



The  
Angel  
Bug

ANN FOWERAKER

# **The Angel Bug**

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All characters in this publication are entirely fictitious and any resemblance to real persons, living or dead is purely

coincidental – except for Sir Tim Smit, who has kindly given me his permission to be himself in this novel. Other than Eden (where I have taken liberties with the layout of service buildings and where the fictional procedure and personnel structures are all my own) no organisations are real or represent real organisations in Cornwall or elsewhere.

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To friends and family - for your  
patience – this one was a long time  
growing

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## **The Angel Bug**

*‘These memoirs may be the only  
evidence left of what really happened,  
where it came from and how it spread.’*

When Gabbi Johnston, a quiet, fifty-  
something botanist at Eden, was shown  
the unusual red leaves on the Moringa  
tree, she had no idea what was wrong.

What she did know was that the  
legendary Dr Luke Adamson was

arriving soon - and that he would insist on investigating it.

This is the unassuming start to a maelstrom of discovery and change - with Gabbi swept up in it. What starts out as an accident turns into something illicit, clandestine and unethical – but is it really, as Adamson claims, for the good of all mankind?

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‘The Angel Bug’, Ann Foweraker’s fourth novel, is set mainly at the Eden Project in Cornwall, UK. This is a contemporary novel combining science fact and fiction, told by the people at the heart of the discovery.

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## The Angel Bug

**Gabbi**

**Luke**

**1** 18<sup>th</sup> October

19<sup>th</sup> Oct

**3** 19<sup>th</sup> October

October

**5** 20<sup>th</sup> October

October

**7** 20<sup>th</sup> October

- 22<sup>nd</sup> Oct

**9** 22<sup>nd</sup> October

- 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct

**2** 18<sup>th</sup> -

**4** 19<sup>th</sup>

**6** 20<sup>th</sup>

**8** 21<sup>st</sup>

**10** 22<sup>nd</sup>

**11** 22<sup>nd</sup> - 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct  
October

**13** 24<sup>th</sup> October  
25<sup>th</sup> Oct

**15** 25<sup>th</sup> October  
October

**17** 27<sup>th</sup> October  
October

**19** 27<sup>th</sup> October  
October

**21** 27<sup>th</sup> October  
28<sup>th</sup> Oct

**23** 28<sup>th</sup> October  
29<sup>th</sup> Oct

**25** 29<sup>th</sup> October  
October

**27** 30<sup>th</sup> - 31<sup>st</sup> Oct

**12** 24<sup>th</sup>

**14** 24<sup>th</sup> -

**16** 26<sup>th</sup>

**18** 27<sup>th</sup>

**20** 27<sup>th</sup>

**22** 27<sup>th</sup> -

**24** 28<sup>th</sup> -

**26** 30<sup>th</sup>

**28** 1<sup>st</sup> -



2<sup>nd</sup> Nov

**29** Nov - Dec  
- Dec

**30** Nov

**31** Dec - Mar  
- Mar

**32** Dec

**33** March -Apr  
March - Dec

**34**

**35** April – Jan  
2023 (10yrs on)

**36**

**37** 2017 - 2043 (extracts)

**38** Emma - October 2084 (blog  
post)

**The Angel Bug 1**

# Gabbi - October 18<sup>th</sup>

Thirty years should change a man, I thought, but looking at the handsome face on the huge poster it didn't look like it had done much to Luke Adamson's features except, perhaps, make him look more rugged, a man to be taken seriously.

I hadn't mentioned knowing him when it was first mooted that he might be able to fit the Eden Project into his UK trip; publicising his book and film, rumoured to have made him a millionaire already. *'Jungala'* was a box-office phenomenon, though it started out as a serious film on 'Man's relationship with

plants and the importance of preserving biodiversity’.

It shouldn't have made it as a blockbuster movie, however, something happened in the filming; the ‘baddies’, a real threatening force, turned up and turned Luke into an Indiana Jones character. Added to that, in the three years it took to film, two major breakthroughs in treating terminal illnesses in man had been developed from extracts of plants hitherto only known and used by natives of the rainforests. With his superb on-screen presence, deep knowledge of his subject, film-star good looks and some excellent cutting, the serious ethno-botanical study became a mainstream

‘true-life’ film complete with soundtrack and an eco-song reminiscent of ‘Born Free’.

You see I knew all this, I’d read about it in the papers; his name, as always, drawing my eye and, despite my conscious thoughts, my interest, I’d even gone up to Plymouth to see the first screening. So why hadn’t I said anything to Mikaela when she was bubbling on about ‘how wonderful it would be’, and ‘what a coup it would be’, and ‘wasn’t he the most sexy scientist out there’? Well, I knew myself too well, I knew if I’d said anything that I’d have blushed, and then there would have been that kind teasing that they went in for in the Eden family, and I didn’t think I could cope

with that, and they would have no idea that it would be difficult for me.

The Eden family, that's how I felt about them all, a great bunch of people that easily became friends as they seemed to have, at their core, the same values. To me they had been a true life-line, welcoming me in and giving me both a focus in life and the gentle external framework I had needed to grow into a stronger person when my main support had been so suddenly cut away.

Well I'd had a month to get used to seeing his photo everywhere, even in my local Co-op, and now his visit was only

a couple of days away. I wasn't really worried, I told myself, even at university he'd been one of the 'celebrities' and I was definitely 'one of the others'. He probably wouldn't recognise or remember me, so it wouldn't be anything to be fussed about, I told myself - again.

'Gabbi!' Mikaela called, waving me over as soon as I reached the open-plan office floor of the Foundation building. When I got close enough, Mikaela swung her chair round to face the others too, 'Hey, listen – Luke Adamson's emailed me. "So looking forward to seeing the eighth wonder of the world! I have heard so many good things about the Eden Project – and as it is the last date on my

tour I intend to take a break and see a bit of Cornwall while I'm there.

Recommendations welcome.” Wow, what do you think? What would a guy like that want to see?”

‘He’s American – anything older than 200 years should do the trick,’ cut in Andy from the plant pathology desk.

‘Cynic!’ Naomi muttered, her eye to a microscope.

‘He’s used to old buildings,’ I murmured, seeing him standing under the arch of King’s College, then, as Mikaela turned a puzzled face to me, I added quickly, ‘PhD at Cambridge.’

‘So he did!’ Mikaela turned back to Andy, ‘So, maestro?’

‘So, it had better be King Arthur then,

Tintagel, um, some of the prehistoric stuff, Men-a-Tol,' Andy offered, pushing himself back from his desk, 'Coffee anyone?' Heads were shaken, one hand up, Andy shambled off to fetch one for himself and one for Naomi.

'You know I keep thinking this is his first UK visit, when it's just his first visit to this part of the UK!' Mikaela beamed brightly, 'I'm sure we can find some really Cornish places to recommend to him, might even be able to escort him round a bit,' she added with a twinkle in her eye.

I smiled at Mikaela's enthusiasm and thought he'd probably be quite happy to be escorted by Mikaela. Twenty-eight, pretty, long-legged, blonde and shapely,



Mikaela was the antithesis of the dowdy scientist, very much the sort of girl Luke used to go for, I thought, and the type who went for him back then. I didn't suppose he'd changed in that respect either.

By mid-afternoon, truth be told, I was feeling a little drowsy as another restless night caught up with me and I was finding the rows of figures in front of me swimming. Somehow, while Eden was between senior botanists, I had ended up with the role, partly through an odd deference to me as the senior by age and, I believed, an acknowledgement of my organisational skills. I shook myself and, deciding on a restorative cup of tea,

pushed my chair away from the desk. As I did so my phone rang, sliding the chair forward again I answered with a voice much brighter than I felt.

‘Hello, Gabbi Johnston.’

‘Gabbi! Josh here, I’m in H03. There’s something not right with the Moringa – I think you had better come and take a look.’

From the designation, H03, I pictured the slight, pale boy, Josh, standing by the Orang dan Kebun, the Malaysian house and garden area in the humid-tropics biome.

‘All right, Josh, I’ll be right down,’ I said already standing as I replaced the phone. A quick whiz down to the pit was probably the best antidote to the lethargy

I was feeling anyway.

Picking up my mobile I headed out of the Foundation building, turned sharply and collected my bike. As a health and lifestyle statement and as a method of keeping fit I kept a bike at Eden for getting around. Easy on the trip down into the pit, as the site of the biomes was appropriately known to the employees of Eden, but a darn sight harder on the muscles on the way back up to the administration buildings on the rim.

I felt that sense of wonder and exhilaration that I always did as my pedal strokes brought me in sight of the Eden that everyone recognises from books, TV and adverts, the soap-bubble

constructions piled against the sides of the once raw granite china-clay pit, then, as I neared, the panoply of the temperate zone, the largest, the ‘outdoor biome’. All of it looking both small and vast at the same time.

After walking briskly through the jungle conditions of the humid biome I was perspiring slightly by the time I reached H03 and there was Josh standing beside the Malaysian house, keeping out of the way of the visitors who were wandering, gawping upwards, stopping and bending to read notices, children dashing back and forth to drag parents on to the ‘thing’ they’d found, or trailing behind, tired and hot.

‘Hi!’ Josh said when I stood beside him. ‘You have to get to the higher side to see it.’

We walked with the crowd round the edge of the garden, but where the rest flowed onwards we stopped and stepped to the far side of the path.

Josh raised his hand and pointed to the top most leaves of the *Moringa oleifera*. ‘There!’ he said, ‘Earlier, when it was clouded over, I could see quite clearly that the top-most leaves are going red.’

The sky beyond the ETFE bubble biome structure was bright now, I shaded my eyes but I still couldn’t see the leaf colour properly; the higher delicate fronds were just dark

silhouettes.

A family came and stood between us and the tree. The mother read from the guide in clear tones. ‘ “Moringa oleifera, also know as the Horseradish or Miracle tree, has edible leaves, beans, flowers and roots.” I wonder if it’s the roots that give it the Horseradish name. “Beside it stands the Neem tree known throughout the East as the world’s most useful tree, providing medicine, fuel and food.” Well that sounds impressive for one plant. ’ The family stood a moment or two looking the two slim trees up and down, the younger boy pointing out the bean-like seed pods. They moved on, the mother reading the next section as they

walked.

‘I’m going higher,’ I said. ‘I can’t see well enough from here.’

Josh nodded assent and followed me as I turned and took a near vertical route up through the planting to get as high as possible.

Now I could see. Josh was right; there were a significant number of leaves turning red, as if for an early autumn. Yet these trees shouldn’t have an autumn, shouldn’t be changing colour.

‘What’s the watering like?’ I asked  
‘Fine, checked that, no problems now or recorded.’

‘Hmm, okay, well we will need leaf samples anyway – so dehydration can be

ruled out while we look for other baddies,’ I smiled. ‘Could you arrange that for me Josh?’

‘Sure, only one for you, or one to each?’ he said, meaning, a sample for the plant pathologist and one for the entomologist too.

‘Better make it one to each, thanks,’ I said frowning, ‘Better make them bio-safe and labelled urgent. Okay?’

‘Okay, no probs!’

No probs! Indeed! Big Probs!! I thought as I sweated the bike back up the slope. Perhaps I should have had a sample sent to Mikaela too. It might be easier than actually telling her that there was a problem with the Moringa. Of all



the trees in all the biomes, why did it have to be that one? A paraphrased Bogart said in my head, if no other plant, Luke would certainly zero in on his pet, the tree that made his name in ethnobotany! Back at my desk I bashed *Moringa oleifera* into the Forestry-Compendium website to check out if it had any history of turning red, and what the cause might be.

Andy and Naomi were heralded by their voices, obviously in heated discussion, followed by their persons as they came up the central staircase into the light and airy office space. ‘But it could be *Thrips Palmi*,’ Andy was saying.

‘What, with the quarantine measures all in place? Besides it isn’t as if it came from some dodgy place.’

‘Well, Kew has been known to have its own problems with diseases and vectors.’

‘Do we have a new problem?’ I cut in.

‘W04, some die-back *co-incidentally* right beside the new introductions.’

‘Which were quarantined for three months as usual!’ Naomi retorted.

‘Anyhow, we’ll know soon, samples coming over pronto.’

‘Well we’re going to be busy then, I’ve asked for you to see some from the Moringa as soon as they come in. It’s a bit tricky, it’s the last tree we want to have a problem with just now,’

‘Why? Any time is bad for any of them isn’t it?’ Naomi said, shrugging.

‘Ah, but Luke Adamson’s coming and he’s sure to make a bee-line for it.’

‘Why’s that?’ Andy said as he sat down.

I looked at Andy and Naomi, both of them looked puzzled, and young all of a sudden. I smiled, ‘Well back when you two were in nursery school, Luke made his name with the first comprehensive ethnobotanical study of the Moringa.’

‘Oh dear!’ Andy pulled a mournful face, wagging his head in a mocking way.

‘Oh dear, indeed,’ I almost laughed, Andy, at least didn’t seem in awe of the superstar.

The three of us busied ourselves in the portacabin laboratory at Watering Lane, Eden's nursery a few miles west of the main site, each wearing the standard kit, lab coat, latex gloves, and, when we were cutting, goggles.

'So,' I said firmly, looking up from my microscope, 'it's definitely not a dehydration problem, these cells are as turgid as we could wish for.'

'And so far I have found no signs of microbacterial infection,' added Andy. 'So I'm going to culture some sections, especially of the red cells.'

'You just do that!' Naomi said to his back as he went into the second half of the lab.

‘Nothing?’ I asked, looking across to her. There was an atmosphere between them that I couldn’t quite put my finger on, though it might have just been the cross accusations over the source of the plant infections.

‘Nothing, certainly on this sample, I’m off to take a good look at that tree and the area, put down a few sticky pads to see what insect vectors I catch.’

‘Okay. I have to admit I’d rather we found something concrete before Adamson turns up.’

Naomi turned and gave me a quizzical look as she hung up her lab coat. ‘I don’t know why *you’re* worrying, Gabbi, that new senior botanist will be here tomorrow and she can talk herself out of

any hang-ups Dr Adamson has about our trees.’

Naomi just about slammed the door behind her, leaving me wondering what had ruffled her feathers. There was something in the way that she had said ‘senior botanist’ that suggested that the new boss was a problem, but, as I had not been in on the day of the appointment I’d not met Dr. Ananias. I had heard that she had made an impact on all of them in different ways, some by her looks, some by her ‘air’ and some by her obvious intelligence, however, perhaps not all opinions were favourable. I recalled that Naomi had been unusually reticent at the time.

I turned the leaf over again; the under side was a definite red, not unlike many plants that have a red underside to reflect light back through to the chlorophyll-bearing leaf tissues. I began to wonder whether the Moringa had the ability to adopt this red pigment in reduced-light circumstances. After all the ETFE bubbles of the domes did not allow a hundred percent light through them, then add to that, the fact that many of the largest of the trees in the tropical biome had grown so fast, faster than had been expected, that they had already needed pruning to prevent them reaching the skin of the dome, and so they were cutting out even more light.

‘Hey, Andy,’ I called. ‘I’m going over to

reception to see if I can chase up anything on Moringa and low light levels.’

‘Okay, catch you up later.’

I cleared and washed up, then hung up my lab gear and left the laboratory. I glanced up at the vast range of glasshouses that had brought on the bulk of the trees and plants needed to create Eden, and now continued that work, with the sideline of producing plants for sale in the shop. Reception was a building that looked, appropriately, like an overgrown garden shed. Inside, it had the appearance of belonging to a set of artistic hippies; six-foot butterflies hung lazily on fine threads from the ceiling, a



foam rubber and papier-mâché tree wound itself around a central pillar, and collection boxes for all kinds of recyclable stuff were everywhere. The reception desk itself was little more than a bare board and unmanned as usual, yet above it hung the ubiquitous picture of Luke.

‘Hiya, Jim,’ I called as I circled round to a spare computer.

‘All right?’

‘Will be if we can sort out this blessed Moringa before he comes.’ I nodded to the picture.

‘Yeah, I heard you had a problem. Anything I can help with?’

Jim was one of those truly green-fingered horticulturalists that make you

believe in such things; anything he touched grew.

‘Not unless you can tell me why these Moringa leaves should turn red with no obvious reason. I’m just looking up the likelihood of a change to utilise reflected light, though there was nothing in the Forestry guide’

‘No watering problems?’

‘Nope.’

‘Hmm, light sounds like a possibility then, and that guide’s not infallible. I’ll leave you to it,’ he added as he left the building.

Half an hour later Andy broke through the trance that I’d sunk into as I flicked from article to article dealing with

plants that utilised the red underside of their leaves. There were no cases where Moringa had exhibited this pattern of adaptation and the only plants where the colour changed, as opposed to always being red, had a well documented histology that demonstrated that they were always ready and willing to change as soon as the light levels decreed it.

‘Ready to go back?’ he asked.

‘Yep, might as well, not getting anything useful here. Of course I might be on to a new research paper,’ I grinned. ‘The adaptation of Moringa to life under ETFE.’

Andy grinned back; he knew how little I wanted to do any such thing, even though

progress in the scientific world was made just that way. I'd said often enough that I was so glad I didn't have to jump through those hoops as I had no ambition now to be a botanical high-flyer. After all I'd seen at first-hand what it meant. James had been at the top of his field for decades and it had driven him to despair at times, especially when out 'scrounging' for research funds, yet it still amazed me when he threw it all in and retired at fifty, many of his colleagues were just getting into their stride at that age.

We were no further on when I left for home. I drove my mini quite sedately, there being no need to hurry home, and

the twists and turns of the high-banked hedges and the road between them meant that being ready and able to stop within a few yards of spying another vehicle was a distinct advantage. My mind wasn't on my driving however; it was still on the problem of the Moringa.

Within fifteen minutes I pulled into my own drive. The sight of the house, low-browed over heavy granite with the sea glinting in the distance, as always, gave me first that surge of joy, now followed by a tang of sorrow. Sometimes, like today, I thought about selling, but I truly doubted I'd find another that gave me that delight on seeing it and there would always be the sorrow of James' absence

wherever I lived. The house had been my choice anyway, that sort of thing not being of interest to James, he'd just asked that the place should have a good sized garden. The garden was now a bit of a problem to manage. It was getting on for an acre and James had only just about got his vegetable garden going and an enormous herbaceous border planted when he collapsed with a massive heart attack whilst digging.

While I unlocked the door and went straight through to the kitchen, automatically putting the kettle on and flicking the answerphone off, I allowed myself to think about James. So often I had to stop myself thinking about him

when I was alone, as the pain seemed to overwhelm me too easily when I had nothing else to think about. At work I could allow myself to think of him, knowing that I would be shaken out of my reverie by something going on, someone talking to me.

I'd been with James for over thirty years, he'd just started his PhD in Botanical Science and I was a second year student in the same subject when we met. I was working in the labs he used for his studies, and we got talking. He wasn't the tall, dark and dashing type, more the tall, intellectual and serious type, but above all he was a really good person; kind, helpful,

generous with his time, honest and dedicated. As I got to know him I found that I not only admired him but missed his presence when he was not working in the labs.

It took him a couple of months to ask me out. I recalled with a small smile his later confession that he'd been trying to make himself ask me out for all of one of those months at least, terrified that this 'exotic creature', as he called me, would laugh at him. Little did he know at the time that I was as shy as they come, and had it not been for the fact that we could talk in a detached, professionally scientific way to each other I probably wouldn't have spoken to him at all.

People said we made an interesting



couple, he at over six foot, alabaster skin, blue eyes, auburn hair, and me, a foot shorter, with a mass of unruly ebony hair, slightly olive skin that tanned easily and dark almond-shaped eyes.

I poured my tea and wandered into the open-plan dining area; as I did so I caught sight of myself in the mirror and stepped closer. That ebony hair was now tempered with what would be a sprinkling of grey if I didn't disguise it with a chestnut dye, giving my hair instant highlights, and was far more controlled and controllable than it used to be by being well cut and twisted back into a knot held fast by one of my collection of unusual clips. The skin still

looked good all things considered, but there was no hiding the lines round the eyes, so called laughter lines. If only.

With a blush I suddenly realised I was looking at myself and wondering what Luke would see.

## **The Angel Bug 2**

**Luke October 18<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup>**

The Great Hall was packed, the front rows were loaded with the elite of the

university but, as far as I could see, the rest of the audience were the well-heeled environmentally-conscious middle-classes that I'd grown used to over the month of the tour in Europe.

I was prepared, hell, I knew my script off pat so that I spoke without notes. The lecture was carefully tuned to keep the audience awake, smiling, nodding at the wisdom pieces, anxious where they needed to be and enthusing just at the point where the talk finished and the book signings began. I'd worked out what I wanted to say and then, ignoring the publisher's suggestion to 'just be yourself', I'd turned to the guy who'd worked the script for the narration on the film, a guy who could work magic with

words. It was well worth it. Every time I spoke the audience was spellbound.

The Dean was at the lectern, giving me the ‘big build up’, Cambridge-style, almost off-handedly, reminding the assembly that ‘our speaker this evening’ was also a product of their own hallowed halls. It made me think for a moment on the difference between countries. Back home at Harvard I’d had a much better introduction, and I’d not even attended that university. The Dean, turned hand outstretched - my cue - and with a smile I stepped out onto the stage. The Dean waited near the lectern, so I had to cross most of the stage to get to him. He shook my hand, faced the

audience and, with a turn of his hand towards the lectern, left the stage.

So there I was at the lectern but with no notes to put down on it. I still stood there, just to start off, I told myself. I gripped both sides of the lectern like a drowning man clutching a plank; I couldn't let go of the damned thing. My fingers felt slippery and I was suddenly aware that my heart was beating faster than normal. This was ridiculous - I'd given this talk so many times and to so many illustrious groups. I mentally shook myself, smiled at the audience and began.

‘Good evening,’ I coughed and then

continued, ‘this evening I want to take you on a journey, a journey that will lead you to stand beside me in a fight to save one of the worlds most valuable resources.....’

I found myself rushing my words, and I kept returning to the damned lectern as if it really did hold a set of notes. A part of my mind, not occupied with delivering the speech, realised what was wrong; every other time I’d felt totally relaxed, the audience with me - this lot were not playing the game. In the first few rows there were many with pursed lips and raised eyebrows. For the first time the carefully planned script sounded too much like entertainment and not enough

about the real issues and the concrete science behind it.

‘..... so this is where we come to, could it possibly be true, as the indigenous peoples believe, that the mother forest has everything to cure all man’s ills? That it is part of God’s care, if you will, to provide our redemption from all the ailments man is heir to? Our journey has demonstrated how we live only by the grace of plant life. Could it be that we may live even healthier, even longer, without pain or disability, if we can only understand the gifts that are provided? And here’s the bottom line. To understand such things, then we need to be able to find and test them. This takes

time, time that is running out as six percent of the rainforest is destroyed every year, meaning that your cure for cancer, your cure for Alzheimer's, your cure for infertility, your cure for arthritis, may be lost forever. Thank you.'

The applause started and grew; I gave a small bow and turned to leave the stage. There, hurrying onto the stage was the Dean, florid faced with hand outstretched. What the hell? 'Wonderful, wonderful,' the Dean pumped my hand and turned out towards the audience, the clapping dying quickly. Only then did he drop my hand. It was all I could do not to wipe the



clamminess off onto his suit jacket.

‘I’m sure we were all fascinated by Dr Adamson’s talk, and I’m sure that some of you will have questions,’

I felt a flush of annoyance, it was explicit in the contract that there would be no question time, but I was trapped, and looking round I could see at least half a dozen of the audience indicated questions by a discretely half-raised hand. I smiled grimly and walked back to the lectern, the beaming Dean in tow.

I scraped up a decent answer for the first and second questions, and headed off the third as I could see I was going to screw it up if I tried to answer properly, the figures were just not there at my

fingertips. Their questions were pointed and deeply scientific, in every posh-brit syllable I felt an underlying criticism of the popular appeal of the book and the film and it was unnerving. It had been a long time since I'd been dealing with the nuts and bolts of the work that they were asking about. The past four years had been spent either in the jungle, doing bits for the film, editing or writing the book.

The fourth question was not much better and I knew my answer did not carry the required scientific rigour. Ridiculously, I began to feel out of my depth, as if, out there, were my former professors scrutinising me and my work. Indeed, from the number of white and balding heads I could see they probably

*were* sitting out there.

More hands were raised. At that point, feeling sick, I leant over towards the Dean and said just that. The Dean, all hesitant and bluff at the same time, waved both his hands at the same time as if to ward off a host of mosquitoes, and then patting the air, apologised that ‘Dr Adamson will not be able to answer any more questions this evening as he is feeling under-the-weather’. He added that he was ‘sure that Dr Adamson would be glad to discuss matters of interest tomorrow as he was staying for another day’. He turned to me, beaming and nodding, at which I found myself nodding back.

Next morning, I lay awake listening to the breathing of the young woman lying beside me. I'd not had such a disturbed night since I left the jungle. Was it just being back here at Cambridge or was it the debacle last night? Well it was a new day and as far as I was concerned I was not going to be available to discuss anything.

My departure from the hall had meant fewer book sales than were usual, according to Kayleigh, so it had hit my Rainforest Foundation, and for that I was annoyed with just about everybody who'd had anything to do with the set-up for the lecture. I was lying there blaming

them all for how it went wrong, and that included the pretty airhead, Kayleigh, lying beside me.

I slid from bed finding the floor cool beneath my feet, and padded through to the bathroom. On my way back I grabbed a towel and wrapped it round my waist. A quick glance told me that Kayleigh was still asleep as I turned to stand at the un-curtained window, drinking in the ancient city as it came sleepily awake in a misty morning. After a few moments my perceptions shifted, the window replaced by a movie screen as memories came flooding through. God! They had been electrifying times. I felt my blood stir as I thought of those years.

I saw my first immature awareness of the place, soon subsumed into an overpowering urge to beat it and everyone else at their own game. This place was supposed to be the best in the world; then I would be the best in it, no matter how I achieved it. I felt a smile touch my lips as I thought of the non-academic goals I'd set myself. Every one of them achieved, well very nearly, even if I'd had an advantage over the competition in both looks and provenance.

Rowing had been a first love from my early days on the New Hampshire lakes and later at Johns Hopkins, but at

Cambridge the competitive edge took me over. There weren't many other scientists on the crews and I worked really hard to dispel the 'weak scientist' prejudice that some of the crew members had. It meant being harder and meaner than they were. Harder meant I'd trained twice as much, meaner meant that at the crucial team-choosing time I'd zeroed in on a guy who'd been hassling me from day one. If he wasn't calling me a 'Yank' then it was the science thing or because my hair was long and blond. So when he'd called out 'Hey Blondie, did you forget your handbag?' I'd walked over, punched him out and then turned away. He'd come up fighting mad and launched himself at my back, whereupon

I'd grabbed his arm and folded forward tipping him over my back to land flat on the floor at my feet, only I didn't let go of the arm, feeling something give as his body cracked down. Others had caught up with us by then; I shook my hand free of his and stepped back. He clambered up but the rest of the team held him back, and plenty said he'd asked for it. The fractured wrist put him out of the running, and me firmly into a place on the winning team for that most prestigious of races - the Oxford and Cambridge boat race.

I had worked all hours on the first piece of 'competitive' work and still found time to sweet-talk and bed the



girlfriend of my main rival. That was the way I found out about the progress he was making, and how I came to the conclusion I'd have to upset the other guy's experiments somehow, as they were proving too successful. In the end it was nothing to get into the other lab at the end of the day and turn off a switch. It could have been anybody that turned off the wrong switch, easily done, and weeks of preparation and incubation were wrecked in a single night of cold. It was all I needed to get the edge to complete and write up my work successfully by the deadline, whereas my competitor struggled to get to the end of his experiments. I took the girlfriend too, for a time, not for long, just about

the length of time it took her to find out about the others.

For intelligent women they weren't that good at working out my game, and boy were they intelligent! Just chatting to them was an intellectual sparring match in itself, and remembering that sent a shiver through me. That Kayleigh had to go, a PA from the publishing house, supposedly organising my tour, she was attractive in just the way I liked, and fell readily into bed, but talking to her was like conversing with a TV guide. If it wasn't on the TV, then she didn't know anything about it. She seemed to live in a reality show and knew all about the goings on in the soaps almost before they did, but intellectual conversation, even

about books or publishing, seemed completely beyond her.

‘Hey!’ I shouted close to her ear. ‘Are you going to get that useless head of yours off the pillow or what?’

‘What?’

‘Yeah, right, listen up, I’m not intending to hang around here to be quizzed. I want transport out booked, pronto, I’m out of here by ten at the latest.’

‘Oh right,’ she glanced at her watch. ‘I’ll just grab a shower.’

‘No! I want that transport arranged first – then you can do what you like because I’m going to do this last tour date on my own.’

‘But Luke,’ she started her voice almost

a whine. ‘I’m coming too, aren’t I?’  
‘Don’t you ever listen? No, I’m going alone. You were great. I was glad to know you, but this is it, goodbye. Got it?’

Kayleigh pulled the sheet up over her breasts, her eyes wide, shaking her head slightly. ‘Just like that? You cold bastard, just like that?’

I shrugged and started to pick out clothes to dress in, then realised she hadn’t moved. ‘Phone! Now!’ Kayleigh jumped and, still clutching the sheet to herself, wriggled across the bed to the phone.

‘Okay, Luke - er Dr Adamson? I’ve booked you a taxi, but where will you

want to go, like, your flight to Newquay isn't until tomorrow, and you were supposed to be a guest of the University until then.'

'Screw that, can't you get me down there today?'

'Well, I don't know – I'll see, it might not be easy, being a small airport, and I don't know how many flights there ...'

I cut in 'Find out then! And if it's an okay then get the hotel booking moved up a day too.'

'Sure, fine, right away.'

I was pacing the room, wondering if even going to this last venue was worth it and why on earth had I allowed myself to get worked up over nothing. It was this place. I'd had come out top in

everything; academic, sport and personal ambitions were all met, yet I'd never felt accepted, and I realised that still bugged me.

## **The Angel Bug 3**

**Gabbi 19<sup>th</sup> October**

One of those beautiful frosty mornings that make winter worthwhile greeted me as I drew back the curtains. The sun glinted off the sea and on myriads of

hoarfrosted points in the garden, for a change I felt refreshed and ready to face the day. It was my usual half-day so, as I was going into help at the St Piran's Society in the afternoon, I dressed for comfort rather than style. After a quick breakfast I set off for Eden aiming to get there early to make sure everything was tidy in preparation for the arrival of our new senior botanist.

The sun had not yet worked its way into the pit and the domes were in shadow but light suffused the top floor of the Foundation building as I climbed the central stairs, assuming that I was first in, as usual. Suddenly I realised there was someone there already, sensed or

heard a movement, I didn't know which. I gripped the handrail at the top of the stair and tried to identify the direction the sound came from, swinging all round to take a three-sixty degree sweep of the place. A woman suddenly threw open the door of the coffee lounge, I jumped, even though I'd guessed there was someone about.

'At last!' the woman snapped, 'does no-one work at this place?'

'Sorry?' I began.

'Sorry? It's gone eight and not a soul about, not even on the desk.'

'Well, that might be because Karen doesn't start until half eight,' I said quietly, while telling myself I ought to check that this formidable woman in the



tightly tailored black suit with red blouse and shoes was really the new senior botanist. I took the final step to the top of the stairs and held out my hand, ‘Allow me to introduce myself, Gabbi Johnston, botanist.’

The woman did not immediately offer her hand to be shaken, she held her note book to her and gave me an all encompassing look, making me feel about twelve years old and wearing the wrong fashion, again, then suddenly there was smile from the carefully painted lips, the hand and a firm emphatic grip.

‘Dr Sapphira Ananias, *senior* botanist, I don’t believe I met you when I was appointed, *Gabbi*. Tim Smit tells me it’s

all first name terms here,’ she raised her perfectly arched eyebrows.

‘Yes, to names, and no we didn’t meet, it was one of my half-days, that day,’

Again I felt wrong footed. ‘I came in early to make sure everything you would need was on your desk ready.’

Sapphira just tilted her head in query.

‘As, as,’ I felt my confidence leaking away, ‘as I have been sort-of covering the job whilst the appointment was made.’

‘Sort-of? Well, I suppose they couldn’t get anyone really suitable for such a short time, even for a post as crucial as this.’

I was lost for words, said nothing, but wondered if Sapphira had given Naomi

some of this treatment. It would have done nothing to endear her to anyone, yet Andy and Tim spoke highly of her. I became aware of an expectant silence.

‘Have you found your desk?’ I said and started to lead the way to the desk in the centre of all the others, slightly larger, to take the extra sets of files and books, but otherwise not dissimilar to those surrounding it. ‘Here,’ I smiled at the area I’d made tidy, clear and clean as it never was when used by its previous owner.

‘No.’

‘No?’

‘No, this will never do –how can I be expected to work professionally in the middle of this entire melee,’ she waved

her hand to indicate the desks of the rest of the team.

‘It’s how it’s always been done here at Eden, so I understand.’

‘So, maybe it’s time for a change,’ she let her gaze sweep round the large open space.

This was a space designed not to have separate offices, to be light and generous not boxed in and tight, a place where work was shared by everyone in the ‘family’. However, I said nothing, I knew that this was not something I could affect but already I sensed that there would be consternation amongst the tight-knit group of scientists used to interacting merely by looking up and speaking.

‘Well, er, would you like a coffee, or something before the others arrive?’

‘And what time do they deign to arrive?’

‘Their day starts at nine, unless they’ve had an emergency call of course.’

‘Nine. Oh very well, black coffee.’

Counting under my breath I went to get a coffee for her and a herbal tea for myself. I reached for a refreshing and relaxing peppermint tea as I waited for the kettle to boil. Emergency, I thought, well, was the Moringa an emergency? Should I tell this woman about it now – or leave it? Feeling cowardly I decided to find out the results from the cultures and the sticky pads before saying anything.

‘Coffee!’ I said brightly as I offered her

the mug of Eden's-own coffee. Sapphira looked at the mug, but didn't reach for it. Only then did I realise I'd used the mug brightly splashed with the words 'A Mug for a Muggle!' against a blue moon, but that the second half of 'muggle' would be lost against the curve of the cup. I turned it slightly, smiled and said, 'Harry Potter fan, it's our plant pathologist's really, we tend to bring in our own distinctive mugs, you know.' With a sour look Sapphira took the cup, sniffed it suspiciously then set it down.

The sound of the door opening and closing downstairs broke the moment's unease.

'Morning Gabbi!' called Karen from the

desk below.

‘There’s Karen now,’ I smiled, glad that she was in well before her start time. I whisked over to nearer the top of the stairs and called down, ‘Hi! Be down in a tick to sign in, just checking our new senior botanist has everything she needs.’

Sapphira was now standing near the centre of the floor, looking first one way then the other, I walked towards her and she marched away to the nearest end, where she stood glancing from the first elegantly arched polished wood roof truss to the end wall.

‘You run along and get signed in, I will be perfectly alright once I can see the alterations I will require,’ she said in

dismissal.

It didn't take much to see that the area being studied would cut off a beautifully large office if Sapphira ever got the go-ahead, though I couldn't see Tim wearing it, as a separate office seemed to go against his philosophy. Run along, indeed! I thought as I descended to greet Karen.

'Oh! I didn't know *she* was here already,' Karen hissed.

'You don't like her?' I whispered back.

'Well, it's only from the one time I suppose,' Karen backtracked a little, 'but she made me feel like I didn't exist, and if I did then I was about as useful as, as a maggot.'

'Mmm, she does seem to be a bit aloof,



but then again I heard good reports too, and she is highly qualified and experienced.’

‘You know your trouble Gabbi?’

‘What?’

‘You are just too damn kind and always trying to find the best in people,’ Karen broke out into a grin. ‘Perhaps she was just putting it on for the interview and really she’s just a great big sweetie.’ I couldn’t help laughing; Karen really *was* a sweetie and would always help anyone who needed it and certainly didn’t deserve to be put down.

I was just signing my scrawl on the new page when Andy rolled up.

‘And a very good morning to both you

lovely ladies!’ he boomed as he dumped his battered briefcase on the desk and swung the book round to sign in. ‘All ready for Dr Ananias?’

‘Hardly, she beat *me* in,’ I whispered. ‘Andy!’ a pleased voice sang out. Andy swung round, Sapphira was descending the stairs as if making an entrance at a ball, slowly, a gentle sway of her tailored hips as she stepped. ‘I just knew you were a stickler for time,’ she came across holding out her hand to shake his. ‘Early! Not, surely, to be here to greet me when I arrived?’

Andy’s eyes sparkled, he took her hand and for one awful second I thought he was going to kiss it rather than shake it. ‘Well, I did rather hope to have been

here, but you know...' his voice trailed, he let go of her hand.

She smiled, glanced at me, 'Gabbi has been showing me the office area, though I want your opinion on a little idea that I have, come,' and she turned and led Andy upstairs, he following obediently. I turned and looked at Karen, who merely raised her eyebrows so high that they disappeared under her light fringe.

More to get out of the office than for any other reason I took myself off down to the domes and into HO3. I pushed fast through the paths to the Orang-dan-Kebun. I was hoping that by being early the sunlight would come in at an angle to illuminate the topmost branches, but

would not blind the observer below. I climbed higher through the plantings until I gained the best view. There was no mistaking the redness now, more than the few original leaves were coloured, in fact I estimated that at least thirty percent of the tree's leaves were now showing red undersides, yet there was no leaf fall, and from my vantage point they seemed to be turgid, not showing any signs of flaccidity through droop. I sighed, well the Moringa really wasn't my problem anymore; perhaps I'd better just get it over with and inform Sapphira. Even as I thought this, I knew I didn't like the idea; I wanted to know what was wrong with the tree for my own satisfaction. I was just leaving the

biomes when I caught sight of Naomi striding along, head down; she turned abruptly to come in my direction.

‘Naomi?’

Naomi’s head shot up, her face, which for a second or two showed a scowl, cleared in an instant to a wide smile,

‘Oh, Gabbi! Glad I met you!’

‘You okay?’

‘Humph. Well, I don’t know – I was when I arrived this morning but two minutes in the office and I don’t know. Have you met her yet?’

‘The senior botanist? Sapphira? Yes, earlier.’

‘Sapphira?’ Naomi’s voice was filled with unusual venom. ‘Dr Ananias, to me – apparently. And she had the cheek to

tell me to get her a cup of coffee while she chatted with Andy, oh, and while I was there, was there anything Andy wanted. Like I am some waitress or something, and you'd be more polite to a waitress!'

'Oh dear, perhaps she thought you were getting something for yourself...' I began. 'Oh no she didn't – I had just said to Andy that I was off to check the sticky pads on the Moringa, nothing to do with coffee.'

'Did you get it?'

Naomi looked up in the air, then suddenly down. 'Yes,' she sighed.

'That's why I am now in such a foul mood! Never mind – want to come and check the pads?'

‘Okay, just been there as it happens,’ I said as we retraced my steps. ‘The red-leaf has progressed down the tree, about thirty percent now, I’d say.’

‘Shit! And you are sure that Adamson will want to look at it?’

‘No, not sure, of course not – just knowing his interest I thought it likely, though it’s a long time ago now.’

‘Well, if it provides a problem for Dr stuck-up Ananias, I’m bloody glad!’

Naomi and I returned to the Foundation building together, ‘for protection’ as Naomi put it. We came out onto the first floor to see Jim and Andy manhandling the large desk out from its usual position down the room towards the end. The

reference shelves that stood at that end were shoved together on one side with no room between them. A quick glance round showed me that Sapphira was not about. I was on the pair of them in an instant.

‘What are you doing? Did she tell you to do that?’

‘Down,’ Andy puffed, then stretched his back.

‘No, we just thought we’d surprise her, she’s had this little idea you see, to have her area just a bit away so if she needs to work on anything serious or see someone confidentially, then she’s not going to cause us any problems in moving or working extra quietly.’

‘And she was saying, oh, well I will



have to see if I can arrange for caretakers or someone, and we just thought, didn't we, well, she's popped out for elevenses, we'd do it and surprise her,' Jim finished.

I looked at our head horticulturalist, usually so level-headed. 'Really? And you didn't wonder why this has never been done before by our other senior botanists?' I shook my head. 'Anyway, unusual to see you over here before lunch Jim?'

'Yeah, well,' Jim said picking up his end of the fully loaded desk. 'Just came to welcome the new senior botanist, didn't I?'

'Well, don't put your backs out, you shouldn't be doing it that way anyhow,

you should have emptied it first,' I said turning away to look at Naomi.

'Oh my! What a piece of work!' muttered Naomi and took herself and the sticky pads off to her desk and microscope, now marooned on one edge of a gaping space.

'Hey everyone! Oh good grief! What's happened here?' Mikaela made her usual exuberant entrance then stopped short when she saw the new arrangements. Jim and Andy were just relocating the last of the filing cabinets and only the chair remained to indicate where the senior botanist's desk had been. Up at the end, the reference book shelves were still crowded together.

‘What do you think?’ Andy called, cheerily. ‘And we haven’t done our backs in,’ he added sticking his tongue out at me. I merely shook my head at him with a wry smile on my face, it was like trying to chastise a Labrador puppy.

‘Well, I think it’s really unfriendly to put her desk down there, wouldn’t she prefer to be with us, all together?’ Mikaela asked.

‘Mikaela – it was her idea, to give us space, only she thought she’d have to wait – months – to get it done,’ Andy said.

‘Oh, right.’ Mikaela said thoughtfully, as she sat at her desk and wiggled the mouse to bring her computer to life.

I stood a moment looking at the desks

that were left, I couldn't help feeling that the ragged hole in the conformation represented more than just a move of furniture, it was a disturbing sensation with a tingle of premonition to it. I shook myself. 'We ought to rearrange our desks as well, make it more – well, bring us back together.'

'Yeah, well, that'd be good,' Andy started. 'We'll think about it then move them all at once, eh?'

'Oh stewpots!' Mikaela gasped.

'Another email from Luke Adamson! He's changed his arrangements and is arriving today on the one-thirty flight to Newquay! He presumes that arrangements will be made to meet him. He will now be alone as he has

dispensed with the services of his publisher's PA.'

'Well, there's plenty of time to get up to Newquay,' Andy said.

'It's not that – it's what to do with him? I'd prepared the itinerary for tomorrow, meet the staff, tour of Eden, familiarisation with the lecture facilities, dinner and the lecture – what do I do with him today?'

'Don't worry, he'll probably want to rest up anyway, won't be bothered about what to do today,' I suggested, looking at Mikaela's troubled face.

'Not your problem, give it to *Sapphira!*' muttered Naomi, 'And there's no indication of pest predation on the Moringa either, so she can have that one

too!’

I looked over to Naomi, I had never known her to be so negative, and of course her comment made the Moringa question rise to the surface again.

‘Andy? Anything from your tests?’

‘Not checked yet, I’m going over in half an hour – want to come and see?’

‘Will do, I checked the tree this morning – I reckon we’re up to thirty percent leaf colour change now, and still no sign of leaf fall or droop.’

‘You’re joking – that’s a hell of a spread in a day, less than a day!’

I just shook my head, I had no answers.

‘Forget half an hour, you ready to go now?’

I gave a tight lipped smile, nodded and

collected my bag.

‘You know it wouldn’t be too good for Sapphira to have this problem right now, just when she’s started at Eden. It’d be good to sort it out if we could,’ Andy was saying as he unlocked his car.

‘Not good for Eden at anytime,’ I replied, wondering about the impact that Sapphira had made on Andy, usually a bit of a cynic and unfazed by authority or fame, he seemed to be reacting out of character over Sapphira.

Andy hummed a rock tune over and over as he drove, only stopping as we pulled into the site. We waved at the staff in the reception building and headed straight to the labs. Once inside

we put on coats and gloves, then Andy lifted the cultures out of the cabinet, took them over to the microscopes and removed the lids. The tune started up again.

‘Any joy?’ I asked as the humming became quieter and quieter.

‘Not a thing! All looks well, healthy, except they are the wrong colour! It doesn’t make sense.’

‘Well, perhaps it *is* some reaction to the lower light levels in the dome.’ This idea had been growing on me; there were examples in the histology of other plants, try as we might the light levels under ETFE were lower than normal levels, and perhaps the evidence that this occurred in the wild just hadn’t been



recorded or if it had, hadn't yet been found by my researches.

Andy looked up at me, a long thoughtful look.

'Yep, we could say that. We could say that we were proposing to research reactions under ETFE. You think Adamson would buy that? It'd let Sapphira off.'

'How would I know?' I realised I was sounding sharper than I meant to be, but somehow didn't feel able to change it. We cleared up in silence, Andy putting the cultures back in to continue development in case they revealed anything later.

Back at the Foundation building we found the upper floor deserted. Mikaela had set off for Newquay and Naomi was nowhere to be seen. I found myself looking towards the relocated desk. It was obvious at once that Sapphira had been back in the interim, for standing on the desk was a photo frame. I really didn't want to, but somehow I found I'd wandered to the desk. Overcome with curiosity I peered round the end to look at the picture, expecting a photograph of family, perhaps husband or children, but the person in the frame wore a sort of ecclesiastical garb in an electric blue which served to enhance his tan, his clear blue eyes and white-blond hair, the photo showed him with his hands held in

uplifted praise. The face was vaguely familiar, though I couldn't put a name to him.

'The Reverend Elliot Ashe,' Sapphira's voice rang clear across the room from where she stood at the top of the stairs. I jumped, for the second time that day, blushed, as I felt caught out, and stepped away from the desk.

'A wonderful and inspirational man,' Sapphira continued gliding towards me. 'I met him in California, travelled with his ministry for a while when he visited Texas - inspirational.'

'Oh, yes – I thought I recognised him, just couldn't place the name,' I muttered as I remembered seeing an advert for his upcoming mission to the UK.

Sapphira gave a tight smile as she reached me and continued in a low voice, ‘If you’d ever heard him preach you’d know his name. You help at St. Piran’s Society in your time off, so I guess you are a believer?’

‘Umm, well I do help out there,’ I felt unnerved, how did she know about St Piran’s already? What did she think I believed in? If anything I believed in some benign goodness, I believed in, if not always being able to do good then at least in doing no harm. ‘I suppose I believe in ‘loving your neighbour as yourself’,’ I said paraphrasing Christ’s second injunction.

Sapphira smiled, ‘It’s a start, Gabbi, but there is so much more that He wants to

give us, you know.’

‘Oh, yes, umm, well, sorry to have intruded,’ I shrugged, still embarrassed at giving in to my curiosity.

‘Nothing to worry about, it was a blessing to open your mind to what He wants you to know,’ Sapphira said as she gracefully sat down at her desk, giving the photo a glance as she did so.

I returned to my desk, Andy looked up from where he’d settled himself in while I’d been snooping. ‘What was that about?’

‘Hmm. Well Sapphira was telling me about the Reverend Elliot Ashe? Heard of him?’

‘The footballer?’

‘No,’ I laughed. ‘The *Reverend* Elliot Ashe? Evangelical minister of the air, TV, net, whatever?’

‘No, you know me, nothing against your beliefs, but none of it interests me.’

‘No, well, it’s of interest to Sapphira, apparently.’

‘Really? I’m surprised she seems so switched on scientifically, I wouldn’t have thought it her kind of thing. No basis in verifiable fact.’

‘Well there’s more things in heaven and earth,’ I smiled, ‘and now I’m off as it’s lunch time. See you tomorrow.’

‘Gabbi,’ Andy beckoned me to him, and whispered, ‘have you told Sapphira about the Moringa?’

‘No, but perhaps I ought before I go,’ I

said feeling as if someone had just pulled out my plug. We looked at each other for a moment.

‘No, it’s okay, I’ll tell her,’ Andy said.

‘You get off to your down-and-outs,’ he smiled.

‘Homeless.’

‘Homeless, whatever, hey, perhaps she’ll want to convert me to believing in the Rev Ashe, I might enjoy that.’

I shook my head at him in mock reproof but thanked him with true relief for opting to be the one to tell the news about the Moringa to that unsettling woman.

# **The Angel Bug 4**

## **Luke 19th October**

Damn crappy little airports and the crappy little planes that fly to them. I could feel myself getting angry as I waited for my luggage to turn up. The flight had been appalling. I'd been crammed in a miniature plane, dumped at this miniscule airport reception area and now there was no sign of the Eden person supposed to meet me, at least I'd seen no card flashed with my name on it.

Suddenly the bags appeared; I reached for them and snatched them up. Okay,



now where's the meet and greet? I stepped towards the doors, looking all round for someone who might look like they were waiting for me. I tossed the larger suitcase down near the desk and leant over to the receptionist.

‘Can you page someone for me? Someone from The Eden Project is supposed to be meeting me.’

‘Of course sir, your name please?’

‘My name? Dr Luke Adamson.’

‘Thank you sir,’ the receptionist turned slightly away from me and picked up a small microphone. ‘Would the person due to meet Mr Luke Adamson please come to the reception desk. Thank you,’ she smiled and continued with her work. So I started looking round, there were

very few people left in reception and no one was heading in a purposeful manner my way.

Right, I've had it with this shit, I thought, I'd just decided to call a taxi and get to the hotel, then tear Eden off a strip when I got to them, when I saw this stunning blonde run into reception, her eyes were wide and her cheeks flushed, she hesitated a moment and then continued quickly over in my direction, sweeping back her hair and straightening her clothes as she approached.

She held out her hand, a broad smile in place, 'Dr Adamson, I am just so dreadfully sorry I wasn't here to meet you when you landed. I got caught up in a terrible traffic jam, an accident I'm

afraid, I'm really sorry.'

I knew I was still feeling angry, but I could see a lovely little opportunity to make this woman feel grateful to me and so, as usual, I took it. 'It's not a problem, are you okay, has it upset you, seeing the accident?' I said as I shook her hand and rested my other hand on her upper arm, solicitously.

'Oh! Thank you for understanding, it wasn't nice, they were cutting someone out of the wreckage. So, um, I'm Mikaela Archer.'

'And you're from Eden, right?'

'Right, and I have my car just outside,' she turned and I picked up my bags ready to follow. 'You know I was so nervous about meeting you, and then to

be late like that, I, well, thanks,' she said over her shoulder.

'Obviously not your fault,' I said smoothly. 'This yours?' I'd seen these cars around of course, a cross between a corrugated iron shed and an old-fashioned VW beetle, but I didn't look forward to the ride it might give.

'Yeah, she's called Binky, don't ask it's a long silly story!' Mikaela said patting the hood as she rounded the vehicle to unlock the door. 'Best just stick your bags on the back seat, the boot's a bit full at the moment.'

'Binky! Boot.' I muttered, hefting my suitcase into the narrow back seat, carefully stashing my hand luggage in the foot well. They must have sent a ditsy

receptionist or something to collect me, I thought, as I gently lowered myself into the front seat as if it might break.

‘Okay?’ Mikaela, pushed the car into gear and set off. Once we were out of the airport area and on our way across country, heading towards Eden I guessed, she continued, ‘Now, I presume you’ll want to go straight to your hotel, I’m afraid that the reception and stuff’s all set up for tomorrow, perhaps you’d like to rest this evening?’

‘Well, that’s a mite unfriendly, abandoning me on my first evening. You could at least offer to stay for dinner with me, if you have no other pressing business that is.’

Mikaela glanced round as if to see if I

was joking, but I pulled a serious face, and thought, well she's already messed up by being late and I'd been so nice about that, so to stay for dinner was the least she could do, wasn't it? It was as if I could read her mind. She'd make some excuse to whomever need to know, I saw that click and then she turned her face to me, all hesitant smile.

'Well, that's very kind of you. So, are you happy to go straight to your hotel, and then I'll return later to keep you company at dinner, say seven thirty?' I glanced at my watch, two thirty. What the hell was I going to do for five hours kicking around some shitty little hotel? The car gave a better ride than I'd expected, it wouldn't hurt to go further.

‘I don’t think so, no, I think you can wait for me to freshen up and then you can bring me back to this Eden place so I can give it the once over.’

‘Oh! You do?’ There was a pause while I imagined some other clogs clicking into place, ‘Okay, I’m sure that’ll be alright.’ She was leaning forward, peering through the windshield, ‘The hotel entrance is along here somewhere, ah, there it is,’ she said and accelerated towards a pillared gap in a long wall. Inside we turned a sharp right to reveal a magnificent redbrick Victorian building of at least six floors, with lush green lawns to the front of it and, as we as reached it, I saw it had spectacular views out to sea. Things were looking

up, at least the hotel looked classy from the outside.

‘I’ll just wait in reception,’ Mikaela said after I’d signed in.

‘Hell, no! You come on up, it’s a suite, it’s not as if you’ll have to sit on my bed, and I won’t eat you,’ I knew I was laying on the American geniality, but it worked more often than not, these English girls seemed to like it.

Mikaela blushed, ‘Well, alright, if you’re sure.’

‘Sure, I’m sure,’ I said, course I’m sure, I thought, congratulating myself on my progress already.

Once in the room I took the suitcase



through to the bedroom, placed it on the stand and unzipped it. I removed my jackets and flung them on the bed.

‘So what do you do at Eden?’ I called softly from the bedroom.

‘Pardon?’ Mikaela appeared in the doorway.

‘I asked what you did?’

‘Well, you know. I mean, I’m the ethnobotanist there and you know how that’s one of the main focuses of Eden - the relationship between man and plants.’

Whoa there, I straightened, looked at Mikaela again, the ethnobotanist. This called for a slightly different game.

‘Shoot, I’m sorry,’ I stepped over to her at the door, held out my hand to

shake, ‘I didn’t realise, I thought they’d sent a publicity person to meet me, pleased to meet you!’ Mikaela shook my hand, blushing again as she realised she’d never introduced herself properly in the first place, still holding her hand I leaned forward and kissed her on her cheek. ‘You know you blush so damned prettily you would make a man find some way just to make it happen,’ I said softly beside her ear. At which she blushed again, but did not draw away. I stepped out of the personal zone, and as I thought it would, it made Mikaela lean ever-so-slightly towards me, which told me that she was ripe.

I turned away, back to my unpacking, ‘I’ll get this stuff hung up,’ I said

indicating the clothes laid on the bed,  
'then a quick shower and you can show  
me your Eden.'

'If you like, I'll hang that up, while you  
shower'

'Well that real nice of you Mikaela. Not  
your job of course, but really nice of  
you, if you don't mind?'

'No, that's fine,' Mikaela came into the  
bedroom, glanced around to see where  
the wardrobe was and opened it ready to  
fill. I disappeared into the bathroom.

Ten minutes later I returned with a  
pure white towel wrapped around my  
waist, my scarred torso showing tanned  
and toned above it. 'Thanks,' I called, as  
Mikaela had returned to the sitting room.

‘No problem,’ she called back and I saw her glance in my direction just as I appeared in the doorway. I held the door as if I was about to close it, but stood there looking at her for a very long moment, long enough for her to see that this was one hell of a fit looking guy, regardless of age.

Half an hour later and we were just pulling into the entrance to Eden. ‘Here we are!’ Mikaela sighed ‘We are? I see nothing!’ ‘Promise you,’ Mikaela had a smile in her voice, ‘We are at Eden, I called ahead and those who are here will meet us at the visitors centre, so you get the same experience that all our visitors do.’

‘Okay, lead on!’ I said, feeling much better and more relaxed, a pleasant evening lay ahead of me, very pleasant if Mikaela came across....

I realised later that Mikaela had parked deliberately so that the view of the domes was obscured then and while she led me down the path towards the visitors centre. As we rounded the last bend the centre itself now blocked any view.

‘All the plantings and art works on the outside are part of the temperate biome,’ she explained.

‘Sure, but where’s the bubble structures?’

‘Here’s the visitors centre now,’

Mikaela said. There were three people walking up towards us and as they reached us she stopped and turned to me, ‘and here are some of the team, may I introduce the senior botanist, Dr Sapphira Ananias, Andy Peters, plant pathologist, Naomi Jamison, entomologist.

‘Delighted,’ I said. ‘Great to be here,’ pumping hands and smiling my very best at the women in the group. Very nice too, in quite different ways; the senior botanist, dark and sophisticated and the entomologist, graceful, black and beautiful.

‘Please, come through here,’ Sapphira said leading the way through the visitors centre to the stunning panoramic view of

the bowl that was The Eden Project, the bubble structures making an impressive backdrop to the plantings and buildings in front.

I was actually impressed, though I'd thought I might not be. There was a strange other-worldly quality to it, yet very English for all that.

'You must be exhausted after your journey, would you like a cup of coffee first? It's made from our own coffee beans,' Sapphira offered. I accepted and we sat overlooking the view making small talk about my tour, the film, my current projects.

'Tomorrow we'd planned a full tour, before the public come in, but is there anything you'd like to see now as a

taster?’ Sapphira offered. The Andy guy sent her a sharp glance, but she didn’t seem to notice it.

‘Well, let’s see now, I’d certainly be interested in looking round your humid biome.’

‘Of course,’ Sapphira said. ‘I’ll escort you round and Mikaela can meet you at the end to return you to your hotel. We’ll meet up with the whole team tomorrow.’ We all stood, handshakes were shared, but as I followed Sapphira out, a glance back showed me the other three, heads together and looking towards us; which made me wonder what was going on.

‘And this is the Orang dan Kebun, where we’ve recreated a Malaysian



home with its traditional garden and surrounding plants.’

‘Complete with Neem and Moringa I see,’ I said casually, following the line of the trunks upwards. What was that? I looked round, there didn’t seem to be any artificial lighting that could be shining onto the Moringa, what was it? ‘Yes, traditionally extremely useful trees, and over here ... ’

‘Is there something wrong with the Moringa?’

‘Pardon, no, over here, you can see...’

‘No, pardon me,’ I said stepping back and shielding my eyes. ‘The leaves are going red – it has a problem.’

‘Oh that, no, it’s just a reaction to low light levels caused by growing it under

ETFE.’

‘And your evidence for that?’

‘Well, we are still in the process of researching the phenomenon, it’s not unknown amongst jungle plants you know.’

‘I know, the anthocyanin layer, and I also know Moringa extremely well, what have you done so far?’

‘If you must know I only took up my post today, and have only just been told we had a problem. My team are looking into it and I am quite sure we will manage to sort it out as soon as I can focus on it.’

‘Sure,’ I said backing off, this was one hell of a good looking woman, almost as full of herself as I am, I didn’t want to blow my chances, after all, I wasn’t

about to ration myself. We worked our way round the humid biome and back out into the cool fresh air of an autumn afternoon. Sapphira called up Mikaela to be ready to meet us.

I said my thank you and farewell, leaning in to kiss Sapphira's cheek as I did so. I winked at Mikaela and followed her out to the car.

'Well what did you think?' she asked as we reached it.

'Really impressive,' I said and was rewarded with a dazzling smile. Easy.

'Fine, so bye for now, and I'll see you at seven,' I said.

'Oh, seven, okay.'

'In the bar for an aperitif before our

meal?’

‘Well, I really can’t, I’ll have to drive you see and...’

‘Nonsense, take a cab, my treat.’

‘No, really, I’m happy to drive.’

‘I insist! After all you are doing me the honour of coming all the way here to keep me company.’

‘Well, okay, thanks, I’ll do that.’

‘That’s better.’

I went to the window and pushed the curtains right back, I can’t stand closed curtains, not since I can remember, then stood looking out at the wonderful view; something about the English countryside is able to make even the simplest bits look terrific. The pocket book size of

everything makes the small differences stand out and be noticed. What the hell, I thought, I might as well take a breather and enjoy this place a bit more, so I grabbed a jacket and left my room.

Outside the hotel I walked round to the front overlooking the sea, beyond a raised grass bank I could see a path, which, when I made my way to it turned out to wind its way around the cliff edges in both directions. Seeing the edge of a cove with golden sands and pinnacles of rock I decided to head towards it. The path was well walked, though narrow, and for the most part kept as close to the edge as I wanted to be, in fact at places I wondered how long the path would survive come bad weather. I

rounded a small headland only to find that the path now took a detour inland, yet I was sure I could see it return to the cliff-edge just the other side of this wild area marked only with a battered 'private' notice. I looked around, not a soul in sight, the land looked so unkempt, it wasn't as if I'd damage any crop or whatever, so I pushed down the barbed wire and stepped over. The going was rocky underfoot, and I made sure to watch for any sudden drops, just in case the area was really barred because it was unsafe, but there was nothing to worry about, just waist high bracken and gorse. The other side of the patch, however, was guarded by a mass of bramble bushes reaching both ways, I

found a bit of stick and beat them down and high-stepped through them. I made it to the barbed wire line with barely a scratch and a just small snagged thread in my jacket.

Now the cove was close, invitingly spread out in front of me. The path continued across the top, but a winding set of steps and pathway obviously led down. Feeling really alive and surprisingly happy I set off down the path, gaining speed as I descended. Suddenly the shale slipped sideways beneath my leather soles and carried my legs out from under me, over the cliff edge. Unable to stop I grabbed for the vegetation beside the path to stop my fall, the pain of the gorse spikes almost

making me let go, but holding on to prevent worse. I dragged my legs back over the edge and sat up, gasping for breath and laughing at the same time, I thought of what the press would make of it – the intrepid Dr Adamson, beaten by a Cornish cliff path! I sat on the path, pulling dead gorse spikes from my fingers, then turned and stood up carefully. The drop from this point was still a good thirty feet onto jagged rocks, I gave an involuntary shudder and, glancing at my hands, decided to go back and get cleaned up before Mikaela returned.

The shower was good and hot, though not as powerful as I liked, British



plumbing never really made it on that score. My hands stung like fury and to add to the damage to my shins I found a graze down the back of my leg I'd not know about. As I towelled myself dry I thought about the evening and how to play it. Now I knew Mikaela wasn't just some airhead, I may need to play a longer game, but that would only make it more fun. I grinned at my image in the mirror. Oh boy, didn't I just love English girls!

At seven I wandered down to the bar, and so was there, all gentlemanly, when Mikaela came in looking wildly round, her face broke into a smile of relief as she spotted me.

‘You are looking lovely,’ I said, stepping in to kiss her cheek, stepping back to admire her. And she was, she’d put on a classy looking dress, and with her hair pinned up she looked special. The blush came easily to her cheeks and she allowed me to buy her a Kir-Royal before she’d even thought.

‘So, what got you interested in ethnobotany?’ I asked as we waited for our desserts to arrive.

‘You!’ Mikaela said, her eyes shining and her cheeks aflame with almost a bottle of wine she’d downed since the Kir. I’d made sure we’d had two bottles, when she opted for the white, I’d gone for a red and topped up her glass

whenever it slid below half.

I dipped my head and looking back at her raised an eyebrow, ‘How’s that?’ ‘Long before, long before the film and everything I had read an article you wrote about the inter-relationship of man and plants. It just got to me, you know, straight to that part that makes ultimate sense to me. We weren’t put on this earth to exploit it, land, plants, animals, any of it, we were here to work *with it* in harmony,’ she gave a small laugh.

‘Listen to me! You know all this, you wrote the book.’

‘Ah! Not me personally then? What a disappointment,’ I leant in close, teasing her with my eyes.

‘Well, not then, I mean I had no idea

who you were.’

Good girl, falling.

The desserts came and the conversation drifted to the quality of the locally sourced fresh fruits and clotted cream.

‘How about we take a coffee and liqueur up in the suite?’

‘I really shouldn’t,’ Mikaela said.

‘We’ve got an early start,’ she giggled, ‘some bigwig film star coming to look us over before we open,’ her eyes twinkling at me.

‘He won’t mind if you’re a bit hung-over, promise,’ I said leaning in and giving the slightest flick of my head in an upwards motion.

‘Okay, just one, then I must get back.’

Good girl. I indicated to a waiter and asked for two Irish coffees to be sent to my suite.

We were barely inside the room when the knock came on the door and a waiter brought in a tray with the Irish coffees, placed them on the table and left closing the door gently behind him.

I settled myself on the sofa and stretched myself out, pushing off my shoes, ‘You don’t mind?’ I said looking up at Mikaela where she stood, wavering, between the window and the end of the sofa.

‘What, oh no, not at all,’

‘Come and sit down then,’ I patted the sofa beside me just once. ‘The coffee’ll

be too hot yet.’ Touching the fabric with my palm made the prickly sensation return to my hand, I turned it palm up to look.

‘Oh. What happened to your hand?’ Mikaela said, dropping herself beside me to look. My palm was reddened with numerous pin-pricks of deeper red. I grinned, ‘I’ll only tell if you promise me, absolutely promise, never to tell a soul.’

Mikaela looked up at me, her face very close to mine.

‘I promise,’ she said, wide eyed. I leant forward, searched her eyes a moment, found no resistance, leant on in and kissed her. She kissed me back, then drew away with a small gasp.

‘To seal your promise,’ I said with a light wink, and a smile that disarmed the moment. ‘I was bushwhacked by a cliff path, nearly had me over the edge, just grabbing a tough old gorse bush stopped me plunging into the sea!’

‘No!’

‘Oh, yes I’m afraid. That’s why you can’t tell! Really, so reckless, leather soles on a downward path!’ She was smiling now. ‘So,’ I said, taking her hands, ‘you really must not break that promise.’

‘I won’t.’

‘Good. I’ll hold you to it,’ I said and drew her closer. ‘You really are something,’ I whispered, kissing her again before she could speak. This time

she didn't pull back, this time I felt her soften, I released one of my hands and let it slide up to the nape of her neck, and down to massage her spine, down again to her thigh, sliding gently towards the top. Then, carefully working my way down again, kissing her, being kissed, this was working well. The hand massaging her back again, drawing her closer, I could feel her body move to the rhythm, down, sliding up under her dress, to the smooth flesh of her side. I was really hard now, finding myself drawn on by old familiar urges.

Mikaela pulled back. 'No.'

'Come on, you want this,' I whispered and drew her back towards me pressing my hand against her naked back. 'You're



so beautiful, you know, a real peach, just beautiful.’

‘No, I ...’

‘Oh but you are, how could a man resist, eh?’ resuming the massaging, the light kisses falling on her shoulder, neck, lips and again harder until she responded.

‘Better,’ I breathed. ‘Come on,’ I leant her back a little, paused, to look in her eyes, damn. Her eyes were wide and she was shaking her head slightly, but enough.

‘No,’ she said, pulling herself up a little.

‘No, not, not, no.’

‘Mikaela?’

She shook her head, ‘Sorry, I should never ...’

‘Hey, Mikaela sweetie, I like you, I like

you a lot, and we're getting on so well, don't worry, no problem.'

'I really have to go now,' Mikaela pulled herself back from me and stood, I could see she was unsteady.

'Okay, we'll call that cab and then you'll go,' I called reception for them to call a taxi, then went over to where Mikaela stood, holding onto the back of the sofa. I came up behind her and ran my hands down her bare shoulders. She didn't move or complain so I repeated the movement, gently, caressing, then leant in and kissed the nape of her neck.

'Please, don't,' she murmured.

'Fine, no harm done, fine with me,' even I could hear the sting of disappointment in my voice.

The phone rang. Reception, the taxi was waiting. Cursing myself for pushing my luck too far, too soon, I escorted a flustered Mikaela down to the taxi. ‘See you tomorrow, Mikaela,’ I said, ‘see you tomorrow.’

## **The Angel Bug 5**

**Gabbi 20<sup>th</sup> October**

‘You have all let me down, have you any idea of how embarrassed I was for

you, and for Eden, at the moment when Luke Adamson told me that we have a real problem with the *Moringa oleifera*? And then questioned my knowledge when I offered him the answers *you* gave me – at the last moment, may I add – so that I had no chance to verify your wild hypothesis,’ Sapphira had started with her voice low and calm. I thought Andy and Jim were both looking appalled, Naomi looked straight at Sapphira and Mikaela had her head hung, eyes hidden beneath a curtain of hair, as they had been since she’d arrived. I hardly knew where to look, as Sapphira continued with her voice growing raw and jagged, I felt so guilty for letting Andy be the one to pass on the *Moringa* problem.

‘So unprofessional! So incompetent! When they asked me, begged me, to take over here at Eden I was told I had a top team of dedicated personnel, now I find I have dross that can’t be bothered to look after the plants, can’t be bothered to do their research, can’t be bothered to inform the senior botanist about the most important failing in the place before an important visitor, not just any visitor but one who actually knows what he’s looking at, comes along and points out that incompetence!’

The men looked at the floor, no one else moved.

‘Don’t you think you are being a little unfair,’ I began.

‘Don’t *you* presume to tell me anything!’

After all, what do you know? This mess is all your doing anyway – you were supposedly in charge.’

‘The problem had only just been spotted and we were working on it on all fronts, I did point out that he’d want to see it.’

‘You did, did you? Not to me you didn’t. Why not? Did you want to show me up, put me in a bad light?’ A strange look came over her face. ‘Did you want this job by any chance? Do you have a grievance that I have it?’

‘No! I didn’t even apply.’

‘Just as well, under-qualified and out of date at that. So whose stupid idea was it to suggest to me that it might be due to growing under ETFE?’

‘It’s a possibility,’ Andy cut in before I

could say anything. ‘It’s just that we’ve not had time to find out what it is at all, just time to discount some of the easier things to rule out.’

‘I see! So you’ll be the best person to explain all that to Luke Adamson when he arrives full of criticisms and spouts off to the press. And talking of him arriving, Miss Archer, where is he? I had expected you to collect him today.’

‘Sorry, I couldn’t, um, I couldn’t drive today, car problems, so I’ve sent a taxi for him.’

‘Time?’

‘Sorry, time, any time now, really.’

‘Incompetence!’ Sapphira muttered and turned away from them to look up the path. ‘Get up there,’ she said over her

shoulder. ‘Make sure he feels welcome, perhaps we can pull something back from this.’

Mikaela looked up, looked around as if to check that it was she who was being spoken to, then, wincing in the bright sunlight, she walked slowly up the path towards the parking area. I watched her for a moment then began to follow, feeling she needed some support today. ‘And where do you think you are going?’ Sapphira snapped. ‘You, here, and the rest of you. This is what we are going to do – we are going to get him involved in the search for the problem with the Moringa. That way we can use the spin that we have brought in ‘the expert’. Whatever turns up then we are covered



and he is in it with us, so cannot reproach us.’

‘He’s only here for a day, what could he do?’ Andy started.

‘How long doesn’t matter – as long as he’s in on it.’

‘Besides, he could be here for longer – remember he wants to look around Cornwall,’ I offered, though saying it made me feel like a collaborator.

‘Ideal! Now we only have to get him involved.’

‘He’s coming,’ Jim said, nodding in the direction of the path.

‘Welcome back, Dr Adamson,’ Sapphira called as they approached.  
‘Pleasure to be here again, Dr. Ananias,’

Luke beamed.

‘Please, Sapphira, we all use first names round here.’

‘It’s Luke, then, Sapphira, what’s the plan?’

‘First an apology, Tim had hoped to be here to meet you now, but he’s not got back from London on time, rail hold-up somewhere. Right now, come and meet some of the Plants team you missed yesterday then we’ll give you the deluxe tour before a lunch with Tim and some of our other teams.’

‘Lead on.’

Sapphira turned towards the others, ‘Andy, and Naomi you met yesterday,’ she indicated the pair who dutifully smiled and nodded a greeting. ‘May I

introduce our chief Horticulturalist, responsible for the growing of the plants at our Watering Lane Nursery.’

Jim leant forward, hand outstretched, ‘Jim Borlase,’ he said, and was given the big American handshake. I was watching Luke, I hadn’t been able to take my eyes off him from the moment he appeared. The years really had been good to him, he looked as good in life as on the posters, and despite myself there was something happening to my pulse rate.

And this is another of our botanists and she is the one who is supposed to be looking into the Moringa difficulty,’ Sapphira added.

‘Gabbi Johnston,’ I said, smiling at him

and holding out my hand, inwardly smarting from the jibe that Sapphira had aimed at me.

‘Pleased to meet you, all,’ he said shaking my hand briefly and encompassing us all in his glance. ‘And if you want any help with the Moringa I will be delighted to take a look,’ he added, looking back at me as he did so. I felt my heart thump as I noticed a faint look of puzzlement flit across his face. ‘That would be wonderful, an honour, thank you,’ Sapphira cut in quickly, drawing him aside. ‘Perhaps after your lecture, I understand you are staying with us for a few days.’

‘Well, yes, I had thought about seeing something of the countryside while I’m

down here,' he said, turning his head back towards me, a glance that, seeing it coming, I managed to avoid.

As I followed along in the 'grand tour' I wondered at my own reactions, wanting and not wanting him to recognise me, certainly not wanting to actually tell him. Sapphira started well on the main principles behind Eden and its plantings, stuff she must have mugged up on prior to her interviews and appointment, I supposed, but was clever enough to hand over to the rest of the team, one by one, as her specific knowledge became sketchy. I was almost in a daydream, sub-consciously giving the plants we passed the once-over for health and well-being, and on

another level working out what more we could have done in the case of the Moringa since we found the problem. I had tuned out the explanations from my surroundings, my mind on another agenda entirely, when I heard my name, and from the tenor it sounded as if this was at least the second time Sapphira had said it.

‘Sorry?’

‘I had just said that you were the first to notice the problem and so it was your call.’

‘Well, sort of,’ I guessed that though we were nowhere near the Moringa that the conversation must have reverted to the problem. ‘You have to understand that this is a problem that only came to light

forty-eight hours ago, if that, and we have taken samples, cultivated cells, set traps for insect vectors and monitored the progression in that time.

Unfortunately we have not been able to identify the actual cause of the problem at the moment, but of course any indicators we need to look at or procedures to be followed that you might suggest would be very welcome.'

'Sure,' Luke said looking at me his head slightly tilted as if listening for some distant sound. 'Okay, perhaps we can have a look at it together, after this lunch thing?'

I glanced at Sapphira as she'd previously suggested that he start tomorrow; Sapphira's raised eyebrows

didn't give me any answers.

‘Well, whenever you like, but won't you want to rest before your performance?’ I could have bitten off the words, they sounded so trite. He grinned, and gave his head a shake.

‘Last in a mighty-long tour of lectures, I think I know my script now. No this afternoon suits me.’

‘Fine, I'll come to meet you after the lunch finishes.’

‘And I'll look forward to it,’ Luke said, his eyes slightly narrowing, though holding his smile, as he looked at me.

As soon as I could decently leave the group I rushed back up to the Foundation building and logged on to search the



internet again for clues to the problems with the Moringa, ‘Anything,’ I murmured to myself, ‘any new idea to pursue this afternoon.’ There was nothing in the recorded studies to give me a clue of where to go next. Perhaps Luke would be similarly stumped, I thought, and wondered why I was feeling so concerned about what he’d think of my scientific credentials, what did it matter what he thought?

Three o’clock saw me pacing up and down in the Link, the section above the restaurant area that joins the Humid Tropics Biome to the Warm Temperate Biome, trying not to get in the way of the visitors and keeping an eye on the lunch

party below in the restaurant. I could see that both Luke and Tim were as animated as each other as they talked over their coffee, the other lunch companions seeming not to get much of a look in. Ah, movement at last, a few people were making ‘I must leave signals’ and shaking hands with Tim and Luke and going on their way, Tim listened to something Luke was saying, then looked up, scanning the Link walkway. His gaze found me and he raised a hand. I raised mine in return and started to walk down to meet them.

‘Well, I’ll hand you over to the tender care of our Gabbi, I am sure she will look after you as she seems to look after everyone in the team. I look forward to

your lecture tonight.’ Tim said before shaking Luke’s hand warmly once more and leaving us.

‘Okay now we’re alone you can put me out of my misery. I do know you, don’t I?’ Luke said, lightly touching my arm.

I felt the blush zooming up my face.

‘Well, it was a long time ago, and I’m amazed you remember me at all but yes, we have met, at Cambridge, Gabriella Angellenzi then, I married James Johnston.’

‘J J!’ he said suddenly, ‘the lucky dog, how is he?’

I took a breath, ‘Passed on,’ I said.

‘Two years ago.’

‘Oh, gee, I’m sorry to hear that.’

‘Thanks. Well I won’t say I’ve got over it, because it wouldn’t be true, but I have come to accept it now.’

‘What was it? Sudden?’ his voice low and full of what sounded like genuine concern.

‘Oh yes, sudden and instantly fatal, massive heart attack, no warnings.’

‘Jesus! Whew, shakes a man up a bit I can say – being the same age and all,’ he shook his head as if trying to rid himself of the thought.

I swallowed. Somehow this was harder than I’d expected. He looked up at me again. ‘And you, how have you managed?’

‘Day to day to start with, but then they’re a great lot here, helped me though it, and

Emma came back over from Australia for a few months.’

‘Emma?’

‘Oh sorry, Emma, our daughter – she’s living in Australia doing a PhD in Anthropology in Sydney.’

We’d started walking as we talked, into the Humid biome, moving towards the Orang dan Kebun, and in its garden, the Moringa.

‘So how did you end up down here?’

‘Here, because James took an early retirement and wanted to move down here to Cornwall,’ I heard Luke give a sudden exhalation of breath, almost a ‘huh?’ so moved straight on to an explanation. ‘He was fed up with the constant begging for money for research,

the doing the rounds and making the bids taking more time than the research grants gave time for the work. He, we, decided that quality of life was missing, so we tried for it here, and it was working, until – it happened.’ I knew that my eyes were beginning to fill, but could do little to stop them, it seemed to have been so long since I’d talked about James to anyone new, I looked away, scanning the tree tops for the hexagonal structure beyond. I felt his hand on my arm and turned, his hand slid down to my hand, took hold of my fingers in his, so caring and gentle, I had to look at him.

‘I really am, really am sorry Gabriella, I didn’t mean to bring it all back. Come here.’ He drew me to him and I leant

into him, wondering at the feel of a man's arms around me, letting my tears flow into the fabric of his shirt. After a moment I drew a deep breath and brushing my eyes with my fingers stepped back.

‘Oh dear! Sorry. Now, we have a job to do – I think.’

‘Gabriella?’

‘Everyone calls me Gabbi now.’

‘Not me. I always thought it a magnificent name that just suited you all out. Gabriella, would you be my guide in the time I have down here, before I go back to the US?’

‘Of course, as long as I can be spared here, and that means we've got to get this Moringa sorted,’ I waved my hand

at the offending tree, its uppermost branches blazing with their reddened leaves.

‘Okay, deal. So you’ve looked at the leaves, insect vectors, watering. What else?’

‘Taken cultures from the affected leaves, which, by the way seem to be healthy in every way apart from the red colour, and I’d better admit to this, as Sapphira has her sights on me over it, it was my suggestion that the red might be a reaction to the lower light levels under ETFE, just a hypothesis, considering the range of jungle plants that exhibit this in the lower light levels below the canopy.’

‘I can see the reasoning, but ‘a



hypothesis' is not how the lady put it, and I have to say I haven't found any such reaction in Moringa in the wild – but then they aren't usually in lower light conditions either.'

'And that's where we are, any ideas?'

'Yeah, have you looked at the root structure?'

'No, what would we be looking for?'

'Disease, fungal attack maybe?'

'But then the tree would show some kind of weakness or failure, leaves actually dying rather than just changing colour.'

'No leaf fall or deterioration at all?'

'None caused by the leaf colour change.'

'Okay, so, you've covered most bases, I'd still like a look at the roots.'

'Okay, how about tomorrow morning

before the public gets in?’

‘Hell no, I want to get right in there now and take a look, waiting would just be wasting time.’

I looked at him for a moment, there was no doubt that he meant it, and Sapphira really wanted him on board so that he was tied in. ‘Okay, I’ll just call up one of the horticultural assistants and some equipment and we’ll go for it.’ I stepped to one side of the path and called through to Josh, asking him to bring some tape to cordon off the area along with tools for digging, a brush, sample bags, a knife and a saw. Glancing at Luke I added that gloves and a small tarpaulin for kneeling on would be useful and that we’d be in the area

somewhere near, waiting. Josh sounded really keen and said at the end. ‘Wow, Luke Adamson, working at Eden!’

We were looking at the slate grey West African Totems, carved for Eden by a renowned West African sculptor out of old timbers from the Falmouth docks, timbers that had started their life as West African trees, when Josh appeared on the scene, his wheelbarrow loaded with gear. It took only minutes for us to reach him, by which time he'd strung some tape around the corner of the Orang dan Kebun garden and hung a sign on it advising people to keep away for their own safety.

Luke grabbed the shovel, lifted it out,  
‘Strange looking shovel?’

‘Cornish, traditional, can get you  
something different if you like,’ Josh  
said.

‘No, no need, won’t be using one,’ he  
lifted out a trowel. ‘This’ll do,’ he knelt  
by the trunk.

‘There’s a tarpaulin, stop you getting  
dirty,’

Luke laughed, ‘Oh, don’t worry about  
me, Gabriella.’

Josh looked from Luke to me and back. I  
took the tarpaulin out and laid it next to  
Luke, kneeling on it. ‘We’re not all as  
gung-ho as you, you know.’

He laughed again. ‘Yeah, its coming  
back, you always were a little mother

weren't you?'

I could feel Josh's eyes on me, knew he was wondering what was going on here, and would soon air his views over coffee to the rest of them. I looked up at him.

'You didn't know that we were at Cambridge at the same time, did you?' Josh blushed and shook his head.

'Different years, didn't expect Luke to remember me at all, but there you go.'

Luke had dug and scraped the soil away from one of the roots and was working his way along it, clearing the soil, stopping to brush away loose dirt from the finer roots.

'Hey, hey. What's this?'

I leaned over to look and there,

seemingly attached to some of the roots, were dark reddish nodules about the size of small peanuts.

‘Are they attached?’

Luke brushed again, lifted a fine trellis of roots and sure enough the nodules were hanging like tiny sparse potatoes.

‘We’ll have some of these for a start,’ he said, ‘these are not usual on Moringa – I can tell you that for free.’

It took another quarter of an hour to check that there was nothing else extraordinary about the root structure, and to have collected quite a crowd who watched this ‘film star’, actually doing ‘work’ at Eden, complete with the background sound of cameras and

mobile phone videos whirring. The disturbed roots were carefully re-laid and the soil replaced. With the samples in a collecting bag we left Josh to tidy up and ensure the area had extra watering to counteract any desiccation caused. Luke had the biggest grin on his face as we took the quick exit out of the biomes and hurried to get back up to the Foundation building.

I dashed into the building to get my car keys and tell someone that we were off to Watering Lane, to the labs, with some samples, but as no one from the team was about, I left a message with Karen at the desk, in case anyone asked.

We climbed into my Mini and were swiftly on our way to the other site.

‘So, tell me about Sapphira.’ Luke said suddenly.

‘I can’t.’

‘What, confidentiality?’

‘No, I really don’t know anything about her, she’s only been here a couple of days, as in, this is her second day in charge. So, I’m not even being good or coy, I really don’t know anything about her.’

‘Okay, I’ll believe you. What about Mikaela? You know I took her for some personnel go-fer when she met me at the airport?’

‘Mikaela is a great girl, good brain if a little taken up with the more flashy



aspects of ethnobotany, but that suits here as getting the message across to everyone is a major part of the Eden thing,’ I thought about Luke’s reputation of old, and added, ‘She’s got a long-term boyfriend, Jono, seems the right sort.’ ‘Okay, and your entomologist, I forget her name.’

‘Naomi, first class brain and dedicated. What’s this, twenty questions on the people here?’

‘Nothing, just curious.’

I shook my head and smiled as I turned the car in a tight right hand turn and into Watering Lane. I waved at Jim as I pulled up and took Luke over to sign in at reception.

As I led him towards the row of

portacabins, Luke was staring round him, distracted.

‘Where are your labs then?’

‘In here.’

‘What? You have to be joking. These are your lab facilities?’

‘Yep, well, they do for what we need, and if we need more we have links with some big university labs, you know scanning electron microscopes, the works,’ I said, hooking a lab coat down for Luke and shrugging into one myself. I pulled new gloves out of the box and put them on the table, and goggles beside them.

‘Okay then, I’d like tray, a block, distilled water, some slides. Do you have a microtome?’ I nodded ‘Need to

use that then.’ I slipped on gloves and collected the equipment together. Luke washed a root nodule down with distilled water and then turned to me and asked for a scalpel.

I fixed a blade on and handed it to him. As he sliced through the nodule it bled scarlet onto the block. For a second I thought he’d nicked his finger and it was blood, realising as I thought it that he’d not put gloves on.

‘Luke, there’s gloves here.’

‘Don’t fuss, little mother, hate the things. What do you think of this? I’ve never seen anything like it!’

‘It’s extraordinary, so bright.’

‘Sure is – I must get a slide done, perhaps the structure can tell us a little

more. Some fungi can have such colouration bleed.’

I watched as he quickly and deftly used the microtome to cut a thin slice of the nodule and prepared a slide.

‘Set the rest of this to cut properly with the gear,’ he said not even looking at me.

I picked up the sample and took it to another area of the lab and started the process to prepare it so that when it was set in paraffin wax it could be sliced ultra-thin to give the best view of the structure.

‘This the best scope you got?’ Luke muttered.

‘Yes, here in the labs, it should do for structure.’

‘Yeah, okay.’

I watched him gently move the slide.

‘Hey! Come and look at this – what do you think?’

I moved in and looked down the eyepiece. The picture wasn’t that clear, the cells had suffered a great deal of trauma being sliced unprepared, tearing and squashing them sideways, but the overall structure of the nodule was evident. I stood up and then bent again to look, moving the slide slightly.

‘It’s very reminiscent of nitrogen-fixing nodules, isn’t it?’

‘Hmm, my thoughts exactly. Though I can tell you for free that they don’t have an association with Moringa, no way, I pursued that one into the ground years ago.’

‘So, what is it?’

‘The hell I know, but I do know I’m not letting up on this thing until we have an answer.’

## **The Angel Bug 6**

**Luke 20<sup>th</sup> October**

I was beginning to think that lunch would never end, though Tim's a great guy the rest of them were plain dull, perhaps just English, what the hell, eventually people are shuffling to their feet, shaking hands and moving off, and although I've had this question nagging me, who was that woman? I'm usually very hot on names and faces but even having both wasn't helping. Something strange happened when I shook her hand, not electric or anything, just strange, something that needs experimenting with to check that it wasn't just a fluke.

Tim looked up towards the Link and raised his hand. She raised hers in return and started to walk down to meet us. Hell, she'd been up there looking down

at us, for how long?

‘Well, I’ll hand you over to the tender care of our Gabbi, I am sure she will look after you as she seems to look after everyone in the team. I look forward to your lecture tonight,’ Tim said, shaking my hand again and beaming at us both. We watched him weave his way out of the restaurant and before she said anything I got in first. ‘Okay, now we’re alone you can put me out of my misery. I do know you, don’t I?’

She blushed, oh so pretty. ‘Well, it was a long time ago, and I’m amazed you remember me at all but yes, we have met, at Cambridge, Gabriella Angellenzi then, I married James Johnston.’

‘J J!’ I said, everything falling into



place, Gabriella! And still gorgeous.

‘The lucky dog, how is he?’ Instantly I knew it wasn’t good; there was this flash of pain across her face.

‘Passed on,’ she said, ‘Two years ago.’ There are only platitudes to say at this stage, so I say them, what else, yet this news hits home in a way that other deaths hadn’t, I mean, we were the same age, same line of business.

I asked a few questions to orientate myself with this news and we walked as she told me how come she was down here in the butt-end of England, I saw that remembering was becoming too much and it was all I could do not to wrap her up in my arms, but that would have scared the hell out of her I’m sure,

so I reached out and touched her arm gently, she turned towards me and as the tears filled her dark eyes, I slipped my hand down to her fingers and drew her towards me. Just for a moment, to comfort her, experiment one, result, same as before, strange. Too soon she pulled herself together and became all business-like, and though I secured a promise for her to show me round the area after the show she was all fired up to look at the problem with the tree.

Nothing much seemed to have changed since the day before, though it was hard to tell, perhaps there was an extra intensity in the red of the uppermost leaves. There didn't appear to be any

fallen red leaves in the immediate vicinity. I ran her through the tests they'd done and decided that the only place they hadn't considered was the root system, so I opted for that, least it made it look like a new contribution.

Wasn't long before she called up some lad with the gear and I started working. Real cute, she was, fussing over me, making sure I didn't get dirt on my jeans, and that brought up a memory of how she was all those years ago; looking after people, thinking ahead.

I don't think I could believe my luck when I came across these nodules on the fine root. First thought was that they might not be attached, but they were, and I knew I'd not encountered this type of

structure on Moringa roots before, and I had looked since this was one area of research I'd gone into. The Moringa has an inordinate amount of nitrates in its leaves and as such is used as a green manure in some parts of the world, but how it manages to get such a build-up in its structure is a bit of a mystery, as it has no known association with nitrogen-fixing bacteria, which is the usual route for plants to get such a high intake of nitrates. My mind was in overdrive, could this be a mutation, or was there something here that I'd missed in all my studies in the wild? I had to get some of these into a lab and look at them. I did a bit more work around the roots; I didn't want to have missed anything else before

we moved off.

It didn't take long to get to the other place, Watering something, but it was long enough in that tiny box of a car, I wasn't sure which frightened me more, Mikaela's dustbin or this matchbox. Gabriella 'signed me in' in some kind of garden shed then we headed for a couple of portacabins. These, my God, were the laboratory facilities; I felt like laughing, I'd had more in the middle of the jungle!

I got a nodule cleaned up and then sliced into it. It was bleeding, I mean, this red liquid oozed from the cut, so unusual, not the colour - the oozing, but Gabriella just starts fussing over gloves.

Okay so nitrogen-fixing nodules usually contain leghaemoglobin and are therefore red, but I had never seen anything quite like this, and I was damned sure there was no other case of nitrogen-fixing bacteria associated with *Moringa*. So this *is* unusual, okay so I tell her that there're some fungi that bleed, true, but not like this, and they can have a red colour as would a nitrogen-fixing nodule, also true, but not usually as deep and bright as this. I was really pumped by now, could I be about to make a new discovery? I sure hoped so.

I got a rough un-prepped slide mounted; get Gabriella to set about prepping the rest of the nodule for high definition slices, and move to the best

scope in the place. It's okay, nothing to write home about but just enough at this stage. What could I see? The structure was familiar: nitrogen-fixing bacteria make nodules with a similar structure, but I think I can detect hyphae too, suggesting a fungal association. Okay, so what are the possibilities, symbiotic relationship between fungi and bacteria and plant to provide what? Nitrogen is the obvious and given, though Moringa don't seem to need that anyway, what else?

‘Hey! Come and look at this – what do you think?’

I watched her look at the sample, even the lab coat looked good on her, she moved the slide.

‘It’s very reminiscent of nitrogen-fixing nodules, isn’t it?’ she says still not looking up at me.

‘Hmm, my thoughts exactly. Though I can tell you for free that they don’t have an association with Moringa, no way, I pursued that one into the ground years ago.’

She looked straight at me. ‘So, what is it?’

‘I’m damned if I know, but I do know I’m not letting up on this thing until we have an answer!’

Gabriella looked at me, then quickly at her watch, so I do too. Hell, nearly six and I still have to shower, change and be ready for a half seven start.



‘I’ll run you back to your hotel,’ she said, not even discussing the problem, stripping off her lab coat, ditching gloves and cleaning up all at once. She hurried me out, threw me the car keys to let myself in, yelled into the hut to ‘sign Dr Adamson out’ and we were on the way.

‘About fifteen minutes to get to your hotel, how long will you need? What about eating?’

‘Half an hour will be fine, and I don’t eat before a talk.’

So I’ll arrange a taxi for quarter to seven, that should get you back by seven, quarter past at the very latest, is that enough time to collect yourself before you go on?’ and all the time weaving

through these tiny lanes.

‘Sure.’

‘Sure?’ she said flashing me a smile.

‘Sure,’ I said, returning it.

So I got into my hotel room and made for the shower. The water was at least hot and it stung my hand, especially as I had to scrub at it where the red colour seemed to stain the skin. I took a mental note of this too, staining, well that would concur with fungi again, as some ancient dyes were made from fungi or their symbionts, lichens.

I got dressed for the evening, it's like getting ready for any performance I guess, I have the costume, the carefully selected range of clothes that says to my

audience; adventurer, savvy, individualistic, but also an accomplished professor of ethnobotany. As I rigged myself out I wondered if that's where I went wrong with the Cambridge lot, maybe it should just have said 'professor' for them, maybe the rest of it raised their hackles before I even opened my mouth. Shit! Thinking about them was a mistake, I could feel my heart rate rising just standing there. So, I went back to thinking about the Moringa and before I knew where I was the phone rang to tell me that my taxi was waiting.

The place was packed, the audience, from what I could make of them,

covering everyone from young teen to geriatrics. There were those who might be in the scientific community but there were a hell of a lot of people who looked like hippies, as if we'd dropped back thirty years, and some of them looked like they'd been that way for the last thirty years. The build-up was good and as I took the stage the last vestige of fear that it would be a 'Cambridge' repeat left me, the audience response was great.

I really used that stage, like looking down from somewhere else I could see how well I was taking the message to the people, my whole body was singing with this message tonight and I could feel the

warm approval coming off them in waves. I could almost have wished for someone to offer that I answer some questions as I just knew I was flying and that the answers would be the right type.

Standing ovation; for a science lecture! My heart was racing fast, I knew, and I felt as if I was burning up, but it was a good feeling, right up there with winning everything I ever wanted to win.

Tim came on and said a few words, which resulted in another round of applause, and we were off and scooting along to a reception with invited guests and I am both ravenous and parched but on such a high it's worth it.

'Gabbi tells me that you've found

something to investigate on the roots of one of our trees, the Moringa?’ Tim said.

‘Sure as hell have, and you know what, I’m not going to leave this place until I find out what is wrong with that tree.’

‘That’s good of you, but I am sure that our team could manage if you’d rather not.’

‘Rather not? In fact I rather would, in fact I’d be insulted if I couldn’t do it. Hey, you can use the publicity if you want.’ Thinking that would buy them, because if they really wanted me out they could do it, no problem.

‘Well anything, or any help you want, just ask the team, I’m sure they will be willing to assist you in any way,’ he

smiled.

I was really thinking on my feet now, we were coming in close to a group of people, ‘Could you assign Gabriella to my team for the duration? She seems quite capable of the type of assistance I need.’

Tim smiled again. ‘I’d have thought that wouldn’t be a problem, just ask Sapphira if she can be spared.’

‘Oh, I will. Thanks, I will,’ and we were into the crowd, with pats on the back, a glass in my hand and the conversation flowing. I emptied the glass and glanced round to get a refill, which came as if by magic. A real old guy, science woven into his face, congratulated me and told me he’s been trying to get that message

across to the scientific community all his life and wished me luck with it. I thanked him, and at the same time I was scanning round looking for Gabriella. Suddenly I have that ‘looking down on the world sense again’ just as I did on stage, it’s as if I can see myself standing there looking round, tops of heads, trays of food, all below me. I see her over by the door, near a buffet table. I start to move towards her, realising as I do so that I’ve left the old guy in mid-sentence, he’ll put it down to American rudeness I guess.

‘Gabriella!’

‘Oh Luke, brilliant lecture! You remember Andy, our plant pathologist?’



she indicated the guy towering beside her.

‘Yeah, sure,’ I stuck out my hand and got it shook.

‘Gabbi was just telling me that you found some root nodules, any thoughts if they are of a pathological origin?’

‘Not at the moment, but we’ll keep you informed. I’ve arranged with Tim to stay on while we sort this thing out,’ I said thinking that would screw him up, ‘and to have Gabriella assigned to assist me.’ I didn’t know what I liked more, the closed look that came over the Andy guy’s face or the surprise, and did I see a hint of pleasure, that flashed across Gabriella’s?

‘I am just so thirsty, any chance of a

really tall glass of sparkling water or something?’

‘I’ll get it,’ Gabriella said and was gone leaving me with the hulk, not that it bothered me, and before he could ask any more puerile questions I was swooped upon by some other guests, who made all the right noises and had in their hot little hands copies of the book which they hoped I’d sign. Happily I scrawled the marks that had become my signature over the tour – no author should have a long name – or write clearly enough to have to actually write it – it just takes too darn long and you get writer’s cramp before you know what’s going on; you can just about make out the L and the A on mine now. Gabriella

appeared, her hand held the most wonderful looking long glass of clear sparkling liquid. I almost shoved aside a devotee to get at it, felt it wash a cool path down my throat. I grinned, ‘Sorry, folks, I was just parched.’ They made appreciative noises and thanking me again, left. The glass drained I looked back at Gabriella, ‘That was good, thanks.’ But even as I spoke I started to feel hot again, as if the air I was breathing was over-heated, and more, as if I were generating a heat energy from deep within my body that couldn’t escape. ‘Any chance of some more?’ I asked, feeling that my face should be glowing like a bonfire by the temperature that I was beginning to

experience.

‘Yeah, okay, look, Luke, are you okay? You look a bit flushed.’

‘All that adrenaline rushing round I guess, though I might grab a breath of cold air.’

‘Well, hang on until I get back with more water,’

I hung on, well that’s what it might have looked like, but after signing more copies of the book I felt myself rising up, I had to be a good ten foot off the ground, and rising up, almost up to the top level of the Link, I spun round, looking for her, there she was engaged by someone with a neat bald spot on the top of his sandy hair, my drink in her hand, her whole body language saying,

‘let me get away you creep’.

‘Ha!’ I felt the laugh explode from me, and there was Gabriella handing me the glass

‘What’s funny?’ she asked, looking more worried than before she’d left. ‘I really think you could do with some air.’ She turned and started away, turned to check I was following and led me out to the crisp dark of a Cornish October evening.

The cold air was good, it stroked the skin on my face and hands, I wanted to feel more of it on my skin, I stood the half-drained glass down and started to unbutton my shirt cuffs, rolling back the sleeves. I drained the last of the water, and wished there was more, that I hadn’t

drunk it so quickly.

‘Could you, sorry, please, some more water?’

‘Is that wise, you can over do water you know,’ Gabriella said, peering at my face in the light that filtered out from the restaurant area.

‘Last one, you have no idea how hot I am,’ I said, a dirty chuckle bubbling up from somewhere.

‘Okay, last one.’ Nanny Gabriella said to me, in such a sharp tone it made me laugh all over again. It was no good, I just had to feel more of that beautiful soft cool air, I unbuttoned the rest of my shirt and stripped it off, stood there rotating slowly to allow the air to cool the burning surface. I could almost see the

flames licking at the hairs on my arms, glowing with small pinpricks of light, each a tiny flame.

Gabriella returned. ‘What! Have you completely lost it Luke?’ she said, I saw she’d put a coat on when she’d collected this glass of water, stood there holding it instead of bringing it to me.

‘Water,’ I heard myself say and I snatched it from her hand as I swooped by, started to bring it to my lips and then, catching sight of the flicker of the flames on my arm as I did so, I doused myself with it, until there was water running in steaming rivulets down my arms, and I had lift off, flowing straight up, higher and darker, darker and higher, until all I could see were the stars, blue as ice, red

as fire.