

Lea Monde

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Rated: R for Restricted

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Chapter 9: The Black Lady

In my days, I've run many different missions. Surviving as a wererat was difficult... it was hard. Most rats with very few exceptions had to work for survival the moment they were fresh from the womb. Due to morality rates by the actions we conducted for ourselves, even suckling the milk of your mother's own breasts wasn't exactly an open prospect. I was lucky enough to still have a mother as a child, I'm lucky enough to still have a mother now.

Mother rejected our entire society's ways, and as such, she was forced to the most menial of tasks... which meant that she was left with the choices of living off the street, or being someone's whore. Instead, she went to live with the humans, which was slightly better for us than living off the street. It was my father who found her eventually. He fell in love with her. A big... nasty... crooked and violent mother fucker that he was, he was still... left changed from my mother's eyes. He was a distant father to me, but I could tell... he was proud... right up to the day we found him skewered on a fence post.

Nonetheless, because he was a master, mother was well taken care of... and her actions had actually opened a new avenue for our people... and the monies that father had stolen in his life time – the klepto – were used to create a supportive group of rats trained by my mother. Though this growing trend didn't have anything more than the first of the seven deadly venoms to protect them from poisons, they did nonetheless have survivability. They were resourceful survivalists, practitioners in healing magics and techniques up to an including the soothing touch of... well... sexual magic.

As it was, my mother had earned a quasi-place of royalty amongst our people, for any team of assassins will tell you, a trained doctor with a scalpel is far more dangerous than a thug with a knife.

Sadly... I wasn't brought up being taught solely by my mother, and instead I was taught almost exclusively by my father... the brick-shitting thistle-furred bastard. I learned all the techniques of my father... and just enough from my mother where I wasn't so completely crass of a person.

Because I could survive... I could do just about any mission that was necessary, and in this mission that I set for myself, I sought information.

So... after sever ladies beds, a couple of fist fights in a pair of bars and getting locked up for the night for drunken misconduct by Cal, I got to meet the Vagrant first hand... and observe him.

In the morning, Cal released me and I trudged back up to the castle, slipped into my room and laid down in the nest to sleep, confident that I'd found out what I needed to know

I awoke lazily, groaning as I rose from the bedding on the fourth day. My breasts brushed against flesh and I smiled down at Madoushi, who... after all his duties were completed, had come to my room and this time I'd rocked his world. And then we went to sleep with each other.

Brushing his hair affectionately from his face, I then laid against him, embracing him while releasing a sigh through my nose as I snuggled, rubbed my cheek against his chest, breasts flattening between us as I snuggled his body.

"You are quite the lover." I moaned... rubbing my pussy against his thigh, wanting more, but then there was a rumbling of the world and the castle shook briefly, a mild vibration in everything that made the windows rattle even.

Madoushi awoke immediately and sat up with me rising with him, and he looked startled and just a little afraid. I palmed his flat chest and shifted my weight so that I could lean my naked form against his.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"Something's different." He said quietly in awe, and then moved immediately and slipped from beneath me, going for his clothes. Jeese he had a big dick...

"Is that bad?" I whined, seeing him go, eyeing his maleness for want of more of him.

"The castle has never shook like this before. Anything effecting the castle... can be catastrophic. And *she's* arriving today.

"Whoa... whoa... what's going on Mad?" I asked, as he pulled on his shirt with his block and tackle hanging over the opened fly of his trousers. I murred as I did some meat gazing.

His meat inside me wasn't some pole so hard that it forced me to open onto it like Lee's was... his was soft enough where it was malleable against the strength of my own sex. Lovemaking felt more communal between us than it did between Lee and me.

Mad finished pulling on his poufy white shirt that was like a pirate captain's shirt as he looked to me, and then sighed.

"You'll learn eventually... I may as well tell you now."

I'd stormed in on Remy who was face first and drooling in his nest of clothes and blankets and pillows in the corner, and yanked him naked out of bed and told him to meet me in Fell's room. Fell was bathing when I stormed into hers and told her to dress, and by the time that Remy arrived, Fell had at least dried off and dressed in the sleeping gown as well as the inner and outer dressing robe.

The castle chose that moment to rumble again.

"Feel that?" I asked them pointing at the ceiling.

"So what? It's a tremor. This place gets earthquakes." Fell mentioned with arms and legs crossed.

“Remy brought something to my attention, and that’s that this place acts in cycles. The first day we were here, did you notice that people’s timing seemed to be uncannily perfect? Open umbrellas right before it began to pour, all in unison, or they’d tip their hats to a person right as they round a corner? They’re expecting it! Tell me you haven’t noticed.”

“I’ve noticed it...” Fell mentioned. “I watched it happen more times than I care to recall when I went into town.”

“I witnessed Drake put down a goblet of his wine,” Remy said.

Fell blinked and turned to him. “What does that matter?”

“The table appeared right before he placed it there.” Remy added and crossed his arms. “They’re expecting everything because nearly everything is happening on a time table.”

“What sort of time table?” Fell blinked.

“Six days.” I replied with arms crossed beneath a bosom that strained the cloth it was in. “Madoushi just verified it to me. He wouldn’t tell me why... but... he urged me to stay in my room tomorrow and not come out of it. He wanted me to even lock the door. Then he ran off and said he had to help prepare for her arrival.”

“Wait. Her... who?” Remy and Fell both said at once before they eyed each other. “Jinx!” And they both paused. “Double Jinx!” and paused again. “Triple Jinx! Quadruple Jinx!” Paused again. “Personal Jinx!” and they both smirked at each other while I stared wide eyed at the exchange. “Jinx-jinx-by-jinx!” another pause. “You owe me a coke.” And they pointed at each other.

“Enough of that! This is serious!” I waved my hands.

“What?” Remy smirked. “You should congratulate me... I’m going to be the proud owner of a coke soon. And none of this Coke Zero bull... I want a Coke with a twist.”

“Then make mine a Cherry Coke.” Fell said.

“Why? So I can pop it?”

“What did you say to me you dirty rat?!” Fell rose to her feet with a bouncing off boobs and Remy made a show of watching them.

“No... you’re doing it wrong. If you’re going to use that saying you need to do it like a nineteen-forty’s gangster. *Ma! Look here see! You dirty rat! Maaaa!*’ If you’re going to insult me then do it right you... overgrown furry pig.”

“I take that personally!” Fell poked Remy in the chest. “I don’t care if stupid science says that bears are most closely related to pigs. It’s a dirty insult!”

“Pig!” Remy shot.

“Sewer Trash!” Fell returned.

“Skank!” Remy retorted.

“SLUT!” Fell screamed, and for a moment, just a moment, I thought I’d have to get in between them... especially when they threw themselves at the other.

But in a burst of passion they were making out and kissing and...

“What... the... hell?” I blanched. “Are you two kidding me?! Focus!” and I clapped my hands fiercely.

“I am focusing...” Remy managed through the corner of his mouth as his hands began penetrating through the layers of Fell’s clothing and I did throw myself between them, pushing the pair of them apart.

“Make out later! This is serious!”

“Oh come on... I was enjoying that.” Remy managed while Fell panted deeply, blushing just as deeply.

“S-Sue’s right.” Fell heaved. “This is serious.”

“Ok fine... but you save that tight ass for later.” Remy said and slapped and cupped Fell’s bottom for a second, making her blush even more deeply.

“This woman is a notable person.” I added. “Whoever it is she’s garnering the respect of even Drake.”

“I’ve noticed that the castle servants are preparing for a celebration but the village isn’t.” Remy mentioned then. “I’ve had some discussions with those in the know. Whoever it is she is a lady... as in a female lord. She’ll be bringing a collection of individuals that are of a royal standing with her. Apparently the Black Lady is also a person that all the villagers fear... downright gets the spooks from, and she ranks higher than Drake, however that may be. I’ve been given the understanding that the Lady and her entourage will be journeying from a long distance away as well, perhaps from another village even.”

“Another village? Another place of purgatory here?” Fell blinked. “I’ve had a run in with Cal. Whoever this Black Lady is, he’s frightened of her.”

“And she’s arriving tonight.” I added. “Apparently... we all get to eat dinner with the master, this woman and their... guests. Whatever happens, on the sixth day something terrible happens, this world gets destroyed and everything starts all over from the beginning. Over and over...”

“Mad... refused to tell me how the world ends, but the look on his face was most dire.”

“Then how do we get out of it?” Fell panted still.

“We need to sunder the castle somehow. Well, we need to sunder the world, but the world is the castle.” I told them.

“Sunder the castle? How do the three of us sunder the castle?” Fell asked.

“I don’t know... but the Devil says I need to do it to escape this place.”

There was a pause in the air before Remy spoke up. “For you to escape this place?” he said carefully. “And what of Fellania or myself?”

There was a pause and then Fell spoke. "Or your man Madoushi."

I blanched, and then bit my lower lip immediately. "I... I don't know. Pen said he saw the three of us walk out... Just the three of us..."

"Though I bet he didn't manage to explain in what condition we walked out though did he." Remy mentioned. "But at least I walk out of this. That's at least a good sign." He paused. "He didn't happen to mention if I collapsed to the ground right after I walked out did he?"

"Or me?" Fell asked.

"He didn't say if I did." I admitted.

"But Buffy... that still says nothing about your beau." Fell said and palmed my back as I held myself tightly.

"Though this is a double edged sword, Pen admits that he's not always one hundred percent right." I said. "I'm... going to hope he's wrong about that. I'm going to prove him wrong for once... because I'm going to take you two, Mad, Alice and Jenny and walk out the front door of this place!" and I turned and headed immediately to the door.

"Who's Alice and Jenny?" Fell asked and Remy shrugged.

"Two little girls." I said as I opened the door. "And don't you worry... it'll all come out right in the end."

"How?" Fell and Remy asked immediately.

"I don't know." I smiled. "It's a mystery." And left them promptly.

Hmm... hot bear ass. No... not now.

"Fellania... though it... *pains* me to a great and excruciating degree... the matter at hand takes precedence of... you and me.... You know."

"I-I... yes... maybe." *She managed and folded her robes tightly about her, closing herself off and I sighed. Damn it.*

"I'll need to do some additional searches, but try and find out what you can. There's something about this hell hole that I intend to find out." *And gripping her powerful woman's hand I bent over it with a sweep of the other hand and kissed it, before running out.*

I must be mad... but why was it that I was glad that, for once, I didn't take the first hint of sex that was offered to me. She was a little miffed, I think... but... something inside me... something... kept me from doing it.

Damn... I'm getting too old for this shit.

“Sue!” Alice cried and hugged her side of the mirror. “I’d hoped you’d come back!” she mentioned and I hugged my side of the mirror.

“Alice... honey... I want to know if you know how to get out of that mirror.” I asked her Straight away.

“I don’t know how to get out.” She said immediately. “And watch.” She disappeared and came back with a large sharp angled toy and struck it against her side of the mirror repeatedly. “It won’t break. Only the Master knows how to enter my room.”

I punched the mirror and shook my hand, biting my lower lip, right before dragging the claws of one hand against its surface, succeeding in creating only a high-pitched noise that made Alice cover her ears from the sound before I stopped.

“Sorry. Alice, is there anything different about your side of the room that you’ve noticed?”

“Well you have a door.” She mentioned. There are bars on my side of the world. I used to be able to squeeze through them, but I became lost in the castle below, and there are... sick men... below my room. The Master had to save me when I went into that part of the castle last time.” She fell quiet a moment. “Mommy, I don’t want to go in there again. I...”

My mouth fell as I stared at her. She called me ‘mommy’...

“Oh baby...” I said and caressed the mirror. “I’m going to get you out of there, and then I’m going to take you from this place.”

“Promise?” she asked gleefully and pressed a hand against the glass. “I wanna go home with you!”

“Promise.” I told her and palmed the glass myself, and decided to add a trial to Pen’s prediction. “I won’t leave this place without you... or your sister.”

Never before... in my whole life... had I been more angry at, or wanted more of, any single man in the whole wide world.

My sexuality was leaping with the start of every day since coming here. Not only was my damn heat six whole months early, but it was coming on stronger than ever, and that... that rat... could’ve done me like he’s been saying so all week, and then he blows me off.

“Damn it!” I growled, gritting my teeth as I gripped my loins with both hands as it shifted and lurched, the column of womanflesh in my navel doing tricks it’d never done before, and when it was over I leaned over one of the tables and panted with both thighs together.

If it wasn’t one thing, it was another with this place. As it was, however, it took me a good half hour at the very least to sooth and control my own body using the meditation techniques taught to me whenever I was in heat. When it was over and I could at least shunt most of my sexuality off to one side before I started getting dressed, breathing long and deep and precise as I did.

Finally, however, I managed to get skirt and blouse on, but when it came to close the cinching string across the bodice I found a problem.

The strings wouldn't tighten all the way.

Letting the strings go and cupping my bodice I found that I was... growing chestier? Growling and taking a deep breath, I drew those strings tight and tied them off to keep the blouse closed before pulling on the corset. Ok... I couldn't breathe too well... but at least I could keep my sensibility intact.

Pulling on the ladies jacket that came with the reddish brown dress and planting the White Oak in my hair, it immediately wove strands of my hair into a new array of striking complexity before I pulled the mid-back train of hair over one side of my bodice.

Sue had been changing too... maybe it was just the castle. First we both loose all our strength and then we both put on like fifteen pounds in the chest region. Someone guiding this castle was a perv. I felt like I was in some insane story written by some pervy insane man who likes pulling the strings of the world like everyone in it like we were all a bunch of puppets.

But nonetheless, I was in this strange, strange play, and I needed to help to find our way out.

Smoothing my dress out, I left to go seek out some breakfast... and perhaps help my friends find out who we could break the world.

Now there's a feat of strength if I ever did here one...

Out in the hallway, looking lovely and strong at the same time, I looked over the servants as they rushed hither and thither, and approached one of them, a French Maid with all her revealing clothing as she curtsied pleasantly before me.

"Am I able to do anything for you miss Fellania?" she greeted with a genuine smile.

"Yes... I would like to know more about someone who I've heard was coming to day. Who is... 'The Lady?'"

"So I'm supposed to just call you mommy? Just like that?" Jenny asked as she drew pictures. "I'm supposed to believe you just because you promise something?" she rose and held a picture aloft for her inspection. "I want to believe you... that doesn't mean I do."

"I will hew this castle in two to get you out." I told her, kneeling beside the glass.

"Will you? Will you fight the Black Lady? Will you fight the master and the three armies?" she asked me sternly.

I blinked in surprise. "Jenny... what do you know of these things? I need to know."

And she rummaged around, picking up papers.

"Six hundred years... I've been trapped in this castle longer than even the Master has been here." She admitted and then spat on the top of one page and pushed it against the barrier to make it stick. "I know things others don't." and

she spat on the next page and the next, applying each to the barrier. "I know things the Master doesn't, and you need to know these things if you're going to succeed."

And then she palmed the back of one of the pictures. "This is the Black Lady." And I saw a woman, wearing a flowing gown of red with long hair that hung nearly to the floor. "She is the darkness... the Master is nothing to her."

"This is the master." And she palmed a picture of Drake. "He's powerful... more powerful than you, and your friends put together. He commands the castle servants... hundreds of dark spawned creatures... an army greater than the legions of Rome."

"You knew Rome?" I asked Jenny.

She paused and eyed me. "I remember... stone columns made of marble stone... beings named Hermes, Puck and Loki." She palmed her forehead. "They... made me do something really, really bad. I... can't remember what. I... was opening something." She shook her head. "It hurts my head to think about that." She stated soundly in her usual confidence... but for the moment that she was describing that image she sounded... afraid.

"This..." and she slapped another drawing baring a familiar face. "Is Sherriff Calhoun. He's a leader of the other army, whether he knows it or not."

"You mean the humans?" I asked.

"Humans? If I know one thing, Susan, is that there isn't a single human being left in Deadwood. They're all dead and gone. By the sixth day, everyone in Deadwood has unwillingly chosen one of these three factions. They are either with the Black Lady, Master Drake, Calhoun... or the castle."

"The castle? What does the castle have to do with this?"

"Everything is based upon the castle, and the third army... belongs to it." And she spat on another sheet and slapped it up, and showed me something that made me immediately rise to my feet and back off in shock.

It was a man, wearing pants and no other clothing. Instead, there were metal plates literally grafted into the man's body, with gauntlets that had filed metal claws on them, and a plethora of spikes across their whole forearms, shoulders and backs. Their faces were masked with metal plates that had been bolted straight onto their skulls. He had wild stringy hair and muscle upon muscle that actually swelled around the plates grafted and bolted and chained to his body. He looked like a heavy death metal guitar player on steroids and crack.

"What in heaven's name is that?!" I gasped.

"Wrong place to reference." Jenny replied with her impish grin. "They're the Lost Ones, or what are called 'The Denizens', the castle's personal defenses. They don't sleep, they don't eat... they just have this untold desire to rip things apart, and they are what everyone fears. They wait in the world between worlds inside the castle's being. But if the castle were to ever break... these maniacs would pour out."

"I'm uncertain what a sexual release is, but the Black Lady refers to their ripping apart of a thing as the only release they get. So they enjoy it, I assume."

"They're monsters! Are they human?"

“Like I said... nothing in Deadwood is human anymore. Everyone and everything is a monster inside.” She eyed me. “Even you.” She smirked.

“And how ‘bout you?” I smirked back.

“Didn’t anyone tell you yet? Why does one trap two little girls where no one, but the Master of the Castle can get to them, and only one of them? Only Alice gets to know the touch of another person, even if it is Master Drake. Why would the castle itself put us aside?” I fell silent immediately. “Is because we two little girls are the biggest monsters in the whole land of Deadwood.”

Fell, Remy and I were situated in the main hall in the late afternoon when she arrived with a torrent of rain falling. I should’ve known something was up when a team of six horses that were each as black as night itself drove up while hauling an elaborate and austere carriage. The driver was wearing a white faceless mask of ivory that covered his whole face while the rest of his head appeared scalded and black. Other than that he was wearing a gentleman’s garb and cloak.

A footman who was likewise dressed as the driver hopped off the back and moved to the door, planting a foot stool by the door and then opening the carriage for the person inside, lowering a step-ladder at the same time that would lead to the foot stool.

The house servitude was sent to collect us all, bring us here... gave us goblets of wine to drink so that we could be present to meet the Lady.

“Have any of you learned anything more about this chick?” Remy whispered quietly to us.

“She’s evil.” Fell answered.

“She’s the reason the cycle continues.” I added.

“Ok... step one in an assassination... discover who your target really is.” Remy mentioned while sipping his wine, right as the Black Lady emerged.

She was dressed in a frilly coat as she lifted a broad umbrella immediately before lowering herself down the steps, taking the white-gloved hand of the footman as he offered it. She stepped onto a red carpet that was already soggy from the rain but un-muddied, which was probably the point, and with head bowed in her black hat and black veil she strode forward purposefully, followed by several more individuals wearing similar finery before the footman closed the carriage, hopped up onto it and the carriage then rolled away.

The courtyard was much more massive now than when we’d arrived. Where Fell and Remy were journeying to the town, I’d remained in the castle the whole time. The courtyard now was complete, with a carriage house and a stable, servant’s quarters for the stables, a multitude of landscaping both simple and complex... but the singular item that remained from when we were first here was the raven-laden dead tree...

Only now the tree looked larger, and there were more ravens on it.

The Black Lady walked forward and collapsed her umbrella, handing it to Madoushi who stood by, taking her coat as she opened it as well as her hat. Her black garb gave way to red... crimson red, with a tight dress that clutched to

her figure that was the figure of perhaps one in a trillion women in the world that we came from. Tall and lean with a rounded hourglass figure accented by wide rounded hips and shoulders and a slender waist, with a large bosom that was a perfect size for her body were both pressed together and hefted in a way that predated The Wonder-Bra by centuries. Her shape as a woman was in a word... perfect. A long-legged and long-waisted Amazon body, arms and legs, with just the right amount of toning muscle.

It was an immortal's body.

The gown she wore was simple, it not coming much higher than the level of her teats across her breasts, but likewise her arms were covered by long red satin gloves. Her hair was long... all the way down to her ankles... and so black light fell right into it and didn't even have a chance to scream.

But she was beautiful. She was unearthly beautiful, the beauty of an immortal woman who's lived for ages and ages. There was a truth about the world, and that is occasionally some people obtain a beauty so grand is that it attracts those of the same sex to them. In all honesty, I was openly contemplating sexual things with this woman... the fact that she was the Black Lady was absolutely nowhere in my mind. Fell and Remy likewise were swooning at her.

"Guests I see, Drake." She mentioned, and her very voice made me shiver, made me tremble and cream. "Hmm... you're most welcome here." She said and held my chin.

She was tall, more than a head taller than me. I wanted to love her.

"You're all welcome here." And I sighed as she moved to Fellania and slid her fingers up and down Fell's thick throat before moving to Remy, lifting her hand which he bent over and kissed.

And then the moment was over as she released me, and I found myself blinking in surprise as the feelings in me washed away as suddenly as they'd arrived.

The procession left the main foyer which in turn left Fell, Remy and myself a little dazed.

"What on earth was that?" Fell whispered fiercely.

"I have to admit that I've never lost my self control so quickly." Remy added at my elbow. "This woman is not a woman. Be wary whenever you're near her."

"I'm beginning to think no one here is human." Fell growled, looking about us. "Have you noticed that there isn't a single mirror around here, other than the ones in our rooms? I tried to find one so that I could make sure hair was straight but I couldn't find one anywhere else in the castle."

"I know of a mirror..." I said quietly. "It's in a room of the tallest tower, but it's a mirror that doesn't reflect anything."

"A mirror that doesn't reflect anything?" Remy and Fell repeated in unison.

"It holds a little girl... Alice."

"Beyond the looking glass?" Remy smirked.

“Pretty much.” I said. “The mirror shows a replica of the room it’s in, but only in complete opposition. Dark things here are light there, and the little girl who lives on the other side has other amenities like more toys, a bed, curtains and such things that aren’t on our side of the mirror.”

“Do you suppose that’s the way out?” Fell asked.

“I... am wary to try.” I smirked. “The little girl on the other side of the mirror talked about the castle’s guardians exists there. They’re horrible, terrible monsters, and given our weakened state I seriously doubt any of us would be able to stand against them.”

“How bad can they be?” Remy mentioned.

“Imagine a deranged homicidal psychopath on steroids and crack laden with grafted body armor with arms filled with spikes and claws attacking you with Olympian retard strength with the speed of a squirrel on Jolt Cola.”

“Damn.” Remy blinked with shock at my description and then shook his head to clear it of the mental image. “So that’s unknown possible exit of last resort then. But back to the no mirrors thing. Unbeknownst to the rest of you, we are in a house of mirrors. The servants are very apt to get every surface to a gleaming military boot-polish shine.”

“Yeah? So?” I replied. “That just goes to show how good they all are at their jobs.”

Remy nodded. “Don’t turn your head, just use your eyes. Using only the reflective surfaces you can see – the brass knobs, the wood floor... count how many of the servants working in the room that you can see in them.” Remy said and sipped at the glass of wine he held in his hand, and Fell and I immediately tried to do what he said.

“I-I can only see the three of us!” Fell replied at last.

“And what does that tell you about the four servants in the room cleaning and washing and setting decorations? What sort of house is kept that has no real mirrors whatsoever... anywhere, other than in specific guest rooms? What sort of creature doesn’t cast a reflection?”

Fell and I came to the same exact conclusion at the same time and spoke in a quiet whisper at the same time.

“Vampires.”

It was getting tense, and it was getting dangerous.

Vampires have long since been the mortal enemies of all lycanthropes. A werecreature’s teeth and claws deal aggravated damage to vampires while a vampire’s teeth and claws did the same thing to us. It was like on a cellular level we were destined to destroy each other. Other than having been made known that vampires exist, I’d never really seen one... and here I was in a house of them. For some reason, and perhaps this was for the best, Fell, Remy and me have been largely ignored by these servants of this coven we were wandering about within, but with the revelation that they were vampires immediately set a stroke of danger upon everything.

I began looking for reflections wherever I went as I passed servants, even Master Drake himself, finding none! None at all! And inside my chest I began to feel my heart break, for if this was a house filled with Vampires... then what if Madoushi was one too!

It got me wringing my hands.

No... no he couldn't be. He was a Lycan like me.

Thinking back to the day that Drake had cornered me, his hands on me as he bent me back... kissing my throat...

I gasped and palmed my neck, looking for bite marks but found none. But then that meant that Mad had saved me! What did he mean that the castle was protecting me? Though the castle was feeding me garlic was one thing, an obvious weakness when it came to Vampires... nonetheless Mad had left his routine duties, the same duties he'd been doing for three hundred years in order to give that warning to his master.

Swallowing, I found myself actually avoiding Mad. Knowing the sensation in my bowels that meant him, I avoided it, moving further and further away from it, not wanting to know as to whether or not he did cast a reflection. But he'd need to. He was a lycanthrope too, after all, wasn't he? He'd changed, true, but I didn't recognize the breed. I had no idea of what animal looked like a combination of a wolf and a tiger like that. Some memory tickled the back of my mind of something recognizable but I couldn't remember it.

Nonetheless, my wanderings eventually led me ever upward, toward Alice's room.

I knew there was a way down along her tower, but I'd never explored it. I couldn't explore it for that matter. As far as I was aware of, there was only one point of access to that tower. There was a walkway that was covered between the doors, and walking along this walkway I paused. To the left of me was that garden with the great pod in its center surrounded by more smaller pods now, but strangely, creeper vines had spilled out of the planter that the great flower bud that the pod was within grew out of. The vines were crawling up walls and across the floors, and I wasn't sure if I was seeing things or not, but those vines seemed to twitch and move to my presence.

Suddenly I had the distinct feeling that I was being watched...

Shivering and moving along, I took only two steps before halting again, for to my right, where there'd been a pair of heavy wrought iron gates that'd been padlocked shut, now were standing slightly ajar with the padlock hanging off one door.

I'd mentioned that curiosity was my bane. Oh it was my bane before I was turned into a full Lycan, but now that I was a Lycan it was even more so. I *had* to investigate curious things like it was some OCD compulsion that even despite that I knew investigating a thing now was perhaps dangerous... I had to look on what was on the other side of a locked door that was now open.

With skirts stirring about my legs, I ventured to the door, pulling it open just enough for it to allow me to enter, and wincing at the squealing sound it created, I slipped inside, my breasts flattening briefly as frontside and backside glanced against the metal doors.

On the other side of the doors was a darkened L-shaped hallway that was elaborately lit with a plethora of candles, and was likewise decorated in a very gothic manner. Dark cherubim were everywhere, the same sorts of cherubim that decorated the ceiling of my room, but instead of being decorated with lutes and harps and flutes, they were

instead armed with bows and arrows, spears and tridents and likewise appeared to be luring and then tormenting both naked men and women foolish enough to come into their clutches.

The men were fully erect, with hard penises curving from their bodies while they were tormented, while the women had thick vulvas and erect nipples atop massive breasts that most women didn't achieve without being supernatural or having implants done. As these men and women were being tormented, they were also being kissed by the cherubim, with some of the human statues having sex with each other, while the kisses that were being done looked more like biting than kissing.

And then I turned a corner in the L-shaped corridor and found myself facing a raised pool, but the pool didn't contain water. Instead... it contained blood. The smell of blood now that I was close to it was dizzying and sickening at the same time, and nestled at the far end of the pool was the Black Lady.

"Ah... Susan is it?" she greeted, her breasts having a film of red on them from the pair bobbing and wobbling as they floated in the viscous life-fluids. "Come to join me?" she smiled.

Her finger tips of either arm stirred the blood, the acrid smell of iron in the air filling my nostrils and making me dizzy from the intensity of it all.

"Ah... n-no... no, thank you." I stammered.

"Pity." She said, and with a sloshing like thick water she leaned forward and stood, but she kept standing, rising till she stood atop the red liquid instead of within it, her form decorated in the red life fluids, and like some Antichrist mocking the One Living God when He walked on water, the Black Lady walked on the red life-fluids toward me. Her naked breasts bounced and wobbled with her every step, those long legs crossing elegantly one foot in front of the other with each step creating a spreading ripple in the red waters. "I could use someone who could join me in my daily baths."

I swallowed and steeled myself from her beauty, the ends of her black hair red from blood, her body beneath the mid-breast covered in blood. She sucked on her fingers to lap the blood off them, the pupils of her eyes shining red as she arrived and then reached out to touch me.

I reviled... and reveled at the same time at her touch. I wanted to nurse from that blood soaked tit and...

I stepped back shaking my head.

"F-forgive me, my lady... but I-I'm not interested in... in..." I forgot what I was going to say.

"Of course you are." She said, her voice a siren's call, and closing her eyes and lifting her hair, suddenly the blood on her body rippled, forming long flowing tresses of a translucent gown that clung to her breasts before her hair rose and wove and she stepped from the pool before me, her body tall and engorged with power. She was sexual, so very sexual that as she approached I lifted my hands to stop her, but she merely pressed those tits of hers right into my hands.

"I can give you everything you want, Susan. All you need do is let me in."

Let her in. A requirement of vampires... they could do nothing lest you invited them in. But her breasts were perfect; her scent was alluring, her teats in my palms made me horny. I wanted to... I wanted to...

“N-no!” it was the most terrible thing I’ve ever done. It was the hardest, most painful thing I’d ever had to do. Not even my most recent tension with Lee amounted to this. “I have to go.” And I turned and hurried away, hearing her chuckling darkly beneath her throat as I surged out of that place.

And then I became aware of a sickness that slipped from me, deep in the pit of my stomach along with all the sensations I’d had. It was like being cured of something foul inside me, and I needed medicine from it. So surging out of that place, holding my breath almost the whole way, I opened the door to the next tower and picking up my skirts hurried up the stairs two steps at a time till I came to Alice’s room.

And of course, the first word out of her mouth was music to my ears and it squashed the Black Lady’s sickness in an instance!

“Mommy!”

As a werebear, I was attuned to the natural order of the world. We were one with the forest, one with the Earth, and ever since that Black Lady arrived, I’d felt a sort of tenuous balance that had existed in the world suddenly tipped into the very bad. It was like the very world was being corrupted by her sheer presence.

I could feel it, I could sense it trying to crawl its way into me, and being aware of it I pushed back... but just enough not to draw attention.

But being aware of the situation, I was starting to contemplate certain measures of it.

The Vampires in the castle, some strange Lycanthropes in the town below... this place was powder keg. History stated that whenever there was a battle, there required a leader of either faction to instigate a fight.

Wanting to investigate more, White Oak shifting into an umbrella shape that I could hold on my walk down the mountain, I searched for Marshal Cal’s jail, and finally found him again, only to find him and his deputies wrapping themselves up with bandages.

“Marshal... what happened?”

“Damndest thing I ever did see.” *The Marshal mentioned, his deputies all nodding in turn.* “Never saw a man so desperate to escape before. Vagrant literally bent the bars outward and slipped through from the inside. Took me and all my men to restrain him. We got pretty banged up restraining him again... but not after we emptied our revolvers into him.”

“Y-you shot him?” *I gaped, and then looked at their bandages, biting my lower lip as I saw bite marks and scratches. It was ok so long as there wasn’t a full moon out tonight. But... I couldn’t tell if there was. The world felt so wrong.*

“Suren’n we did, miss.” *One of the deputies, a young man, said as he fingered a wound on his forehead that’d been covered by a bandage.* “Thirty two rounds, and he still ain’t dead.”

“Still not... dead?” *I repeated. Even being shot thirty-two times would leave me hurting.*

Lycanthropes weren't like they made us out to be in the movies. A Lycan can still be killed if you blow him up or burn him. Only the strongest of healers could pull themselves back together after being blown up. It was all a matter of overloading the healing factor... and I was pretty sure thirty two bullets would do it.

"I need to see him." I mentioned, and turned toward the cells.

"Missy wait... darn it..." Cal began but I'd already surged past them and into the cells, finding Vagrant sitting on the ground, still breathing, wheezing for air and occasionally gurgling, but what was happening right before my eyes was unmistakable.

He was healing through it. Even as I watched, a bullet... a bullet in his freaking head! It was pushed out and fell to the stone floor with a clink before the brain matter, skull and flesh knit themselves together.

"T-too late. Too late." Vagrant panted. "It's too late. The world is over, everyone dies... they die again. The eyes. The eyes are here. It's too late... for everyone."

He was wrapped in ropes and chains like a straight jacket, there were bullets laying all around him, lead bullets.

"What do you mean? What's too late?" I asked with some trepidation.

"He's a loony. And not right. How does anyone live through something like that?"

"You're all dead, we're all dead. It starts again... it starts all over again, just like it always starts, and it begins with you, Marshal Calhoun. You will lead the war, you will lead everyone to the slaughter, it's all your fault... all your fault... for not killing me when you had the chance." And Vagrant coughed up some blood and laughed as it spilled down his chin, and then almost lazily he slumped back against the wall... unconscious... or maybe finally dead.

"Silly bastard." Cal mentioned while I frowned at Vagrant. "Best you leave no miss. The only thing I can think to do now is burn him to death. I won't have that maniac no matter what the law says now. He's not right."

I looked to Cal, leveling my gaze on him, and wondering if he'd taken to action earlier, would whatever Vagrant had said would happen, would happen. Ultimately, I stepped away from him and was led out of the jail, Cal giving his goodbyes and then shutting the door behind me.

Standing there for a moment, I then lifted my head, only to see Remy squatting atop the horse hitch, his bare feet spread in such a way that he remained perfectly still on the rounded surface while petting one of the horse's manes.

"What are you doing here?!" I snapped and then composed myself. "Sorry."

"No need to apologize, Fellania... I understand completely. Stresses within you and without... I can imagine you're near the threshold of sanity. Lord knows I fell across that threshold shortly after arriving here."

I calmed myself. "But what are you doing here?"

"Testing theories. You may have your thoughts, I have my thoughts, and my thoughts include the same thing you're probably thinking right now."

"How is that man still alive?" I said aloud and Remy nodded.

“There are only two possibilities. One... is that he’s a Lycan of exceeding power or age. Given the length of time some of these people have been here for, that’s not impossible, but unlikely, especially given that that power requires the body to age. The bodies don’t age past six days here for whatever reason. He’d have to have been especially powerful *before* coming to Deadwood.”

“And the other reason?” *I asked.*

“A fear. A very great fear. About two hundred years ago, the last of a very virulent and artificial strain of Lycan breeding was hunted down by all the good-natured creatures of the world. But this place has been here for six hundred years. It’s possible that that particular... breed... could’ve survived here...”

“No.” *I breathed.* “No... no it can’t be true.”

“Go back up to the castle, Fellania. I’ll...”

“No. If it’s true then I’m going to stay here with you.”

“Yes!” *he said sternly.* “If it is true, then you need to be with Susan. We both can’t leave her in that coven alone, and I travel far faster than you do.” *I hesitated.* “Fellania... You’re her lifelong friend. It’s more befitting for you to be there than I am. After all... I’m nothing more than a thief.”

I hesitated again, and then stepped to him, and palming his forehead, hesitated one more time, contemplating where to put it, thought to put it on his lips... but finally tilted his head downward and kissed him between the brows.

“You don’t come back... and I swear I’ll find you and kick your ass.”

He palmed my hips and laid his head against my chest briefly, his hands moving ever so slightly from holding my hips to nearly embracing me.

“Fellania... if I don’t come back... then I’m dead. No go... quickly. Something very, very bad is about to happen... and I don’t... I can’t...”

“Hm... that’s cute. You’re worried about me.” *I smiled to him as I stepped back so we could look at each other.*

He smirked. “No... I’m just being selfish. I don’t... want to lose another friend.”

“You’ve seen the Black Lady.” Jenny said in her dark, girl’s voice as she sat in the center of the circle, black shoes projecting beneath the white skirts and the red dress she still wore.

“I have.” I said, cupping the elbows of either arm with either hand while my voluminous chest hung over those arms. I’d stopped trying to tie the gowns so tightly anymore, and so there was now a crack of cleavage showing since the pair had grown so. It was like I’d become the barmaid or the princess in most male Gamemaster’s renditions of a fantasy setting. “Who is she? She must have a name... I dare not ask her directly or even Master Drake.”

“Lilith.” Jenny mentioned and I turned back from pacing around the circle to stare at her.

“Lilith? I... I know that name. Like Lilith Fair... but I don't think a fair about Goths was made after her for her being nice.”

“The Black Lady is also known as the Queen of the Damned. She's the most unholy of unholy creatures that walks the Earth... she is Lilith.” Jenny got to her feet and approached me with several drawings in hand. “She's the one who did that.” And she pointed to the nearly upside down crucifix. “One legend speaks that in the beginning, spoken of in the Book of Genesis, after God created the whole world and then rested, he placed in the Garden of Eden Adam. But what this legend alludes to is that next to Adam, created at the same time as Adam, was made a help-mate... a woman... and her name was Lilith. Adam wished to lie with her, but Lilith, who was made as equal to Adam, refused to be subservient to Adam like she was commanded to, refused to lie beneath him, and so the Lord God cast her out of Eden and instead made Eve to replace her.

“Though Lilith was black-haired and physically equal to Adam, Eve was everything Lilith wasn't, and Lilith didn't like that. Eve was blonde haired, possessed greater femininity and was physically inferior to Adam. She cleaved unto Adam openly and willingly without hesitation and he took her without a second thought. Lilith was immediately forgotten by Adam.

“But Satan himself, after tempting Eve who thusly tempted Adam, after being cast out of the garden, thusly sought out Lilith. Lilith sold all that she was to Satan, laid with the Prince of Lies, and she drank from his blood and became like unto a goddess. Or... at least that's how the Black Lady herself tells it. She even rewrote the bible itself to tell *'her story'* of everything that *'really happened'*.”

“And what's the truth?”

Jenny smirked.

“Though she says that she was made at the same time as Father Adam, that is of course a heinous lie. But what more do you expect from the woman who learned at the feet of Satan instead of the feet of God? Everything that exits that whore's mouth is a lie, or is being used to corrupt a person. She wasn't Adam's sister, but rather his daughter. The bible tends not to record what happens to women in its pages... so Lilith was never mentioned... nor were the many other daughters of Adam and Eve.

“The Black Bible that Lilith wrote, however... describes the truth perfectly.”

“The Black Bible?”

“Also known as the Bible of Hell. It is a mockery of God's Word, but nonetheless there isn't a single lie in the Black Bible. Its Revelations tell of a different possibility of Armageddon... if the denizens of Hell win instead of Heaven. But likewise... they paint a different Genesis too.

“Kain and then Able were born from Adam and Eve, but unbeknownst to the world is that Lilith was born of Adam and Eve first, born before even Kain was. She became the seed of man's destruction.”

Jenny began to apply her drawings to the barrier before me, showing rather detailed examples of birth and suckling of a child with black hair from a truly beautiful woman of blonde hair and a powerful man of chestnut hair.

“She was born first... before Kain, and her heart was dark and black... because she carried all of the corruption of the fallen Day Star that was Lucifer that was in Eve. She bore every last bit of every dark thing she held because of that first corrupting sin of all of mankind, and of course that sin needed to be expelled from the pure woman that Eve

was, corrupted in her innocence. Lilith was raised to adulthood, and was a woman when she first tempted her father, only to be shunned and turned away. Her hatred of the experience led her to lie about it. Instead she directed her attentions onto her younger brother, Kain.

“She spoke lies to Kain, tempted him to hate their youngest sibling Able, in whom God found the most favor in. Her teachings soon led Kain to begin to cheat the Lord till his offerings of sacrifice were rejected even... and of course Able’s weren’t. Seeing this, Kain became insanely jealous, especially when Able reproved him for attempting to cheat the Lord, and slew Kain.”

Another picture, of Kain beating his brother to death with a nude Lilith laughing at it from afar.

“It was Kain who was punished by the murder, and Lilith laughed that she could even manipulate God the Father, that despite that she instigated it, her younger brother was the one who was punished for it. Feeling greater than a God even, she left and followed Kain, and in his punishment she was the one who comforted him, soothed him with lies, laid with him and invented the word ‘*carnal*’ with him. But Kain awoke to her lies, saw them for what they were, and forced her to leave. Kain spent the rest of his days trying to make up for killing his brother, but Lilith’s damage had already been wrought.”

Two figures, a dark-skinned male one and a porcelain skinned female one were intertwined in hard violent sex was posted.

“Lilith consorted with Lucifer further, learning the arts of witchcraft and demonology... and she absorbed these powers unto herself, drinking the blood of the Dark Prince himself and growing stronger and stronger... stronger and stronger... till at long last her insanity became the architect of this... place.” And Jenny lifted her hands and indicated the world around her. “She’s wrought a great many evil things in the world before she began this place, Susan. She’s a monster that needs to be put down, and though I suspect her of being the Antichrist, I certainly hope she’s not. For if she isn’t... then she can be put down. But if she is... then she cannot be put down till the End-of-Days.”

“I’d be glad to do that for you Jenny.” I replied.

“For me... for my sister... for everyone.” Jenny replied, and then planted an image of Drake.

“Many call him the first of his kind. But he’s really the second. Master Drake was born of her loins, but despite that, and though there was a period of time where he was a ruthless and stalwart knight of hers, really committed to the condition and evil of their race, six hundred years in this prison has changed him and his wives. You may find an ally in him.”

“B-but why him, Jenny?”

“Actions speak greater than words, Susan. Why does he protect Alice and me from her? Why does he actively attempt to thwart her at every cycle?”

“Freedom?”

“Perhaps. And despite how pessimistic as I am, Susan... I conclude that he is nonetheless... penitent. Given such... if he’s penitent enough and you can gain the Master of the Castle as an ally... then quite possibly Lilith can be thwarted and this never ending nightmare can end.”

The bars of a jail cell weren't something that could keep a rat away, though in all honesty... this was the first time I could ever recall breaking into a jail.

Just like cats, the skeletal system of a rat is malleable, flexible. The larger a creature is the harder that their skeleton has to be. An Elephant would have no hope to squeeze through a space smaller than it. A bat, however, could squeeze through a gap no thicker than a pencil eraser. A mouse could squeeze through a gap no thicker than a human pinkie... and a rat could crawl through a pipe the side of their head.

So like Halley Barry in Catwoman, I squeezed through them bars...

The Vagrant was sitting down in the corner of his cell, apparently out cold, and coming to squat down in front of him at a respectful distance, I prodded him with a stick in his brain pan.

"Hey... hey, wake up fucker." I said and Vagrant slowly lifted his head and opened his eyes.

Even as he opened his eyes, I saw the thing that definitely enhanced my fear of the matter at hand as his eyes shone a deep red now.

"What... do you want... dead man."

"I want you to tell me... everything you know about what's about to happen. Don't spare any of the gory details, I want to know everything."

"And if I don't..." he smirked.

"How 'bout if you do... then I'll kill you." And I gently placed a long throwing knife into the wood before me. The glint of silver was more than apparent. "And if you don't... well... the transformation itself is artificial, so since it's not natural it must hurt like a son-of-a-bitch... and combine that with your body getting crushed amidst those chains and ropes... yeah... I don't envy you changing like that."

"Chains and ropes will mean nothing if I change." He chuckled insanely, though now that I looked at it, it seemed as if he were sobbing. "I'll tell you... everything."

Time in this place drew out like a blade ready to strike you down. Every tick and every tock was filled with a sensation of an approaching impending doom, like the scythe of a pendulum blade on its water weight with the water drip-drip-dripping away, and with every drop the scythe lowered a little bit more.

There was a knock on the door.

Without thinking I rose and walked to the door, pulling it open, only to find Madoushi standing there before me with a small smile on his face as he looked at me. I was taken aback by his appearance... I knew not if he was taking time out of his schedule or not, but if he was he was coming to see me in danger of his own health.

“Mad... I...” and then I stopped and deliberately removed my hand from the doorknob, opening the hand one finger at a time in a tenuous anticipation I couldn’t make go faster. Believe me, I tried. But one finger after the next revealed the reflection of the brass doorknob, showing my shapely figure represented there... but as well as his.

With a gasp of elated relief I immediately surged straight into him, tears of glad tidings and joy like none I’d ever felt seeping from my eyes as we embraced and he kissed and hugged and held me tightly.

“What brought this on?” he whispered into my ear.

“I worried... that... you weren’t who you were.” I replied, again acting without thinking, this time because I was so overjoyed. But then he was gently pushing me off, holding me by the shoulders at arm’s length to look in my face.

“Why... would you think that?”

“Well... I... this place is so strange and...”

“And what changed your mind?” he asked then.

“Y-your... reflection in the door knob?” I ventured cutely for a moment, but stopped trying to be cute when a frown curved his face downward.

He pushed me forward and shut the door behind him.

“You’ve figured out more than I hoped you would... but then I shouldn’t’ve tried. You’d’ve just figured it out eventually anyways.” He took a deep, deliberate breath and let it out slowly. “The Dream Time is a land of living nightmares here, Susan. It’s all I can do to keep myself from experiencing it, I didn’t want you to, but it appears as if things are standing against me. It’d be best that you and your friends stay in your rooms after tonight. It’ll spare you much of what will happen.”

I slid into him, gripping at his jacket vest with my long fingernails. “What will happen?”

“No...” he said immediately trying not to look at me.

“But...”

“I said no!” and he closed his eyes shaking his head fiercely, and I immediately stepped back from him, angry.

“You know I’m not weak just because I’m a woman.” I growled. “If I had my true strength to me then...”

“I’ve seen enough to know that women are just as equally capable as men in causing as much good and as much harm in the world.” Madoushi said immediately. “Three hundred years ago this would be some chivalrous thing, perhaps it is now at least in part, but I don’t want you to experience this, b-be...” and he stopped and hung his head.

I stared at him, sensing it. “Go on. What were you about to say?” I asked anxiously, my heart falling right into the pit of my stomach with the anxiety. I thought he was about to call me his... beloved. Oh please... please Mad don’t be like Lee.

“Nothing.” He said and I sighed. Great... another guy with commitment problems. “Sue, the Master and the Lady wish to have you and your friends for dinner.” Mad said then, and I blinked before my eyes went wide.

“Please rephrase that.” I begged.

The thought of a bunch of vampires wanting me for dinner didn’t quite make me feel so good. Made me want to throw up actually.

Mad lifted his gaze to me, saw my expression and blanched. “Oh... wait! Sorry I meant, they would like you to *attend* dinner.”

“That makes me feel a whole lot better Mad... really.” I admitted and wrung my fingers again. “I suppose I don’t have a choice...”

“You do... but do you really want to insult your hosts?” Mad replied and again he came to me and cupped my shoulders.

I remarked on what Jenny had said that I should try to get Drake as an ally. Though Alice was still a little girl, Jenny at least had aged into the mentality of a grown woman inside that little girl’s body. I knew her understanding of the situation was much greater than my own.

“No... I don’t.” I replied lifting my hands and gripped his vest coat again, this time I rose up on tip toes to kiss him. “Come see me tonight.” I told him.

“I’ll definitely try.” He mused, and kissed me back again.

The absolute unyielding desire for him inside me had waned steadily. Oh I wanted him in me again, that was for sure, but I felt able to resist it now. His previous protrusions into my body had fed the powerful hunger, and now I merely wanted to dine at his banquet instead of engorge at it. So when he stepped away I let him go, and he revealed an evening gown for me to wear that wasn’t hanging over his arm when he entered.

“This should suit you. I had the servants make it for you.”

I smiled and stepped over to it, feeling the silks and fine lace. “You always get me the most beautiful things.” I smiled.

“If I were more able... I would shower you with gifts and affections... but fate, it seems, has had a cruel twist in our lives.”

I looked to him and smiled. “Fate, it seems, has a cruel sense of humor. And according to a friend of mine, he also cheats at cards.”