

Cessation (*Eclipse*)

The children chattered excitedly, holding up pierced pieces of paper to blot out the sun's corona. Jake was slightly irritated. He'd come here because he thought it would be quiet.

An attractive young girl, at the rear of the clamouring crocodile, broke away, and approached him. "Oh dear! Not the quiet you expected. And I see you brought lunch too. Tell you what, I didn't bring any, if you give me a moment, and you are willing to share, I'll take you to my secret stone. It's quiet, and nice and flat. Your lunch will be out of the dirt and you can balance your flask." He glanced at the children. She smiled. "The others will take care of the little ones." Keeping tight rein on his burgeoning ego, he said "thanks" with as much nonchalance as he could muster, and followed her around the side of the church.

Hitching a shapely rear onto the tomb capstone, she patted the space next to her, and smiled indulgently at his reddening face.

"I don't bite. Vampires don't dare to tread in daylight. Although that will shortly change of course, briefly at least, when the sun goes dark..."

"Come! Be quick! Or we will miss it." He settled next to her. She placed a cool hand on his knee, and leaned across to take a sandwich...

"An eclipse is a moment of magic don't you think? A time of cessation... There were witches once, in this parish. If you go to the local museum, the trials are well documented. Just young girls... Like me perhaps." She arched her eyebrows and patted her heart in mock despair.

"Ironic that priests accused them of practising magic, but bound them in the ground with ritual, and incantations of their own. Sounds a lot like they too were casting spells..."

Do you think spells are weak during moments of cessation? When the world is quiet, and all is still? Surely no magic can be strong at such a time... Sleeping beauty was awakened with a kiss... Do you think kisses can be magical too..?"

She clapped her hands. "Oh listen..! The birds and insects have gone quiet. And look! A black disc is edging the sun. Isn't it eerie..? You know... This tomb was originally outside of the church yard. In unhallowed ground. Her voice became theatrical, a stage whisper. I think a witch was buried here, her soul bound to this grave... Do you think perhaps, a true lovers kiss, in the shadow of an eclipse, might release her soul..? Surely it would be the strongest magic... Kiss me Jake. While the sun is black, and let me go." She leaned close, breath heavy, her lips wet...

Pressing his shoulders, she pushed him gently away. The sun was bright.

"Thank you Jake." Thrusting herself off the crypt, she walked away. His loss was profound.

"Wait..! Your name...?" Turning, she tilted her head, and spoke.

"Look beneath you my love... And remember."

Birdsong drowned her words.

500 words