The shack at the top of the hill was rattling violently right down to its foundations. Splinters of timber cracked launching rusty nails into the air. The surrounding grass was singed and a single bush sat smouldering as a group of hooded figures moved hastily past it towards the flimsy looking wooden building, ignoring the chaos around them. Winds whipped up their robes but they paid no mind.

As they neared the door, an undulating ring of translucent blue light curved outwards like a wave causing the figures to hunch against the force. At first it seemed they could not penetrate the barrier and there they were held, straining against it. Then, a shower of sparks blasted through the roof sending tiles spinning up into the air and the blue shield melted away allowing the figures to continue their advance.

Inside the house there was devastation everywhere. Tables and chairs lay broken and charred, fixtures and fitting were strewn throughout and a gaping hole in the roof offered a snapshot of the angry sky above. Occasionally a blast of smoke would belch out from underneath a pile of rubbish sending magical looking stars of green and gold dancing into the pall of smoke that seemed to hang in the air.

At the back a desperate looking middle aged man was trying to escape, clambering unsteadily over smashed furniture and crumbling cupboards, making for a door that was already off its hinges and sitting under a frame that was bent out of place. As the hooded figures pushed open the front door, the man was already outside, gratefully taking in great gulps of air as he staggered and nearly fell into a bed of rotting flowers. Looking fearfully behind him he pulled himself forward, careering down the hill and crashing into rows of neglected vegetables. Wild eyed with a mixture of fear and determination, he looked back again, and when he saw that his pursuers had seemingly not yet realised he’d left the building he smiled. His smile was short lived. As he bolted down the hillside, he almost crashed into three other cloaked figures, one of which stepped forward as the man twisted his ankle and yelled as he collapsed into a bed of mouldy looking cabbages.

“You know why we are here,” said the voice of the leading figure. It was a woman’s voice, strong and clear but surprisingly calm.

The man, who seemed to no longer have the strength to right himself looked up shaking his head, “No! You can’t have it – it is mine, my birthright…”

“You have forfeited that birthright by your own hand.”

“But I need it…just a little longer….a few more days, that’s all I’m asking for, I nearly did it, nearly…”

“You have misused your powers and that is simply not allowed.”

“Please….please: I am *begging* you to let me keep it for just a little while. I am nearly done…”

“You *are* done and what you *have* done is unforgivable…”

“I did good….”

“You did wrong, whether it is good or bad it was wrong. You interfered with the laws and balance of nature and now you have forfeited your power.”

The man sat up, begging now; “Please, please; listen to me….I knew if I could get things right…then it would help everyone; don’t you understand – I want to help the whole world!”

“The time for talk has ended. We have made ourselves clear.”

As the sun went down a golden glow filled the side of the hill and before long the figures in dark robes had gone. The house’s decrepit shape made an incongruous silhouette in the evening light while in the cabbage patch below a man sat looking forlorn and lost staring up at the sky.