sex advice, those are the customers you'll be attracting next. I think you should stick to his request to find out what she does at the park and let it go at that," Allie finished firmly.

In my mind I had a disturbing image of all sorts of beings coming to my office with questions on their sex life. That's true, once I open the door to that energy I'll be besieged with that type of problem. The law of attraction. That's how it came to be that I had gone from seeing only human clients to seeing elementals, supernaturals and *preternaturals*. I have nothing against nonhumans with the exception of vampires, but sometimes I like normal clients...like Allan and Alice. Though, what I consider normal does change with my experiences. I’ve worked with elementals, beasties, werewolves and others and they have interesting problems, and I've gotten used to visiting other realities...sort of, but I don't want to be giving advice on sex to anyone or thing. My own experiences in the romantic world aren't examples to base my giving advice to others on their romantic relationships. I shudder at the idea...a beastie?

"You have a Find job that came in this morning," Allie continued, changing the subject. "Two different parents and they both are looking for their daughters. Apparently, the two girls are BFFs. Both their retainers cleared with the bank." Allie looked at me worried. "You don't think it's the work of a child molester, do you?"

"I've already doused a find for them. I heard the call come in on the answering machine late last night and worried about the same thing. What a coincidence, my pendulum placed them at the same park as Alice visits. It's a beautiful park with lots set aside for neighborhood gardens and a plant nursery. Alice and her friends talk to the trees and plants, which is why I think they have good harvests. When I go on my runs on either of the trails around that park, I haven't seen any nature spirits but I'm sure they're there."

"How do you know that they aren't talking on their cell phones?" Allie asked skeptically.

"Because ...or I don't think so. It feels like a place nature spirits would like to inhabit."

"I won't be going to that park."

I had to laugh. On the occasion that an elemental had visited my office in the past she didn't appear uncomfortable, so why is she acting this way?

"For all you know, they may take some of their produce to Farmer's Market on Wednesdays where you like to buy your vegetables. Imagine your carrots kissed by Pan," I tease. As I said it, I suddenly felt a blush of heat on my face.

Where did that come from? Did I just summon Pan? Of course not, or I hope not.

When dealing with my clientele, it's important not to try and explain or reason everything out. I let my subconscious put things together and most of the time it all makes sense in the mundane world...or I should say, my clientele usually make sense of it. Right now, my subconscious is making all sorts of links like nature spirits and Pan equals gardening. Unfortunately, my imagination then jumped to Pan and sex orgies, or was that Dionysus? Bacchus? Maybe there is something to worry about the two missing girls. Yet, when I doused early this morning, they were in no danger.

"I don't have anything against nature spirits," Allie said. "I just don't want them to mess with me." Then Allie rolled her eyes at what she might have admitted to me.

I closed my mouth with a snap which was open at what I was thinking, not for what she had said.

"Alright, so I've met a few and we didn't get along," Allie said.

"Wow. It's amazing what I keep learning about you. You're not just a grandmother trying to make ends meet with a part time job," I say hurriedly to cover up my heated face. It wasn't just a blush it was a...it was a blush with... I can't explain it. And, I ended up putting my foot in my mouth with Allie.

"I'm not trying to make ends meet, thank you very much, and this isn't a part time job," Allie said. "I do put in more hours than a part timer."

"Okay, that's true, that's how you first started here, to get out of the house and away from your son and his..."

"You don't have to go over that unpleasant visit from the consequence of a bad mistake I made in my youth. They're gone, and I'm enjoying the entertainment you provide and with a nice income to supplement my extravagant lifestyle."

That was funny and we both laughed at the extravagant lifestyle part. Allie loved to save her money to go on weeklong cruises which so far, she hasn't gone on one. She keeps finding an excuse not to go, which I think its because her sister and her can't agree on the cruises. As for the entertainment remark, she told Marvin, my neighbor, the reason why she likes working for me is the type of people that pay me, or us, to solve their problems is more entertaining than staying home and watching the daytime soaps.

Being involved with the weird and unexplained and other sorts, no daemons thank you very much, I have learned to listen to nudges or hints that something needs a closer look. I will admit I don't always act on what I've heard because not everything is as it seems. But my face is heating up, and my body feels peculiar after I made the comment about carrots being kissed by Pan and I need to see what that nudge is about. I can't go around with a red face as if I'm having hot flashes. I'm over and done with them, thank the gods.

"Their checks passed that quickly?" I glanced at the clock and noticed it was past ten in the morning. "Go ahead and give both families a call and tell them I'll take the job. Make the necessary arrangements," I say as I close my laptop and retreat to my bedroom, closing the French doors for privacy.

I gather what I need to meditate on for locating the girls again, but this blush is still heating my face. It's definitely not a hot flash. When I had everything and was settled in my sacred circle, I was at a loss on what to do next I was so flustered. I glanced at Cleo and Callie

who were watching me from the top of the cat pole. They were staring at me. Callie yawned and resettled to a nap. Cleo kept watch.

I need to focus on work and not this annoying flush. I spread out the map of the park I used earlier to douse for the missing girls. If they were no longer in the park, I would have to start over with the city then narrow it down. This took my mind off my heated face and the tingling in my body and set it up to something important, locating those two girls.

The bob pointed to the garden. The same place.

I put everything away, grabbed my pack and checked that I had my bottled water, my bag of protection stones, and keys to the Vespa. I made a quick exit out the front door, before Allie could ask me anything. Sometimes she reads me too well.

"Vic, you forgot your car keys," Allie shouted as I closed the front door.

I didn't forget my car keys. Ever since the police had impounded my vehicle my car had picked up bad vibes in the impound yard and I couldn't get rid of them.

"I'm taking the Vespa," I say loud enough to be heard inside.

The Vespa is great for short distances. I got the Vespa as payment, which was way more than what the job called for. The job was to locate and arrange a meeting with this young college student's birth mother. I didn't tell my client, Agnes, she had only a few months to live. I felt she already knew that. I personally would have advised against her meeting her real mother, Jennifer Albright, because Jennifer Albright was in my view a rich selfish bitch; however, this is where my guides advised differently. What came of the meeting I don't know. I found Jennifer Albright, did a profile on her and arranged a meeting leaving out the mother's personal secretary, another snob. The rest was up to them. As with all my jobs, I say prayers and bless all those involved, letting the higher power do the rest. Most beneficial outcome to all involved, I say.

The park is twenty minutes away on the Vespa and considering there usually aren't any parking spaces near the park for cars, the Vespa is ideal because there are plenty of bike racks.

As I park the Vespa, I can see around me happy faces of adults and children. As usual, the park has happy energy with no dark overtones. I really like visiting this place which is where I do my morning or evening runs, sometimes with my neighbor Marvin. Individuals in the community take care of the park and had constructed the children's play area, the flower gardens, and built park benches that are comfortable. I think the best parts are the community gardens where there had once been a neighborhood dump. Trees and a grassy slope for adults and

children to roll down were part of the landscape, which when it snowed was a busy place to slide down the slope. I spent a lot of time watching Alice and her friends in their garden plots, talking to spirits and hugging trees to know that nothing negative could happen to any visitors in this park, so I hadn't thought the girls were in any danger being at the park that early in the morning.

What was I thinking? Well, I felt the garden was like the Findhorn Gardens in England, with plenty of guardians to prevent evil. This garden has statues of elves, fairies, gnomes, nature goddesses, the Green Man's image here and there but no Pan that I had noticed. But when I run either of the trails, I'm not really looking for elementals but rather focused on my run. It's a great stress reliever.

It didn't take long for me to see both girls on a park bench in the garden area chatting and laughing while swinging their feet as if missing for two days was nothing.

"Hi," I say and send out kind and concerned vibes. "Your parents are wondering what happened to you two." They aren't girls I notice as I get nearer. They are mature teens and not dressed in clothing that sexually active girls would dress in or run away. They're dressed in working jeans and plaid shirts. Each had a coffee cup and looked as if they were taking a break from working in one of the gardens.

"Hi," they said in unison, sounding suspicious.

"Who are you," the shorter of the two demanded.

"Victoria Handle, a private investigator. I was hired by your parents to find you two."

"What on earth for?" demanded the other. "It's not like they miss us."

I raised my eyebrows. I didn't waste my breath saying of course they did, that's why I was hired.

"We are old enough to be on our own," the shorter one said.

"You're Gina?"

"No, she's Gina, I'm Cari."

"Oh, I must have..." I imagined them differently when I meditated on their energy last night.

"Cari is the name I like," she said firmly. "I despise the name they call me and I despise that woman I was named after," she hissed. Yes, she actually hissed. This girl did not like her great-grandmother on her mother's side. Since I could sense she died before she was born, I wondered what she ever did to her, then remembered, DNA carried more than physical features.

It carried the energy of one's ancestors. Besides our own karma, we have our ancestors' traumas too, though with work all these can be dealt with. I didn't want to get too involved since I wasn't a life coach nor did I have the desire.

"Okay. So, are you two waiting for someone?" I'm thinking I can herd them along home.

"Pan," they said in unison and both giggled.

"What's wrong with your face?" Gina asked.

"You look like you're having a hot flash. My auntie has them all the time," Cari said.

"Just how old are you two?" I ask to change the subject.

"Seventeen and she's almost eighteen," Cari said.

"In a week," Gina said, "And then I'm out of that house."

"Where will you go?" I was concerned that she does not end up like a run-away with no home but the streets. I lived on the streets and knew how rough it was for the young, though the older folks didn't have it so easily either.

Gina grinned. "I have my safe place. Don't you worry about me."

She sounded so grown up I was surprised.

"And I'll soon be behind her. I have a scholarship, and a place to stay, so it doesn't matter if he pays for my college or not," Cari said.

Gina snorted. "He can threaten all he wants but he can't touch us here."

"Why would your parents call for a PI to look for you two after two days of your being..."

Both girls interrupted me laughing loudly.

"We've been away for more than a week. See! They didn't even miss us."

"I'll bet it's that damn preacher. He's too friendly with some of his parishioners, the females...the young women," Cari emphasized. "I don't know why he's interested in us, like he's got other things to worry about." She looks at Gina and giggles.

"He likes to preach what he doesn't practice," Gina said cynically. "His son just joined the Marines to get away from him, and I'll bet his daughter up and left him with no forwarding address because she knew him for what he is."

"A forn-i-cator and blasp-he-nator," Cari said in a sing-song voice.

Both girls laughed again hilariously. I couldn't help but laugh too.

"Is he married?" I dared to ask.

"Hell, and damnation no," Cari said. "She up and left him with the two kids, according to him."

"I heard he took custody of them," Gina corrected. "His wife and him were into drugs and he got cleaned up first so he got custody of the kids just so he could deny her the right of seeing them. He uses her a lot as an example of the devil. He claims he found the lord and salvation from drugs in a gutter and was inspired to preach the word that saved him. I don't think he says anything from the words of E-mman-uel, Jesuss - son of Gawd." Gina did a good impersonation of one of the evangelists on the radio. "He just preaches on damnation and burning in hell and cozies up to the teenage girls, demanding they lead a chaste and obedient life, while getting too touchy feely."

"He gives me the creeps," Cari said.

"Your parents go to his church?" I ask.

"They gotta. Our fathers are employees at one of his businesses," Cari said.

"Which business is that?" I asked.

"Insurance," Gina said.

"Is there money in it?" I asked.

Gina and Cari smiled. "If you know your business you can make a killing," Gina mimicked in a deeper voice.

"Well legally your parents are responsible for you. If you can at least call them and let them know you're still alive and well, it would make them not put out an amber alert. It would make me feel better if you both go home or let them know you're spending your nights in a safe place."

They looked at each other and whatever message passed between them an agreement was made. "We'll go home...for now."

"Just so we don't get picked up..."

"And forced to go to another one of those awful sermons," Cari finished.

"Do you have a ride? I can call a taxi."

"No. We have our bikes at the half-way house."

"Well, wait a moment." I withdraw from my pocket my bag of stones and shook out two stones. One was pink calcite, and the other was an adamite. I held them in my palm and offered them to the two girls. Cari chose the pink calcite, and Gina delightedly chose the adamite.

From under the bench, they both pulled out backpacks. I had not seen those. I must be slipping on my observations of details in my surroundings. I touched my face, and it still felt hot. Was I getting hot flashes again? I thought once my hot flash life stage was over, they were over for good.

Chapter 2

Before returning home I thought I would take a ride to one of my fellow magic practitioner's house and ask her about Pan. Lacey was a ghoul who knew everything there was about herbs. Besides mixing tasty and not so tasty teas, she also created amulets from scratch. She had her own solarium, and I knew she had nature spirits that lived on her property. Lacey is a strange person, whom I dearly love. I would have never thought a ghoul, subservient to a vampire, would be into herbs or be a practicing magician for that matter.

As I pattered up her driveway, I noticed the rosemary pot was on the left side of her door, indicating she either wasn't home or not available for a visit. I was in the act of backing up when I heard a hail from the side of her house.

"Victoria! Don't leave. You're just the person I want to speak with."

Lacey was dressed in her gardening garb of bright autumn colors. It always struck me how different she dressed when she was working in her garden then when she was about her ghoul business dressed in her black Goth uniform.

I parked my Vespa and went around the back where I saw her disappear. I spotted her mixing mulch in a large pail through the solarium's windows. I tapped on the door on the side and stepped in. She didn't seem to be aware of me as she concentrated on her mixing. Never interrupt someone when they are in prayer or doing a spell. I could hear her softly saying a blessing over the mix, so I took a seat on one of the benches. While she worked, I looked around the area taking a deep breath. I relished the smell of damp rich soil mixed with various vegetation. The lemon mint bush was next to me and its aroma brought to mind sipping tea with Lacey while she talked about the healing properties of the leaves. In my peripheral vision I could see the small people and globes of lights. When I turned my head to get a clearer vision I could no longer see them. However, I began to hear them. That's what happens when I open doors on one level of experience, it allows for more opportunities for this type of energy to find me again.

Lately my experiences in the *supernatural* were primarily with beasties, which covers a lot of energy entities that take a human shape, otherwise known as shapeshifters, and werewolves, another shapeshifter, one or two incubus, succubus, which are not nice to meet even if their master or mistress is controlling them. And there was a dragon...yep, they too exist and some are not friendly without an introduction, due to their intense work on various continents, and there are many others that have no description but do exist. In reality, all of them, including the *others* are *preternaturals*. Yes, I know. By definition what I put under *supernatural* should really go under *preternaturals* but hey, my fee chart doesn't have a code for *preternaturals* and I didn't have the nerve to tell my programmer that she got her categories wrong. I never argue with a shapeshifter even if they are in human form.

The ruckus the elementals were causing and that I was trying to ignore became so loud I put my hands over my ears.

"Enough! Silence!" a deep voice boomed.

Oh, gods! My whole body quivered, and my face heated up.

Lacey straightened up.

"Lord Pan! Greetings and welcome."

My eyes opened wide because I saw and felt his presence. It was vaguely familiar. Was that what I felt when I was in the Community Gardens? He towered over us. Curly hair grew into his equally curly beard covering any indication of horns he was reputed to have. He grinned at me, or was that a leer? Lacey turned to see who he was looking at.

"Vic!" she said surprised. "What are you doing here?" She didn't seem pleased to see me.

"I...well..." I had a brain freeze.

"I summoned her here," Pan said.

"Oh!" she said surprised. "Should I leave?"

"No!" I said hurriedly.

Pan laughed and wow, it made me giggly all over. Lacey smiled and giggled too.

My insides were so jittery I was lucky to be sitting down.

"I'll make us some tea," Lacey said. As she walked by a planter box she pinched some leaves.

I dared to look at Pan who stood so still he could have been a figment of my imagination but suddenly he was standing at arms' length from me, so tall I was looking up into his soft

brown eyes. How he did that didn't even cross my mind. It's so usual with my dealings in the *supernatural* world.

"So, you got my message," he said.

"I guess I did." I felt breathless.

He laughed. "Take a few deep breaths and you'll feel better."

I was so nervous. For all the beasties and strange apparitions and places I've been I have never been before a...

"Ask," he grinned.

"Are you a god?"

"To some I am." His laugh was so melodious. "My work is with nature. My subjects are an assortment of Nature Beings. However, I am a servant to the One Source of All."

"Oh." I paused to collect myself. "Why did you summon me?" I asked more curious than bold.

"Something of importance has been removed from one of my gardens that I protect. I understand you handle issues that are for some in the mystical regions."

"What is it?" I whispered in awe.

"Talk to Alice. Speak to the girls. Find what is missing and return it."

"Oh. Okay."

I heard cups and saucers jiggle and turned to see Lacey with a tray heading our way. When I looked back Pan was gone and so was my jittery stomach. I sighed in relief.

Lacey placed the tray on her workbench and handed me a cup and saucer, pouring my tea that smelled of lemon and ginger, then placed a bite sized scone on my saucer, with a plate on the tray that had more scones to choose from.

"Does he visit you often?" I asked.

"He helps with the garden and everything that grows here. He's taught me how to grow many of the herbs that would normally not be suitable for this environment, how to sense a plant's benefits, and what is good for a person that comes to me for aid." She smiled broadly and added, "Even vampires can benefit from the properties of herbs."

"Do you happen to know just what he wants me to find?"

Lacey shook her head.

"He referred me to speak with Alice or the girls. The only Alice I know gardens at the Grand Avenue Community Park and Gardens and the girls that come to mind are two teens I was asked to find that were in the same garden." I felt foolish not being intuitive about what these three people had in common, besides spending time in his gardens.

"There you go. Ask them," Lacey said.

"Do you have any image of Pan in your garden?"

"I have a statue of him in a corner where I don't cultivate anything. I let the plants grow wild there and I have a plaque of the Wild Man over the doorway. That's his face in the leaves," she said pointing at a colorful wood plaque.

It was odd. The leaves were bright green, and the face was bright orange. I don't recall seeing that on my previous visits.

"It's my fall plaque. Each season his face color depicts that season," she said.

"Aren't you confusing Pan with the Green Man?" I tease.

"They both represent nature and fertility. As does Faunus and Cernunnos and so many others. The gods or goddesses represent what we create. Don't let anybody fool you into believing that our creations are without flaws and are omnipresent, for they are but servants of the Beloved One. If you look deeper into my garden or anybody else's you'll find many faces of figurines that we feel will cover whatever energy we're creating for the good of our gardens or what we feel we need in our lives."

"So, what is causing me to envision Pan into my life? Wasn't Pan like Dionysus where drinking heavily resulted in wild sex orgies?"

Lacey laughed at the expression I must have on my face.

"See? What you imagine is what you are creating of them to be for you. Pan will always identify himself as a servant of what we call the one God, who created all things. I envision Pan as Lord Pan, helper and loving energy that invigorates my garden and brings the various elementals that assist in creating beautiful energy in my garden. Be mindful of your thoughts—what we expect shapes what we create."

"Oh, yeah. Manifestation 101," I muttered.

We sat quietly enjoying the energy of her garden while sipping tea and munching on the scones stuffed with fruits in the dish before us. Before I left, she gave me an herb bag.

"This will help and protect you from harm while you look for whatever he has you looking for," Lacey said.

"Is this going to be dangerous?" I've never did a favor for a god even if minor.

"What jobs do you do that don't have elements of danger in them?" she laughed.

"Maybe I should ask in my search for something stolen from Pan, will I be going to unknown places?"

Lacey smiled. "We are practioners of magic and you're asking me that? Be serious."

My adrenalin spiked upward. I'll admit I'm a bit of an adrenalin junkie. I like the unknown and excitement and though I like to control things, I know I can't and as I surf the waves of chance, I clutch my amulets and pray to my spirit guides that I survive the ride.

"Perhaps you should not be driving a Vespa for this adventure," Lacey advised, chuckling.

"I need to buy a new car. My present one feels too negative since it was taken to a police impound lot. I can't remove the negative energy it picked up."

"Let me know when you get your new car. I'll work on a new protection bag for you. Are you still calling your cars Mary Jane?"

"Not Mary Jane!" This was an ongoing joke. Lacey knew darn well it was Margaret Mary after someone I held dear and had passed over the rainbow bridge. Margaret Mary wasn't an animal, but she had told me when she crossed over to the next world, she would be dancing over a colorful rainbow bridge. I like Margaret Mary's imagination.

Chapter 3

As I pattered home I was wondering how I was going to explain this job, which isn't a paying job, to Allie. I don't like the idea of doing too many things that really irritate her, and I felt my doing something for Pan wasn't just because I don't have on my fee chart a code for a god, even if a minor one. I've never dealt with someone in this hierarchy of beings. Now that I've had time to think about this request and who made the request, I'm beside myself. The people in my magical group are some very advanced practioners while I'm more of a dabbler that uses what I do know to achieve movement and protection in the realities of different worlds I find myself in. What I'm trying to say is that, I'm aware of the spirit and presence of what in

bygone years were described as saints, holy people and or gods, but I had never personally met any of these beings. I pray or ask higher beings for protection, BUT I've never seen these higher beings, just felt their presence. That's what I'm trying to say. So, here I've seen and felt the actual presence of Lord Pan, overseer of Nature Beings. That's elves, pixies and plant divas, to name what I know of.

When I got home Allie's bright red pristine Mustang convertible was gone. That's a relief.

I got out my book on rituals and spells and paged through it to see if there was any mention of Pan. I knew I had notes on my encounters with various nature spirits, like gnomes and there is a dwarf that occasionally appears to remind me not to stick my finger in the proverbial electric socket, but I would have remembered if I ever encountered Pan or anything more than nature spirits. Was that why I was now involved with Pan? One short encounter and then this? It really doesn't matter. It's all just another adventure. Something more to add to my journal.

I started a new chapter and wrote Pan's request and what I was going to do about it.

Step one: meditate on what it could be that he wanted me to find. Something mystical.

Step two: Talk to Alice and the girls. What magical item would be in Pan's garden?

Step three: Why were the two girls looking for Pan?

I shook my head at that question. I need to focus on the garden or... How did those girls see Pan? Just what were they doing in the gardens? Did they have a plot there? Did Alice know them? Did Alice see Pan? What did Alice and Allan have in common? They met on a dating web site. Did I have good information on their profiles? Why was Allan so jealous of the time Alice spent gardening? Neither lived in places with gardens. They went back and forth between each other's condos that had no garden space in Alan's eight-story building and Alice's twenty-four-floor building.

I finally blew out the candle and put out the incense. I couldn't concentrate. My thoughts were bouncing around all over the place. It was like a dream that mixed ideas so that it was worse than a hound dog in a forest with squirrels in every tree. I opened my circle and pushed around the stones I had laid out. I couldn't get settled.

Pan. I had met Pan. Or I met someone that called himself Pan and that Lacey identified as Pan. He was taller than me and I didn't see a flute on his person. In fact, I didn't notice if he had cloven feet or horns and for that matter, what he was wearing. What was I thinking not to notice

that? I did notice that he had a nice peaceful feeling about him. A rather happy feeling. I started to giggle and then laughed aloud just thinking about him.

This isn't getting me anywhere. I got up and went into the front room. The kittens raced before me over the furniture and disappeared, however, I could hear them, or I could hear one of the balls they had with a bell in it.

I turned suddenly with alarm. I could feel something not friendly where the tinkling bell was. I caught sight of Ramses on the couch back, his back up and tail bushed out. The two calicos were at the other end of the couch snarling and in a defensive position. I flipped the light on, as if that would chase away any daemon.

Whatever it was left when I turned the light on. Was that a daemon? I have never had the displeasure of meeting one. I stayed clear of that sort of *other*. Did my amulets fail me?

The phone rang and the answering machine clicked on. This was after hours so my machine took messages. I'm not available for phone calls 24/7 and definitely Allie isn't. The overtime would be...how would we calculate that? Maybe if I was hurting for money I would.

Whoever called didn't leave a message. Silence was better than static or messages from other dimensions. I get those too. They were weird and difficult to translate sometimes. *Supernaturals*, I got to love them because they make life so darn interesting. I'm saying that with heavy sarcasm. Sometimes I like boring cases, like the two separate cases that both were connected to the Community Park. Odd, that.

The phone rang again and another hang-up when I didn't pick up. If it was a personal call, they would have my cell phone number and call me directly. Suddenly I remembered I left my cell in my Vespa compartment under the seat.

I made sure the kittens were away from the door and I left to check and see if anyone called me on my cell. I keep my cell tucked in a special holder on the handlebars when I'm driving and drop it in the seat compartment when I don't want to be bothered. I had forgotten to put it in my backpack when I parked it near my least favored leased car.

I don't like that car anymore. I thought about the lease I have on it. It should be up soon. Maybe I could end the lease sooner than I usually do.

I found my cell. It was vibrating like a Hawaiian dance figure that sits on a car's dashboard.

"Yes," I answered.

"This is Bill Donovan. My daughter's gone again!"

"Did she say where she's going?" I ask as I head back to my apartment.

"She said out. She won't tell us where she goes. She's underage! I can have her arrested!"

"Why don't you instead go to counseling and see if you can work things out. You know adolescents have this rebellious..."

"We are going to counseling. Pastor Steal said she needs a firm hand across her bottom. I'm not that crazy to get accused of beating my teenaged stepdaughter, but a night in jail may do it!"

"Mr. Donovan, I don't recommend..."

"You said you would find her!"

"I did. And I told her you were concerned and she said she would return home. By what you just said, she had returned home."

The phone clicked.

"He hung up on me," I said disgustedly. "How did he get my cell phone number?"

I went back into my apartment and as soon as I closed my door something smashed into my bay window, sending glass shards spiking into the closed drapes.

"Thank you for the thick drapes pulled across the window," I muttered.

After what seemed like a long ten minutes, I heard a tentative voice from Marvin from the porch asking if I was okay. I opened the front door and let him in.

"Hi cuties," he cooed to the three that were sitting on the back of the couch. He turned to me and quickly took inventory then surveyed the broken glass under the drapes. "What was that about? You look okay."

"I am okay." I went into the kitchen and from the broom closet took out the broom and dustpan.

Marvin helped me clean up the mess and took time to pull out the slivers lodged in the curtains. He didn't say anything as he helped me clean up and I didn't offer anything. That's one of the things I like about Marvin. He's okay with silence. He makes a good running partner too. Which we haven't done together for about a month now. Lately when I do go running on the trails around the park it's been at times when he's not at home. He works full-time and goes to night school. He's a busy guy.

"I think I'll be safe until tomorrow when the window will be replaced...that is, unless we have bad weather."

Marvin gave me a funny look. "A rainstorm is predicted for tomorrow. Not good for window putty drying." He picked up a rock that was at the bottom of the curtains. Ramses is playing with it, not getting it to move at all. "Is this one of yours?"

I have plenty of stones around my apartment, some too heavy so the kittens can't move them around. I was going to take it from him, but it moved in his hand, however, he didn't seem to notice it.

I held the dustbin out for him to drop the rock there. "Thanks for helping me clean up. I hope whoever broke the window gets the same back," I said glibly, while thinking they should get it back three-fold when it's pelting rain and wind.

There goes my being nice when nasty things happen to me. I usually, or would like to think that usually, I wish whoever tries to hurt me good blessings. I know the power of thoughts and words, and I try to keep in mind the three fingers pointing back at me or the witches' reminder about bad spells returning threefold.

It was midnight and I was still sitting on the couch staring at the rock that was sitting in the dustpan on the coffee table. The kittens were just as interested. We all stared at it, perhaps wondering if it would move again. The curtain rippled and I could hear the wind from outside. Some of the outside smell came in. Rain was in the air. I got up and looked for something to tape over the broken window. Duct tape and plastic bags were my solution until morning. The cracks in the remaining parts of the window were duct taped reinforced. I could hear what sounded like hail hitting the taped window and porch. Shivering, I went to bed, grateful for the heating blanket that will keep my toes toasty warm.

Somewhere in my sleep I heard thunder. I dared not move because three warm fur balls had found comfort cuddling under the blankets close to me.

My dreams were more rewarding. Pan and I were sitting in a garden, one of his many, talking about I don't know what and he leaned down and picked up one of the stones that ringed one of the garden plots. He rolled it between his fingers as he continued to talk or was he talking? Was I talking? Well one of us had to be talking about something. Looking closer at the stone Pan held in his open palm was the rune Wunjo, Joy.

A meow in my ear woke me up. I could hear someone in the kitchenette and soon all three of the kittens were at the French doors demanding to be let out. What a racket. I stumbled to the doors, opened them, peered out to verify it was Allie, then went to take a shower. I would have rather gone back to bed.

When I was stepping out of the shower I could hear the rumble of thunder, then the lights went out. It didn't matter. It wasn't that dark but from Allie's comment, she was annoyed. Dressed and ready for breakfast I stepped into the front room and nearly had heart failure.

"What happened?" I asked flabbergasted.

"I was going to ask you since you live here, but I guess not," Allie said. She calmly took a sip of her latte. Her one caffeinated drink was in the mornings, and it was always a caramel double latte, whatever that meant. I noticed the cup size and color were different this morning.

My eyes went back to my front room. The couch was turned over, and my chair was backed up against the broken window. The curtains were pulled back to let some light in but the tape job I did didn't let much light in. There was nothing broken aside from the window.

"I called a window repair shop before the phone went dead. I take it you do know about the window. The tape job looks like your work." She actually raised an eyebrow and added, "Marvin would have not left it looking like a DIY with bad taste."

"Someone threw a rock though it last evening."

"Is there something going on that I need to know about?" Allie asked.

"No, nothing out of...did you give Bill Donovan my cell number?"

"No. He called you on your cell? It's not listed." Allie frowned.

"I think he holds me responsible for his daughter's second disappearance."

"He does want more than his money's worth," Allie said dryly.

"Is he going to be a problem?" I ask, thinking that I didn't take the usual precaution and check the parents out before taking the job. Allie was responsible for the financial part of the contract, and I did the background checks. However, I did rely on her instincts about the clientele.

"Haven't you seen his advertisements around town? All American, voted most likely to succeed on his smile alone, highest scoring high school quarterback in Lipton's history, and as an adult, the most boring and least likely to be handing out insurance checks if whatever you insured with him is due," Allie finished with a white tooth smile.

"He's not to be trusted?"

"His checks bounce is the rumor. His boss is John Spenser, the one that doesn't pay insurance claims and his boss's payroll checks bounce too," Allie said. "However, his retainer the usual cashier's check didn't bounce."

"I thought his boss was..."

"A minister, no less. Runs a racket on Quinton and Harvard streets. He lives on the church property. Churches don't pay taxes including property tax."

"I know that building. It was abandoned and was headed for demolition. No one wanted to claim ownership after the last group left. Some people think it's haunted."

"I wouldn't be surprised. Not good things come from the people that have their services there. There's been some festive banishments of evil a couple of times. They were real wild parties."

"Really? I haven't heard."

"Nor are you likely. Haunted buildings aren't your business, thank goodness."

I nodded. Nor do I plan on making them. That is a whole different line of curiosity and work. And by the stories of some of my friends who do like to check out haunted places, the cost of their tools from Hydra Sensor Web, EVP Wrist Recorder, BooBuddy...just the thought of the Teddy Bear which the kittens would shred in no time...and a Ghost Box or two and so on. Too costly a hobby and not as interesting as my diverse clientele.

"So, the minister runs his insurance business from there?" I'm thinking if the place is haunted and no one stays there for long, how long has he been there? I can hear Allie typing away at something.

"Here it is," Allie says triumphantly. "John Spenser started his insurance business in nearby Trent. And..."

I went into the kitchen into her office space and peered over her shoulder. She was zooming in the address in a locator program, google earth.

"Looks like a house," I say. "So, he's operating his office out of his house. Most small insurance brokers do."

"Hmm." Allie was typing in another address.

"Ahh. He moved to California Street. Residential also," I say as she brought up his next address.

"And six months ago, he bought the church at auction using his status as a minister of the divine. That was the fifth auction they had on that property, and it finally found someone. The city owned the land because no one would claim ownership after the man's name on the deed passed away. His family wanted nothing to do with it," Allie said. "It made the news, I remember how not just kids would vandalize the place but worried adults. It's been set fire four times that I know of and not the kind of fire that gets out of hand when a homeless person is keeping warm."

Allie typed more information in the search and hit enter. We both read the headlines of the local newspaper in the property business section.

"It says previous residents only stayed for no more than two weeks and gave the property back. John Spencer has been living there for six months?"

"He hasn't been living there for that long. The place has been undergoing remodeling, and it hasn't been by any local tradesmen. All DIY by his congregation doing the repairs," Allie said.

"Don't they have to have inspectors check on his plans and the work done?" I'm very skeptical about the repairs since the place was a dump ready for demolition, according to the local gossip.

She brought up the section on church news from a local paper. Pictures of various men and women working on the inside of a trashed building moved to blurry pictures of finished insides of a hall.

"Not very good pictures," I comment.

"You mean those orbs," Allie says with an emphasis on orbs.

"Isn't that what ghost hunters call ghosts," I say. "Well," I lean back and contemplate what that group is mixed up in. "It's their problem and as for the missing daughter, I can see why she doesn't want to be part of that group. What has that to do with Pan?" I foolishly ask aloud.

"Pan!"

I look at Allie, surprised. "You have something against Pan?" Just as I mention Pan my face heats up and I feel somewhat comforted that Allie's face is also blushing a bright red.

"What job are you on that involves Pan?" she demands.

I quickly recover and say calmer than what my face indicates, "The two girls in the park said they were waiting for Pan."

"Is it his garden?" Allie demands then answers herself. "Of course it's his. The nature spirits everyone is talking to...that's why Alice...oh for heaven's sake. Well, what has that to do with this haunted property?"

"I don't know," I say calmly. "But without me getting involved in haunted property, I'm...ahh," I suddenly remember that I have been asked to look for something that is missing from Pan's garden. How can I forget that? How can I not tell Allie?

I feel my face getting hotter.

Allie is staring at me, and the pharaoh is sitting at the edge of the kitchen counter, his golden eyes staring at me and his tail whisking back and forth. Whose side is he on?

"Well, I'm going back to the park and see if Bill's daughter is hanging around."

However, I can't leave yet. I have to do my usual morning meditation. I never leave without my morning rituals. I'll skip my morning run, though. I sigh and go back into my bedroom, closing the doors. A meow and tapping on the window of the French doors reminds me that the kittens have become accustomed to watching me meditate. They find it interesting. I haven't quite gotten the translation of why. I'm still learning to translate their thought forms. Anglea, my animal communicator friend told me I am coming along fine with translating their thought forms, but I have a way to go before I have the strong connection I had with NO, however, Night Owl was more than a cat.

It took me a while to get settled and really relax. My thoughts were all over the place. When I finally quieted my thoughts, or believed I had, I imagined Pan walking through the gardens in the park. He glanced at a tree and frowned then turned and looked directly into my eyes. I blinked.

Looking down at my lap I found Cleo looking up at me with her paw extended as if she had patted me on my chin. She does that to get my attention and to wake me up. Once she had my attention she bounced out of my lap and out of the circle. Ramses and Callie were on the cat pole looking bored.

I put everything up and went to the kitchen to get a cup of coffee that I could smell filling the small apartment with its tantalizing aroma.

"Have you met Pan?" I asked Allie as I poured my coffee.

Allie ignored me. I felt I stepped over a line.

"I met him," I admitted. "He asked me to find something for him."

"When did he ask you that?" she demanded.

"I'm not sure exactly when but I know for sure yesterday I saw him." Now thinking about it, I must have felt his presence when I was on my surveillance of Alice, I just didn't take note of it.

I'm curious why Allie is so intense on the subject of Pan and nature spirits, since she didn't seem bothered with the gnomes that had visited me shortly after I had returned home with the kittens.

According to news from Findhorn Gardens, Pan is alive and well in England and from my own experience here also. Pan being an earth spirit meant that he could appear anywhere on earth not limited by a body of water or mountain. Pan stories were as wild as...the Green Man. From my own experience I know that people can draw energy from Earth by manifesting the appearance of a being that fits their beliefs or fears. There was probably a ley line in the community garden and I'm sure it had to do with the park being setup as a sacred space.

Allie was tapping her pencil on the kitchen counter, reminding me she was waiting for me to finish my story.

Not likely.

Instead, when she had my attention, she moved on to another subject.

"I have a message from Lamour Wattson, the new manager of leasing that you're due for a switch of leased cars. What will it be this year?" Allie asked.

"I've looked at some brochures of the newer Hybrid Ford Fusion. Maybe with all the bells and whistles like Louie got me last time."

"You do know each time you swap leases and get stuck with the pay-off of the previous one, you are marketed to get a more expensive car to avoid the pay-off, right?"

"Yes. But because I take good care of my vehicles I pay less. Besides, it's a business expense that looks good on paper and in my driveway."

"So, what color?"

"What do you suggest?" I ask, hopefully not a bright red color like her beloved red mustang convertible.

"I'm not suggesting something personal, but that dealership is going out of business, so you had better do your business this week."

"Really?"

"I heard it from a friend of a friend of a friend. So don't ask me where I heard it."

"Allie, you surprise me every day with what you know and who you know," I said.

"Well?"

"Put it on my calendar...."

"How about now. You have this morning free, and I don't think getting around on that Vespa is practical. I'll go with you, just so I know you'll not get taken for hidden fees."

I stare at Allie who is busy shutting down her laptop and gently putting the pharaoh on the cat pole she bought. It's in the shape of a tree and has three levels. I was bowled over when she dragged it in with Marvin's help. She said it was so the little ones had someplace to sleep other than on her desk when she's here, as if they take the hint and don't spread out over her lap and work.

Since I've been getting good deals with my vehicles for the last four years, I'm not sure what was really on her mind. Allie and me car shopping. It won't take long since I know what I want and I say a prayer and cast a spell...

"Allie, why all the rush? I usually do a spell where neither I nor the seller loses."

"We don't have time. We'll rely on faith and good intention."

She grabbed me with one hand and picked up my backpack that had my wallet with the other.

What was her hurry?

There was nothing much to remove from the leased vehicle since I hadn't repacked it when it was returned from the police impound with anything of value missing. The insurance covered what electronics were removed and there was no apology from the impound lot's management. Don't let your car be impounded even if it is by the police, is my advice. My new talismans were the only things I had in the car, which didn't help the car's bad energy.

It took all of thirty minutes to get to the car lot, or I think it was that. Allie kept my mind busy with chatter that was so unlike her. I was getting more curious by the minute.

Abbots New Car Sales and Leasing was in a cul-de-sac with the freeway behind it. It gave him extra space to store cars. I could see his inventory was not spread out like it used to be. There were no signs saying he was about to close. However, the moment I stepped onto the pavement I could feel roils of mixed energy. Very chaotic on one level. Not good for business.

I removed my talisman from the rearview mirror, which wasn't doing much good.

One of the reasons I liked Abbots was because the Sales Manager was a spell caster but not one to take advantage of the buyer. He was an older man and the last time I was here he was excited about his first grandchild. Louie was my salesman and that's who I was looking for on the lot.

Allie pulled me to the left, away from the office and shiny display models. We were heading to the far lot where the cars hadn't been sprayed cleaned for the day. Two men, dressed in cheap suits and had auras that showed worry were leaning against a watchman's building. One of them spotting us straightened up and adjusted his tie, then put his cigarette out. The other turned around quickly, looking guilty.

"I called the other day about a fully loaded 2014 Ford Hybrid Fusion you had advertised," Allie started. "Are you Luke?"

"I am. You're from Victoria Handle PI office?"

"I'm Allie, her assistant, this is..."

"Victoria Handle. I've heard about you," the other fellow said. "Louie was your salesman. I was sorry to hear about him leaving." He looked at his friend. "I'll see what I can do. Nice meeting you two," he said and left.

"I have a fully loaded one for you to look at. I moved it from the showcase after you called yesterday. It's got a few miles on it because management doesn't let employees drive them anymore, so the mileage is low."

"No incentives and free advertising, heh?" I say, wondering what that would mean to my deals I had been getting. "What happened to Louie?" I ask. Allie had called the previous day and for the car I had my eye on. Of course, I did have the advertisement on the coffee table. Really. What kind of detective was I that left clues of my own desires lying about. Wasn't that part of the creative process for abundance or what many call their vision board?

"He left about a month ago. Moved to Canada to be with his wife's family. Having triplets changes a person's priorities. Here's the car. Two days of no washing and it looks a bit dusty but take a look inside."

I slid inside and could see the inside was spotless, unlike the exterior. The energy wasn't great but not terrible.

"Who drove it last?"

"I'm not really sure. It was specially ordered but the couple got a divorce before it was delivered, and it wasn't part of the divorce settlement. Mrs. Abbot requested all cars being driven by salesmen to be returned so none of us have given it a test run. Do you want to go for a spin?"

"Sure," I said. I wanted to see if it had the same goodies as my other one had.

"Did you bring your other one in?"

"Yep. Right over there." I handed him my key fob.

He walked over to one of the salesmen that was watching us and handed him the key fob and returned to us. I took the car for a spin while he told me all the loaded features, and I turned this on and that and liked how someone wanted to have all the goodies I would want. A moonroof, a voice activated navigation system with a large screen, hands free calling, and voice activated calling, remote start system, backup sensors, with forward collision warning and a whole list of other goodies. It was as if I had ordered it myself. The only thing I didn't like about the car was the strange energy I could feel. I was sure I would have better luck with cleaning up the energy on this one.

Allie and I went into the office and she sat down, prepared to argue with the new financial manager. I was given the shoo gesture by Allie, so obediently I walked around looking at vehicles I wasn't interested in. I noticed my soon to be car was moved to the wash area.

Allie came out of the office looking smug. As I started to walk toward her someone came running out of the office and they both returned to the office. If she gets a better deal than I ever got then in the future I'll have to let her bargain for my new lease yearly.

Twenty minutes later Allie came out of the office and handed me the key fobs.

The car was sitting all polished and ready for us where I had left my other leased car.

"So, what was all the bargaining about?"

"It's not a lease. It's your car free and clear."

"What?"

"I emptied out your business account, but I got you a good deal. Since they want to sell as many cars as possible before going out of business, they were more than happy to deal with a cash client. No one has shown interest in it because it's too loaded, meaning too expensive."

"What about my bills?"

"What about working on a list of appointments I have lined up for you?"

"Oh, so that's it. You're trying to keep me from hanging around the office."

"You aren't worried, are you?" Allie asks, grinning. She knows my financials better than I. If she's not worried, then neither am I.

"No. But the Pan job...it's not a paying job and I did say I would look for what's missing."

"Don't worry about Pan. Haven't you heard about Findhorn Garden in Scotland? Doing something for him usually results in fruitful blessings, provided your intent is correct."

"I've got that lesson down pat," I say and point a finger at her playfully, mindful of the three that are pointing back at me.

"You're going back to the park?" Allie asks.

"Yes. But I'll take the Vespa. There usually aren't any close car parking places except for bikes around the park. It's probably meant to keep gang types from doing drive-bys."

Allie snorted. "As if..." and she didn't elaborate. She appeared to be napping as we drove back to my office/home. I guess she accomplished what she had meant to do for the day...empty my checking account.

I like my new car and this time it really is my car. No more leasing. On the drive home I thought of the protection bag I'll create for my car, and how I'll officially name her Margaret Mary after a friend from my past, what I'll carry in the trunk and...then my thoughts went to Allie and her change of tone about Pan. Unfortunately, I didn't believe the subject of Pan would be a conversation we would have. I also didn't want to poke in her private life. If Allie mixed with nature spirits, or Pan, and she kept a pristine car from normal wear and tear, she was obviously sensitive enough to know if I cross the line into her private life.

Chapter 4

It was Saturday midafternoon, and the park was full of life. I parked my Vespa among the overflowing collection of motorbikes, motorcycles, bikes and some tricycles. BBQs were still putting out aromas of cooking meat. Games were in progress in every available space. Screaming and yelling in voices, high and low were everywhere. Giggles from little voices where a group of children were drawing with colorful chalk on the sidewalk were to my left. My interest was in the garden area. I wanted to see if I could figure out what was missing. When I was watching Alice working in the garden it was from a distance. I didn't go close to the gardens because I would have been spotted as a stranger. Usually, I can alleviate people's natural suspicion of a

stranger, but I didn't feel I would get away with lulling anyone's vigilance here. There was a different type of protective energy here, and now I knew why. It came from the flowers, vegetable gardens and trees, which was why I suspected there were active nature spirits here. Since my intentions weren't threatening anyone, I didn't feel threatened myself. As I walked along the walkway, I could see movement in my peripheral vision where there were shrubs. I understood them to be nature spirits. Lacey and Allie are the two recent friends that I know that admit to seeing nature sprits but like my other friends that have mentioned it, they too don't elaborate on just what they see. So, what does that mean? Are nature spirits really *preternatural*?

What difference does it really make? We are all from the same Source but exist in different realities, or realms, very much like a comparison of street people and people living in luxury all their lives. *Supernatural* is where I put all the strange beings and nonhumans I've encountered because it's easier to categorize on a fee sheet. *Preternatural* is outside of the natural world that we humans haven't figured out where to fit them. At one time vampires were considered *preternatural* but even I categorize them under *supernatural*, and only because they were once human...I think. So, where would I put Pan?

As I was standing at a distance from the gardens I spotted Allan Lund. He seemed out of place, and his unpleasant look attracted uneasy stares from both adults and children. I walked over and thought about his stalking tendencies.

"Allan," I said firmly. "You're scaring people."

He looked at me glumly. "I don't know what it is about this place, but I don't like her coming here."

"Wait a moment. Do you hear yourself?"

"What, what?"

"You sound like a stalker. Not a lover but a possessive owner of an object."

His face hardened then shook his head in disbelief. "I'm not like that."

"And all you feel for Alice is a warm and cuddling feeling? Is she really your fiancé?"

He looked embarrassed. "Well, no. Not really. I was just thinking how nice it would be to have her living with me." Then he got a peculiar expression.

I laughed. "No, you don't. You like your hobbies too much."

He nodded and then sighed. "I guess I'm really having a hard time telling her that we should end it. But I don't like this place." He finished.

“Allan, with all the women you’ve been seeing and discarding for another...yes, yes, I know your habits, how did you move away from one favorite and take up another?”

“Oh, well. It was understood from the beginning...no ties. Just dilly dalling. You know? It’s one of those websites.”

“Alice was on one of those sites?” I ask unbelievably.

“No, no. I just thought of trying for something more permanent.”

“It’s not working out for either of you.”

He shook his head. “I guess not.”

“I think you both need to say that to each other, so you can move back to your one nighters and she can look for someone more along her interests.”

He nodded and turned to leave. I turned back to my original reason for coming to the Community Garden.

The garden area had a waist high fence surrounding it. Here I stop my chattering thoughts to allow the energy around the garden to register. At the gate I stop and ask the women near the gate if I could come in. I can't get a read about any of them. The garden is a sacred space where a ley line has been tapped into...or perhaps the sacred space was created first and then the ley line was energized to build on the energy.

After the women talked among themselves one of the older women separates from the others who move back to their areas to continue their work.

"I'm Irene," the older woman said.

"I'm Vic..."

"The PI." Her smile and chuckle disarmed me.

"How did you know?"

"Cari told us. I guess you're looking for her and her friend Gina. They usually work on the half-way house garden in the corner."

I was surprised it was so easy to get all this information from her.

"Pan said you would be helping us get back the touchstone." She turned and pointed at a space that had a gaping slot in a circle of stones around a statue of Pan. Only, this statue wasn't what a mother would find objectionable, since the flowers around it were covering most of his body. He's playing a flute as if serenading the plants, I thought.

"Who took it?"

"Gina and Cari. They had the best intentions, but Bill and his friend John don't. One of them found it in Gina's backpack and removed it. John now has it and is intending on using it for nefarious intent."

"John Spenser?"

"Yes. You heard of him?"

"He calls himself a minister and has moved onto the haunted church property on..."

"Yes, yes. We don't mention places of ill energy here. It opens doorways."

"As if the stone doesn't," I say as I look at the missing space. Now as plain as day I can see a small fairy, the size of my hand, sitting on the rock next to the missing one. A doorway?

"So, whatever he plans on using it for..." I start.

"To open a doorway to another realm. That's what nature's spirits said it is for. It was given to us when we dedicated our garden to the nature spirits and Lord Pan." She turned and surveyed the garden. "Already we are seeing changes, and in our kitchen gardens they are not doing well."

"What would the touchstone have to do with your produce doing well?"

"Good energy uncontaminated by the toxins that once covered this area. It was even clearing the underground well that is under here."

"I take it John and Bill know that they have something removed from Pan's garden?"

She laughed. "Of course. The girls told them. They thought they were doing a good deed and were very upset when the stone was removed from Gina's backpack...stolen by her stepfather. Not a kind and thoughtful person."

"John is trying to open up a ley line," I say mostly to myself. "Probably to draw power for his businesses."

"Possibly. But you know it's like a Quija board. What your intentions are and what you are expecting to find is what you will get. John is not a man with good intentions for anyone but himself. He will be attracting darker energies of nature spirits and a darker side of Pan if not stopped."

"Did the girls say why they removed the stone?"

"You'll have to ask them. It is their burden to complete what they set out to do."

I hurried back to my Vespa. I needed to get to the church and see if that was where the stone was being kept. As I sped toward the old church I thought of John and what the girls were

hinting about him. A child molester? Some men didn't think there was anything wrong with having sex with girls as long as they were over eleven years old. People like John used the bible as an example that many of God's holy men took for wives' young girls before their first bleed as a privilege though they already had many wives in their households.

I leaned forward on my Vespa as though that would increase my speed to the church. I was imagining the worse of the worse. John was going to release the toxic sexual energy of Pan and dark spirit entities. It was going to be worse than a whorehouse. It was going to be a child sex ring. Was I right or was I right? As I neared the church, I could see smoke coming from the property.

I wasn't getting a good feeling about this. Did the girls set the church on fire thinking that would prevent John and Bill from misusing the stone?

As I drove up, I could hear the wailing of fire trucks, but they were far away and from what I could see the entire wooden structure of the building was engulfed in flames, past the point of any structural saving.

"Cari," I shouted to a figure I could see hanging near one of the buildings nearby the church.

"Victoria! Please, help me find the girls!"

"What girls?"

"Bill took five of the girls in John's bible study to a special place in the forest. Gina thinks Bill is going to use Pan's stone to do something evil. He thinks it's magical like Aladdin's Lamp or something like that and like the girls are part of some kind of energy. He's really off in the head, like stoned or on some weird trip."

"Where is this special place?" A loud whoosh had me looking at the building as the building's roof collapsed. The whoosh caused a hot blast of air to surround us.

"Where is Gina?" I asked fearfully.

The firetrucks are making so much racket on their arrival I couldn't hear what Cari said. She grabbed my arm and got onto the back of my vespa.

"In the forest," she yelled in my ear.

"What forest? Pan's forest?"

"No, no. The one on the Mitchel's property. Go, go!"

I gunned my Vespa and off we go.

Chapter 5

The Mitchel's farm is too far for my Vespa, and I can see my gas is low. Instead, I head back to my office with Cari having a fit.

"I don't have enough gas!" I yell back at her.

I just about run into the back of my new car with my brakes getting a grip that nearly has me and Cari head over heels.

My office is closed but I don't need to go inside for my keys. I grab my pack and phone out of the Vespa and with Cari impatiently jumping up and down on the outside of the passenger side of my car, I press the key fob and the doors unlock. My backing out of my driveway was luckily not witnessed by anyone because I would have died if I hit someone or got a ticket, however the small screen on my dash shows I'm clear and if anything was near my bumper the brakes would have automatically engaged. I like my new car.

"Who set the fire?" I demanded Cari as the car's navigator screen comes up. I know where Mitchel's place is and can see the roads and streets clearly marked on the navigation screen.

"John. I saw him running out and jumping in his car. He's probably going to blame it on someone else and claim insurance coverage. There, there, turn there. It's a shortcut."

Onto a dirt and bumpy road and in *my* new car. I take a quick glance at the navigator screen wondering what this shortcut looks like.

"Why did you two remove Pan's stone?" I asked. "Shit!" I barely missed a pothole.

"We were going to use the energy to cleanse the church. Bill and John are really creepy around the girls and my parents can't see that. They're really blind."

"Did you speak to your mother or father?"

"My father, like Gina's owes their jobs to crazy John. I'm not going to talk to my mother about John and Bill. She's got this thing for sweet talking John."

We came to the end of the rough road and to a gate that looked like it hadn't been used for a long time. It was held in place by rusted chains on both sides. If the posts rotted out, the gate and posts would topple.

Cari was out of the car and running through the brush alongside the fence, which didn't look like it could keep out anyone or thing. Wooden poles were down, and posts leaned as if

pushed out of place. This place was already giving me the creeps. I slipped my hand into my pants pocket and held my bag of stones. I reminded myself I was thinking of dark things and should be bringing good energy of positive thoughts.

I followed behind Cari as she found where the fence was no longer giving any semblance of keeping out or in trespassers. There was a path of beaten down grass and an obvious cleared way from this part of the nonexistent fence into the forest. I remembered the Mitchel family had a nice acreage of trees and, so I've heard, a retreat where relatives, who are pissed off with other family members, can hide away in solitude in their "cabin". I heard it was a rickety old pile of smelly wood and NOT having a toilet inside was situated too close to the outhouse no one moved around as the old one became too smelly. I also heard other stories of the various Mitchel family members over the years not being among the ordinary folk. They sound like a group of people I would have some connection to, however, I'm not really a social butterfly and only socialize with my clients out of necessity and a few people I do call friends that don't require my regular appearance to keep a friendship going.

We went to a large clearing where in the center there was a firepit. That could be alarming considering this is still a forest.

"Do you hear that?" whispered an excited Cari.

"I hear birds, oh. Music." I turned every which way to see where the music was coming from, and it was everywhere. Then little children's voices sang as if they were happy and singing hymns. Hymns?

"It's Pan," Cari said excitedly.

I relaxed and opened myself to receiving only good light and love energy.

Cari was giggling and when I looked over at her, there was Gina hugging her.

"What's happening?" I asked concerned.

"Pan and his loving army. If you can be still, you'll see not just the nature spirits, but dryads and all sorts of beings big and small protecting any and all in this forest."

Cari giggled and nodded toward the fire pit where a large figure of Pan playing his flute appeared and surrounding him were human children with elves, fauns, gnomes, fairies and myriads of others I couldn't identify.

"The Mitchel family were not happy about John and Bill planning on using their forest's spirits to turn loose the negative side of Pan and the elementals." Gina explained.

“Marchant, one of the Mitchel grandsons works on the Halfway House’s garden at the community park and knew what that lunatic John was going to do in their forest. This is where Cari and I come with Marchant when we didn’t want to go home. He didn’t mind us staying in the family’s cabin since no one was using it. They have all sorts of statues scattered in the brush and wedged among the roots of trees. Gods and Goddesses. This place is as peaceful as the Community Park only nicer to hide out in. Kara, Marchant’s mother would bring out warm meals to us.” Gina giggled.

“She doesn’t do cooking as well as Elizabeth, Marchant’s grandmother but it’s edible,” Cari laughed.

“Just what are the Mitchel’s...”

I then had to shush. The children’s voices were too beautiful as they harmonized with Pan’s flute. The energy I was feeling was electrified and so beautiful I could only enjoy in silence so much love that was everywhere.

When Pan and everyone and everything around the fire pit disappeared, I was slow to realize that Gina and Cari were gone. I was all alone in a dark forest with the occasional bird call. As I turned to look for the path back out of here, a faun appeared.

“Are you lost?” he asked and it wasn’t a verbal question.

“What happened to the children?” I asked concerned.

“Their parents have taken them home. Everyone is at peace.”

“Did Pan get his stone back?”

“I know of no stone that Pan is concerned about. Lord Pan is busy elsewhere. I’m here to guide you back to your transportation.”

Chapter 6

Back at my apartment, I wasn’t tired. What kept running through my mind was the phrase no stone unturned however, I kept seeing the phrase as no stone unexamined. I would have meditated on the switch of words but though I wasn’t tired, I was. I sat on the couch and watched the kittens, that were not kitten sized as I saw them in a sharper focus, were darting about and chasing this and that. It was sudden awareness that there was a small statue of Pan sitting on the kitchen counter. It was Pan with curly hair, cloven hooves, and playing his flute and looking

closer I could see tiny elementals scattered around him, some dancing and some playing their musical instruments.

I went to look at it closer and found a note pinned underneath the statue. It was from Marvin who said it was left outside my door after the window repairman left. He didn't think I would want it left outside my door. Turning the statue upside down was the rune Wunjo etched in the statue's base. That was the rune I had dreamed about in a conversation with Pan. Joy.

Quickly I searched for the stone that had been thrown through my window. Was there something on that stone? I was really worried that there was something I was missing. I hate having assignments that had dangling endings. Was there an ending? Pan had rescued the girls with Cari's help and the Mitchel family. They were all determined to not let their sacred forest to be invaded by the likes of Bill and John. So, what was it that Pan wanted me to find? Irene had led me to believe it was the stone in one of Pan's gardens that the girls had borrowed. However, he had asked me to speak with Alice and the girls. Perhaps it was something else. Was it something physical or metaphorical? He did say it wasn't something mundane.

It was embarrassing that I thought I was the only one that could intuit or rescue the people I was hired to help. Really serious ego problem, there. But I was annoyed that I felt this wasn't over. Why else...

I found the rock under the couch and studied it closely. It had a flat surface on one side as if waiting for a message to be scratched on it.

"I sure do have an imagination," I told Cleopatra that sniffed at the rock.

I stared out the window feeling the urge to go to the Community Garden. I wanted to see if the stone was returned and if it was...then would I still feel this way? Something wasn't connecting right. There was a slight drizzle which by the looks of the sky promised rain in parts of the city.

Before leaving I select stones I feel are right for my visit. From my collection I chose pink calcite and adamite. Both are heart chakra stones, the two stones I had given to the girls. I wrapped them with my black tourmaline, turquoise and citrine. My obsidian stone was my necklace in the shape of a cat. I felt I was ready.

The drizzle was getting to be a thick mist. My car doors unlocked automatically, and I hurry into the dry interior. The need to visit the garden became more intense as I back out of the driveway and would have floored the gas pedal if I thought I could get away with it.

“I will find a parking place in the parking lot where I’m supposed to park,” I say firmly.

And I did. Right in front of the park office. The staff were volunteers, and they always had coffee available. On my jogs over either side of the trails I would smell coffee among the flowers. And, I wasn’t disappointed because I could smell coffee and through the windows see the office had volunteers posting new announcements on their activities board. I headed to the garden allotments where I had seen the missing stone in a ring around a Pan statue.

Among those working in their gardens, dressed in raincoats and hats, I can feel happiness in their labor in the mud and whatever they were cultivating. Good for them. I like walking in the rain, now and then, with my hand wrapped around a warm mug of coffee, which I don’t have at the moment. So, I carefully worked my way around the garden plots. I’m sure I will remember where Irene had pointed it out to me. It was when I first thought that was what Pan asked me to find and return. Why and what it represented was what others had told me it was all about but I’m feeling something isn’t finished.

My hiking shoes are waterproof however, not when I step in a puddle that goes over the shoes. I’m so focused on looking for the exact spot, I wasn’t watching where I was stepping.

“Are you looking for something?”

Startled I glance over to my left at a faun, with cloven hooves, horns poking out of his head and his curly hair was glittering from drops of rain, not soaking, just covering like a sparkling coat. His chest was muscular and across it was a strap that held a harp. Surrounding him were tiny fairies and small balls of light and I felt like I interrupted something.

“I don’t think I know exactly what Pan has asked me to find and replace in his garden. I just know he called it something mystical. Do you know where he is?”

The faun nodded but didn’t offer me any suggestions.

Looking around me, I could feel I wasn’t where I thought I was. “This whole place is magical,” I say more to myself than the faun.

I began to wander around the gardens enjoying the intensity of the sacredness of the space, careful not to disturb the gardeners, who are still indifferent to the light rainfall, and some were humming a tune. It is so peaceful and...

It hit me as if I was struck with light between my eyes. Those three people were missing something that prevented them from feeling the safety of the peacefulness of the gardens. Ahh. Was it that? Did Alice feel it was more burdensome to work in the Community Garden because

her lover felt jealous and hired someone to watch her? Did the girls feel it was troubling that their time spent in the gardens may end with their parents calling the police to say that they were delinquent and needed a night in jail?

I returned to my car. I needed to meditate on that conclusion. Was I right in my assumption? Did the three women, whose protection was under Pan just by their association with his gardens was being threatened by negativity in their private lives? They felt threatened so they couldn't enjoy peace when they were in the garden. It was probably like a depressed person bringing in a dark cloud to a bright place.

Wunjo. Joy.

Chapter 7

My first task is to reassess Allan and see if our discussion changed his stalking relationship with Alice. On the way home I'm mentally preparing for my meditation on Allan. However, there was a newspaper on my kitchen counter with a note from my neighbor. He had intercepted Bill who was pounding on my door with the newspaper. I opened the paper and there was a picture of the burned-out church and charges against the owner for setting it on fire to collect insurance. Old photos of the pastor, John Spenser with a short history and his businesses being audited. I wondered if the girls were going to be alright. Since Cari and Gina were staying at the Mitchels, I didn't feel any concern. In fact, in the morning I'll give Cari a call at the half-way house where I can leave a message to see if they are alright.

The cats are very interested as I select my color of candles, they are not long but tapered. I also have my usual white candle of intent. I burn palo santo incense to protect and cleanse my space, then I surrounded myself with protection stones. In my right I hold a jet stone and in my left pink calcite stone. I set my intention to do no harm to anyone involved, and pray the most beneficial outcome comes from this for all known and unknown entities involved with this search for a solution to Allan's jealousy...if that is the only cause.

I focus on the pale kunzite that is part of the my circle of stones and breathe in the white protection light and breathe out any distractions to my quest. I do this three times and feel before the third breath is expelled a part of me finding Allan ranting and raving in front of a quiet and composed Alice. He runs out of energy quickly because it's just an act and Alice knows.

I watch as she gives Allan two choices, either they go to couples therapy or their relationship comes to an end. She points out to him why she doesn't believe he is serious about continuing their relationship and though his face is red, he nods that what she says is true. He's been continuing his sexual encounters with other partners and Alice feels not only his interest in her is waning but his potential of picking up STDs is not worth her life.

Is this really happening or is this something that will be in the future? I can feel Alice is really upset with Allan but puts on a strong front to cut the emotional ties. Will Allan let their relationship go?

As I pull out of that fog I sit for a while thinking of what I would need to do, not to interfere with Allan's lesson to leave relationships he has no business of pursuing further. As I sit here I'm wondering if that is wistful thinking on Alice's part or if that confrontation was what Allan was conjuring up.

I held the pink calcite stone in my right palm and sought for energy to send to Alice and Allan's heart chakra. I pictured the softness of the energy to caress their hearts and give them dreams that will show them the way.

Thus, I ended my meditation on Allan and Alice and extinguished the candles and removed some stones and added others to my circle. I lit one candle and with the jet and pink calcite I meditated on the welfare of the two teens. If the paper was telling the truth, and John and Bill were suspected of torching the church they were fixing, I'm sure there would be a part two and three of follow ups since John had a reputation of being shady.

Slowly my thoughts moved to the two teens and found them sitting around a fireplace surrounded by teens their age laughing at something. The counselor that ran the half-way house gave the group a time to bed message. Cari and Gina were part of the group that headed upstairs to the rooms. While I was watching them climb the stairs I was suddenly overwhelmed when Pan's head appeared in my sight, filling it.

"Thank you," was his message.

END