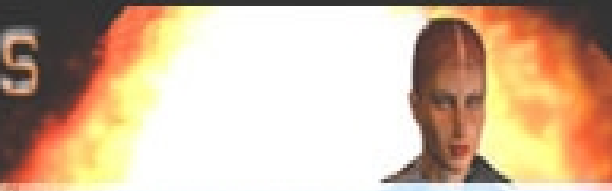


The Larna Fox Adventures
Written By: S J Aucott



The Time Crystal



Prologue
The Continuum Palace

Larna dropped to her knees as a burning pain rushed through her head. The pain was similar to the one caused by the withdrawal of memories by the chair. Only this felt different somehow. It felt like the memories were not only being pulled to the surface, but also yanked from her head completely. She placed her hands on to either side of her temples as if trying to hold the memories inside her head. She was not allowed to stay on her knees for long. A beam of light hit her whole body shortly after she had fallen. It pulled her up into the air swiftly and effortlessly. Her whole body was stretched out to its limits as the light worked right through her being. She floated in mid-air. She was rotated around like an animal being roasted on an open spit. Larna tried not to scream out, but she could feel the whole of her being, being ripped apart from the inside out. Part of her training had been to ignore pain and not show any weakness. Suddenly the instinct to hide her true emotions was gone. She screamed out as loud as she possibly could. Her martial arts training had gone. Larna could not even remember having that training to begin with. Everything about her was changing. Her hair suddenly changed colour. She went from the auburn haired Fox to a stunning blonde. Her figure changed. She lost height and grew a firmer fuller bosom. Her outfit changed also. White silk, lace and PVC replaced the black leather. She still had the short mini-skirt, but it looked even sexier on her fuller curves. Larna was too distracted to notice that the bubble was slowly shrinking in size as it carried out the work. It was collapsing in. By the time Larna's transformations were finished, the bubble was small enough to fit into one of the screens that were on the walls.

The crystal seemed to have a mind of its own. The Guardian was not controlling it at all. He did not pick the screen that Larna was to be integrated into. He did not determine how the crystal transformed her character. He was simply an observer in the whole thing. The crystal could almost be classed as a living entity, with a mind of its own. The bubble was guided across the large cavern towards the walls. Larna was pulled along in the centre of it. While she could not see out, the Guardian could monitor the inside. Larna floated across the room. She could not see anything around her. She then noticed that the bubble was started to flatten. The flat edge was quickly working towards her and collapsing the space that she had inside. She placed her hands over her eyes quickly. She did not want to be hurt. She started pleading and begging for someone, anyone, to come to her rescue and help her. Larna Fox, the mercenary, assassin and proud determined young woman who was more of a damsel that caused distress, had been completely replaced by a cowering damsel 'in' distress. She did not fight as the bubble continued to be squashed into the screen.

The Guardian watched as the bubble slowly hit the screen and Larna was absorbed into the scene that was playing out on it. She was sucked into the screen as if being drawn into a

frame filled with water. The bubble was totally gone after a minute. Larna had also gone. She had been integrated into a new reality. The time traveller was no more.

The crystal slowly dropped down from the ceiling and returned its place on the pedestal table. The light levels returned to what they had been before. The Guardian did not even look toward the screen. He moved slowly back to the chair to return to the crystal. There was one more person he had to integrate into a reality before he could return the crystal to the safety and protection of its flux state. As he moved around the side of the chair he stopped dead in his tracks. Shadow was standing larger-than-life right next to the crystal. Shadow slowly turned her head around to look casually in the Guardian's direction. She did not say a word as her solid black eyes fixed on to the Guardian intently. The Guardian glanced towards the crystal. Shadow's gloved left hand was moving around the crystal in a circular motion as if she was caressing the air around it. He did not know what to do. Shadow was within touching distance of becoming the owner of the crystal. And whoever owned the crystal, basically became time itself.

Chapter One

Paris, France - June 10, 2034

Larna removed her hands from her eyes. The last thing that she had remembered was seeing a strange surface coming towards her. The surroundings were strange. Now she felt the warmth of a summer sun on her skin. She looked up to see clear blue sky above her. She bent her head back and bathed in the heat from the sun. Her long blonde hair cascaded down around her shoulders like a waterfall. The sun hit her bare skin. She was wearing a very skimpy outfit of white silk, lace and leather. The short mini-skirt was barely long enough to cover her buttocks and her skimpy top was hardly on her body. She was showing off a lot of flesh. As she lowered her head, she noticed the body at her feet. She instantly jumped back in shock and horror. Her right hand went straight over her mouth in an attempt to trap the scream inside. Larna tried to regain her composure, but for this Larna Fox, this was the first dead body that she had ever seen. She was not used to seeing this. She slowly stepped back closer to the figure lying on the damp ground of the alley. Larna glanced up and down the alleyway hoping that whoever or whatever had done this was still not around. The alleyway was quiet and deserted. There would not be anyone around to help her if she got into trouble. She peered down at the body. Her right hand returned to her mouth again. She recognised the young woman lying on the ground. She was staring down at the body of her friend. Her friend was motionless on the ground. Her clothes were tore and ripped. Her skirt was up around her hips and her fishnet stockings were ripped and bloody. Her breasts were fully exposed through the shreds of what was left of her leather top. Her blonde hair was matted with blood and wet from the water beneath her. Larna continued to hold her right hand across her mouth. The reason had changed from trying to keep from screaming to trying to prevent herself from being sick. It did not work. She twirled away from the body and threw-up into the trashcans that were in the alley beside her. Larna bent across the cans and wretched her guts out almost. She then heard the laughing coming from further down the alley. Larna slowly lifted her head up from the cans. She peered down the alley with a pale look on her face. Her paleness was not just as a result of being skin, but also because she had heard the voices. They were strangely familiar to her. She could not however quite place them. Her memory was patchy. She had to wonder if she was suffering from some sort of amnesia. There were holes in her memory the size of a tunnel entrance. As she peered down the alley, ten men appeared out of doors on either side. They were all large, well-built men. Each one carried a different weapon in his hand. Larna watched them gather across the alley in pure horror and fear. They blocked the way down the alley completely. There was nowhere for her to go. She glanced in the other direction. She was now cursing herself for coming down into a blind dead end alley. She slowly moved away from the bins.

“Please,” Larna started to beg with a very slight French accent to her voice.

“Oh, is baby frightened?” one of the men asked from the group wickedly.

His statement brought a snigger from the others with him. Larna backed away and almost tripped over the body on the ground. She stumbled back like she was in a trance. She continually shook her head from side-to-side in a vain attempt to stop them from hurting her.

“Please, I beg you, let me go,” Larna pleaded as she pressed her hands together in a prayer position. “I promise that I will not say a word,” she continued hopefully.

“Oh I know you won’t,” a different man then said bluntly.

This man then pushed his way through the group of ten men. He was dressed differently. The others were all wearing well-worn leathers. This man was dressed in a business suit with a long coat over the top. His hair was greased back and his hands were covered with gold rings. Gold bracelets were around both of his wrists. The man looked like he was trying to act rich, but instead was coming across tacky and contrived. Larna increased the ferocity of her headshakes.

“Pierre,” she started with semi relief coming to her voice. “You have got to believe me. I had nothing to do with the police. That was all Marianne’s idea,” Larna expressed as a suddenly memory burst back into her head.

“And look where that got Marianne,” Pierre snapped instantly in a very broad French accent, but speaking perfect English.

“You know that I would never say anything about your operation,” Larna expressed trying to convince her ‘pimp’ to be merciful.

Pierre roughly grabbed a fistful of Larna’s lush blonde hair and yanked her closer to him. He twisted his hand around in her hair violently as he dragged her feet slightly off the ground.

“Just remember who you are speaking to bitch,” Pierre barked sternly. “I can do what the fuck I want with you. I own your ass,” he snarled menacingly. “But, right now, you are more trouble than you are worth,” he added coldly. “These men are looking for some form of payment. I guess they are going to be able to use you as part payment,” Pierre then concluded before swinging Larna around to send her flying towards the group of ten men.

Larna could not stop herself. She crashed right into the middle of the group. She found more hands on her clothes in a split second than she could imagine. Her clothes were ripped in all directions. She was yanked, tugged and pulled around the group of ten like a rag doll. Her screams filled the alleyway. They were matched by the laughter of Pierre and the cries of the men.

The Guardian appeared in the alley right behind the group of ten men. He was wearing his usual outfit that was similar to a monk’s habit. The hood was up over his head to hide his face in shadows and darkness. That had always been the same with the man. He stood well over six foot, but did not have a very stocky build. He could instantly see Larna being pushed around the circle of men like she was part of a pass-the-parcel game. He knew that he could not afford to wait for the music to stop. In this case Larna was the parcel and she

would be unwrapped by the man that she found herself in front of when they decided to stop playing the game. He coughed several times. The men all stopped what they were doing. The yells and cheers fell silent instantly. A pin drop could be heard at that moment. One man held Larna firmly against him. His arms were across her chest. Her arms were pinned by her side and her feet were off the ground. The Guardian glanced up the alley to the dead body further up.

“I see that you have already been busy,” he pointed out swiftly.

“We are not looking for forgiveness father,” one of the ten men growled instantly. “Take your opinions back down that alley and mind your business,” he then concluded sharply.

Pierre moved back to the front of the group immediately. He knew that the ten men were not the best at diplomacy. They were excellent muscle, but if they had half a brain cell between them then that was being generous.

“Father,” Pierre said the moment he saw the monk-like outfit that the Guardian was wearing. “This is a private business matter between myself, these men and the young lady. It is no place for God,” he stated firmly as he moved to stand right in front of the Guardian.

The Guardian looked down at Pierre slightly. He knew when he was facing intimidation tactics. He could read Pierre’s true motives like an open book. The Guardian had a mental ability that could pick up on most people’s thoughts. Pierre was not very good at hiding his true motives. He was also terrible at playing the intimidation card. Pierre lifted his walking stick up and started smacking the end down into his left palm. The Guardian shook his head. That was just another primitive play. Pierre could tell that his words and actions were not having any affect. He shrugged his shoulders. It was a shame. He did not like hurting a member of the church, but this man had to be despatch. Pierre went to hit the Guardian in the stomach with the end of the stick. The Guardian stopped the blow inches from his body. He grabbed the stick and held it firmly in his right hand. Pierre found that he could not move it forward or back. He was astonished by the strength of the supposed religious man in front of him. In the blink of an eye the Guardian snapped the stick out of Pierre’s hand. He twirled the stick around and smashed it across Pierre’s face from right-to-left. Pierre crashed to the ground with blood pouring from his nose and a deep gash right across his face. The Guardian’s head instantly snapped up to the men across the alley. They attacked swiftly.

The men moved quickly, but without thinking. They had not expected the attack on their boss and were now reacting to the attack more than drawing on the stranger to them. Their movements fell right into the Guardian’s plan. The first two men charged at him like lightning. The Guardian twirled passed the first one to send him down his right side. He smacked the second man firmly under the chin with a right-footed rising kick on his way around. Guardian then quickly recovered his balance. He swung his right elbow back to

strike the man coming up behind him in the face. He then twisted his upper body around and grabbed the man's jacket. He pulled him around back to the front and sent him flying into the third and fourth to attack. All three men crashed down to the ground in a heap. Instantly Guardian grabbed the lid of a trashcan to his right. He swung it up in front of his face just in time to prevent a fist from hitting him. The fifth man slammed his hand straight into the lid hard. He bounced back cradling his broken hand gingerly. Guardian swung the trashcan lid around. He smacked the fifth man clean in the face with it. While he slumped down to the ground, Guardian did a full anti-clockwise turn. On his way around he kicked a whole trashcan into the air with his right foot. The can smashed into two of the other men. They caught the can between them before it did much damage. Guardian quickly did a left-footed rising kick into the metal can to smack it back into the men's faces. There were only three men left standing. One was too busy holding on to Larna. Larna was struggling to try to get free. The man holding her was too strong for her to break free. She wanted to try and help this man to rescue her, but she was unable to fight. She did not know how. The man was too shocked and surprised by the actions of the 'priest' figure to really concentrate on Larna. After he had seen most of his comrades beaten, he swung Larna around and slammed her head on into the wall. Larna slumped down to the ground. She was winded, but still conscious. She peered down the alley longingly as she watched her 'hero' coming to her rescue. Guardian quickly launched into a series of front punches. He hit the man on his left first with a stinging right jab then the man on his right with a left. He continued to his pattern until both men had been punched drunk. He then did a running clothesline move. He held his arms out to sides and clubbed both men across the throats to drive them down to the ground. He instantly hit the last man in the chest with a right-footed rising front kick. His boot hit the man and drove him right backward down to the ground hard on his back. Guardian strolled past him to Larna. He held out his right arm to Larna in an offer of friendship.

"I suggest that you come with me if you want to get out of this," he expressed quickly.

He was not worried about Larna fighting him. He knew that she would not have any memory of the judgement that he had put her through. Her past life had been erased. Fortunately, he knew that he was able to restore it and he needed to do exactly that.

Larna did not put up any argument. She grabbed the stranger's arm and used it to get back to her feet. The pair of them quickly went back down the alley. Larna looked down at each man as they went down the alley through them. They were all moaning, groaning and writhing in agony on the ground. She found it amazing that one man had managed to defeat ten. She felt safe with this man. She did not think that he was going to hurt her, not after risking his life to save her from the gang. Guardian quickly pulled Larna down the alley on to the street. They were in a quiet part of Paris. It was a side that the tourists rarely saw.

Guardian turned to Larna quickly. Half of him looked back down the alley to the men they were leaving behind and half looked at Larna.

“Can we go to your place?” Guardian asked firmly.

“They know where I live,” Larna admitted instantly after just a brief glance back to the alley.

“This won’t take long. There is something that I need to discuss with you and it will be better done in private,” Guardian expressed urgently.

Larna shrugged her shoulders. She had no idea what this man could possibly want to discuss. She had never met him before. A complete stranger had saved her life and now wanted to discuss something. A hundred and one things ran through her mind about what the discussion was going to be. The one thing she could be sure of was that she was safer with this man than being left on her own. Larna nodded her head and walked away leading the way back to her apartment. The Guardian watched her walking away with a wry smile on his face. He was feeling a little better now. By the time those men came to pay her a visit, they would be facing a different Larna Fox. He placed his hand into his deep right-side pocket and felt for the object inside. As his hand cupped the object, he felt his confidence reach a higher level. He was doing the right thing. He just had to keep convincing himself of that fact.

Larna quickly rushed inside the front entrance to her apartment block. It looked more like the entrance to a hotel than to a block of apartments. There was a reception desk at the far end of the foyer. A small porter-like man was on duty. He was not smartly dressed like a hotel receptionist would have been. His grimy t-shirt was barely on his skinny frame. His trousers had more holes than Larna’s fishnet stockings had gaps. His hair looked greasy, unwashed and was certainly uncombed. He strolled out from behind the desk with a broad smile on his face. The Guardian could tell that it was this man’s highlight of the day to see Larna walking through the front door. He could not blame the man. A blonde haired Larna Fox was even more of a stunning package than the auburn haired vixen had been. Larna was not extremely happy to see the young man, but she simply tolerated his attention. She liked the feeling of having some degree of power over this man.

“Thank god you are back,” the young man expressed speaking in an American accent that just did not fit the Parisian surroundings. “Who is this?” he then asked turning to look at Guardian standing right behind Larna closely.

“This man saved me from Pierre,” Larna replied honestly.

“Pierre found you!” the young man exclaimed with shock and horror. “What happened?” he asked quickly as he placed his hands on to either side of Larna’s shoulders. “Did he hurt you?” he checked swiftly.

“No,” Larna said quietly with a solemn shake of her head. “This man saved me from the group before they could do anything to me. Marianne was not so lucky,” she reported as

her eyes dropped down to look at her feet. She even started shuffling in her stance nervously.

Guardian just knew that he had to get the spitfire Fox back. The young man quickly rushed back to the desk. He returned with a gun in his hands.

“I told you that it was a mistake to come back here,” he announced with a firm shake of his head. “Marianne paid the penalty, but I am not going to let the same thing happen to you,” he insisted strongly.

Guardian was quite impressed with the young man’s show of determination and heroism. Standing up for the damsel in distress was quite admirable. It was a shame that he would not stand a chance if the group of ten men came to this apartment block. Larna jumped away from the gun with shock and horror on her face.

“What are you doing?” she asked in astonishment.

“I am getting ready. Pierre is sure to come here looking for you and when he does I am going to be ready for him,” the young man replied instantly. “I suggest that you go up those stairs to your apartment, pack your bags and get out of the city as fast as you can,” he suggested directly.

Larna was going to argue. Guardian quickly took her arm and led her away without saying a word. Larna struggled for a moment as she tried to return to the young man standing like a sentry at the door to the apartment block. She soon stopped when she could not slip free from the Guardian’s hold on her arm. Larna then went up to her room under her own steam.

Larna pushed the door to her apartment open and slipped inside quickly. She headed straight for chest of drawers against the right hand wall of the room. Guardian stepped inside the room slowly and carefully. The room was pitiful. There was a basic kitchen than had a single electric ring for cooking, one cupboard, a sink and a tiny fridge. There was no television or radio. The bed was a simple low structure that was basically a mattress with feet. The white blanket on the mattress was screwed up and untidy. Larna was quickly pulling clothes from the drawers like crazy. Guardian slowly closed the door.

“Would you stop that for a moment,” he started as the door clicked shut. “I need you to help me,” Guardian then stated simply.

“You, need ME to help you,” Larna stated after stopping pulling her clothes from the top drawer. She turned her head to the right to look at Guardian with surprise on her face. “What could I possibly do to help you? You took out ten men with ease,” she continued then suddenly realised what the man must have been referring too.

Larna slowly turned right around to face the man. Her hands slowly went to the tiny flimsy straps of the silk top that she was wearing. She started to slip the straps from her shoulders to let the outfit drop away from her body. Guardian quickly darted across the room and stopped her hands before they got half way down her biceps. He slowly took the straps from her and slid them back up on to her shoulders.

“That is not the sort of help I meant Larna,” Guardian said swiftly.

Larna snapped her head back to glare right at the man in front of her. She backed away with an anxious nervous look on her face.

“How do you know my name?” she asked slowly in a very suspicious tone. “I never told you my name,” Larna continued nervously. “Oh my god, you are working with Pierre aren’t you. You attacked those men on purpose. I knew that no one could beat ten men without having some help,” she proclaimed hysterically.

Larna then looked toward the door. Like a startled animal she was looking for the quickest way to get away. Guardian shook his head gently.

“It is nothing like that. I am an old friend of yours,” he pointed out as he slowly removed the hood from his head.

Unlike the last time that the Guardian had revealed his face to Larna, this time he showed his true appearance. He was a silver haired man with an attractive, yet weathered face. Age and wisdom were clear in the lines of his face.

“What are you talking about?” Larna asked wildly. “I have never seen you before in my life,” she protested as her eyes remained fixed on the door.

“Listen to me,” Guardian snapped sharply sending a chill right through Larna’s spine.

She jolted into a firm posture. She was rooted to the spot. That last statement had just gone right through to her soul. Guardian reached inside his pocket and pulled out the object that he had been treasuring. It was a small piece of the crystal that had been used to change the course of Larna’s life. It was only about an eighth of the size of the crystal that had been inside the Continuum Palace. Guardian held out his hand and opened his palm. The small piece of the crystal remained right in the middle of his hand.

“Look at it,” Guardian demanded with a firm nod of his head down to the object in his hand.

Larna’s eyes still did not leave the door. She was acting just like a trapped animal would do. Guardian was crying to calm the situation. He was picking up on her agitation easily.

“Trust me. Look at the crystal in my hand and I swear that everything will be different right after,” Guardian insisted with a friendly smile on his face.

“It’s some sort of sleep inducer isn’t it?” Larna asked suspiciously. “I’ll look into it and fall asleep. You’ll then take me to Pierre without a fight,” she delivered sharply.

“No,” Guardian said with a slow shake of his head. “I told you. I need your help. But, I need to look at the crystal first before I can explain,” he continued calmly.

Larna did not know what to believe. She looked back to the door. She did not hesitate. She darted towards it in an attempt to escape. Guardian lost his patience. He grabbed a fistful of her hair and yanked her head around. Larna screamed out as loud as she could. The young man downstairs watching the door heard the scream easily. He instantly left the door and sprinted up the steps suddenly fearing that he had let the devil in through his door.

Guardian twisted Larna’s head around and flashed the crystal right in front of her eyes. A

bright light flashed across her face. Larna yelled out as a burning pain ripped through her head. Guardian let her go instantly. Larna span away. She slammed right into the wall to the side of the door of the apartment. Both of her hands went to her head instantly. It felt like she was being burnt from the inside out. After only a few seconds she slumped down to floor of the apartment unconscious. Guardian slowly slipped the crystal back down into his pocket as he sat down on the edge of the mattress. It would only take a few moments for the crystal to do its work.

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