**Spirit and Alien Party Part 7**

I needed a bath. While the water was running and the bath filling, I went outside and shovelled some soil from my front garden into a saucepan, filling it up. In the bathroom, I didn’t need much water for my purposes so only quarter filled the bath; I wasn’t about to get clean; I was about to get dirty. I dumped the soil into the bath, stripped, and got in, and stirred it like when someone does when they are filling the bath and kneeling in it swirling the hot and cold water around behind them and round the other side towards the taps again. The water grew browner while grit left a trace around me. I lay down and splashed water over my chest. Dipping my head beneath the water didn’t feel good but it was necessary.

I stood and examined myself in the mirror while I was still wet. ‘Yup! Right there on the right side of my neck, a crescent shaped ‘arm’ thrust in deep. It was attached to a small demonically grinning creature, about eight inches high and perched on my shoulder. I washed it with a cup of clean water and it vanished, but then reappeared, though less distinct. Apparently, it was sticky and the dirt in the water had stuck to it, as I thought it would. No-one else would have seen it though.

‘Gotcha!’

‘Crab on your back,’ observed Hakim who had returned and come to watch. I expected he would. He is only absent when I don’t care where he is. ‘Spider on your side, and something on your left knee.’

A lot of people would have wriggled and squirmed and squealed, ‘Get them off! Get then off!’ It is no use though, you can’t force them off you; they just leave an arm, head or leg, to fester deep inside you. You have to grip them firmly and apply a continuous pull, sometimes for over ten minutes and then, with a sucking pop, out they come. Except you can’t hear it. It is more of a feeling; something like snapping a tendon without the pain. They die and fade pretty quickly if you put your foot on them and hold them still so they can’t escape. Just like trying to hold onto something from a dream and bring it into our awake state, they wriggle like fish. I have seen some, on other people, when I am in my better self, that are as big as the person they are attached to. You need specialist help to get rid of them, which isn’t always available. Often they just go and leave a sword or pike in the person. These are more often than not barbed, but eventually they decay and the shards melt into the body’s system and dissipate, but not before the affected person greatly suffers. Decades can pass before the afflicted people gain sufficient positivity to protect themselves from further mass spiritual attacks. Essentially, anyone who has potential to disrupt the negative intent of spirit warmongers is a strong target for malfeasant attention.

After half an hour, Hakim and I had found all the things stuck on, and in, me and removed them. I had a memory of needing a drink and a cigarette through the horror of going ‘cold turkey’ from sudden withdrawal from both. This also meant that I was attracting a lot of spiritual attention. Harrari came and soothed my thoughts, while I lay on my bed, free from influence. I felt as though I was bereft and needing to learn to live again. My life of locked-in attitudes and reliances had stopped, but had left a vacuum. I needed a ‘reboot’ without ‘viruses’ and ‘malware’.

‘Alarm! Alarm!’ cried Hakim so often I could not count them. I was hoping that this ‘new alternative me’ would be exchanged for the normal me, the one I had built up over decades of honour and integrity, the ‘virus-free’ robust me, that relied on Hakim as my firewall and virus-checker. Somehow, I knew that I was hosting myself. In my tripped-out state, I couldn’t help thinking that my spirit was giving a piggy-back to another of my spirits; me carrying myself. At least I was managing to hold a concept in my head to act as a scaffold for useful thoughts. Virus, malevolent spirit; firewall, Hakim. Am I an organic computer? Where and when am I?

Morning came.

‘Perhaps you should call a meeting of your alternative spirits,’ Harrari silently offered me. I didn’t quite understand what she meant, even though I understood the content, but she IS prescient, or at least incredibly good at seeing more than one future; I am never sure which.

The elderly woman was in the entry-point village. This time, she was clearly frowning and visibly upset. Hakim and I, by repeatedly entering the spirit world by the same route had what might have been considered to be, in the physical world, churned it into a slightly overgrown track used by animals through trees into a sunny clearing, into a wide open tractor-tyre rutted thoroughfare that led to a muddy mess. We were noticed immediately. I knew this would happen; the mess we made and the attention that tearing the veil so rudely would bring. I expected horned faeries, but got one of the men from the cafe we had fled from the day before. He was the one who had just stared at us and said as we left, ‘You are one hell of a clumsy fool, aren’t you?’. The last time I had heard this was when Tim, the neighbour I love to hate because I find release that way and don’t need to blame myself for my own failings, had said it as my friend. He isn’t my friend; we are diametrically opposed in our thoughts and incompatible, though as someone who had been blinded by lies I had recently told myself, we, for a day, had been blended through similarity.

Aaron led us to a pub in the village, through a building throng of angry and raucous entities. Once inside, there was quiet, as though we were shielded from view and attention.

None of us ordered drinks and we sat at a table.

‘What do you think you are doing?’ Aaron asked as though he did not know that we were scoping the spirit world. ‘You are not making friends here.’

Still lumbered by my passenger spirit, I felt distant from the answer. I wanted to say, I don’t know. Fortunately, I managed to assemble my thoughts and bring up some energy. ‘Finding out who would be useful in a spirit and alien political party.’ As I said it I knew I, we, Hakim and I, were making a mess of things. Gatecrashing has an intent behind it that is born from deceit. Interlopers carry an invisible spirit into innocence, where once entry into the crowd is effected, an open invite for more malevolent spirits is made. Like at a teenagers party while the parents are away, there will be trouble; things will get broken and innocence lost.

Aaron gave us just sufficient information to convince us that he was some sort of observer. His role was to look for heightened activity fomenting in the spirit world that would overspill into the physical world. This happens all the time, which is why I thought about skirmishes when Hakim recently introduced Harrari and I to the spirit of the man I met in the Post Office back in late May.

Covertly, though not bringing any falsehood or obfuscation, he intimated that political parties already have free spirits in them. From his words and my earlier experience with the demons that were stuck in this alternative body brought along by the new and alternative spirit I still had, I understood his words to mean that almost everyone suffers the same malady.

‘You manifested a Brownie to help you. It is an avatar shaped like a representation you had of a helpful spirit-figure. Work on that.’

Of course, Hakim bristled but said nothing. The secret and silent link between us breathed the same thoughts of passivity.

Aaron left by the front door. Hakim and I knew we would never be able to use this village entry-point crossing again and went out the back door of the empty pub. Even skulking, as we did, was not right for us.