

The Master Race

By

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Unrated Version: This is the version minus the training wheels. As a rule, there is no capitalization of words which have additional meanings specific to this book. You'll just have to put your thinking caps on and figure it out. Or you could just use the enclosed glossary.

Examples of words including all of their implied tenses which have additional meanings specific to this book are: army, associate, believer, book, collateral, change, chosen, church, crank, crimson, dead, death, devices, die, earth, embrace, family, first, glasses, grimm, hard, heads, hogs, hunger, infernal, kill, kiss, law, lurid, made, mafia, marine, military, mistress, mob, moll, moon, optical, pretend, pretense, prime, race, racial, rapture, readers, reaper, redemptive, reform, reformist, research, rook, saint, sanctified, sanctify, save, scan, secondary, scum, suit, tank, temptation, thug, thirst, thirsty, took, trooper, visor, way, whispers, zealot. Then, again, I also lie. Capish?

In the Beginning

Haven is a dark city.

The narrow streets huddle together. The plain stone and timber buildings lean on each other for support. Out leaning upper stories bow to each other like tired old men shutting out the light but, even in the shadows there is little relief from the midsummer heat. The glaring suns scorch down on the sprawling city, driving all moisture from the air. The streets are parched and dusty, and thick with the buzzing flies. Being a seaport, Haven usually gets all the rain it wants, and then some, but not in midsummer. The long days wear on, and the baking heat makes them a misery of sweat and thirst and endless fatigue. The days are too hot for work and the nights are too hot for brawling. Birds hang on the sky like drifting shadows, but there is never a trace of a cloud or a breeze. Haven at midsummer is a breeding ground for trouble. The heat stirs men's minds and brings forth hidden evils. Everyone watches the sky and prays for rain, and still the long dry summer drags on.

Hawk and Fisher, captains in the city Guard, stroll unhurriedly down Chandler Lane, deep in the rotten heart of the North Side. It's much too hot to hurry. The grimy overshadowed lane is a little cooler than most, which means that the heat is only unbearable. Flies hover over piles of garbage and swarm around the open sewers. The squat and ugly buildings are black with soot from the nearby tannery, and the muggy air smells strongly of smoke and tannin.

Hawk is tall, dark, and no longer handsome. He wears a black silk patch over his right eye, and a series of old scars run down the right side of his face, showing pale against his tanned skin. He wears a simple cotton shirt and trousers, but doesn't bother with the black Guardsman's cloak required by regulations. It's much too hot for a cloak, and anyway, he doesn't need one to tell people he's Guard. Everyone in Haven has heard of Captain Hawk.

He doesn't look like much. He's lean and wiry rather than muscular, and he's beginning to build a stomach. He wears his dark hair at shoulder length, swept back from his forehead and tied with a silver clasp. He has only just turned thirty, but already there are a few streaks of grey in his hair. At first glance he looks like just another bravo, not as young as he once was, perhaps a little past his prime. But few people stop at the first glance; there is something about Hawk, something in his scarred face and single cold eye that gives even the drunkest hardcase pause. On his right hip Hawk carries a short-handled axe instead of a sword. He is fair to midland with a sword. He is very good with an axe.

Captain Fisher walks at Hawk's side, echoing his pace and stance with a naturalness of long companionship. Isobel Fisher is tall, easily six feet high, and her long blonde hair falls to her waist in a single plait. She is in her mid to late twenties and very beautiful – like a painted lady of the stage – an actress.

There is harshness to her pretty face that complements her deep blue eyes and generous mouth. Like Hawk, she is wearing a cotton shirt and trousers. The shirt is half-buttoned to show a generous amount of bosom, and her shirt sleeves are rolled up, revealing arms that firm and fit, like the rest of her supple body. You'd expect her arms to be corded with muscle and lined with old scars. The arms, like the body, look like they belong to a dancer, instead of an experienced swordswoman. She wears a sword on her slim hip, and her hand rests comfortable on the pommel.

Hawk and Fisher; partners, husband and wife, guardians of the city law. Known, respected, and mostly feared throughout Haven, even in the lowest Northside, where the very rats go around in pairs for safety. Hawk and Fisher are the best, and everybody knows it. They are honest and hardworking, a rare combination in Haven, but more important still, they are dangerous.

Hawk looks about him and scowls slightly. Chandler Lane is deserted, with not a soul in sight, and that is, unusual. The afternoon is fast turning into evening, but even so there should be people out selling and buying and making a deal. On the lower Northside everything is for sale, if you know where to look. But all around, the doors and shutters are firmly closed despite the stifling heat, and the shadows lay still and undisturbed. It's like looking at a street under siege. Hawk smiles sourly. If his information is correct, that just might be the case.

"There's going to be a full moon, tonight," Fisher says quietly.

Hawk nods. "That'll bring out the crazies. Though how anyone has the energy even to plan a crime in this heat is beyond me."

"You do realize that this is probably nothing more than a wild goose chase, don't you?"

"Not again, Isobel, please. The word is that she's hiding right here, at the end of the street. We have to check it out."

"Three months," Fisher says angrily. "Three months we've been working on that child prostitution racket. And just when we're starting to get somewhere, what happens? The word comes down from above, and we get pulled off the case to go looking for a Nosferatu!"

"Yeah, Hawk says. "And all because we raided the Nag's Head. Still, I'd do it again, if I had to."

Fisher nods grimly.

The Nag's Head is a hole-in-the-wall tavern on Salt Lane, just on the boundary of the Eastside slums. The upper floor is a brothel, and the word was that they were interested in acquiring children. Cash in hand, no questions asked. Child prostitution has been illegal in Haven for almost seven years, but there are still those with a vested interest in keeping the market open. Like many other places, the Nag's Head keeps itself in business by greasing the right palms, but one man made the mistake of trying to buy off Hawk and Fisher. So they had paid the place a visit.

The bravo at the door tried to bar their way. He was either new in town, or not particularly bright. Hawk gave him a straight-finger jab under the sternum. The bravo's face went very pale and he bent slowly forward, almost as though he was bowing to Hawk. Fisher waited till he was bent right over, and then she rabbit-punched him. The bravo went down without a murmur. Hawk and Fisher stepped cautiously over him, kicked in the door, and burst into the Nag's Head with cold steel in their hands.

The staff and patrons took one look at them and a sudden silence fell over the crowded room. Smoke curled on the stuffy air, and the watching eyes were bright with fear and suppressed anger. Hawk and Fisher headed for the stairs at the back of the dimly lit room, and a pathway opened up before them as people got hurriedly out of their way.

Three bravos crowded together at the foot of the stairs with drawn swords. They were big, muscular men with cold, calculating eyes, who knew how to use their swords. Hawk cut down two of them with his axe while Fisher stabbed the third cleanly through the heart.

They stepped quickly over the bodies and pounded up the stairs. The upper floor was ominously quiet. Hawk and Fisher charged along the narrow landing, kicking open doors as they went, but most of the occupants were long gone, having disappeared down the fire escape at the first sound of trouble.

One of the prostitutes hadn't been able to get away. Hawk found her in the next to last room. She was dressed in torn silks that were too big for her, and wore gaudy colors on her face. She was chained to the wall by the throat, and her back ran red from the wounds of a recent whipping. She sat slumped against the wall, her face pressed against the rough wood, crying softly, hopelessly. She was almost twelve years old.

Fisher joined Hawk in the doorway, and swore angrily as she took in the scene. The chain was too heavy to break, so Hawk levered the bolt out of the wall with his axe. Fisher tried to comfort the child, but she was too frightened to say much. She'd been abducted in the street two years ago, and had been brought to this room. Her abductors put the chain around her neck and locked it.

"There's a man who comes to visit me," she said quietly. "He was here, today. He'll never let me go. You can't protect me from him. No one can. He's important."

She didn't know his name. No one ever told her their name.

Hawk and Fisher never did find out who he was, but he must have influence. Only two days later, the child was stabbed to death in the street. Her attacker was never found. Hawk and Fisher were officially taken off the case and sent to join the other Guards searching for the supposed Nosferatu that was terrorizing the Northside. They raised hell with their superiors, and even talked about quitting the Guard, but none of it did any good. The word had come down from somewhere high above, and there was no arguing with it. Hawk and Fisher had shrugged and cursed and finally gave up. There would other times.

Besides, it seems like there really is a Nosferatu. Men, women, and children have been attacked at night, and occasionally bodies are found with no blood left in them. There are dozens of sightings and as many suspects, but none of them has led anywhere. And then a lamplighter had come to see Hawk, and there was no denying the horror in his voice as he told Hawk and Fisher of the dark figure he'd seen crawling up the outside of the house in Chandler Lane.

"All the Guards in Haven, and that man had to choose us to tell his story to," Fisher grumbles. "Why us?"

"Because we're the best," Hawk says. "So obviously we're not afraid to tackle anything. Even a Nosferatu."

Fisher sniffs. "We should have settled for second best."

"Not in my nature," Hawk says easily. "Or yours."

They chuckle quietly together. The low, cheerful sound seems out of place in the silence. For the first time Hawk realizes just how quiet the empty street is. It's like walking through the empty shell of some village abandoned by its people but not yet overgrown by the forest. The

only sound is his and Fisher's footsteps, echoing dully back from the thick stone walls to either side of them.

Despite the heat, Hawk feels a sudden chill run down his back, and the sweat on his brow is suddenly cold. Hawk shakes his head angrily. *This is no time to be letting his nerves get the better of him*, he thinks.

The House of Usher

Hawk and Fisher finally come to a halt before a decrepit two-story building almost at the end of the lane. Paint is peeling off the closed front door, and the stonework is pitted and crumbling. The two narrow windows are hidden behind closed wooden shutters. Hawk looks the place over and frowns thoughtfully. There is something disquieting about the house, something he can't quite put a name to. It is like a sound so quiet that you almost miss it, or a scent so faint that you can barely smell it. Hawk scowls, and lets his hand fall to the axe at his side.

Nosferatu, revenant, that which returns.

He's never seen one of the undead, and doesn't know anyone who has. He isn't altogether sure that he believes in such things, but then, he doesn't disbelieve in them either. In his time, he's known demons and devils, Lycans and undines, and faced them all with cold steel in his hand. The world has its dark places, and they are older by far than anything that man has ever built. And there is no denying that people have disappeared from the Northside of late, and one person in particular.

"Well?" asks Fisher.

Hawk looks at her irritably. "Well what?"

"Well, are we going to just stand here all afternoon, or are we going to do something? In case you haven't noticed, the sun is getting bloody low in the sky. It'll be dark inside of an hour. And if there really is a Nosferatu in there."

"Right. The undead rise from their coffins when the sun is down." Hawk shivers again, and then smiles slightly as he takes in the goose flesh on Fisher's bare arms. Neither of them cares much for the dark, or the creatures that move in it. Hawk takes a deep breath, steps up to the front door, and knocks loudly with his fist.

"Open in the name of the Guard!"

There's no response. Silence lay across the empty street like a smothering blanket, weighed down by the heat. Hawk wipes at the sweat running down his face with the back of his hand, and wished he'd brought a water canteen. He also wishes that he'd followed regulations for once and waited for a backup team, but there hadn't been time. They had to get the Nosferatu while she still slept. And besides, Councilor Trask's daughter was still missing. This is why finding the Nosferatu has suddenly become such a high priority. As long as she'd kept to the poorer sections of the city, and preyed only on those who wouldn't be missed, no one paid much attention to her.

But once the Nosferatu snatched a Councilor's daughter out of her own bedroom, in full view of her screaming mother.

Hawk worries his lower lip between his teeth. She should still be alive. Nosferatu are supposed to take two to three days to drain a victim completely, and she couldn't become one of the undead until she'd died and risen again. At least, that's what the legends say. Hawk sniffs. He didn't put much trust in legends.

"We should have stopped off and picked up some garlic," he says suddenly. "That's supposed to be a protection, isn't it?"

“Garlic, at this time of the year?” asks Fisher. “You know how much that stuff costs in the markets? It has to come clear across the country, and the merchants charge according.”

“All right, it was just a thought. I suppose hawthorn is out as well.”

“Definitely.”

“I assume that you have at least brought the stake with you? In fact, you’d better have the stake, because I’m bloody well not going in there without one.”

“Relax. Love, I’ve got it right here,” with that said, Fisher pulls a thick wooden stake from the top of her boot. It is over a foot long, and has been roughly sharpened to a point. It looks brutally efficient. “As I understand it, it’s quite simple,” Fisher briskly adds. “I hammer this through the Nosferatu’s heart, and then you cut off her head. We burn the two parts of the body separately, scatter the ashes, and that’s that.”

“Oh, sure,” says Hawk. “Just like that.” He pauses a moment, looking at the closed door before him. “Did you ever meet Trask, or his daughter?”

“I saw Trask at the briefing, yesterday,” says Fisher, slipping the stake back into her boot. “He looked pretty broken up. You know them?”

“I met his daughter a few months back. Just briefly. I was body guarding Councilor De George at the time. Trask’s daughter had just turned sixteen, and she looked so bright and happy.”

Fisher puts her hand on his arm. “We’ll get her back, Hawk. We’ll get her back.”

“Yeah,” Hawk says. “Sure.”

He hammers on the door again with his fist. Doing it by the book. The sound echoes on the quiet, and then dies quickly away. There is no response from the house, or from any of its neighbors. Hawk glances up and down the empty street. It could always be a trap of some kind. No. His instincts would be screaming at him by now, if that were the case. After four years in the city Guard, he has good instincts. Without them, you don’t last four years.

“All right,” he finally says. “We go in. But watch your back on this one, lass. We take it one room at a time, by the book, and keep our eyes open. Right?”

“Right,” Fisher says. “But we should be safe enough as long as the sun’s up. The Nosferatu can’t leave her coffin till it’s dark.”

“Yeah, but she might not be alone in there. Apparently most Nosferatu have a human servant to watch over them while they sleep. A kind of Judas Goat, a protector who also helps to lure victims to his mistress.”

“You’ve been reading up on this, haven’t you?” asks Fisher.

“Damn right,” says Hawk. “Ever since the first rumors. I’m not going to be caught unprepared, like I was on that Lycan case last year.”

He tries the door handle. It turns jerkily in his hand, and the door swings slowly open as he applies a little pressure. The hinges squeal in protest, and Hawk jumps despite himself. He pushes the door wide open and stares into the dark and empty hall. Nothing moves in the gloom, and the shadows stare silently back. Fisher moves softly in beside Hawk, her hand resting on the pommel of her sword.

“Strange, the door isn’t locked,” says Hawk. “Unless we’re expected.”

“Let’s get on with it,” Fisher says, quietly. “I’m starting to get a very bad feeling about this.”

They step forward into the hall and then close the front door behind them, leaving it just a little ajar. Never know when you might need a quick exit. Hawk and Fisher stand together in the gloom, waiting for their eyes to adjust. Hawk has a stub of candle in his pocket, but he doesn’t want to use it unless he has to. All it takes is sudden gust of wind at the wrong moment and the light would be gone, leaving him blind and helpless in the dark. Better to let his sight adjust while he has the chance.

He hears Fisher stir uneasily beside him, and he smiles slightly. He knows how she feels. Patiently standing and waiting just isn’t in their nature; they always feel better when they are doing something. Anything. Hawk glares about him into the gloom. There could be someone hiding in the shadows, watching them, and they’d never know it until it was too late. Something could already be moving silently towards them, with reaching hands and bared fangs. He feels his shoulders growing stiff and tense, and makes himself breathe deeply and slowly. It doesn’t matter what is out there; he has his axe and he has Fisher at his side. Nothing else matters. His eyesight slowly grows used to the gloom, and the narrow hall gradually forms itself out of the shadows. It is completely empty. Hawk relaxes a little.

“You all right?” he whispers to Fisher.

“Yeah, fine,” she answers quietly. “Let’s go.”

The hall ends in a bare wooden stairway that leads up to the next floor. Two doors lead off from the hall, one to each side. Hawk draws his axe, and hefts it in one hand. The heavy weight of it is reassuring. He glances at Fisher and smiles as he sees the sword in her hand. He catches her eye, and gestures for her to take the right-hand door while he takes the left. She nods, and pads quietly over to the right.

Hawk listens carefully at his door, but everything is quiet. He turns the handle, and eases the door open an inch, and then kicks it in. He leaps into the room and glares quickly about him, his axe poised and ready. The room is empty. There is no furniture, and all of the walls are bare. A little light filters past the closed shutters, taking the edge off the gloom. The woodwork is flecked with mould, and everywhere is thick with dust. There is no sign to show that the room has ever been lived in.

The floorboards creak loudly under Hawk’s weight as he walks slowly forward. There is a strong smell of dust and rotten wood, but underneath there is a faint but definite smell of corruption, as though something long dead lies buried close at hand. Hawk sniffs at the air, but can’t decide if the smell is really there or if he’s just imagining it. He moves quickly around the room, tapping the walls and listening to the echo, but there is no trace of any hidden panel or passageway. Hawk stands in the middle of the room, looking around him to check that he hasn’t missed anything, and then goes back into the hall.

Where Fisher is waiting for him. He shakes his head, and Fisher shrugs disappointedly. Hawk smiles slightly. He already knew that Fisher hadn’t found anything; if she had, he’d have heard the sound of battle. Fisher isn’t known for her diplomacy. Hawk starts towards the stairs, and Fisher moves quickly in beside him.

A Hidden Darkness

The bare wooden steps creak and groan beneath their feet, and Hawk scowls. If there is someone here, watching over the Nosferatu, they have to know that there is someone else in the house. You can't put your foot down anywhere without some creaking board giving away your position. He hurries up the rest of the stairs and out onto the landing. He feels a little less vulnerable on the landing; there is more room to move, if it comes to a fight. The floor is thick with dust and rat droppings, and the bare wooden walls are dull and scarred. Two doors lead off from the landing, to their right. It is just as gloomy as the ground-floor hall, and Hawk thinks fleetingly of his candle before deciding against it. If the sound hasn't given them away, a light certainly will. He moves over to stand before the first door, and listens carefully. He can't hear anything. Hawk smiles slightly. If this house does turn out to be empty, he is going to feel bloody ridiculous.

He looks at Fisher, and gestures for her to guard his back. She nods quickly. Hawk tries the door handle, and it turns easily in his grasp. He pushes the door slightly ajar, takes in a deep breath, and kicks the door in.

He darts forward into the room, axe at the ready, and again there is no one there. Without looking around, Hawk knows that Fisher is looking at him knowingly. He knows her so well; he can almost read her mind on this one.

Fisher thinks: *I said that this was a wild goose chase, Hawk.*

He doesn't look back. He won't give her the satisfaction. He glares about him, taking in the darkened room. A sparse light seeps past the closed shutters to show him a wardrobe to his left and a bed to his right. A large wooden chest stands at the foot of the bare bed. Hawk eyes the chest suspiciously. It looks to be a good four feet long and three feet wide; large enough to hold a body. Hawk frowns. Like it or not, he is going to need some light to check the room out properly. He peers about him, and his gaze falls on an old oil lamp lying on the floor by the bed. He bends down, picks up the lamp, and shakes it gently. He can feel oil sloshing back and forth in the base of the lamp. Hawk worries his lower lip between his teeth. The house might appear deserted, but somebody has been here recently. He takes out flint and steel, and lights the lamp. The sudden golden glow makes the room seem smaller and less threatening.

Hawk moves over to the chest and crouches down before it. There doesn't seem to be any lock or bolts. He glances at Fisher, who takes a firm hold on the wooden stake in her left hand and nods for him to try the lid. He clutches his axe tightly, and then throws the lid open. Hawk lets out his breath in a slow sigh of relief, and he and Fisher relax a little as they take in the pile of old bed linen that fills the chest.

The cloth is flecked with a rather nasty-looking mould, and has obviously been left in the chest for ages, but Hawk rummages gingerly through it anyway, just in case there is something hidden under it. There isn't. Hawk wipes his hands thoroughly on his trousers.

All this taking it slowly and easy is getting on his nerves. He suddenly wants very badly just to run amok and tear the place apart until he finds the missing girl, but he knows that he can't do that. Firstly, if there is no one here the house's owners will sue his ass in the courts, and secondly, if there is a Nosferatu here she is bound to be well hidden, and nothing less than a careful, methodical search is going to find her.

One room at a time, one thing at a time, by the book. Follow the procedures. And he and Fisher might just get out of this alive yet.

He moves over to the bed and gets down on his hands and knees to look underneath it. A big hairy spider darts out of the shadows toward him, and he falls backwards with a startled yelp. The spider quickly disappears back into the shadows. Hawk quickly regains his balance and shoots a look at Fisher, who is trying hard not to laugh and is only just making it. Hawk growls something under his breath, picks up the lamp from the floor, and sweeps it back and forth before him. There is nothing under the bed but dust.

Not in the chest, and not under the bed. That only leaves the wardrobe, though it seems a bit obvious. Hawk clambers to his feet, puts the lamp on the chest, and moves over to stand before the wardrobe. It is a big piece of furniture, almost seven feet tall and four feet wide. Hawk thinks, absently: *Wonder how they got it up the stairs?* He takes a firm hold on the door handle, gestures for Fisher to stand ready, and jerks open the door.

Inside the wardrobe a teenage girl is hanging naked from a butcher's hook. Her eyes are wide open and staring, and she's been dead for some time. Two jagged puncture wounds show clearly on her savaged throat, bright red against the white skin. The steel tip of the butcher's hook protrudes from her right shoulder, just above the collarbone. No blood has run from the wound, suggesting that she was already dead when the hook went into her. Hawk swallows hard and reaches forward to gently touch the dead girl's hand. The flesh is icy cold.

"Damn," he says quietly. "Oh, damn."

"It's her, isn't it?" Fisher asks. "Councilor Trask's daughter."

"Yes," Hawk answers, his voice tinged with shock and rage. "It's her."

"The Nosferatu must have been thirsty. Or maybe just greedy. I doubt there's a drop of blood left in her body."

"Look at her," Hawk says harshly. "Sixteen years old and left to hang in darkness like a side of beef. She was so pretty, so alive. She didn't deserve to die like this. No one deserves to die like this."

"Easy," Fisher says softly. "Take it easy, love. We'll get the bitch that did this. Now let's get the girl down."

"What?" Hawk asks, looking confused at Fisher.

"We have to get her down, Hawk," says Fisher. "She died from a Nosferatu's bite. If we leave her, she'll rise again as one of the undead. We can spare her that, at least."

Hawk nods slowly. "Yes. Of course."

Somehow, between them, they get the body off the hook and out of the wardrobe. They lay the dead girl out on the bed, and Hawk tries to close her dead, staring eyes. They won't stay shut, and in the end Fisher puts two coins on the eyes to hold the lids down.

"I don't know her name," Hawk says. "I only knew her as Trask's daughter."

The scream catches him off guard, and he's only just started to turn around when a heavy weight slams into him from behind. He and his attacker fall sprawling into the floor, and the axe

flies out of Hawk's hand. He slams his elbow back into his attacker's ribs and pulls himself free. He scrambles away and goes after his axe.

Further Affiant Sayeth Naught

The attacker lurches to his feet, and Fisher steps forward to run him through with her sword. The man dodges aside at the last moment and grabs Fisher's extended arm. She groans aloud as his fingers crush her arm, grinding the muscles against the bone. Her sword falls from her numb fingers. She claws at his hand, and can't move it. He is strong, impossibly strong, and she can't free herself.

He flings her away from him. She slams against the far wall and slides dazedly to the floor. Hawk starts forward, axe in hand, and then stops dead as he finally sees who his attacker is.

"Trask." Hawk gaps at the nondescript, middle aged man standing grinning before him. The councilor is little more than medium height and painfully thin, but his eyes burn in his gaunt face.

"She was your daughter, you bastard!" Hawk exclaims. "Your own daughter."

"She will live forever," boasts Trask, his voice horridly calm and reasonable. "And. So will I. My master The Master has promised me this. My daughter was afraid, at first; she didn't understand. But she will. We will never grow old and ugly and die and lie forever in the cold earth. We will be strong and powerful and everyone will fear us. All I have to do is protect The Master from fools like you."

He darts forward, and Hawk meets him with his axe. He swings it double-handed with all his strength, and the wide metal blade punches clean through Trask's ribs.

The councilor screams, as much with rage as with pain, and staggers back against the bed. Hawk pulls his axe free and gets ready to hit him again if necessary. Trask looks down at his ribs, and sees the blood flow from the gaping wound in his side. He dips his fingers into the blood, lifts them to his mouth, and licks them clean.

Hawk lifts his axe and Trask goes for his throat. Hawk fights for breath as Trask's bony fingers close around his throat and tighten. He tries to swing his axe, but he can't use it at close quarters. He drops it, and grabs Trask's wrists, but the councilor is too strong. Hawk's gaze begins to dim. He can hear his blood pounding in his ears.

Fisher steps in beside them and hacks into Trask's right arm with her sword. The gleaming, razor-sharp blade slices through the muscle like a hot knife through butter, and Trask's arm goes limp. Hawk gathers the last of his strength and pushes Trask away from him. Trask lashes out at Fisher with his undamaged arm. She ducks under the blow and runs her sword through his heart with a single thrust. Trask stands very still, looking down at the gleaming steel blade protruding from his chest. Fisher jerks it out, and Trask collapses, as though only the sword was holding him up. He lies on his back on the floor, blood pooling around his body, and glares silently up at Hawk and Fisher. Then the light goes out in his eyes, and his breathing stops.

Hawk leans back against the wall and feels gingerly at his bruised throat. Fisher stirs Trask's body with her boot, and when he doesn't react, kneels down beside him and feels cautiously for a pulse. There isn't one. Fisher nods, satisfied, and gets to her feet again.

"He's gone, Hawk. The bastard's dead."

“Good,” says Hawk. He frowns at how rough his voice sounds. He wouldn’t mind, but it feels even worse than it sounds. “You all right, lass?”

“I’ve felt worse. Was Trask a Nosferatu, you know, had he been turned, do you think?”

“No,” says Hawk. “He didn’t have the teeth for it. Besides, we saw him at the briefing yesterday morning, remember?”

“Yeah, right. Trask was just the Judas Goat. But I think that we’d better stake him anyway. Just to be sure.”

“Let’s see to the girl, first.”

“Sure.”

Hawk pounds a stake into her heart. It’s hard work. He’ll let Fisher stake Trask, while he cuts off the girl’s head as cleanly as her can. When he beheads the girl there is no blood, and that somehow makes it worse. Cutting off Trask’s is no problem at all. When it’s finished, Hawk and Fisher leave the room and shut the door quietly behind them. Hawk thought that the air would smell fresher on the landing, but it doesn’t. He holds up the oil lamp he’d brought with him from the room, and studies the next door in its flickering light.

“She has to be in there somewhere,” Fisher says quietly.

“Hawk nods slowly. He looks at her, and then frowns as he sees her holding a wooden stake in her left hand. “How many of those did you bring?”

“Three,” Fisher answers calmly. “I used two on Trask and his daughter. So. If there’s more than one Nosferatu here, we’re in big trouble.”

Hawk smiles in spite of himself. “You always did have a gift for understatement.”

He opens the door a crack, steps back a pace, and then kicks in the door. It flies back to slam against the inner wall, and the sound is very loud on the quiet. The echoes take a long time to die away. Hawk steps cautiously into the room, his axe in one hand and the lamp in the other.

The room is empty, save for a heavy metal bed pushed up against the far wall. Fisher moves slowly around the room, tapping the walls and looking for hidden panels. Hawk stands in the middle of the room and glares about him.

The Nosferatu is here somewhere. She has to be here somewhere.

He moves over to the bed and looks underneath it. Nothing but dust and shadows. He straightens up and looks at Fisher. She shakes her head and looks uneasily about her. Hawk scowls and looks back at the bed. And then he smiles slowly as an idea has come to him.

“Isobel, give me a hand with this.”

Between them they get the bed away from the wall, and Hawk studies the wall paneling carefully in the light from his lamp. He smiles grimly as he makes out the lines of a hidden panel, fits his axe blade into one of the cracks, and applies a slow pressure. The wood creaks and groans loudly, and then a whole section of the wall swings open on concealed hinges. Behind the panel is a hidden compartment, and in that compartment lays a huge coffin. Bones and partially eaten carcasses human carcasses litter the floor. A horrible scent assaults the nostrils: The rank, stomach-churning stench of rotting flesh and raw sewage, and the overpowering, game smell of a

zoo's ape house. This underworld is paradise to The Master. Hawk feels his mouth go dry just looking at it.

The coffin is seven feet long and six feet wide, big enough for two, built from dark red wood Hawk doesn't recognize. Arcane glyphs and runes are craved into the sides and the lid. He doesn't recognize them either, which is quite understandable, because neither he nor his partner is a practitioner of magic. One of the symbols is repeated many times. It is a swastika.

Hawk looks at Fisher who is standing beside him. Her face is very pale.

"Come on," he says quietly. "Let's get it out of there."

The coffin is much heavier than it looks. They have to drag it into the room, inch by inch. It smells bad. It smells of blood and death and decay, and Hawk has to keep turning his head away in search of fresher air. He and Fisher finally get the coffin out of the hidden compartment and into the room, then he steps back to take a good look at it.

"Big isn't it?" Fisher asks softly.

"Yeah," answers Hawk. "Look, as soon as I get the lid open, you get that wooden stake into her. As soon as the stake's home, I'll cut off her head. I'm not taking any chances with this one."

"Got it," says Fisher. "We've been on some dirty jobs in the past, Hawk, but this has got to be the dirtiest."

"Remember the girl," Hawk says. "Now, let's do it."

They bend over the coffin and the lid flies open, knocking them both backwards. The Master sits up in her coffin and grins at them with large, straight, pointed teeth—serrated teeth—serrated teeth and blood drinking fangs: A razor blade smile. Killer tongue. Layer upon layer of blood paints her mouth, lips, and chin; some of it is fresh, some of it is not. Layer upon layer of blood paints a red boulevard down her front; some of it is fresh, some of it is not. Giblets, the ghoulish leavings of an unlife spent eating as well as drinking the living. Bits of flesh, muscle, bone, nerves, ligaments, fat, sinew, various tissues, tidbits of this and that, embedded in that red carpet of death and decay.

Such a horrific sight as this brings two things to mind. What do the undead care of hygiene? And. She wears what she eats and drinks.

Hawk's hand tightens around the shaft of his axe till his fingers ache. He thought that he knew what The Master would look like, but he had been wrong.

The creature before him was a very beautiful woman once, every bit as beautiful as his wife Isobel, but she isn't anymore nor is she a person either. She looks like what she is: a something that has died and been buried, and has dug her undead self out of the grave. Her face is sunken and wrinkled, and there is a bluish tinge to her dead white flesh. Her eyes are dirty yellow, without pupil or retina, as though the eyeballs have rotten in their sockets. Cockroach-infested hair hangs about in limp stringy rattails, draping shoulders and breasts. That shock of filthy blonde rattails, which is liberally streaked with grey and white, erupts from the bony skull. A scraggly bush, that's just as geriatric and just as infested as her mane, carpets her vile, reeking crotch. Her hands are horribly thin, the fingers are little more than claws. Klaw. Floppy shriveled pendulous breasts with stringbean nipples and hideous stretch marks. Labia, clitoris, female genitalia that's equally unattractive, unless you're a nercophiliac, that is. But the real horror lays

in much more subtle things. The Master's black dress is rotting and falling apart. Things grow on her. Things live on her. Things feed on her. Head lice, fleas, and crabs. Graveyard lichens and moss grow here and there on her dead filth-ingrained skin; skin that's so filthy that it's ashy-black in places. Her chest doesn't move, because it no longer needs to breathe. And she smells like rotting meat that has been left to hang too long.

What Doesn't Make You Stronger, Will Kill You

To digress. Killer tongue. A tongue which is a bloodlusting, self-sustaining organ.

To digress. Klaw, of course, is when the hands are claw-like, in appearance and grasp, like the taloned feet of a bird of prey. It's an eerie effect, indeed, with decidedly freakish overtones.

She rises up from her coffin in a single graceful movement and leers at Hawk and Fisher with her empty yellow eyes. Hawk looks away despite himself, and his gaze falls on the shuttered window. No light shows around the shutters' edges.

Hawk thinks: *We left too late! The sun's gone down.*

The Master steps elegantly out of her coffin. Her dirty bare feet make no sound on the wooden floor.

"Foolish mortals. Soon you will be mine, forever. You will replace those that you have taken from me. The woman shall sleep with me as my new concubine," hisses The Master, looking straight at Fisher, as if Hawk isn't there. The creature's breath is foul.

Fisher wrinkles her nose at the smell. "Dirty stinking rotten bitch. Lying down or standing up, it makes no difference. Let's do it, Hawk."

Hawk nods slowly, and then springs forward, swinging his axe double-handed at The Master's neck. The creature puts a spindly arm to block the blow, and the axe bounces off, vibrating as though it struck an iron bar. Hawk's hand goes numb from the impact, and it is all he can do to hang onto the axe. Fisher thrusts at The Master with her stake, using it like a dagger. The Master avoids the blow easily, and knocks Fisher sprawling with a single backhanded blow. She lies where she falls, her head swimming madly. There is an inhuman power in The Master's slender frame. Fisher clutches desperately at the wooden stake, and struggles weakly to get her feet under her. The Master looks down at her and chuckles suddenly—a low, filthy sound.

There is a blur of movement. The creature lashes out, racking the leftside of Fisher's neck with her long, sharp, dirty fingernails. Fisher's throat feels like it is on fire, and she hears a voice, the creature's voice, in her head. *You are mine, now!*

There are other voices in her head. Many voices, countless voices, all screaming, all at once. *You are ours, now!*

Fisher's mind is going numb. She feels somehow, not there. Paradoxically, on the animal side, so to speak. Her nipples get hard. She feels that moistness of her loins. That game smell. She feels that special pleasure, the delicious pleasure that she feels when she's with Hawk and they make love, and she climaxes—only much more intense. Orgasm. It's as if she is a bitch dog in heat. Her hands klaw!

Hoping that The Master is detracted enough, Hawk swings his axe at the creature again. He voices a silent prayer.

As if she has eyes in the back of her head, The Master raises her head, reaches out with her other hand, and catches the heavy blade in mid-swing, wrenching the weapon from Hawk's hand. She throws the axe away, and reaches for Hawk with both of her bony hands. He darts back out of range and looks desperately about him for another weapon. The Master laughs again, and bends over Fisher, who much to her delight is already changing.

The Master grabs Fisher by the shoulder who moans aloud as the nails and claw-like fingers of The Master sink into her flesh. Blood runs down her arm in a steady stream. Blood already paints her savaged neck. Besides the obvious physical damage, Fisher is fighting for her own sense of self as well, and she's loosing. Nevertheless, Fisher tries to break free of The Master, but she can't.

The Master draws Fisher closer, grinning widely to show her long pointed teeth. Fisher tries to stab The Master with the stake. The Master grabs her wrist and squeezes hard. The feeling goes out of her fingers and she drops the stake. It rolls away and disappears into the shadows. A knobb sprouts from the rightside of her neck.

To digress. Knobb. That creepy black mole—creepy—makes your skin crawl. A small, black, star-shaped "mole."

Hawk watches helplessly. In the meantime, he has found his axe again, but he dares not attack The Master. Cold steel is of no use against the creature, unless he can behead her. He needs a wooden stake.

He glares widely about him, and his gaze falls on the coffin. The Master must always return to its coffin before break of day. Hawk grins savagely as the answer comes to him. He steps forward, lifts his axe, and brings it swinging down onto the side of the coffin. The heavy wood splits and splinters under the blow. Hawk jerks the blade free and strikes again. The side sags inwards, and splinters fly on the air. The Master, who has affixed its mouth to the leftside of Fisher neck and is greedily feeding, throws Fisher aside like a ragdoll and darts forward. Hawk drops his axe, grabs the heaviest splinter from the coffin and buries it in The Master's chest as the creature reaches for him. For a moment they stand facing each other, the yellow eyes and grinning mouth mere inches away from Hawk's face, and then The Master suddenly collapses and falls limp to the floor. She makes surprised mewling sounds, and clutches at the thick wooden splinter protruding from her chest.

Hawk throws himself down beside The Master, snatches up his axe, and uses the flat of the blade to hammer the splinter again and again into The Master's heart. She screams and tears at him with her clawed hands, but he doesn't care.

He hits the wooden splinter again and again, driving it deep into The Master's chest, and with every blow he strikes he sees the dead girl's face as she hung from the butcher's hook. After a while he realizes that The Master is no longer struggling and that Fisher is kneeling beside him.

Fisher's knobb and klaw are gone. The voices are silent in Fisher's head. With The Master dead, her transformation has reversed itself and she's free of The Master's powerful glamor.

"It's all right, Hawk. It's over."

He looks down at The Master. The dirty yellow eyes stare sightlessly at the ceiling, and the clawed hands lie still at her sides. He raises his axe one last time, and cuts savagely at the creature's neck. The steel blade slices clean through and sinks into the wooden floor beneath. The Master seems to collapse and fall in upon itself and in a few seconds there is nothing left but dust. Hawk sighs slowly, pulls his axe out of the floor, and then sits back on his hunches. Some of the tension begins to drain out of him. He looks wearily at Fisher, who's still kneeling beside him. She looks gaunt, battered, and completely spent – bruised and bloodied. She also no longer looks cursed.

“You all right, lass?”

“I’ll live.”

Hawk smiles slightly. “Well, we got The Master. Not exactly according to the book but what the hell. You can’t have everything.”

He and Fisher rise painfully to their feet, Fisher dripping blood from her wounds, and they lean on each other awhile until they feel strong enough to make their way back down the stairs. Fisher leaves a blood trail, right through The Master’s dust. Uncharacteristically careless of her.

They leave Trask and his daughter where they are. Burning the bodies can wait. Let the backup unit earn its pay for a change. Hawk and Fisher slowly make their way through the empty house and out into Chandler Lane. It is still hot and muggy, and the air stinks of smoke and tannin, but after the house and what they found in it, the lane looks pretty good to them.

“You know,” says Hawk reflectively, “there has to be an easier way to make a living.”

For the briefest of moments, all of the emotion drains from Fisher’s face. She has a flash, a fleeting vision of something, and then. Her mind goes completely blank. Worry paints Hawk’s face upon seeing Fisher’s relapse. Then, she just snaps back. She smiles. Her face flushes with emotion, again.

“You sure you’re okay?”

“Must have really got my bell rung, back there. I’ll be fit as a fiddle after I get some fixing from a healer.”

A Hero Falls

An unnatural silence precedes the resurrection. The shadows cometh, and then they go, as if they are disembodied mourners at a wake shuffling past the cremated remains of a loved one.

Movement—the dust that was her, stirs. Then, it takes shape. For one as old as her, there is death and then there is death. What does kill you often makes you stronger.

As the corpse reconstitutes itself, so does her coffin. Both are undead things. All that was needed was blood to begin the cycle anew. All the better that it was the tainted blood of a cursed hero. Best of all, it was the sanguine of her bride. For a brief moment, she makes contact with her bride Fisher. She wears the girl. She is outside with her slayer Hawk.

The moment passes. No matter. Soon. Very soon. She will wear the girl again. She will wear the girl forever. The girl belongs to her.

There are no recriminations. There's no—*I told you so*. There is only the now. There is only forever. She comes back, but not as she was. She's reborn as another. From her bride, she gleaned that another. Time to walk amidst the food, as if she's that another. Nobility. And, a conservator, no less. That rare blueblood who her bride enjoys bodyguarding. Fisher's personal favorite, in fact. Lady Glenda Noreen McKay. The beloved aunt that her bride always wished for, but never had.

She will leave this place that she has called home, for her new life. When the others come to desecrate her abode, they will find it just as Hawk and Fisher left it. A smashed coffin and a pile of dust. And, none will be the wiser.

Days lapse into weeks. Weeks into months.

With the monster officially vanquished, and thus the menace finally over, things return to normal in Haven. It's as if The Master never stalked its streets.

"But who was The Master?"

The old man points at his empty mug. The fine young gentleman, in fancy dress, smiles and motions for the barkeep to refill the wizard's glass.

"Some say she was Lilith, the whore of Babylon, the bride of the devil, and the mother of all Nosferatu—the first true wife of Adam. But because she was a dominant female, Adam didn't like her, so God banished her into the wild where she met the devil and laid down in sin with female demons."

"And what do you say?" The dandy asks, coyly. His fellow collegiates snickering, from the adjunct table. But, the dandy does not laugh. Unlike his friends, he's not here to mock the wizard.

The old man shrugs his shoulders. Once he was clean shaven and respectable. He was an august conjurer of the king's court. But that was decades ago. Before drink and debauchery took hold of him and he sank into the depths of obscurity and disgrace. Penniless and disheveled. Filthy and ragged, his effluvium is quite pungent. His sour breath stinks of cheap spirits. He climbed into a bottle, and he never climbed out. There is still that stray tinkle in his bloodshot

eyes. And he's been known to have those flashes of brilliance. But, mostly he's just a pathetic old drunk, the butt of jokes. He pays for his watered-down drinks with sad parlor tricks that usually go awry. He sleeps in the gutter and prays for the day when death takes him from a life that no longer has any meaning.

"I could take you there, if you let me keep the bottle." He flashes a mouth of rotten, snaggleteeth.

"What happened to you?" The dandy asks. The concern in his voice is genuine. He can see that the old man's mind has begun to wander again.

"She warned me, but I wouldn't listen. I was so arrogant. So. I kept looking into the abyss. And one day it looked back."

"Who warned you?"

"The Fallen speak in dead tongues and bathe in the blood of children."

A woman enters the tavern. She is dressed in the shabby attire of a common streetwalker. The slut-for-hire still causes a stir just like she did when she came in for the very first time. She's a deadringer for Lady Glenda. It's a likeness that has enabled her to make a lot of coin off of the clientele that frequents this establishment. The commoners get to pretend that they are fucking royalty. Traffic has increased. More drinking and eating. And, the owner gets a nice cut of what the new girl makes. She pays him off like clockwork at the end of the evening.

She walks straight over to the dandy's table. The wizard ceases his babbling and becomes completely silent. He avoids the woman's gaze.

The dandy is not shy, though. Nor are his friends.

"And who might you be?" The dandy asks, rhetorically. Word has gotten around about Lady Glenda's doppelganger.

"Glenda, just like my namesake the grand lady herself," the woman coos. She is fast, quick witted, and flirtatious. A sharp mind and ravishing looks are uncommon for the cheap whores that usually work low places like this. Although she doesn't charge much, she's doing a healthy business and it adds up quickly, as aforementioned.

"Are you sure that you're not her twin?" The dandy asks. Tit for tat.

"I'm sure."

She brushes back her long golden platinum blonde tresses, momentarily baring the leftside of her neck. A knob disfigures that side. Black imperfection in a sea of lily-white perfection. Her hands klaw, when idle. The real Lady Glenda, of course, has neither the creepy mole nor the creepy hands.

"How much for me, my friends over there, and my wizard drinking buddy here?"

"Twenty five."

"Done."

The dandy hands her the money. She tucks it into the cleavage of her ample bosom. His friends get up, ready for action. The wizard stays seated.

Her surging popularity aside. There is much about the woman to be cautious about, besides the obvious engaging in commerce with a prostitute is problematic, at best, but none but the wizard seems to be concerned. There is that cold, soullessness to the woman's eyes, as if they were deep blue bottomless pits of nothingness. The eyes are supposed to be windows to the soul, and her eyes say that she has none. There is the mole and her hands: Hardly normal, to say the least. The woman is rather leaden and robotic. Her clipped, pause-filled, heavily-accented speech only reinforces the animatronic nature and "modus operandi" of her "presentation." Then again, maybe it's all just that, a gimmick. Or. Maybe this is the real her. Who can really tell with harlots?

The dandy notices the wizard's reluctance. But he has a foolproof solution for that. He gives the barkeep the high sign. The barkeep brings over a bottle. The dandy shoves a wad of bills into the barkeep's mitt, and gives him a "keep the change" wink. The barkeep grins from ear to ear. The dandy slides the bottle into a jacket pocket.

"Wizard, you get all of this," the dandy taps the bottle, "if you come along. And, don't drag your feet, either. We make haste to fuck this wanton wench."

The wizard downs his glass in one swallow and falls in step behind the party. He still refuses to meet the woman's gaze. Once he was somebody. Once he had a name. Once, he was John Jaspers. But that man died a long time ago. The one who walks in his stead is a nameless drunk. A tavern buffoon. As they exit the bar, he feels a momentary chill in spite of the heat. He looks up and notices the alignment of the stars.

This cannot be!

He must know if it's the mirage of the spirits that he's partaken of or the truth of something evil revealed. The wizard makes an arcane gesture with his hand. Subtle. Discreet. Adept. He couldn't have done better if he was sober.

A light that only he can see, briefly frames the woman. An echo of his former greatness. One, maybe two magicians in the entire kingdom could do what he just did, and then only if the foul creature allowed disclosure.

She's one of them. And, she wants me to know it. Even at the height of my prowess, I could not disclose one of them unless they permitted it. She must be quite powerful, very old indeed, to pretend so convincingly. An Old One? Maybe one of the Fallen?

The prostitute looks back at the drunk as if she's "heard" his thoughts. She smiles that smile. It's a hungry, evil smile. The drunk shudders. John would do something. But, the drunk does nothing. As aforementioned, he's no longer John.

He allows himself to be carried along by the tide of the events. Like the others, he's sheep to the slaughter. Unlike the others, he's no unwitting pawn. They're already dead; they just don't know it, yet. But, he knows. Yet, he follows. Hoping for the release, that is death. He wallows in self-pity and degradation. Broken beyond repair. What happened to him? Is his babbling about the abyss true, or it more of the same—the ramblings of a disturbed mind?

A madman, anesthetized by drink, there is only libation to keep him silent. His insanity strains to break free so that he can scream and shriek. But, he dares not. He might offend the others and not get his promised bottle. He can almost taste the cheap spirits burning its way down his gullet.

He's suddenly so very parched. His mind, what's left of it, drifts in and out of lucidity. He oscillates. Sometimes he's almost John. Sometimes he's just walking shit.

The Damned

It's full, a full moon. In a distance, the baying of a Lycan can be heard. The partygoers seem not to notice, or maybe they notice but they just don't care. But, the drunk conjurer does.

Unseen, there is another participant in this outing. There is another participant in all of the fiendish prostitute's "picnics." That unseen participant is Fisher, of course.

Fisher no longer dreams. When Fisher sleeps, whether The Master is awake or not, she wears The Master. But, unlike when The Master wears her, she remains a person, she remains herself. As if she is The Master, she sees, hears, feels, tastes, etc.—she experiences everything that The Master experiences. And, her husband Hawk, who shares a bed with her, is none the wiser.

Stage One. Having slipped on The Master. Thusly trapped inside of The Master, she dreads the anticipated holocaust. Ultimately, in the aftermath, when she no longer wears The Master, she knows that she will be disgusted by the atrocities committed. She knows that she will feel unclean. She knows something else. Every time she wears The Master, the hole in her soul grows just a little bit bigger. Eventually, that personal abyss will be all consuming.

At first, there is always only dread and disgust. The dirtiness. And, that's to be expected at this early junction in her transformation from living to undead.

Then, the darkness cometh. Z'ha'dum, the Shadows. In contrast to the Vorlons, whose philosophy is represented by the question "Who are you?," that of the Shadows is represented by the question "What do you want?" centering towards desire rather than identity.

Fisher's conscious goes dormant and her sexuality twists, rendering her a sociopath and a homicidal manic, as well as a sadomasochist. As such. Her initial dread gives way to feelings of maniacal glee and an inhuman craving for the sordid doings and depravity that will soon ensue. Such is the ever growing paradox that is this transient state of her incremental conversion.

Ying and Yang. Vorlons and Shadows. That moral seesaw. In the later stages of her metamorphosis, there will be no such pangs of conscious and conflicting emotions, when she initially slips on The Master. Because, by then, none of her precious humanity will remain.

Stage Two. She now revels in the anticipation of the expected holocaust. In the immediate aftermath, when she is still wearing The Master, she knows that she will wallow in graphic remembrance her recall of the atrocities committed. Reliving them over and over again in her mind. She knows that she will feel unclean, and cum to the dirtiness of it all. She knows something else. Every time she wears The Master, the hole in her soul grows just a little bit bigger. Eventually, that personal abyss will be all consuming. That day can't come soon enough for her darkened Id.

Stage Three. Fisher soils herself. *What depraved acts shall I commit, tonight?* She cackles to herself. Yet, she is still Fisher, albeit an ever darkening version. The evil progresses like a cancerous malignancy, growing within her with each debauchery of The Master. Growing steadily and surely, but slowly, per The Master's intent. The inch that is slowly becoming the mile. She is rotting from the inside out.

They make their way through the narrow winding streets of the sprawling slum. Fisher recognizes the navigation. The Master is leading them to Chandler Lane on the lower Northside, where she and her beloved husband Hawk slayed The Master.

Although there is many a bravo about, as one would expect in this part of town, none of them gives the party any trouble. In spite of the fat purses that dangle from the belts of the drunken partygoers. Prime pickings that are inexplicably ignored, or so it would seem.

Wanton eyes have watched the harlot with the lady's semblance come and go with many a customer through this very way, night after night. But, this looks to be the windfall much hoped for. The bravo aren't ignoring the pickings, they are merely baiting a trap. Sure, they have heard the sinister rumors about the whore, but greed has finally gotten the best of them and swept away their caution.

There is the other reason, which also sweeps away their caution. Yes indeed, these are professional criminals, but they still have their needs in that way. Their needs for that kind of sexual release. After all, are they not still men and women?

Yes. The whore is quite a prize indeed, in and of herself. Forty something. Dishy. She's a walking pheromone. To look upon her, is to gaze upon something that you must possess; something that you must worship. A flawless, creamy-white complexion. Smooth, velvet-soft skin. Generous breasts that strain against the fabric of her torn, flimsy dress. A large loathsome mouth custom-made for the oral pervy and a hard pretty face. Long legs. Slim hips. A slender, mature (stacked) frame. Slim, stacked, and matronly (buxom). Keen features and thin lips. Blue eyes. Long, thick, golden hair. And an ass so tight that you can pop coin off of it. All women should be such as her to gaze upon.

Ripe. A pungent odor. Infestation. Adjectives which pertain to her garment. But, which have nothing to do with the woman herself. A telling epitaph in itself.

And, for very little coin, anyone can fuck her. She will have any man or woman. Old or young. Healthy or diseased, even lepers. Whether they are low or high born. She will have more than one at a time. She will dish out pain to her clients for their pleasure and hers. And she'll wallow in the pain dished out to her by her clients. Sadomasochism. Humiliation. Degradation. Bondage. Discipline. Corporal punishment. Sinister eccentricities. Completely immodest. Adulteress. Sexual manifestation. A total whore. Completely whored out. Sexual manipulation. She is the personification of a two-legged, sexual malignancy. Slut. None are refused. And no perversion is objectionable to her. She will even fuck beasts. She will even fuck the dead. Then again, she is dead.

Déjà vu. Flies hover over piles of garbage and swarm around the open sewers. The squat, ugly buildings are black with soot from the nearby tannery, and the muggy air smells strongly of smoke and tannin.

The Master's bare feet make no sound whatsoever on the pavement as the tattered hem of her black dress sweeps the filthy cobblestones. Frayed cuffs of sleeves that out her elbows. A dress that is so ragged that it is more of a rag than a proper covering. Indecent clothes for an indecent wench.

Heavy pancake makeup. But, no eyeliner, eye shadow, or mascara. Yet her complexional affections imply such cosmetic trickery of a painted lady. Chocolate brown eyebrows that are perfectly arched. Long, thick, black eyelashes. Long, blood-red fingernails; shiny, wet-look glossy, as if they have been dipped in fresh blood.

No strong game odor about her. No smell of sin. No effluvia. Not the faintest scent whatsoever? No head lice, fleas, or crabs, and none of those other infestations which a low

practitioner of the world's oldest profession would be expected to harbor. No scum covered teeth. No foul breath, in spite of the depraved acts of the flesh that she commits routinely. Cunnilingus. Fellatio. And, of course, anilingus.

No personal hygiene. Yet. No masking of a strong sour body odor with cheap, heavy perfume. Just her and her soiled tatters. And, no unmentionables underneath those soiled tatters that are doing "long" business as her sleeved dress.

To reiterate. Herself: clean and pristine. No bodily parasites? Maybe a professional courtesy? Not diseased. Her clothes: filthy, smelly, and infested with lice, fleas, crabs, etc. A highly unnatural contradiction. Yet none of her customers seem to notice, let alone complain. They will put their mouth on her between her legs without hesitation as soon as money exchanges hands, and eat their fill to their heart's content. Sweet, juicy peach. Fragrant glans: The only scent that is hers and it's carnal. So, as you can see, you don't have to be a powerful magician to divine a Nosferatu who's pretending, if you know what to look for.

They finally come to a halt before a decrepit two-story building almost at the end of the lane. Paint is peeling off the closed front door, and the stonework is pitted and crumbling. Narrow windows are hidden behind closed wooden shutters. There is something disquieting about the house, something that you can't quite put a name to. It is like a sound so quiet that you almost miss it, or a scent so faint that you can barely smell it. *Beware all ye who enter, for this is the abode of a Nosferatu.*

The massive door jerks open and something huge looms in the darkness inside. Broad shoulders and a thick, muscular build. Tree trunk like arms and legs. Short, straight, closely cropped grey hair—the very masculine-looking hairdo is called a moe. Black work boots with thick lug soles and heels, and a long black dress. A cross dresser? No. The figure steps forward enough out of the shadows to reveal the coarse features of a very masculine looking and acting woman.

Protruding eyebrow ridges. Big hands and feet. The wild, green eyes of a lunatic. Long, limegreen fingernails. An impossibly large chest, that makes The Master look almost flat-chested in comparison, which speaks volumes. Because, The Master, like all "female" Nosferatu sport double-D's.

The Amazonian she-bitch flashes a wide, toothy grin. Two rows of large, very white, perfect teeth. A brutal smile. Helga Zoë Bell is not a cavewoman, but she could easily be mistaken for one of those savage females of the untamed frozen frontier. Nope, she's not a barbarian, she's something infinitely worse, and like her master, The Master, she's not human either. Helga is an Ogre!

Ogres will eat anything, and they prefer to eat their food fresh, which means alive. Ogres will even eat each other. But, their preference is children, infants to be precise, and the younger the better. And not just human children either. Although their brutish appearance and manners can mislead you into thinking that they are a stupid lot, don't make that mistake, because it could be your last.

"Welcome," Helga greets the party. She has a deep, husky voice.

No one is too drunk to not notice, let alone fail to acknowledge, this hulking creature. The she-male in this case, a female wearing a strap-on commands attention and induces apprehension. Bulldyke. Manhater. Nevertheless, they all enter.

Entering the house is like entering one of those eerie crypts described in an H. P. Lovecraft novel. Everything reeks of graveyard stench and a rotting coffin's musty decay. Everywhere you look there are cobwebs. Creepy crawlies scurry along the baseboards or lay in wait for the unsuspecting in dark nooks and crannies. And most of the windows have been rendered opaque.

It's dark, dank, cold, and foreboding, in spite of the miserably hot and humid weather outside.

The foyer is huge, and it's in ruins. Breathing in the damp, chilly, stale air is like breathing in Death herself. This previous habitat of humans, back in the day in much better times, has been converted from a light cheery diplomat's mansion into the gloomy abode of very old supernaturals, with absolutely no accommodation made for the basic necessities, let alone the comfort and tastes, of mere mortals.

Into the Abyss

This is not the house that Fisher and Hawk breached, vanquishing The Master. This house is so much worse, and that refers to more than just its worse squalor and decay. It has a presence, as if it's alive. It's unnatural.

The Master leads the magician, the dandy, and four of the dandy's cohorts upstairs. As they ascend the winding staircase, the steps creak and groan in protest underfoot.

The Ogress slams the front door shut and leads the rest into the sitting room on the first floor. Over her widow's dress, she's sporting a lace-up hobble-skirt and a heavily-boned full-corset: B&D accoutrements which give her Victorian ladies' stilted walk and wasp waist.

Unlike her bereavement dress, her skirt and corset are stiff leather. Cured hide from humans, not cows, in her case.

Sixty-something Helga fancies the kill. Figuratively smacking her considerable chops on the scraps, that she literally will be doing so in short order.

As a rule of thumb. Supernatural beings are quicker, stronger, faster healing, and more durable than mundane non-supernatural beings.

I'll kill the Nubian, first. Wrap my hand around his neck from behind and squeeze. Crushing his neck, severing his head from his body. The Cimmerian, the one that they call Conan, will be next. I will be facing him when I crush his skull like an egg shell. At least, that's the plan.

Although in no way legally obligated to do so, the real estate agent who sold the house to The Master and Helga revealed to them that it was supposed to be haunted. No good deed goes unpunished.

The realtor subsequently and mysteriously disappeared. He ended up in the pot. "Guess who?" stew, an Ogre specialty.

Of course, The Master and Helga knew about the haunt, as well as The Signs, beforehand. It's why they bought the house in the first place.

The haunt and the Signs are bait for a trap. The trap of a powerful magician. The conjurer is John Jaspers' twin sister Sara. Although John looks old and spent. She looks thirty-something. She is, of course, quite a bit older than she looks. What John saw in the abyss ultimately destroyed him. What she saw in the abyss made her into what she is today.

Sara was not fooled by The Master's chicanery in that other house on Chandler lane, the house where Hawk slayed The Master. Furthermore. She believes that this prostitute is The Master in disguise. And so began a deadly game of cat and mouse. The question is. Who is the cat? And. Who is the mouse?

Without saying a word. What the men want is obvious. They crave the deadliest of games. Unbeknownst to them, she is an Ogre. And. Yes. Of course. They've mistaken her for a mundane cavewoman from the frozen wilderness of the far north.

A giant cavewoman such as they believe her to be, is still a most formidable opponent, indeed. So. Having heard stories of the prostitute's huge woman servant, they've hedged their bets. They are all on a PED cocktail called "stimms." It's neither magic nor alchemy, but that new upstart

abomination called science. Stimms make humans quicker, stronger, more durable, and faster healing. Sound familiar?

A blur of movement—fueled by stimms, for mortals it is called *fast-forward*. The glint of cold, tempered steel. A blade slices through Helga's clothes and hacks off her breasts. Another blade, almost simultaneously cuts through the air. It's aimed at her neck. She deflects it with ease with one of her massive forearms against the flat of the blade.

Drunk, yes—but, not to the point of impairing them. Buffoons, no—not ever. The food has turned into formidable rapiers. Their blades drawn, ready to cleave, carve, and in general butcher Helga into oblivion.

Someone executes a leg sweep in an attempt to take Helga off her feet. The guy who tries to sweep Helga ends up shattering his leg in the process. It's as if her muscular lower limbs are made of granite. He screams out. Writhing on the floor in anguish. She literally punches her fist through the head of one of his cohorts as if her massive soup bone were smashing through a ripe watermelon with a sledge hammer. She breaks still another's sword with her other fist against the flat of the blade.

She loves to block kicks by smashing her fist into whatever part of your lower limb that she can connect with. Ouch!!!

Helga unhinges her jaws and bite off the head of one of the men, swallowing it whole in one gulp, smacking her lips afterwards without dropping a beat whatsoever. Hand-to-hand fighting for her kind is fast, brutal, and extremely violent. They call their version of pugilism, The Grey.

A vicious jab, followed by an equally vicious uppercut—it's vintage, old school fisticuffs. A man loses an arm. She'd punched through his shoulder joint. Severing a limb as opposed to merely dislocating his shoulder, with her bare-knuckled attack. Bright-red blood squirts from the gaping wound. Understandably, at least one major artery was severed. He goes into shock and loses consciousness before he hits the floor. Urination. Defecation. As he loses control of his bladder and bowels. He twitches a little on the floor involuntarily, as if he is a chicken who just got his head cut off.

The lucky ones are the ones who get to die in the fighting. She will endeavor to let one of them survive. That one she will eat to death. Drink live. Eat live. Eat whole. No half stepping.

Yep. If you're lucky: the Ogre will kill you, rape you, eat you, and make clothes out of you, in that order. An Ogre's definition of romantic lovemaking is rape. Then again, their definition of a casual one-night stand is indistinguishable from rape too. Truth be told, sex with an Ogre in any way, shape, or form is indistinguishable from rape. Fuck 'em high. Fuck 'em hard. Fuck 'em any way but loose. And, make that asshole pucker!

The Nubian, who she had initially planned to finish first, charges her from behind as she defends a frontal assault from another. Helga dispenses with the man on the floor with the shattered leg. She crushes the cracker's head under foot like an egg shell. Being a nigger lover, the monster has changed her mind and decided to save the shine for last.

Intending to finish her off and in the course of doing so putting the butch in her proper place, the Negro tries to bury a hatchet in the back of her head. He throws the hatchet and misses. So, he bear hugs her, instead. He is a big, powerful man. He's as massive as she. And. He's on

stimms. But, he's still food and human. And, she's still supernatural and an Ogre, and being Ogre she's inherently the better fighter.

Her front suitor stabs her several times with a pair of daggers. Face, neck, chest, and arms are viscously punctured. She breaks the nigger's hold, breaking his arms in the process, and backhands the dagger wielding bravo into a wall as if he's a pesky fly being swatted. You can hear the peckerwood's neck snap like a dry twig as his head impacts the wall. He drops to floor, dead; a ragdoll to be consumed later.

Both arms broken. Compound, not complex, fractures. Broken, jagged bones poking through his flesh. Only the nigger is left. She gives him her undivided attention. Even flow. She changes levels, in a jiff. Blows from her fists knock off his kneecaps. He goes down. She gets on top of him and snaps his neck, severing his spine, paralyzing him from the neck down.

"Food. Welcome to slavery," The Ogre gloats. "I promise it will be short-lived and so very, very, very painful."

Helga strips him naked from the waist down. Violently yanking off his trousers and boots. Leering at his crotch, she covets his package. Wearing her strap-on, she's hung like a horse with ginormous balls. He's big too, just as big as she strapping. Maybe it's true what they say about niggers, in that regard? Or is he the exception that just happens to fit the stereotype? Only God knows.

She rolls him onto his back and inspects his anus. Nice and tight. Unexplored territory. Can you say "bung hole?"

Good. A virgin. I get to be his first.

Conscious, alive, fully aware of what's happening to him, she begins eating and drinking him. The carnage facilitates her healing. Already, her tits have grown back in full, as if they had never been hacked off. Yep. The lucky ones died in the fighting.

Supernaturals heal Biblically—no scars or evidence of injury, afterwards, whatsoever. They age the same way, also—they age Biblically.

She also rapes him, fucking him first in the ass, of course; shredding his bung as if he's a prison biotch. And, in the course of doing so—raping him, that is—she begins incorporating some of his black, shiny skin into her attire. She intends to skin his massive penis and fashion it into a frockcoat for her dildo. His huge testicles will likewise be eviscerated, the skin sewn into a suitable skin covering for her strap-on's prosthetic testicles.

The philosophy of an Ogre: Can I eat it, or, will it eat me? Somethings never change. Then again, why would they?

Upstairs, things will unfold quite differently. Because. As aforementioned, an Ogre is a person. The Master is not.

It's commonplace for Ogres to draw things out, to maximize the pleasure of the fight. Ogres love to fight. For Ogres, the fight is the game. Carnage and mayhem, the end result.

Raped, ravaged, and eaten, the Nubian is given a reprieve from his agony. She pleasures him, against his will, and, he reacts instinctually.

He gets hard. His balls juicing his hot rod. His eyes roll back in his head. And those sounds come out of what's left of his mouth.

Unhinging her jaws, she deep throats him with ease as he begins to geyser. His massive phallus disappears into her equally generous mouth.

When she hits rock bottom, her long facile tongue snakes out and plays Wimbledon tennis with his balls. She blows him like an all-day sucker. Of course, she swallows his jism.

And, when she pauses from the front, she turns to the back. Helga flips him like a fluffy pancake onto his stomach. Plying his cheeks apart she takes in the aroma of his pungent defecation. His boner still squirting, only now it's into the floor instead of into her throat. For a while, she sandpapers his ass with her hair and gouges his ass with her tongue.

Then, she turns to the dirty business at hand. Dirty business for a very dirty girl. A nasty girl.

Helga's tongue lengthens into its own kind of unholy serpent. It's The Temptation, right out of the Garden of Eden. She plumbs his crack. Scooping up his "brown" into her waiting maw. The tip of her tongue tickling his pucker in the process. It's what Ogres call "chewing a wad of chew."

Ahhh!!! The taste of fresh shit!!! Nothing like it in the world!!!

When she's cleaned him up. Left nothing of his spread. His crack glistening with the wet of her saliva, and nothing else. She stabs his asshole with her tongue. Her tongue goes past his rectum into his lower intestines far enough to fish for turds.

As aforementioned. Upstairs is another story, entirely.

Upstairs, Downstairs

No more delusions, illusions, etc. The façade is stripped away, leaving only the naked truth that is cold-blooded murder. This is the purest form of murder: Murder for the sake of murder. No ulterior motives, whatsoever. As such, it dispenses with the façade of being “she.”

It still looks female, of course. Feminine looks, feminine ways, feminine wiles, feminine etc. But, it no longer “fancies” itself female, or a person for that matter. The walking, talking Barbie doll has devolved into The Real Barbie Blank. Only the remnant of Jaspers notices the change. Yet, he doesn’t raise the alarm. He’s consigned himself to his fate.

We don’t choose the things that we believe in. They choose us.

It, the dandy, his cohorts, and the remnant pace down the hallway toward a door that seems to beacon to them. Neither leftside nor rightside, said door is at the end of the hallway.

Backtracking. This referring to the creature in question as “it” is not a singular exercise. Flying squarely in the face of conventional practice, this is a plural situation.

Here and now and always, for that matter, colloquial usages just don’t apply. Yes. Never have. Never will. Can’t.

Bram Stoker’s Gothic, Victorian ideal of the romantic Master finally and utterly debunked? No bare-chested Twilight fantasies of Jacob and Edward? The answer to all of those questions and others like them is a resounding “yes.” Now, doesn’t that take the starch out of your knickers, so to speak? Now, try and pitch a tent, faggot.

Based upon the gender of the body of the vile, hellish creature in question. There’s this common misconception. She is The Master. He is The Master. The Master is an “it.”

The Borg do not have names. They have designations. And. Only The Queen has a personality, and it is unique unto her. As such. The various drones are null and void.

So, like The Borg. The Master is not a name. It is a designation. A designation that they all share. They are the one, who is the many. They are legion, who is one. They are one and the same, and yet they are not. The singular usage also refers to the plural, and the singular also refers to the singular.

On this world, The Master is territorial. And, The Master’s territories never overlap. Hence, one Master per territory.

On other worlds, in Creation, The Master travels in hordes. Herds that make The Master the dominant species. Ipso facto, those are Dead Worlds.

The Master is not sentient. In spite of whatever elaborate, involved conversation that The Master may be able to carry on at length about with the most learned of humans. The Master is not a person at all. The Master is an animate corpse. The Master is “undead.”

Therefore, it is correct and proper to refer to one of their kind as “it.” Although even the most learned humans, knowing full well what they are in the presence of, can from time to time slip up and misspeak, and refer to one of their ilk as he or she.

The Master is cruel, unyielding, and relentless. The Master is a pitiless fiend. Hard. Loathsome. Merciless. Vile. An abomination. Corruption incarnate. There's nothing remotely romantic about them.

The Master has no collective consciousness. They have no consciousness at all. They are not people. They cannot think. Yet. They have something. Something analogous to, intelligence, for want of a better word. Something expressed as "voices" in their heads that only they, and their collaborators, can hear. And, they have personalities, too. They have personalities unique to the individual, just like a "real" person does.

They finally reach the door. You can smell it in the air. The smell of impending death. The Master smiles, broadly.

The humans. Their plan is quite simple. Once the dandy and his cohorts are alone in the room with The Master, door closed, they will attack before The Master has a chance to react. The unexpected acquisition of a discredited wizard as an unwitting ally is seen as a plus, though obviously too problematic to be considered a windfall.

Again, like their comrades downstairs, they crave the deadliest of games. Instead of paying the whore for sex. They intend to butcher her for sport.

The Master opens the door and strides forward, moving so gracefully and effortlessly, that it's as if it glides into the center of the room.

Foolishly, the humans follow—the last one closing the door behind him. Once they are all inside, the humans attack. Too bad. Too late. Not enough. The Master reacts, instinctually, and without pause. Bottom line. Zero reaction time, on the part of The Master!

All of the humans, except for Jaspers' remnant, are on stimms. But. The Master, just like Helga, is on another level, entirely. It also takes on these multiple attackers with ease.

Hawk and Fisher were a different story, entirely. Such skilled, high level, mundane fighters as them. They were able to defeat The Master in spite of its supernatural advantage, without the use of stimms. Bottomline: stimms would add absolutely nothing to their already elite level fighting portfolio—they're already fighting at the highest levels that humans are currently capable of. Plus. They experienced, expert monster fighters.

The Master is a blur of movement—the genuine article, not that stim-fueled mortal imitation known as fast-forward. Two of the humans get their throats ripped out by the dangerous fingernails of the fiend's clawed hands before they can draw their swords.

A third man gets his throat ripped out by its snapping, unhinged jaws. Transformed. Its mouth is now a living nightmare. A razor-blade smile. Large, straight, pointed teeth – serrated teeth – long serrated teeth and blood drinking fangs. A killer tongue. A tongue which is a bloodlusting, self-sustaining organ. He does get a chance to draw his sword and stab it through its heart the skewering blade coming out its back severing its spine, for all the good that does him.

It hurls him into a wall like he's a ragdoll. As if he's the discarded toy of a spoiled brat who's grown bored with him.

It pulls out the transfixing blade and breaks the blade over the head of a fourth man, fracturing his skull, killing the man outright. This is the only time that it uses something other than itself as

a weapon. It laughs in the deranged fashion of a lunatic worshipping a full moon as it throws away the two halves of the broken sword.

Another blur of movement. The Master lashes out, ripping a gaping hole in the dandy's trousers. The dandy goes into shock. Blood gushes out of his crotch where his manhood used to be. Agony engulfs his loins. In one, quick, vicious strike, it has emasculated him completely. It cackles as it munches on his mauled penis and testicles. He quickly bleeds out and dies.

The wizard just stands there and does nothing, unable to move. Transfixed by this personification of evil. Like a cat playing with mice, The Master has made mincemeat out of the dandy and his no longer jovial, no longer alive, cohorts. For the first time in a very long time, the conjuror feels the darkness closing in on him. And as he looks upon The Master, unable to avert his gaze, he sees the abyss looking right back at him, flashing that razorblade smile. The vanishing!

Deep down, though, part of him is glad. Soon, very soon, his suffering will be over. Finally, he will be free of this cruel joke of an existence that his life has become. Either he will be butchered like the others, or.

Goddess, he thinks. A realization that triggers something.

"Goddess," the wizard feebly utters. The Master misinterprets the remnant's proclamation. His Id is dispelling: the something that was triggered by the realization.

"Behold in despair, your new master."

His plan had been simple enough. Weave a spell. Let the abyss devour him. Become the pathetic wretch that he is now. Become the wandering ronin. And, wait.

And, when he had finally found that which had taken his beloved wife from him, his Id would dispel said spell and the gazing into the abyss, and he the real him would either destroy that goddess creature, even if he died in the process, or he would fail and die trying.

That twinkle in his eyes returns. The remnant gives way. Gives way to John Jaspers. The Master was not the only one wearing a façade. The wizard suddenly stands tall. Enough lives have been lost, tonight.

Again, that public lie versus his private truth. Clearly, he's a sociopath who "enjoys" fooling himself. That and the paradox is what endeared him so much to his late wife.

There's also that other thing. No matter how courageous the act he commits. He's not a good man. Then again, he never has claimed to be. Unlike what a deceitful politician would do.

The Master flashes a toothy grin. Plans within plans. It's "lived" (existed) much too long to be so easily caught off guard. It recognizes that another trap has been sprung. From the git-go, it recognized that multiple traps were afoot. One was obviously the dandy and his cohorts. It recognized that Jaspers was some type of bait for another.

It taunts him. This is an expression of its inherent cruelty. The inherent cruelty of all Nosferatu.

The others died much too quickly. A dictate of necessity. This last one shall die slowly. Prolonged agony.

It finishes off the dandy's eats, wiping its hands on its dress. It will lick the gruesome leavings off of its dress, later.

Back to himself, for the first time in a very long time, he is no longer the broken man that he was. But in having done what he's done, allowing others to die when he could have done something, not lifting a finger to help, he's shown that he's no longer the hero that he once was. He has fallen. A hero has fallen. Then again, truth be told, he was never that man. He was never a hero.

Revenge. Revenge is why his Id didn't trigger earlier. He needs to destroy this thing himself.

He has become obsessed over time. No matter the cost in human lives, innocent or otherwise, he will not share this the destruction of this fiend with anyone. Yes. If successful. It proves that he could have saved some, if not all of men who lost their lives, tonight. More than just a fallen hero. In a sense, he has become something akin to that which he has hunted for so long. The Darkness calls to him. It The Master also calls to him.

As aforementioned, it was only his public image that he's undone. His heroic persona, so to speak. Deep down, inside, he was always akin to the something that he's hunted for so long. For too long he's lied to others. For too long he's lied to himself. He's the real monster here. As much a monster as this hell spawn something standing before him.

The End Draws Near

His hands gesture, arcanelly. Wards and warrants invoke. The room is now “sealed.”

Only the most powerful conjurer can do what he is about to do. Only a conjurer of the First Order.

But. Unfortunately for him there is no knowledge on this world of that which would render a Nosferatu, or any supernatural being for that matter, unable to resurrect and thus venerable to destruction. What good does it do to kill something, if it can just come back into existence over and over again, ad infinitum?

“You know your days are numbered, count ‘em one by one. Like notches on the handle of an outlaw’s dagger. You can outrun the devil if you try, but you’ll never outrun the hands of time. In time there’ll surely come a day. In time all things shall pass away,” Jaspers intones.

It smiles evilly at his bold proclamation. It’s trembling with the ecstasy of homicidal glee.

And. Inside of The Master, Fisher more than just watches in first person. She’s living it!

“Bold words for someone who is already dead,” It, the dead thing, taunts.

“Now, that’s the pot calling the kettle, black,” He responds in kind.

“I’m neither pot nor kettle, but I am a thing. As dead a thing as the pot and the kettle.”

Jasper’s pursuit of revenge has morphed into something else entirely, something which he will not admit even to himself. It is the obsession with predatory behavior touched on in Ernest Hemingway’s most famous muse.

“On the Blue Water,” Esquire Magazine, April 1936.

“Certainly there is no hunting like the hunting of man. And those who have hunted armed men long enough and liked it, never really care for anything else thereafter. You will meet them doing various things with resolve, but their interest rarely holds, because, after the other thing, ordinary life is as flat as the taste of wine when the taste buds have been burned off your tongue.”

Ernest (Miller) Hemingway (1899-1961)

Gestural magic. The magician makes arcane, vibrant gestures with his hands as he intones loudly in increasing decibels toward a thunderous crescendo. The air crackles with the power of magic wrought for the sole purpose of mayhem. Here, on this world, in this age: wizard, witch, sorcerer, magician, conjurer, etc., monikers for practitioners of all of the magical disciplines are used interchangeably. Because here, and now, that’s how they are practiced. Specializing leaves too many gaps in your game. Gaps that can prove “unhealthy,” if they were to be exploited by an enemy.

The room is suddenly intensely-lit. But, the source of the illumination is neither discernable nor earthly. There is a loud hum, like the sound you hear given off by high-voltage power lines in the hot, humid nights of August.

“I bind you, foul spirit. I bind you, by your name.”

Sensing that her master, The Master is in peril. Having rushed upstairs from downstairs. The Ogre, faithful “dog” that she be, pounds on the door and hammers on the walls to no avail. She can’t get in. The room is “sealed.”

“To punish and enslave,” boasts the dead thing in total refutation of what he’s trying to do. And, with a mere sweep of its hand, so trivial a gesture as that, it’s all over.

The room darkens. It’s deathly quiet, again. The “seal,” the so-called unbreakable iteration, is broken. Jaspers lies flat on his stomach on the floor, sprawled like a ragdoll. Arms flailing uncontrollably. Legs askew. An impossible weight upon his back. Foaming at the mouth as if he’s rabid. He can’t breathe, gasping for air. His vision narrows. He’s blacking out. In his worst imaginings, he never thought that it would be like this. It was as if he was nothing, a fly to be swatted. It was as if it, the dead thing, wasn’t in a fight. The anti-climax: He can hear it move toward him, slowly, cackling, taunting him. It’s taking its time, prolonging the torment.

Then. It’s just there. Upon him. He must have had a flash blackout. It flicks out its long, facile tongue and licks the back of his neck. He can feel its hot, foul breath. Breath fouled by the anticipation of its coming meal. It flips him onto his back as if he is a sheet of loose leaf paper, a back raked by spasms. The room is rapidly getting darker, from his perspective. It lifts him up by the shoulders as if he is a small child who weighs absolutely nothing.

“Welcome to slavery,” It gloats, flashing a razorblade smile from ear to ear. A fate far worse than death, awaits him. It’s decided to make him its thrall.

In a final act of betrayal, his mortal body shuts down completely. His vision fails. He goes blind. It is pitch black. The last thing he hears is its bone-chilling laughter. It has won. The outcome was never in doubt. Casting aside his pride, the last thing that he manages to get out of his mouth are two words.

“Help me,” he pleads, seemingly to no one in particular. Then, he blacks out. This time for good.

How to make a Barbie doll

“Foolish girl, I take what I do not get willingly given to me.”

The Nosferatu wears the girl like a suit of clothes.

The sword drops from Fisher’s hand. It clatters as it hits the floor. Transformation. Unclean. Her hands klaw; they will klaw, when idle. A knob sprouts from the rightside of her creamy-white neck. Her mouth opens slackly drooling. She sports an empty gaze. There are voices in her head. Her mind is empty. A blank slate, so to speak. Not the paradox that you might think. She is part of a Collective, a collective of two. No longer a person, she is a thing like her dishy Nosferatu master and husband.

Grey and white liberally streaks the golden platinum blonde tresses that drape her shoulders and generous breasts. The rug matches the drapes. Grey and white, with specks of blonde, her bush goes geriatric also. Comely in spite of her tainted looks. Although some would differ with that observation. Different strokes for different folks.

Fisher removes her clothing. Now, she is naked like the Nosferatu. The newlyweds walk slowly over to the coffin. There’s no rush. They have forever. The grinning Nosferatu makes low, feral sounds. Fisher is the unclean and the Nosferatu is the undead.

Here, there is no need for pretense. As such, the Nosferatu sports a geriatric mane and bush, a killer tongue, and a razorblade smile. Knobb. Klaw. Etc. Comely in spite of its tainted looks. Although some would differ with that observation. Different strokes for different folks.

The girl lies down in the coffin. The Nosferatu gets on top of her and feeds, drinking the girl live. Cheeks, breasts, thighs, and torso, even vulva, are suckled, but most time is spent with the Nosferatu’s mouth affixed to the leftside of the girl’s neck.

Drinking live is much more than just about obtaining sustenance, for the Nosferatu. This, for them, is how they have sex. Enjoy who you drink. After all, this is one of the ways that they reproduce.

Cautious Nosferatu are monogamous. They drink live from only one human. This minimizes detection.

And. When it comes to wives, this Nosferatu is very picky. It prefers a certain physical type. Fisher is its type. Blonde, blue-eyed, and buxom – long legs, slim hips, generous mouth, fair complexion, and tight ass (flat, pancake ass and slim hips).

When it is in-between wives. During that risky period when it’s in search of a replacement, because it’s either used up its chosen or she’s turned, it feeds indiscriminately. Sometimes it does so intentionally to attract the attention of a potential mate, which is what it did in Fisher’s case. When its brazen attacks of commoners failed to elicit the desired response from the powers-that-be, it knew that the Guard would send their best to come after it when it publicly abducted the Councilor’s daughter. Its encounter with Hawk and Fisher was a trap. It was wife shopping.

How does it conceal the eating of people? That’s the easiest part of this elaborate charade. This is a very violent part of town. People die, every day. It’s child’s play for her to pass off one of its carnivorous feedings as the handiwork of mortals. Besides, there are Lycan afoot, in the area. A Nosferatu’s carnivorous feedings can easily be mistaken for that of a Lycan’s handiwork, and

vice versa. Many uninformed humans don't realize that Nosferatu eat as well as drink live. Ignorance is not always bliss.

As if they are cannibals, Nosferatu derive great sexual pleasure from eating live. Enjoy who you eat. It's not quite the serious banging that they get from feeding, but they derive quite the intense orgasm from it, nonetheless. Major league wetty/woody, depending upon the applicable male, female, she-male gender involved. Feed the demon within and without, so to speak.

With each feeding, Fisher becomes less and less human, and more and more monster, until none of her former self, her humanity, is left. Once transformed. She will prey upon those that she once protected and loved. No one will be safe from her unnatural cravings, not even her husband Hawk.

In folklore, turning someone is portrayed as being so easy and inevitable. In reality, making a human into a Nosferatu is problematic, at best—neither easy nor inevitable. The same can be said of turning a human into a Lycan. Of all of the supernatural beings in Creation, only Lycan and Nosferatu can reproduce in this asexual fashion.

Your Villain is Our Hero

Sic semper tyrannis - "Thus always to tyrants."

Hearing. It's the last of the senses to go, and it's always the first to come back. He's prone, lying on his back, unable to move. He can hear two voices, nearby. Both are female.

"I thought that you two had an acrimonious split 20 years earlier?"

She smiles broadly, before answering. She has that face, a face that belies her character's unsavory proclivities.

"It's a woman's prerogative to change her mind. Besides. It's your Order's prime directive, not mine, and he did ask for help."

The Order in question, of course, is the Order of the Bene Gesserits.

"You idiot, he's conscious!"

One of the voices moves closer. Something must have given him away, although for the life of him he can't gather what.

"I guess you'll be leaving, then?"

A telltale is removed from his forehead. It's as if he was numb and couldn't feel it. The person who removes it doesn't bother to answer the question, she just leaves. By now, he has regained some command of his body. Instinctually, he knows that it's okay to open his eyes.

For a fleeting moment, there is panic—stark raving terror—naked and terrible. The dead thing, the Nosferatu who once enthralled him, looms behind The Other. All the while, she, the "living" Nosferatu—call her Samantha Gayle Phillips, for want of a better name—smiles at him, knowing what's what. That wide, toothy grin of hers. Those ravaging pearly whites. Then she just blunts her teeth. Her tongue ceases to be killer.

Of note. She prefers to be called "Sam."

Demon or not, Nosferatu notwithstanding, she's one of his closest friends, a monster far worse than that which momentarily unnerves him. And, that's what ultimately calms him. She's on his side.

He waves off her offered assistance and, still weak and shaken, he stands up by himself. He makes an arcane gesture which allows him to "see" what's what. The dead thing cannot see them, nor can it touch them. It walks right through them, enraged that it cannot find its lost possession. Enraged that it cannot find him.

She'll test me. Something hard. Hard and clever. A conundrum of sorts. One of those things known only to her and the "real" me.

"I'm better than the past, outshining the present, and the greatest thing for the future." She pauses. "Who said that?" She's testing his wits. Dispassionately assessing the damage, lingering and otherwise.

The dead thing doesn't react to her voice. Obviously, it can't hear them either.

“Kiddson,” he answers, as if uncertain. Then there’s the pause, as if he’s racking his scrambled brains. It’s the expected inside joke between them. “Or, or was it Melina—Latina Nosferatu?”

“Finally. A proper answer.”

“How long?”

“Six months. Any longer and it would have peeled away the last vestige of your alias. And.”

“I would have been its, forever.”

He is once more himself. The rest of the lie is gone. Stripped away. The sociopath is gone. He is once more the good man, the hero driven by justice not revenge. And, as such, he must live with the lives lost in the pursuit of his noble quest his just cause. Filthy and parasite-infested. Head lice, fleas, and crabs. Clad in filthy tatters, rags that are so filth-engrained, they are starched stiff. The darkness of the abyss is no longer within him; gone, completely. And, he can guess who took it, but he knows her and her kind too well to ask the obvious.

As his arcane senses begin to return to normal, Jack realizes that they are within her ROOM. Another “gesture.” His vision shifts. The ROOM is no longer immaterial. He also realizes that if she didn’t allow it implicitly or explicitly, none of his magic would work here.

“You owe me a fin. I told you that you couldn’t bind it. But you had to learn the hard way. There was no talking you out of it,” she teases, understandably insensitive to his feelings.

“It was, after all, my wife that it killed.” It’s a measured response. To react humanly to her dig would be a grave mistake. Because, dearest friend or not, staunchest ally notwithstanding, lover no less, he’s still food to her, and she will not hesitate to eat and drink him if he should ever fall short of her expectations of him.

“Yes, indeed. That’s my old Jack. Back in the saddle again.”

Chance favors the prepared mind.

He sees his reflection in a full-length mirror. He’s once more as he was when they last met. Six foot even. Two hundred, very lean, well-muscled pounds. An athletic build. Broad shouldered. Square, lantern jaw. Jet black hair. Huge hands. Tall, dark, and handsome. He looks more like a gladiator than a magician. A man’s man straight out of an Ernest Hemingway novel of daring do.

Six months of being enthralled to that abomination, and I’ll bet you enjoyed every minute of my degradation; masturbating day after day to it. Leaving me with the graphic memories of my humiliations seared indelibly into my brain. And, yet you magnanimously return me appearance-wise to what I was before my premeditated fall. Truly your demon kind is the undoing of us all. I bet that dark things such as you would look into the abyss and yawn, seeing only their fiendish reflection in kind and deed.

Just when you thought you had reached the deepest depths of horror, it suddenly got worse. How do I turn off that small voice inside your head that’s started to whisper: You should be glad that now, if not before, your revenge was justifiable on any conceivable moral scale? That small voice proved, beyond any doubt, that I was damned. Despair. They’re here. The Lost Ones are among us.

Kaz warned me as much, but I had no choice. No matter. If I had it to do all over again, I would do nothing different. I prefer her with me as opposed to against me.

“You know your way around. Get cleaned up, lover. We have places to go and things to do.”

Jack steps through a door into the master bath. He strips off his clothes and steps through the shower curtains into the shower. Water, at the perfect temperature for him, sprays from the shower head and gently peels off layers of filth and parasites. He reaches for a bar of soap and feels her naked body against his. Her front to his back. He lathers up with the soap as she nibbles on his shoulder.

Her teeth are too sharp. He doesn't need to see them to know that they are no longer “blunt.” He doesn't need to see her tongue either to know that it's now “killer.”

Whenever they are alone, like this, she always sports a razorblade smile and the requisite killer tongue. Knobb. And klaw. And, those empty, deep blue, hungry eyes. And. A voice that is deep, husky, smoky, raspy, and wanton. Cold. Ice cold. Those mechanical, automaton ways, mannerisms, etc., etc., etc. Overtones, but not overpowering, that's comes off as stern, shrew, schoolmarm, spinster. Sam is a total degenerate.

We've digressed. Time to get back on track.

The ultimate perk of being a demon's lover is not the sex; it's the sex. In other words, it's not the pheromone-fueled carnality—oral, anal, vaginal, S&M, B&D, D&H, and/or however else you define fucking. It's being feed upon. Like the dead things, The Master, a something like her feeding on you is the best sex that you will ever have. No mere human lover can ever hope to compete.

Bottomline. She is something that is both repulsive and attractive. You know what she is, and yet you still want her in the worst way.

The still-grieving widow holds back nothing, to do else would be highly unwise, not to mention unhealthy. He loved his wife. His misses his wife. But he loves the living Nosferatu, also. Their relationship is totally carnal, unlike the one that he had with his wife. So, in spite of what he should do, morally speaking, that is. Totally inappropriate behavior, and all that. He's still gonna fuck her. He's still gonna feed her. He throws caution to the wind.

And so the dance begins. She slides down to her knees and buries her face in his crack. Tongue plumbing said crack as well as his anal nethers—his anus. No wasted motion, whatsoever. Her arms encircle him. The fingertips of one hand gently manipulate his balls. The fingers of the other curl around his erect, meaty shaft and begin to go up and down. Fingering and hand job would put a porno starlet to shame. Her pheromones both excite and control him. Insurance that he won't cum too soon. Guarantee that once he does cum, he will stay hard until she decides otherwise.

The soap drops from his hand. He shudders. His pulse races. Jack can hear the countless voices in her head. For what seems like forever. The Collective calls to him. The “faint” seduction. Then, as always, the moment passes. Silence. Once more, it's just the two of them. The voices are gone, for the both of them.

Her arms no longer embrace him. He turns around. And, she goes down on him. Deep throat. Linda Lovelace would be proud. Her fingernails lengthen. She reaches around him and digs her daggerous fingernails into his buttocks. He ejaculates into her mouth. She swallows. Gush after gush. He's a proverbial geyser. Ecstasy for him. Merely a nibble for her. Minutes pass like months.

Jack is still has an erection; his penis refusing to go flaccid in spite of the human biology involved. It's her inhuman doing, of course. Sam stands up. As she does so, she rakes his back from ass cheeks to shoulders. Blood from his wounds mixes with the water washing over them and swirls down the drain.

They kiss. Their tongues dance. He can taste himself in her mouth. He can taste everybody that she has ever fucked. Tit for tat. He rakes her back with his fingernails. Blood from her wounds mixes with the water washing over them and swirls down the drain.

She pushes back, making some space between them. Their lips disconnect. She sighs as she throws her head back, flaxen tresses cascading down her back, a paint brush smearing her pale skin with blood like some gruesome Impressionistic painting.

No more klaw or knobb. Her teeth blunt and her tongue is no longer killer. The leechgirl ways and means all go bye-bye. So goes that ghastly voice of hers, and in its place is the sexy one that he likes so very much.

He pulls her toward him. Their mouths conjoin, again. Their bodies interlock, once more. He can no longer taste who she has fucked in her mouth. Her mouth is fresh and clean.

In spite of her being a whore, and a psychopathic one at that, it's like he's with a virgin. A virgin straight out of the convent whose been taught by the nuns to be a proper wife and lady. A proper wife and lady who paradoxically possesses the sexual skills and prowess of a porn slut. Ergo. Sexual skills and prowess which are quite considerable.

But, make no mistake about it. This is only foreplay. The second "kiss" has yet to come. Things must be built up to that epic crescendo. And all the while, in the back of their head, the knowing human partner of a demon in heat knows for sure that they the demon can lose it and eat them the human alive and whole. Food is food, after all.

Beauty and the beast. Too perfect to be real. She, the undoer, is all those things and so much more. This is she, The Nosferatu, The Other, Sam. This is all of them, the demonkind.

He can feel that dull pain in his head and that maniacal throbbing of his temples as his pineal gland expands exponentially.

Displaying inhuman flexibility, that belies her dexterity, she places the palms of her hands against his chest and shoves him violently into a wall of the shower stall. As his savaged back slams into the ornate Grecian tiles, she is upon him like a whirlwind. This is not about lovemaking, anymore. This is about rape, pure and simple. His.

She digresses and goes feral, again. Razorblade smile. Killer tongue. Knobb. Klaw. Daggerous fingernails. The leechgirl with the shrew's voice. They all return with a vengeance. Now, dis here be da dope!!!

Welcome back to my world, beloved. Where violence is a virtue and depravity is a way of life.

Jack doesn't have to hear her thoughts in his head, to know what she has in store for him. They're back together again, and that can only mean one thing leading to the next. Duplicity? Who's playing whom? No way. They've got each other's back. And, right now, they've got each other's front, so to speak.

Then. That pregnant pause. The very awkward moment. Whoosh. She manhandles him onto the marble floor of the shower as if she were a grown woman dominating a small boy, and mounts him, violently. Schoolyard bully style. Driving him like a raped ape.

The seesaw regression. Flat hair, that stern hairdo, the “shrew” ‘do: in other words, in beautician’s vernacular, the so called worx. Plain, straight, and simple. A hairdo that is the perfect affectation for her effectuation. Teeth blunt. Razorblade smile, killer tongue, knobb, klaw, daggerous ‘nails, and leechgirl shtick, all gone.

In the midst of all of this normality of appearance on her part. She unsheathes her blood-drinking fangs: Her upper canines elongating into a pair of nasty-looking, drinking-live pikers. That next kiss!

The final and expected transformation. She digresses and goes feral, again. Her fangs are rejoined by long, straight, “needle” teeth and a killer tongue. Klaw. Knobb. Shrew voice. Long, pointed fingernails. And, those leechgirl affectations.

Displaying that aforementioned, inhuman flexibility of hers and advertising his own pliability, she shoves his head to the side upon his right shoulder and bites down hard. Her teeth and tongue puncture the leftside of his neck while he’s still inside of her—his dick is ramming deep into her pussy with a lotta assist from her. Multiple puncture wounds.

As she violates his neck, he experiences agony and ecstasy, simultaneously. At no time does she cease to “grind” on top of him. She’s, quite literally, fucking the shit outta him. And, he’s a more than willing participant.

He experiences what it is to be like her. A quasi-faerie experience, so to speak. One of the many temporary byproducts of this exchange of body fluids. As such. Tit for tat. They shift—he becomes overdriven and she is no longer underdriven.

Overdrive. Something quite beyond the human tech of his world.

Overdrive. Where the fastest movement of mundane undriven is excruciatingly slow motion to the driven mundane.

Overdrive. We’re discussing the bleeding edge of the Theory of Relativity here, and, needless to say, if Albert Einstein were eavesdropping, he’d be getting a woody at this very moment.

You see, in point of fact. What’s overdrive for mundanes, is undriven for supernaturals. What’s underdriven for supernaturals, is undriven for mundanes. In other words, their default the default of supernaturals is a mortal’s overdrive. A default which totem worlds suppress.

What mortals call *universes*, supers call *worlds*. Supers call the totality of worlds: Creation. Mundanes call that same totality: the multi-verse. What do supers call a planet? They call it a planet.

Haven is on a planet in a totem world. And. They are still on Haven in that universe, so to speak. But. In a ROOM you’re outside of the normal space-time continuum. This is why Sam can shift back to her default state, and Jack can become overdriven.

She buries her fingernails deep in his back. Multiple puncture wounds. The more, the bloodier. It’s to her kind’s taste. Eat live. Drink live. But. When all is said and done, it’s always about blood for Nosferatu (*Sanguinus immortalus*). Blood is sex. Sex is blood. Sex—orgasm.

Situational awareness. The best predators all have it. As distracted as she is at this very moment, she's never too distracted to notice. She feels the telltale its ever so subtle vibrations long before she hears it. By the time they materialize in the bathroom, she's upon them before they know what hit 'em.

Her attackers become the prey, in short order. And, it's not just her. The pseudo-Nosferatu, her familiar, Jack, joins in on the fray. And, the ROOM. After all, the ROOM is SOAP. Her SOAP. Her very hungry, always ravenous SOAP.

It is a trap. They never breached her ROOM, she duped them into thinking they had. She let them in her ROOM, so that she could ambush them, butchering them for sport.

Pale Rider

“History is the version of past events that people have decided to agree upon.”

—Napoleon—

Jack comes to himself lying upon a thick slab of cultured Italian marble. It is the Cadillac of beds for demons in all of Creation. And, for a brief moment he was akin to her kind.

Something horrid, the sight of which makes him shudder involuntarily, turns its head and grins at Jack from across the ROOM.

It's dragging the last of the freshly butchered bodies through a door into the kitchen. The “it” has a name. His name is Puck. Puck is one Sam's most ardent fans. He literally worships her.

Of special note. The given name of Puck, who's a mischievous Sprite and the proverbial life of the party, is Robin Goodfellow. 'Nough said!

A naked, freshly showered Sam steps out of the adjoining bathroom and walks over to Jack. She's eating something. She's chewing on someone's face. Blunt teeth and tongue. Her nails are no longer daggerous. No knobb. No klaw. Nothing Borg about her. And. There's no evidence of wounds or mayhem.

The same can be said of Jack. He's himself again. Mundane. Clean and pristine. Totally unscathed. There's not a mark on him.

“Recognize him?” She asks, holding up the face for his inspection, while giggling at his apparent discomfort about her presentation. She's such a biotch. A total bitch.

“Yes. He's one of the queen's elites. One of her personal bodyguards.”

“I need for you to look at the others, before Puck has his way with them. He's quite a good cook, so once he begins preparing the food any forensics will be destroyed. If you're feeling modest, lover, there are some clothes over there on that chair the previous owner won't be needing them anymore. But, be quick about it, we don't want to keep the chef waiting any longer than we need to.”

How many rooms are there in Sam's ROOM? As many as there need be.

She steps into the kitchen. He dresses quickly and follows her, dressed in the clothes of a dead man. He thought that he was quick. He was wrong. Puck stands impatiently by one of the bodies, meat cleaver in hand poised at the ready above the torso of the fresh corpse. Bene Gesserit tricorder in hand, she is finishing up her scans.

Jack notices that she's no longer naked. She's wearing a tiny black bra, matching black fishnet tights, uber-creepy black opera gloves, and a pearl necklace. Jokingly, she first described her bra to him as the holsters she wears to keep her tits out of the way when she's killing. Her long grace kid gloves are LBGs, of course. LBGs: long black gloves.

Laying on a cutting table that she's careful to keep in range of, is her sword belt. The belt's holster is a Race Bannon.

Race Bannon. A conventional “active” holster that has been extensively modified. It more resembles an orthopedic device than it does a street-ready carry. And, as such, it violates every

carry reg in the IDPA rule book. In fact, it's more radical than the race holsters of gun belts used in IPSC unlimited events. The holster molds itself to whatever weapon it holsters, providing the most secure carry and the fastest draw possible. It can be configured to be anything from a back holster to a belt holster on the strong side.

So, someone else singular or plural is in the room that we cannot see.

Jack doesn't have to be Sherlock Holmes for this deduction. And. He's careful to sport a poker face when he comes up with it. It just wouldn't do to advertise the lowdown to the invisible.

"Quickly now, do you recognize any of the others?" She asks, the impatience palatable in her voice.

He takes his time and ignores their digs, her audible ones and Puck's visual ones. The bodies of the four men and one woman are laid neatly out on metal preparation tables. None is known to him, except for the one whose face that he has already identified.

"I only recognize that one. The one whose face you are munching on. Those arcane tattoos inking his body, I'm the one who wrote them. All of the queen's service has them, and they are done by a wizard of the First Order. Then again, I've been out of circulation for a long time, so maybe policy has changed and not all in the queen's service are required to sport ink."

"Or maybe their ink has been removed, without leaving a trace."

"Then why not remove his?"

"Because he's known to you, and the others aren't." At first, Jack doesn't get it, and then, in short order, that boyish smirk paints his face. He finally gets it. Unfortunately, so do the others.

This second wave of attackers materializes in kitchen. And, they are packing heat. Their weapons are "generic" brand-x, but the guns are equivalent to Bene Gesserit phasers.

The first time that Jack saw someone use a gun, it was his Sam. He thought at the time what strange looking wands they were: black, clunky-looking "things" with hand grips. One minute her hands were empty, the next moment her hands were grasping the grips of those things. They spewed death, silent and horrific, without even the faintest shimmer of a magical flash. She referred to them as guns, and told him that it would be wise if he never spoke of them or what she had done with them to anyone. To this day he has complied. In the bloody aftermath, without her having to tell him otherwise, he figured out on his own that the "guns" weren't wands, they were weapons.

The previously-invisible others are armed with guns the likes of which he had never seen before, not that they get much of a chance to use them.

They are attacked simultaneously by Puck, Sam, the ROOM, and Jack. Like the ones before them, none of these attackers are driven.

A wizard of the First Order, Jack can defend himself against all mortal comers and most Supernatural ones. His hands gesture arcanelly. An invisible protective "shield" envelopes him. Wizard's fire erupts from his hands. Think: directed thermo-nuclear blasts minus the radiation. Two men get fried into crispy ash figurines.

Puck drops his meat cleaver and just goes poof. It's called spot-monkey, an arcane specialty of his race. Ultra-short range teleportation. He materializes here, there, everywhere in the room:

ceiling, walls, and floor. He attacks with his long daggerous claws, ripping out throats and beating hearts from chests. If you know how to counter such an insidious attack, you have a sporting chance. If you don't, you just die horribly.

Sam drops her tricorder and draws her sword. It's as if her fully-deployed sword magically "loaded" into her hand. One moment she was unarmed. The next moment she's hacking and slashing away at the enemy. She's a blur of movement.

24 hours ago, minus the "enemy" attacks in Sam's ROOM.

"A retired, thirty-something librarian on holiday."

"Calls herself Sam. She'll have to do in a pinch."

"She'll have to do a damn site better than that."

Sister Carol will never get used to her superior's use of profane language.

"Yes, Reverend Mother."

"No trace back to us The Order?"

"Confirmed, along with plausible deniability."

"Texas no limit hold 'em. And, on top of that, she's one of them faeries. Shit!"

"Couldn't be helped. We had to commit."

"And that, Sister Carol, is only saving grace in this total, and I mean total, cluster fuck."

"Yes, Reverend Mother."

Present time.

Wearing what's left of a long sheer diaphanous dress, Fisher rises out of the coffin. Borg glyphs and runes are craved into the sides and the lid of the coffin. No one native to this world would recognize them, which is quite understandable, because The Borg have yet to reach this world.

She's filthy, parasite-infested, and ravenous. The Master is nowhere in sight.

It's too late. She's the dead thing's Familiar. In mind, body and soul, the Nosferatu "owns" her. She remembers her old life, but it's irreverent to her. If her human husband Hawk were here, she would attack him with the intent to kill him, rape him, and feed upon him, and hopefully for his sake if it ever happens it's in that order. She would have her way with him, making clothes out of him; again, for his sake while he was not still alive.

The dead thing is fashioning her into something pretty, perfect even, by its way of thinking. Her fingernails are long and daggerous, complementing her klaw hands. Her teeth serrated, for eating live. Fangs, for drinking live. Her tongue killer, for the in between. A bloody, coagulated "slime" paints her front from that gruesome mouth of hers to the geriatric rug of her crotch. Paints her dirty flesh and the filthy tatters that she calls a dress. Poor table manners. She wears who she eats.

Her long geriatric mane, those filthy streaked rattails, drape a knobbed neck and a once-beautiful face that's been ravaged by insanity. Of course, it's a beautiful face to the Master.

Stark raving mad, the feral sounds coming out of that grotesque mouth of hers are not even remotely human, although she still is. Yes. She's still human, by the barest of threads. A very strong, tough to kill, homicidal, totally insane human being. Soon, very soon, she will be skin, bones, hair, and tits. A proper human bride for a Nosferatu. For now, the raving lunatic still has her comely figure. To the dead thing, the emaciated look is comely, of course.

Down here, the dead thing has dispensed with the lie, the façade of Lady Glenda. It once more looks like it did when Hawk and Fisher vanquished it. It once more looks like an animate corpse. A dead thing that preys on the living.

Where are they? They are no longer in the house. They have retreated to the catacombs and sewers beneath the city. It was a very hasty retreat. When Jaspers could not be found that was the tipoff that their home had been compromised, the three of them beat feet. While Noreen searches for a more suitable abode, this is home, for now.

Leavings scatter the floor. Human leavings. Male and female. Young and old. Children and even infants. Bones, some complete skeletons, but no flesh. No partially eaten carcasses.

Not all of the leavings are human, though. A fair share are animals. A fair share are other Supernaturals, too.

She walks across the grotto. Thanks to a long forgotten earthquake that collapsed part of the floor into the sewers below, almost half of brick-lined cavity is submerged. Raw sewage laps at the ledge that is the slimy cobblestone floor.

Her dirty, bare feet make no sound as she traverses the subterranean chamber. Large rats, the size of small dogs, scurry about. All of them give her a wide berth, as aforementioned for very good reason.

There is nothing remotely post-modern about Fisher, Noreen, or their master The Master. Most especially when it comes to the Nosferatu. Because, as depraved as they are, at least Noreen and Fisher are alive. The Nosferatu is a dead thing, literally the walking dead. But, in spite of being alive, Fisher is still quite the sight herself.

Like her beloved master and dead thing husband, who she worships. In addition to the aforementioned geriatric mane and bush, rattail hair, klaw, knobb, daggerous nails, fangs, serrated teeth, killer tongue, etc. Things grow on her. Things live on her. Things feed on her. Head lice, fleas, and crabs. Graveyard lichens and moss grow here and there on her filth-ingrained skin; skin that's so filthy that it's ashy-black in places. And she smells like rotting meat that has been left to hang too long. Her teeth are so filthy, they look rotten.

To digress, just like her master The Master. Cockroach-infested hair hangs about in limp stringy rattails, draping shoulders and breasts. That shock of filthy blonde rattails, which is liberally streaked with grey and white, erupts from her scalp. A scraggly bush, that's just as geriatric and just as infested as her mane, carpets her vile, reeking crotch.

Yes indeed, Fisher is still quite the sight herself. To a dead thing, she's a Barbie doll. And, the coup de gras. Once she's just skin and bone and hair and tits, emaciated, she'll look as close to a walking dead as you can get and still be alive.

With the exception of the knobb, which is Borg, her look is CLAF: common look and feel. It's the dirty one, of course. There's a plain variation, also known as stern. And, a sexy one. The latter two plain and sexy are clean and pristine. There are myriad permutations of the three looks. At this junction, Fisher and The Master sport the so-called dirty Borg.

Again, the paradox. Borg references on a world that has never known the Borg. This animate corpse lacks the ability to assimilate. Yet, the Nosferatu as a dead thing is the model for assimilation.

Borg assimilate in their pursuit of perfection. Making imperfect species perfect in their image by their way of thinking. The Nosferatu as dead thing has no such aesthetic. It is a relentless killing machine, nothing more and nothing less. This apex predator that embodies the essence of what it means to be Borg. As such, its body is its weapon.

Kaboom. The ground shakes. Debris rains from the ceiling. It sounds like subterranean thunder crackling in rapid succession interspersed with more ground-shaking kabooms. Fisher has never heard gunfire before, let alone heard or felt grenade percussions, so her misinterpretation of what she's hearing and feeling is quite understandable. In a nearby chamber, a pitched gun battle is being waged on a planet where the local inhabitants haven't developed guns yet, let alone flash-bangs.

Onward, Duplicitous Bastards

“If you don’t stand for something, you’ll fall for anything.”
—Alexander Hamilton in 1978 (from Sucker Punch)—

Sam sits smugly in the magistrate’s office glaring at him with ravenous eyes. To his credit, he doesn’t budge an inch. He’s not the least bit unnerved by what he’s in close proximity to. His pants don’t bulge at the sight of her in her scandalous attire either, and he’s no fag. Yep, he’s got some stones, this one does.

“We are very sorry to interrupt your fun, Ms. Klein, but it was quite unavoidable.”

“It’s Miss not Ms.”

“Sorry for my misspeak.”

“No problem.”

She crosses and uncrosses her legs. Think: Fatal Instinct, the unrated, uncut, “international” version, the one with all of those juicy “oral” parts that were so judiciously deleted from the American theatrical version, but with Sharon Stone wearing a yummy, nude-look, flesh-colored thong in place of mouthwatering commando.

You can hear the friction of bare, white flesh sliding against bare, white flesh. She watches how his eyes follow the lascivious movement of her most shapely lower limbs. Very long legs. Leggy. Forty-two inches of smooth, creamy-white perfection erupting from the short, tight, straight, hip-hugging, midriff-cinching skirt of her body-hugging serpent suit, her Koo Stark the proverbial “little black suit.”

Perls. Creepy prudz. Disfiguring sternns. Careys. Hair yanked back into a sternka. Heavy makeup: Max Factor, applied extra thick. Bra and panties. CLAF, version super stern: The Sarah Palin gone bitter, loathsome, venomous, uber shrew. That almost unmitigated bulldyke look that a lot of guys are into. Plus. Knobb. Hands that klaw when idle. Very, very Borg, indeed. But. No cigarette purse or Race Bannon clipped to the boned waistband of her tiny snakeskin skirt underneath her matching suitcoat.

Think. The Dollhouse Studios in Clayton Missouri USA. Where Fitness is Sexy and Darque. Where you learn to expose your inner diva and enhance your outer doll. Got wood? Or its antithesis, depending on your tastes.

The door opens. Sister Riker and Sister Nash enter the room. They are dressed in civilian clothes. The girl’s conditioning kicks in. She goes limp in her chair. Mouth open slackly, drooling. Her eyes stare off blankly into space. Think: Rohypnol (Ruffies, Rope, Rape), the date-rape drug-of-choice of frat boys and gangsters. Invented by a Section 31 chemist named Adolf Gruber—he was named after his uncle. Got pill, got pussy.

“Not such a stuck up bitch, now, are we?” Rhetorically asks the magistrate in his most condescending voice.

If things go south, there will be no evidence of the girl’s abduction and coerced participation in this “off book” operation. The junkie whore will simply disappear. Another hapless American

tourist that has gone missing in a distant foreign land. Likely, death by misadventure. With nothing to point a finger back at the Bene Gesserits. And, if successful, there are also contingencies in place to dispose of the then “inconvenient” vacationing librarian. Either way, Section 31 seems to have things well in hand.

But, Sister Riker is an old hand and Sister Nash is no slouch in her own right. So, these very experienced nuns know that there is no such thing as having all of your bases covered once a mission commences. Murphy is bound to kick in somewhere, somehow. If something can go wrong, it will.

Nevertheless, Sister Riker dutifully tows the line, careful not to cross Section indiscriminately. She knows how to pick her battles with them. So. When, not if, the unexpected happens, she and her away team will just deal with it as it comes no matter what.

Sister Nash is a Security Chief, which means she is a member of Section. A Security Chief in the Roman Catholic Church is akin to a Political Officer in the Orthodox Catholic Church of the now defunct Communist Bloc countries.

Section 31 is an autonomous intelligence and defense organization of the Bene Gesserits. It is a special security operation, manned by Bene Gesserits, that is not subject to the normal constraints of ethical protocols of The Church.

The Section exists outside Church Intelligence’s influence and deals with threats to Church security. Its operating authority stems from a provision of the Bene Gesserit charter—Article 14, Section 31, from which its name is derived—that makes allowances for “bending the rules” during times of extraordinary threats.

Unlike other secret police organizations, such as the Romulan Tal Shiar and the Cardassian Obsidian Order, Section 31 is not an actual branch of government. Accountable to no-one, Section 31 focuses on external threats, and pursues those it identifies by whatever means it sees fit.

The implications of Section 31 have been described as “troubling” and its goals and methods “deeply questionable.” Its methods include brainwashing, torture, assassinations, and, as revealed by a recent op-ed piece in the New York Times, genocide, the crime that is most opposed by the Church. The genocide involved the creation, by Section 31, of a disease designed to kill a single species, the Founders, with the aim of destroying the Dominion.

Two more people enter the office. A younger woman and a cigar-chomping older man. They are also wearing civilian clothes. But, you can tell by their manner and bearing that they have a superior/subordinate relationship in someone’s military. Cigar man is the lolly’s boss.

On this Earth. The powers-that-be know that the foreigners are from other planets in other universes. The general population is supposed to only know the foreigners as tourists from exotic, very distant provinces.

Of course, there are rumors about the truth, and it’s not that most people are afraid to voice them publicly let alone privately. It’s just that the notion of living in a multiverse is just too disturbing for the vast majority of people. They prefer the lie, and living in the perceived bliss of their self-imposed ignorance.

“Who the fuck is this?” The older gent chomping the cigar asks excitedly, as he points at the librarian’s limp body.

Sister Riker and Sister Nash exchange confused looks. Finally, Sister Riker answers. “She’s Ms. Klein, the one we’ve prepped as our contingency, per your request.”

“The hell she is!” Cigar man exclaims.

The magistrate wisely and discreetly vacates his office, closing the door behind him. Leaving the bickering foreigners to their own devices. Looks like Murphy bites again.

Thanks to compartmentalization—need to know—this is the first time that all of the principals involved, the team that targeted the mark and the team that harvested the mark, were present in the same room together with the mark. An experienced operative, Sam merely slipped between the cracks. Sam never claimed that she was Dr. Molly Klein. She just never corrected anyone’s mistake. Passive misrepresentation. Letting assumptions make an ass of everyone, herself excluded, and letting herself be used for kicks, her own and theirs.

Bottomline. They got the wrong girl in the handoff, and never were the wiser until now.

Apocalypse Now, Redux” aka “Doctor Who?

“Don’t ever write a check with your mouth that you can’t cash with your ass.”
—Wise Man (from Sucker Punch)—

“So, who is she?”

“Samantha Gayle Phillips, faerie, retired thirty-something librarian. And.”

“Yes?”

“There’s a lock on her file.” Pause. “A 011.”

“Why in the fuck would military intelligence have a lock on a civilian’s file?”

“Whose military intelligence?”

“All of them. Everyone’s MI.”

“Which world?”

“Which universe?”

“Everyone’s MI on every world in every universe known, including ours.”

“I suppose that she’s connected?”

“Tight as a nun’s knickers.”

Sister Riker is the only one who cracks a smile. Then again, of the four people present, she’s the only one who’s not talking either. The principals are in an observation room at the local police station.

Sam is in an interrogation room viewable through a two-way mirror glass. She’s conscious, chatting up the magistrate and one of his deputies. In place of her dowdy disfiguring sternns, she’s wearing her flattering/unflattering palins lenses set on clear. It’s a stern look that even more men crave, because it’s very stern and very sexy at the same time. The way her legs explode out of her skirt doesn’t hurt either. Works well for Sarah Palin, regardless of which universe.

“And Dr. Klein?”

“Something came up. A last minute engagement. She couldn’t come on the tour, but it was too late to cancel her reservations without forfeiting her money. So she had Miss Phillips come in her place. They’re school chums. Look enough alike to be doubles. They belong to the same Athletic Association. You know it’s one of those girls clubs. A lot of the faerie women belong to them.”

“I guess it’s time to roll the dice.”

Upon making that smart aleck remark, three very puzzled faces turn to and stare at Sister Riker.

“Sister Nash, let’s go earn our pay.”

Sister Riker exits, not bothering to see if Sister Nash is following. By the time Sister Riker’s hand reaches for the doorknob of the interrogation room hosting Sam, Sister Nash is right by

Sister Riker's side in step with her boss. When Sister Riker opens the door, both of them are sporting their game face.

Things go dead silent. The magistrate and his deputy leave. Sam momentarily flashes a broad toothy grin. Sister Nash casually leans against the wall by the two-way mirror glass, as if she's part-n-parcel of a living picture frame. Sister Riker nonchalantly sits on the desk.

Sam lets her hair down. Sternka give way to flat hair. Long, straight, silky, golden tresses. Bleach blonde rivers of hair on a natural blue-eyed blonde. Worship me, now!

She removes her gloves and glasses, and places them on the desk by Sister Riker. She runs a finger across those oh-so-lethal teeth of hers. An even wider smile. Then. Teeth and tongue "blunt."

"So, magically the conditioning doesn't work," Sister Riker tentative ventures, employing a somewhat risky gambit.

"It works when it suits me."

"Which is why you stayed when your tour returned home?"

"Of course." You can hear the annoyance in her voice. Sister Riker needs to stop being so iffy, or she will lose Sam. So, she goes for it.

"We need your help."

"Then, use me as it suits you."

She goes limp in her chair. Sister Riker looks into her eyes. There's no one at home. She's a blank slate upon which anything can be written.

Sister Riker flashes that cocky grin of hers. It's premature. Ba da bing ba da boom. Sam animates.

Sam makes an arcane gesture with her hands. The two-way mirror glass goes one-way like a "regular" mirror, affectively it's opaque. She leaps out of the chair and takes out Sister Riker with some violent flashes of movement.

Sister Nash is next. Likewise taken out before she has a chance to react. Likewise taken out with some violent flashes of movement.

Sam pockets her gloves and glasses, and sits back down in the chair, smug and arrogant. In the case of both takedowns. Never driven. Nothing lethal.

Cigar man and the lolly rush into the room, with armed Bene Gesserit security. Sister Riker and Sister Nash are out cold. From the marks on Sister Nash's neck, the girl has feed on her. A quick liquid snack. In compliment to the go-to-sleep.

Sam is licking red off of her thin red lips. A long facile tongue. Pearly white teeth. Blunt teeth. Blunt tongue. Such a human looking smile on someone who is anything but human. A moment ago, when she was feeding, the girl was flashing a razorblade smile.

Cigar man is a cagey old coot and his "red shirts" are just as coon as he. No need for a quick hand signal from him of warning. They know the score from Jump Street. Sam notices that security repositions themselves in the ready. Just outside the chokepoint.

“I think you could still take us, Miss Philips. But, you would know that you had been in a fight.”

“You flatter me with praise. But, please forgo your humility. I’m sure you would be formidable foe. And. On any given day, anyone can be killed. Besides, I think two is my quota of pie for the day.”

“Taken down or buried?”

“Either will suffice.”

“Then let’s keep it friendly, and say that your quota has been met.”

“Agreed.”

“I think that you can leave now.”

“Thanks. Be sure to keep in touch.”

“We will.”

Sam stands up. No faint. No boo. So. Without much fanfare. The dance begins. Taking the lead, she generates space. How? The food moves, making space for her. In other words, none of the food tries to close the distance. Due respect given to her deadliness: None of this “prime directive, guns don’t exist” Bene Gesserit bullshit. Weapons? Security: They’re shouldering their high-compression phase rifles. Cigar man and the lolly: A holstered phase pistol concealed by their jacket. Any tells? Security is in khakis. Cigar man has on a leisure suit. The lolly is wearing a pantsuit.

The food—cigar man and the lolly—escort her out of the room, down the hallway, out to the front desk. They maintain a “respectful” distance from the girl. The food (security) is further back and further in front, phasers pointed at her the whole time. Weapons hot. Being experienced operators, the safeties for their weapons are their trigger fingers.

“Miss Phillips will be leaving, now. Please bring her things.”

The deputy complies with cigar man’s request without exchanging a word. Sam signs a receipt for her belongings upon taking possession of them. She smiles coyly as she clips her purse and Race Bannon to the waistband of her skirt. She slowly and methodically transfers her gloves and glasses from the pockets of her jacket to her purse. Savoring the moment. Making the food squirm in anticipation of what she might do. She’s neither fair nor foul, and that’s the problem. They just don’t know what to expect.

Her hair yanks back into a sternka. No gloves. No glasses. Knobb: creepy Borg “mole.” Klaw, when idle: creepy hands, when not in use. Her in between, almost Sarah Palin look. Maria Bello as Jane Timoney, a hard-working NYPD homicide detective on NBC’s “Prime Suspect,” minus the funny little hat, plus Borg and big boobs?

Sugar and spice, and everything nice. Gives way to the very scary shrew. Creepy gloves: Prudz glove her. She slips on her sternns. The girl flashes a wide toothy grin. A razorblade smile: Eating live teeth—serrated teeth – long, oversized, straight needle teeth, drinking live fangs—blood drinking fangs—and a killer tongue—a long facile tongue, that’s a hot, wet, and “hungry for flesh” oral appendage—whipping back and forth in her mouth like snake that has a mind of its own. A tongue which is a bloodlusting, self-sustaining organ. Nothing human about that.

She extends her hand. Cigar man is taken back by the gesture. He quickly weighs his options. Then, he decides. So, while flashing a very human grin of his own, he shakes her hand firmly. He never breaks eye contact with her. Nothing done indecisively, on his part, once he had decided on his “proper” course of action.

She exits the station without further incident. And the food knows better than to follow her. At least, the Bene Gesserit contingent does. The Observers are not so careful. They follow her into a dark alley, unaware that she can see them now.

It’s not due to her glasses, either. She’s not wearing the palins. And the thick coke-bottle lenses of her sternns are just ordinary clear optical-grade glass. She can see them with the naked eye.

Shazam! Out of the blue, her body finally assimilated to them the day before yesterday, and what one faerie can assimilate to see, all faeries everywhere can assimilate to see. There’s open season on them now, and they don’t even know it, but they soon will. Genocidal invaders or well-intending do-gooders, the specter of extinction now hangs over their entire race.

Wham! Using her line-of-sight, her Bene Gesserit tricorder deactivates the Observers’ personal invisibility devices. Now, everyone can see them. When the tricorder switched their Geist boxes off, it fused their innards. The invisibility devices, which are based on alchemy not science or magic, are now useless. Incidentally. Technically, they’re not a Geist ghost box, let alone a gi (ghost interface); they’re an unsichtbar invisible affecter. But, Geist and gi sound so much cooler, hence the usages.

Her hands change as her fingernails go daggerous. Her gloves accommodate the change. Creepy has given way to grotesque. Hygiene mode for her entire outfit, including her accessories, switches off.

She was in the station for a good eight hours. It was late evening when they bought her in. It’s the dead of night, now. There’s scum of the earth around and about in this narrow, garbage-strewn thoroughfare. Drunks. Bums. Bagladies. Strung out junkies. And, other such skidrow flotsam and jetsam. Perfect witnesses for what is about to occur. Some can sense what is about to go down, and they create space between them and her or they stay close because they want to fuck her so bad they just don’t care.

She’s on vacation. She came here to have fun. And, that’s just what she intends to keep doing. These people, The Observers, look human, but they’re not human. Ergo, they are humanoid extraterrestrials and therefore are not protected by any laws, Man’s or God’s, so they are fair game. In other words, legally they are not people, they are things. Ergo. No murder involved, just killing. And, above all things, Darque or not, she is a Nosferatu. And, “living” Nosferatu, above all things, are pure—ultimate—killing machines.

Black “swirls” manifest themselves in her eyes, moving about like malevolent storm clouds, as if she had swallowed The Abyss; swirls moving across the irises and whites of her cold, blue eyes. Her mind goes feral, as she gets in touch with her “inner” Nosferatu. Eons of “civilization”—that mundane façade—get peeled away in an instant. It’s as if she were a god in the Before Time, before humans, when there was only God, the gods, and The Darkness. Rage and hatred distort her face, disfiguring her.

There are six of them. The Nosferatu targets the nearest two. She shifts, becoming no longer underdriven, and rips the twin beating hearts out of the chest of the closest Observer with one of her gloved clawed hands.

Apparently, he's some type of guard. He has a sidearm, but he never gets a chance to draw it from its holster. He's also wearing some type of laminated body armor.

Another falls as she rips out the throat of the other Observer she'd initially targeted with her other gloved clawed hand. A techie. He's unarmed. Wearing no armor.

How's her movement, now? What she did in the police station to Sister Riker and Sister Nash was Ray Harryhausen stop-motion animation, in comparison. And, this time she's out for blood.

Two down, both males, in rapid succession before any of them has a chance to react. Finally, one of them does. A female shifts into overdrive, shoulders her box gun, and fires. Box gun is slang in spec-ops for a generic untraceable gun that's used on "off book" missions. The previous human attackers have used box guns, and in those cases the box guns were Bene Gesserit phaser work-like-but-don't-look-like. The female is using a weapon just like those. In fact, it's identical. So. The box gun being employed is primo deadly. For all the good that does the female. The slicer beam passes harmlessly past Sam's head as she attacks her attacker. She's on the female like stink on shit.

Like the male guard, the female is also wearing some type of laminated body armor with a high encircling collar which does protect her neck. For all the good that does the female. Sam bites through the armor like it isn't there, and feeds. Said armor is as good as any "lite" body armor in Creation, the known and unknown world!

The Nosferatu's tongue, teeth, and fangs ravage the female's neck. Major blood vessels are severed violently. Literally, ripped out of her neck. Blood gushes out of her raped neck. She bleeds out. The female dies quickly and horribly.

Shock and awe. By now, the others have recovered from their initial shock and awe. They react. But, only two of the six are armed and armored: The first male that Sam killed and the female that she just killed. The other four are scientists—one of whom is dead, leaving only three. The two armed were their security detail.

The six of them are part of a scientific expedition. Their weapons are for defense only. The guards are just a "what if" contingency.

To their credit, these untrained, unarmed civilians and they're eggheads, at that assault the Nosferatu as she ravenously consumes their fallen comrades. For weapons, they improvise and use their instruments, their tricorders, their clipboards, and whatever else they can grab that's laying around.

To their credit, they go down swinging, for all the good that does them. Sam plays with them. Eating and drinking them while they're still alive.

On one of them she executes a Columbian necktie. That's when you slit the person's throat and then you pull their tongue out through the new orifice. She uses her dangerous fingernails to do the tracheotomy. The incision rivals that done by a surgeon's scalpel. She does this on a female the apparent team leader who's pregnant and showing. Even if the female hadn't been showing, being a faerie, Sam could sense it. Tender, fresh-as-you-can-get fetus. That violent abortion. The despicable act of a totally despicable person aggressive and unscrupulous.

The Time Lords

Things are falling apart, quickly. The best laid plans of mice and men. Even Time Lords are fallible. Shades of The Time War, more specifically called The Last Great Time War. The conflict pitted the Time Lords of Gallifrey against the Daleks of Skaro, and nearly resulted in the mutual destruction of both races and their entire universe.

Why this apparently unrelated tangent into Time Lords and Daleks, and their Conflict? Not unrelated and not a tangent. You see, those up till now denoted as the so-called Observers are in point of fact Time Lords. An Observer Team of Time Lords, to be precise.

Who are these Time Lords and what is their back story? Well that's a matter of "National Security" to all governments and "For Your Eyes Only," and the most classified. As such, only a select few in the multiverse can answer that question. Fewer still will answer that question.

There is one known file on them in existence. It is a physical paper file in a nondescript file folder. Nothing electronic. Access to it is at the highest levels only. The file and its folder have been "altered" in some way such that copies cannot be made. Much of it is written by someone who only refers to himself, and is only referred to, as either The Doctor or Doctor Who. And, it reads like this.

In their universe, up until The Last Great Time War, the Time Lords of Gallifrey pursued a policy of non-intervention but also protected the time vortex. Under that objective, they intervened in two previous "Time Wars": the first was a skirmish between the Halldons and the Eternals; the second was the slaughter of the Omnicraven Uprising. The Time Lords had also used their time travel to retroactively destroy the Charon race before it even existed.

Their need for order put them at odds with many warmongering races, e.g., the Sontarans. Most prominently, it put them at odds with the Daleks.

The Time Lords – having foreseen the possibility of the Daleks conquering the universe – sent one of their Time Agents—the Doctor, Doctor Who, a Time Lord himself, of course—into the past in an attempt to avert the Daleks' creation, or, failing that, at least affect their development to make them less aggressive.

The mission was a complete and utter failure. Worse yet, in retaliation to this ultimately unsuccessful mission, the Daleks attempted to infiltrate the High Council of the Time Lords with duplicates, followed by an open declaration of hostilities by the Dalek Empress. Thus this mission founded on the best intentions provided the spark for the conflict The Last Great Time War.

Two specific events led up to the outbreak of the war: A peace treaty was attempted by President Romana under the "Act of Master Restitution" which led to the otherwise-unexplained trial of the Master a Time Lord on Skaro. This attempt was followed by the "Etra Prime Incident" involving The Apocalypse Element, which some say "began the escalation of events." Weapons used by the Time Lords included Bowships, Black Hole Carriers, and N-Forms Damaged Goods, to say the least, while the Daleks wielded "the full might of the Deathsmiths of Goth" and launched a massive fleet into the vortex.

The duration of the war remains unclear, with figures ranging from at least several years to thirty thousand years, though such numbers are tentative, as time itself was bent and mutilated by

the effects of the war. Several races with issues with the Time Lords, e.g., the Sontarans, wished to participate but were forbidden to do so by the Dalek Empress herself.

The Doctor, in his Eighth and Ninth incarnations, fought on the front lines and was present at the Fall of Arcadia.

Davros, the creator of the Daleks, also fought during the war after his creations, which had turned against him during “Genesis of the Daleks,” rehabilitated him to a leadership position. In the first year of the War, Davros’ command ship was apparently destroyed at the Gates of Elysium after flying into the jaws of the Nightmare Child. Unbeknownst to the Doctor, who had tried to save him, Davros was rescued by Dalek Caan, who had escaped the events as described in “Evolution of the Daleks” via an emergency temporal shift.

The war resulted in countless millions dying endless deaths, as time travel was used by both sides to reverse battles that caused massive fatalities on both sides.

These excesses of time warfare eventually led to the whole of the conflict becoming “time-locked,” so that no time traveler could go back into it. The Doctor described the final days of the war as “hell,” with “the Skaro Degradations, the Horde of Travesties, the Nightmare Child, the Could-Have-Been King with his army of Meanwhiles and Never-Weres” constituting particularly disturbing developments, all of which have not yet been specified further.

As the war progressed the Time Lords became increasingly aggressive and unscrupulous. At one point, they resurrected the Master, renegade Time Lord and nemesis to the Doctor, as they believed him to be the “perfect warrior for a time war.” In fact, it’s implied that they gave him a full new set of regenerations as was done to all Time Lords fighting in the war, and that the eye of harmony could be used as a means to gain more regenerations. However, after the Dalek Empress gained control of the Cruciform, the Master deserted his post, used the chameleon arch to disguise himself as a human and escaped to a time period shortly before the end of the universe. Genetically a human, he escaped the near-destruction of all Time Lords as well as detection by the Doctor – who was unaware of his resurrection in the first place. The Master also remained ignorant of the latter phase and outcome of the war.

Leadership among the Time Lords remained vague during the earlier phase of the war. Especially the role of the Doctor’s former companion, Romana – President of the Time Lords – is avoided possibly censored? Ultimately, Rassilon himself, the founder of Time Lord Society and the inventor of its time travel technology, returned from the grave so to speak to re-assume leadership possibly using the resurrection gauntlets—where one fell through the rift out of the time lock. Refusing the possibility of his civilization being destroyed by the Daleks, Rassilon prepared a doomsday scenario, the so-called “Ultimate Sanction.”

This genocidal scheme included sacrificing all of time itself, thereby destroying the Daleks and all life in the universe. The Time Lords themselves would have transcended into a non-corporeal collective consciousness that would be the only sentient form of life in existence. The Time Lords, apparently hardened by the horrors of war, gave near-unanimous support for this plan.

The Time War concluded with the near-mutual destruction of both belligerents and their respective home world planets. The Dalek fleet – reportedly ten million ships – was destroyed by the Ninth Doctor. Gallifrey is first described as having “burned” like Earth of the far future, and is “rocks and dust” as a result of the war, but then the Doctor admits that Time Lords and Daleks both burned together and that he personally ended the war, in an act which caused the Time

Lords, the Daleks, and Gallifrey to burn. The Doctor was, therefore, responsible for nearly destroying his home planet. He is called “the killer of his own kind” by the beast of the Pit.

The specifics and what prompted the Doctor to such drastic measures were ultimately revealed in “The End of Time”: The Doctor had discovered a way to end the war, described as “the Moment,” when he became aware of Rassilon’s “Ultimate Sanction.” It remains unclear whether “the Moment” would always have resulted in the destruction of both antagonists together or whether the Doctor could have simply used it to destroy the Daleks and chose to destroy the Time Lords as well to prevent Rassilon’s scheme. The Ninth Doctor apparently faced a similar situation in “The Parting of the Ways” when he creates a Delta Wave to destroy the Daleks. When the wave was charged, The Doctor realized that it would not distinguish between Human and Dalek. Firing the Delta Wave would have resulted in the mutual destruction of both the Daleks and Humans similar to the situation he faced at “the Moment.”

By this point, the entire period of war had become “time locked,” so that no time traveler could enter or exit it. In knowledge of this and the threat posed by the Doctor’s possession of “the Moment,” Rassilon and his fellow councilors tried to escape the Lock by retroactively planting a four note drumbeat the rhythm of a Time Lord’s heartbeats into the Master’s brain the sound of which eventually drove the Master insane and use a Whitepoint Star, a diamond only found on Gallifrey, to create a link between the final hours of the Time War and present-day Earth of their universe. The Master could therefore bring Gallifrey and the Time Lords out of the Time Lock and into the present. The plan ultimately failed, as the Doctor destroyed the diamond link and the Master apparently sacrificed his life, sending the Time Lords back to their apparent doom.

Faced with the specter of the extinction of their respective races and the final realization by both sides of the “no win” situation that they were deadlocked into, the Time Lords and the Daleks brokered a kind of peace under the renewed leadership of President Romana.

While they rebuilt from the brink of extinction for their respective races, there was none of this Time Lords and their order versus the Daleks and their “scripted” disorder. Resulting in a power vacuum. Darkness and chaos reigned supreme. Anarchy ruled. More members of the lesser and greater races died during this period than during The War itself. Some of those races became extinct.

Following in the adventurous footsteps of “The Doctor” Doctor Who, the Time Lords created The Foundation. An institution coincidentally dedicated to the same high moral ideals as Bene Gesserits. But, The Foundation is the Bene Gesserits minus the corruption that is Section. It’s their attempt to redeem themselves for what they had done to their universe with The War. The Foundation’s moral compass is based on The Doctor’s. Lofty principles, indeed.

Reformed, reborn do-gooders. Once they had rehabilitated their universe, they sent off The Teams of their Foundation to help out other races in other universes. Employing a newly discovered tech, new to them, of course well known by many in the m-verse: The Bridge-Gateway.

Resuming their policy of non-intervention but also protecting the time vortex and maintaining order, only this time at the Creation level. This is when they came into contact/conflict with the faeries, the Federation, and other powerful “self-interests” most of which/who are human. This is when they become a threat to the powers that be and thus the status quo of the m-verse. In other

words, this is when they appeared on the radar of the MICC this most powerful group, which President Eisenhower called the Military-Industrial-Church-Complex. This is never a healthy thing to do. Just ask Jack Kennedy. Oh, that's right, you can't. He's dead.

When a Team came into a world (universe) where faeries were present, the Time Lords found that the timelines there were locked, immutable. Without the stealth that their invisibility devices provided them, they also would have found themselves hunted by the faeries as game when/if their presence was discovered. Righting wrongs got a whole lot harder and a lot more dangerous. Teams had to resort to deception and misdirection. They had to go undercover. Even more than that. Something even more disturbing was afoot. Objects of extinction.

In their universe of origin, demons cannot partake preemptively, by edict of God. No matter. Unable to preemptively extinct the human race in their own universe, they sate themselves, elsewhere. Unrestricted by the Laws of God in universes that are not their universe of origin, faeries are free to engage in genocide as sport. Total genocide. The Final Solution.

As such, there are universes where no life exists, because of the faerie menace. Entire civilizations gone missing. Vanished into ruins. Sentient races made extinct, not just humans. Nothing but traces. Echoes are all that remains. Worlds bleached. Completely dead. Absolutely sterile. Not even a single microbe.

Exterminate absolute, that which is not you. In that way, faerie are like Daleks, only many times worse and a whole lot deadlier. Behold me I am Death, Destroyer of worlds.

Rangers Lead the Way, 456 Forever!!!

The scientific expedition of Observers in question on this Earth is being sponsored by one of the Teams and thus the Foundation. As such, staffed by Time Lords, it was only supposed to observe and report back its findings for further analysis and final judgment by an Advisory Board. Standard operating procedure for the Teams.

Taken back by the extreme injustices they saw, the rampant governmental excesses and the corruption such excess always lead to, they got involved. Their moral zeal got the better of them, in spite of their own better judgment. SOP went out the window.

Aligning themselves with the indigenous reformist movement, the Observer Team began to supply these local supporters of freedom and democracy with weapons, know-how, and tech. This put the OT at odds with the local government. A government which the reformists refer to as “filled with stooges of the Federation.” But, it’s not so much the Federation that the local government is in bed with it as it is in collusion with Section.

Such is the back story. The tale of how things have come to a head in this alley. So far, we have met the pawns. Now, we meet the players. Those pulling the strings. But, as is the way with such things. We only get to know those calling the shots at the operational level. But. You don’t need an Ultra-Violet clearance rating to guess who is running things at the top, governmentally speaking, that is. Some of you even voted for them.

Back to the here and now. A squad of soldiers materializes around her in the “loose” position designed to bury any gunhand, no matter how good she/he be. They are U.S. Army Rangers. The Rangers are the most elite light-infantry unit in Creation. And, these tack-drivers are 456. The 456, of course, are Hobgoblins and their close kin the Goblins aka Asia’s Delights. Collectively known as Ricers, they are so hideous by human standards that they’re only “acceptable” to mixed company in pretense. As such, being who and what they are, as a rule they almost never bother to pass for human. There are notable exceptions, and those select individuals are just that – notable exceptions.

The squad is shouldering their trick M4s, carbines that have been modded to the max specifically for their use. They didn’t beam down via a Bene Gesserit transporter from a Bene Gesserit vessel. They deployed from a Warlock Class gunboat which is parked in a worm hole in a low orbit above the planet. So they have heavy eyes-in-the-sky as backup. Air Cav: Death from Above. Air Cavalry. Starships and orbital-capable APCs have replaced their horses.

Officially, the U.S. Army only fights terrestrial wars. Officially, the U.S. Army doesn’t have starships, either. Officially, these men and women and their shipmates are not here. That is just how off-book this op is.

Ultimate—pure—killing machine versus pure—ultimate—killing machine: the difference? A pure/ultimate killing machine like a dead thing Nosferatu would charge these hardcases with teeth, fangs, and nails, and get slaughtered. Brute force and unbridled ferocity always loses against mechanized. A pure/ultimate killing machine like a living Nosferatu knows when to pick his/her battles. Mechanized versus mechanized.

Sam does not step into the pocket slinging lead. Sam does not stand in the pocket, gun blazing. Sam stands up and in the process she operationally stands down. Hygiene mode for her outfit switches back on. She lets her hair down. Her shrew’s sternka gives way to her Vampira’s also

Azkadellia's in "Tin Man" equally stern flat hair. She purses her glasses and her gloves. Daggerous nails, razorblade smile, etc., all go bye-bye. She can pass for human, again. No knobb. No klaw. She can pass for not being Borg, again. Clean and pristine, once more. But, the slaughter she has wrought is mute testament to her filthy perversion of mayhem and death. What she looks like versus what she really is. Again: shades of Vampira in "Plan Nine from Outer Space," and not just the hairdo either. Then there are those usual "creepy" overtones of hers, over and above those normally associated with a Nosferatu.

Reason asks. Could she take 'em? The soldiers? Maybe some, but clearly not all. In the end, they would prevail and she would lose her head, literally. Pride interjects, though. Then again, lopsided as the situation may be, she's beat the worst odds before, and such suicidal gunplay doth tug at her black heart. Maybe she could prevail - idolatry on her fan's part or whimsy on hers? No matter. There will be none of that Nosferatu vs. Ricer bullshit, today.

Besides, Rangers hold serious grudges. Like forever. They've been known to hunt down entire races into extinction for besting them in a single battle. Kill one of us and we will kill all of you, or we will die in the process trying: Is the Ranger motto. And, she so loves to be the hunted. Yet, she backs down.

Sam can "hear" some encrypted "squawk" coming into their headsets and out of their mics of their Bluetooth headsets. The chatter ceases after a few short bursts in either direction. She can feel the tension between she and the soldiers just go up in smoke. They stand down.

She turns her back on them and continues down the alley in the direction of the house where her ROOM is "parked" in the basement. Where. Puck and Jack will no doubt be waiting anxiously for her with a lot of questions for her to answer.

Her flat hair gives way to a bouncy, square-layered hairstyle a Rachel aka The Rachel. Then, she just disappears, from the point of view of those watching her from orbit. She doesn't ghost, spook, cloak, invisible, etc. She just knows how to make herself blend into her in this case urban surroundings to elude detection, or at the very least make her detection very difficult, by orbitals or long-range snipers. How? She goes Old School, of course. In other words, she employs a plethora of advanced "old school" evasion techniques, not technology.

Her stalkers are put on notice. Too much makeup. Too much hair. Too much _____ showing. Too much etc. Don't be fooled by her looks—that shallow, vacuous, self-absorbed, immodest Miss Debra look. No-talent WWF diva, hired eye candy, and ditzy bimbo don't apply. This girl is a real pro. Fuck with her at your own risk.

The Rachel - A Dark ‘do that isn’t just for Darque girls

“So I want it kind of rough and ready but like really shiny and smooth and kind of chin length but shoulder-draping lengthy and like straight but a bit curly and a crass golden blonde. Wait a minute let me get my People Magazine out!”

That was the conversation held in thousands of hair salons in the mid-1990s as women everywhere throughout the multiverse tried to describe a bouncy, square-layered hairstyle the “Rachel Cut” aka The Rachel named after and inspired by the character played by Jennifer Aniston in the sitcom Friends which was then at the peak of its popularity. This definitive ‘90s hairstyle is a shoulder-draping, sleek, and layered style with a grown-out fringe. Its implicit center part, a cosmetically smooth front hairline, and the faintest suggestion of a widow’s-peak prevent the hairdo from obscuring the wearer’s face. So, paradoxically. Sans bangs, the woman’s forehead is left exposed. It was the most popular hair fashion fad of the ‘90s and the envy of all women, human and inhuman. It also inspired many a “just got out of bed” hair product, for example one of the originals Tigi Bed Head.

The weakness of the assassin.

Flush them out in the open. Don’t be enticed by their deception. And, you will be the victor. But, here she is out in the open, bold as she can be, as deadly and formidable as if she were hidden. Spitting in the face of conventional wisdom.

But. How?

For one such as her, being out in the open isn’t her preference and it makes her highly uncomfortable, but she’s hardly a fish out of water. She’s skilled in CQC aka CQB. She’s the complete package. This is why she can spit in the face of conventional wisdom.

Close quarters combat (CQC) or close quarters battle (CQB) is a type of fighting in which small units engage the enemy with personal weapons at very short range, potentially to the point of hand-to-hand combat or fighting with hand weapons such as swords or knives. In the typical CQC scenario, the attackers try a very fast, violent takeover of a vehicle or structure controlled by the defenders, who usually have no easy way to withdraw.

Because enemies, hostages/civilians, and fellow operators can be closely intermingled, CQC demands a rapid assault and a precise application of lethal force. The operators need great proficiency with their weapons, but also the ability to make split-second decisions in order to avoid or limit friendly casualties. CQC is defined as a short-duration, high-intensity conflict, characterized by sudden “bursts” of violence at close range.

Criminals sometimes use CQC techniques, e.g., an armed robbery or jailbreak, but most of the terminology comes from training used to prepare soldiers, police, and other authorities. Therefore, much CQC material is written from the perspective of the authorities who must break into the stronghold where the opposing force (OPFOR) have barricaded themselves.

Although there is considerable overlap, CQC is not synonymous with urban warfare, now sometimes known by the military acronyms MOUT (military operations on urban terrain), FIBUA (fighting in built-up areas), or OBUA (Operations in Built Up Areas) in the West. Urban warfare is a much larger field, including logistics and the role of crew-served weapons like heavy

machine guns, mortars, and mounted grenade launchers, as well as artillery, armor, and air support.

In CQC, the emphasis is on small infantry units using light, compact weapons that one man can carry and use easily in tight spaces, such as carbines, submachine guns, shotguns, pistols, swords, battle axes, and knives. As such, CQC is a tactical concept that forms a part of the strategic concept of urban warfare, but not every instance of CQC is necessarily enveloped by urban warfare—for example, jungle and guerrilla warfare are potential stages for CQC.

As you can imagine, when it's a faerie-only affair, CQC gets cranked up a notch or two or three. It gets taken to a whole nother level indeed. It's as if we're watching a Hong Kong wuxia film, a cinematic martial arts fantasy, showcasing excruciating wire and harness work choreographed by the likes of legendary fight choreographer Yuen Wo-ping. Wire and harness work that in turn requires meticulous "digital wire removal" in post-production before the wire-fu movie can be shown to an audience at the theater.

In Their hands, the requisite fight scenes of this non-movie reality, this real life conflict fought by exclusively faerie opponents are masterpieces of lethality where the inhuman participants soar with balletic grace and dignity. As if combatants exist in a time set aside when wire-fu acrobatics are the norm—providing action sequences that were visually impressive but incredibly artificial. This combination of grace of movement, physics-defying feats of agility, and the lack of wires or CGI assists makes the action genuinely thrilling. Non-stop action. Gravity-defying artificiality, notwithstanding. Action that is the real deal. Gritty. Raw. Fresh. This is CQB as an art form, a homicidal one, but an art form, nonetheless. Called Roku. You might call it the demon equivalent of a Chinese wuxia epic which has been infused heavily with the karma—the realism, the "realistic" elements—of a Thai opus by martial arts masterminds Tony Jaa or JeeJa Yanin, Prachya Pinkaew directing, Panna Rittikrai handling fight choreography. It is the purest expression of the only pure art form of demonic origin.

On ground level, at a safe distance, three humans watch the Nosferatu make her way down the winding alley, until she's goes around a bend and is out of sight. They stand in front of the police station. T.S. Eliot, Debra McCombs, and Sir Nigel Sheinwald. T.S. is the aforementioned cigar man. And, Debra McCombs is his aforementioned lolly. Sir Nigel Sheinwald is British Ambassador to the United States

"She's a very Darque girl, indeed. A bit too dark for my tastes, if you get my drift," causally observes the ambassador.

"Agreed. But. She is 'somewhat' attractive, nonetheless." Pause. "For a nigger, that is," adds T.S., nonchalantly.

The expected affirmation: "Yes. For a nigger."

In this context, "nigger" is a racial slur for a Dark Elf. One that you don't use in polite company, let alone mixed company. To digress. A Darque is a Nosferatu who is a Nosferatu and an Elf. A blend, not a breed. A "pure" expression of both Original races. Dark also have Goon tendencies. Usually, those tendencies are latent. In Sam's case, they are not. They are full-blown. As such, she is cruel like the Nosferatu, vicious like the Elf, and brutal like the Goon. She is a "pure" expression of all three of the so-called Elder races.

"Looks, notwithstanding. I bet she's a tight fuck and sucks like an Electrolux vacuum cleaner."

“I was just thinking the same thing.”

“Yes. Too bad we have to destroy her.”

“Can’t be helped.”

McCombs wisely says nothing. Her guarded thoughts say it all.

Fools rush in where fools have been before.

Spectral Anomalies

Down the long winding alley, she nonchalantly walks. Seemingly obvious to the dangers that abound. The locals don't bother to engage her in conversation, seeing by her scandalous attire that she's one of those "foreigners." She does get her share of gawks, though. She is quite the fetching lass. Her leg-baring skirt amply advertising her bare white legs. It adjusts for immodestly. In other words, whether sitting, standing, running, walking, whatever, the skirt is always mid-thigh length a "legitimate" miniskirt. The default for a Koo's strap.

Ghosted eyes-on-the-ground follow her. So far they have made no move to intercept her. And, she has not initiated hostilities against them. Then, just like that, her close scrutiny goes poof. No more ghosted U.S. Army Rangers following her. Cease and desist, immediately.

In response, she terminates her evasive maneuvers. She rounds a bend, exits the alley, and steps back out into the open onto a cobblestone street straddling a break in the sidewalk. Visible again to anyone above who's watching. She has a hunch that no one is. No longer a "person of interest." She's back to being a tourist on holiday.

High above in the sky, the U.S. Army gunboat is gone. The Enterprise is still cloaked and parked in geostationary orbit. But, it's backed off to an even higher parking attitude. Several miles above its previous position. Halfway between this Earth and its orbiting moon. All regular Bene Gesserit personnel have been "officially" recalled. The pullback includes all but a handful of Section operatives. Boots on the ground: The usual local contingent. A skeleton crew. No more. No less. The status quo.

What was the game changer? An apology. Heartfelt and genuine. Mr. President of the United States to Madame President of The Guild. Subsequently. The President of the United States made a phone call, having just gotten off the phone with the President of The Guild. Words were exchanged between the Commander in Chief and a high ranking official in U.S. Military Intelligence. Situation reassessed. Hands off. It's a local _____ problem. None of our - _____ business. Not in our National Interest, anymore. Orders changed effective immediately. Heads rolled, a plenty, in spades. The 619 figuratively, but not literally!

Sam walks a few more blocks before she notices that she's picked up a tail. It's the dead thing's public Noreen—Noreen wearing that public façade—unaccompanied by the dead thing wearing its equally public Glenda façade. Ergo. Noreen minus the dead thing. Just Noreen.

The adventure resumes. Whether by happenstance or premeditation, Noreen has spotted her and is out for no good. The large stage has suddenly become very personal again. It's dinner theater, not Broadway. Very intimate, just the way Sam likes it.

Sam walks past the downtown Hilton. A woman, angry and cursing, gesturing obscenely with her hands, steps backwards onto the sidewalk right in front of Sam. The two women have a near-collision. The new arrival ignores the Darque girl, too intent on rebuking the hotel clerk she's verbally engaging. Not so gingerly, a hotel bellhop deposits the older woman's suitcases onto Hilton's front steps.

Her name is Dame Tress-Macneille Chillingsworth. Forty-something: Looks like she's in her forties, but she's hundreds of years old. Dishy. British. Very British. Stiff-upper-lip-and-all-that British. The Queen's English. A living Nosferatu. Not Dark, like Sam. But, a Nosferatu like the

one who made Sam. Tall. Leggy. Buxom. Long, straight, coal black hair with China-Doll bangs. You know. A White girl.

Hair yanked back into a sternka. Prudz. Skins: Koo Stark. Perls. A cigarette purse is clipped to the waistband of her hip-hugging miniskirt, on the leftside, concealed by her suitcoat. Bare legs. A flawless porcelain white complexion. Cold, blue eyes. A large, ugly, cruel mouth with thin red lips. That loathsome mouth. Braless and commando. Mules: debrahs.

A black plasticine slide holster is clipped to the waistband of Dame Chillingsworth's hip-hugging miniskirt, on the rightside (strong side), concealed by her suitcoat: SSb (strong side belt holster). A Tessmacher Model-80 pistol is cradled in this tricked-out conventional holster.

First impressions? Cold. Aloof. Catty. The expected for one of her age and race. As such. Her outburst seems out of character. And, yet completely in character.

She's appears to be self-centered, egotistical, detached, deadly, wild and uncontrollable, totally unpredictable, and extremely unemotional. In other words, there is a high level of contradicting depth to who she is.

In the heat of the moment, the Brit turns her head. The two hotties, Tress and Sam, make eye contact. They have the very same thought at the very same time as they size up each other.

This fight will take place at the Breastery in Nippopulas, on Mammary Mountain.

Sometimes, the best laid plans are not planned at all. Sometimes, it is pure coincidence. Tress. The noblewoman. Rich. Powerful. Entitled. And, titled. A blue blood. A member of the House of Lords her duty, not her job. The talented amateur Tress meets Sam the top professional albeit retired. And, Sam is an American, no less. A Yank. A blonde who is Blonde. Tress' very favorite flavor of blonde.

Back in the day, in a past life, the Nosferatu authored pulp fiction novels under the pseudonym of H.G. Wells. Critics of the day dismissed her works as penny dreadfuls. They were anything but that. Time has vindicated her talent. The stories of H.G. Wells are now revered as literary gems that are so far-thinking, they border on being prophetic.

A penny dreadful also called penny horrible, penny awful, penny number, and penny blood was a type of British fiction publication in the 19th century that usually featured lurid serial stories appearing in parts over a number of weeks, each part costing an old penny. The term, however, soon came to encompass a variety of publications that featured cheap sensational fiction, such as story papers and booklet "libraries." The penny dreadfuls were printed on cheap pulp paper and were aimed primarily at working class adolescents called novels of their ilk such, because the novels cost a penny.

In the 1930s, the Nosferatu a dabbling thespian was a frequent stand-in for actress Gloria Swanson, doing a near deadringer for the movie starlet. Many a vintage glamour portrait of Ms. Swanson is actually a misidentified photo of Dame Chillingsworth. It takes an expert to tell the difference, and even then sometimes they are fooled. Nothing is foolproof in life but God.

Decades later, she as the off-again-on-again thespian resurfaces theatrically in Showtime's "Full Body Massage" among others doubling for actress Mimi Rogers. It remains the Nosferatu's public self her favored/favorite "pretense," so to speak, and her dearest "hobby," to this very day. Needless to say, vamping like a real pro.

What about her day job? These days, she chairs the committee that provides oversight, funding, and “policy direction” for MI5 and MI6 - “MI” stands for military intelligence. MI5 formally known as the Secret Service deals with threats inside the UK. MI6 formally known as the Secret Intelligence Service combats external threats including overseas and extraterrestrial ones. MI5 - Domestic intelligence. MI6 - foreign intelligence.

Crudely, MI6 are “our” spies while MI5 is there to catch “their” spies. It gets a little more complicated in that MI6 has its own “counter-intelligence” section. “MI5”/“MI6” were the original designations when both organizations came under the War Office, now the MoD.

The Ministry of Defense (MoD) is the United Kingdom government department responsible for implementation of government defense policy and is the headquarters of the British Armed Forces.

The MoD states that its principal objectives are to defend the United Kingdom and its interests and to strengthen international peace and stability. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the MoD does not foresee any short-term conventional military threat; rather, it has identified weapons of mass destruction, international terrorism, and failed and failing states as the overriding threats to the UK’s interests. The MoD also manages day to day running of the armed forces, contingency planning, and defense procurement. But, as aforementioned, it does not manage British Military Intelligence.

Their official names, the Security Service (MI5) and the SIS the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6), were acquired in the 30s. Officially, the former is responsible to the Home Office and the latter to the Foreign Office.

But. Unofficially, both are responsible to Oversight the committee that Dame Killingsworth chairs: An off-book relationship that no one in the British government will admit to, on or off the record.

Breakfast at Tiffany's

Judi Dench—"If becoming a dame means you've got to behave very well. That's very, very boring."

In point of fact, Oversight is to the UK what Section is to the Bene Gesserits. Analogous, not equivalent. In point of fact, no one in the British government will admit that Oversight exists, on or off the record. Oversight is not a governmental committee. In point of fact, Oversight is not part of the British government, whatsoever; even though some of its members are career civil servants and additionally as aforementioned its current chairperson is an active member of the House of Lords. Its members are not elected governmental officials; they are handpicked by the British Monarchy and, just like the Justices of the U.S. Supreme Court, have life terms.

Yet, this is a chance meeting. Not a "scripted" coincidence in a mission scenario. In spite of Dame Chillingsworth's heavy duty Intelligence connection. A connection which makes her a de facto heavy weight in her own right in the Intelligence community.

Two Nosferatu. Dame Chillingsworth and Sam. The sight halts The Master's lackey Noreen in her tracks. She backs off. Another time. Another place. Of her more opportune choosing.

Sam waves off the hotel employees, who hastily retreat back into the Hilton. The clerk was an Orc-Gnome mix. The bellhop was a Hulk. Both are from Newark, and they love to crack wise with their heavy Jersey accents. No lightweights in their own right. Heavyweights in their own right. But, it's the two Nosferatu that Noreen takes caution of. A caution born out of habit and respect, and a lifetime of voluntary servitude to Lost women.

The Dark girl extends her hand. "Maybe I can be of service to you."

"The hotel double-booked my room."

"Overbooked because of a convention?"

"Something like that, and I have no place to stay. And. You know how the locals shun us foreigners."

"No accommodations from the locals regardless of what you offer them."

"As such, the Hilton has a virtual monopoly."

"You did argue your point quite eloquently, and quite colorfully I might add."

Nice, witty exchange. Between unequals. First and foremost, Tress being much older and thus Sam's de facto superior. But there are those other things that make the two women unequal which fit neatly into the somewhat nebulous category of "etc." Things which humans choose to ignore in their foolish pursuit of The Lie the "unnatural," ungodly state that Liberals call "equality." There is no such thing. Never has been. Never will be. The proof? Our relationship with God is a relationship between unequals.

Not fair? Life isn't fair, then again, it isn't meant to be. Life is what it is. A privilege, not a right. Nothing more. Nothing less. What about that level playing field? There is no such thing. Never has been. Never will be. A fact that spits in the face of Conservative discourse.

Dame Chillingsworth shrugs her shoulders. “The guest who got my digs evidently has more pull than I do.”

The title of Dame is the female equivalent of the honor of knighthood in the British honors system. The word “damehood” is not used. “Dame” is also the equivalent form address to “Sir” for a knight. A woman appointed to the grades of Dame Commander or Dame Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath, Order of St Michael and St George, Royal Victorian Order, or the Order of the British Empire becomes a Dame. Because there is no female equivalent of a Knight Bachelor, women are always appointed to an order of chivalry. Women who are appointed to the Order of the Garter or Order of the Thistle are not given the title of “Dame” but “Lady.”

Formerly, the wife of a knight was given the title of Dame before her name, but this usage was replaced by “Lady” during the 17th century.

Full Body Massage

“There is but one temple in the universe and that is the human body. We touch heaven when we lay our hands on it.”—**Thomas Carlyle, 1840**

The girls shake hands. There’s nothing disingenuous about their exchange.

“I have a ROOM.”

How big is a ROOM? As big as it needs to be.

“You’re housesitting, right? Sorry for asking, but you do look a bit young to have your own ROOM. Hell. I’m not old enough myself. Normally, you have to be eons older than dirt.” Pause. “No offense meant.” The Dame flashes an infectious smile. She’s quite the talkative bird, as they say.

I’m surprised that you didn’t tell that old joke. The one about how it’s such a pity, a real waste, that anyone old enough to have their very own ROOM never goes any place in it, because they’re so old that they’ve been everywhere. That’s a good one. I never tire of hearing it.

“No offense taken. You’re quite right for asking. Because, I am quite young to have my very own ROOM. And, I wouldn’t want to scare you off thinking that I was one of those types of girls. You see, the explanation is quite simple and innocent enough. A very good friend of mine bequeathed it to me.”

“So I take it that your friend was childless.”

“No. She had a daughter.”

“And, the daughter was okay with this.”

Sam flashes that large toothy grin such a loathsome smile that bespeaks volumes. Then, after a measured pause, she adds: “Dame Julia and I were very close. Her daughter Lady Julia and I are just as close. Closer than most sisters. Lady Julia is copacetic with me having her mother’s ROOM.”

Satisfied with the girl’s answer. Enchanted by the girl’s demure. Throwing caution to the wind. The Dame purses her gloves and lets her hair down. Flying in the face of the axiom that no woman with a modicum of pride would venture out on the town without gloves and her hair up.

A prelude to thighs wide shut or Tomme Tønner. That Swedish movie about three small-time criminals finally get the chance to climb the ladder - but manages to fuck it all up in royal manners.

They walk away from the hotel, talking their heads off. A couple of real chatterboxes. The Dame’s well-trained luggage follows at a low, slow hover. Likewise, Sam matches the Dame’s gait. That leisurely pace. Stiff-backed. Haughty. Erect. Stern. Severe. Prim and “oh, so very” proper. The measured, deliberate gait of means and privilege.

Spiked heels stabbing the pavement. Short skirts tightly-wrapping velvet thighs and long shapely limbs. Figure-hugging skins dressing slender, toned, well-endowed bodies. Skins molding to every curve. Matronly. Severe. Strident. Suggestive and seductive. Stilettos. LBS—the little black suit. Every girl ought to have one.

The clothes. The shoes. The etc. Wealthy and inhuman. Immortal and beautiful. Who says that you can't have it all?

A man's girl. Dame Chillingsworth. Hasn't been a girl's girl in eons. Yet, here she is. A career civil servant. A member of the power elite. One of those unofficial officials who pulls the strings behind the scenes. Accountable and answerable to no one. Yet. Here she is, out in the open. No security detail. No handlers. No Special Branch. Just like "regular" folks. Then again, demons wear it such absolute manipulative power quite differently than humans do. Of course, they wield it the very same way. Due diligence and just desserts.

Anybody's girl. Samantha Gayle Phillips. Retired librarian. Former Grimm Reaper. Used to be a lot of nasty things. A person who has never met anyone or anything that she couldn't kill. So, not only is she a person who enjoys killing, she's also very good at it. An interesting lolly for the Dame. A silly-dilly, deadly trophy for a very rich, very powerful, very single, very "older" White female.

In another place, below the city proper, there is a similar affectation. A silly-dilly, deadly trophy for a very rich, very powerful, very married, very "older" dead thing in the guise of a woman. There is Fisher feeding her husband The Master. There is The Master wearing its wife Fisher. There is Fisher being worn by The Master.

They are standing knee-deep in raw sewage. The dead thing's mouth is affixed to Fisher's neck. Those sounds are coming out of the girl's loathsome mouth, again. Feral. Vile. Masturbative. Far beyond mere arousal, let alone porn dog erotic. Better descriptions? Breath-stealing orgasm. An epiphany. Incoherent bliss. Bread-n-butter. Foul. Nothing remotely sane, let alone human.

There is nothing romantic about this scene. Nothing one would find depicted in a Gothic novel. Or in one of those insipid "Twilight" movies. Forget about that haunting "first scene": a shrouded, shadowy predator—looking more like Death Incarnate than a traditional Nosferatu, drains a comely maiden of her very youth, leaving the girl an aged, wizened husk.

This is raw. Animalistic. Totally insane, hardcore, XXX fucking of mind, body, and soul. Total damnation. Beyond all hope or redemption. Lost forever. Hell on Earth. This is something from the deranged ranting of a slobbering lunatic syphilitic whore with a disease-melted brain trussed up in a straitjacket and leg irons, wearing a restraint mask/muzzle à la Hannibal Lecter in "Silence of the Lambs" which prevents her from chewing away her very own tongue. Something fit for the slut wretches that asylums keep confined in padded cells. An experience beyond limits. Pain and pleasure indivisible. Stripped down to its barest essentials. This is the essence of what it means to be Nosferatu.

Species 456 – Hobgoblins and their close kin the Goblins aka Asia's Delights

"Suddenly, you light and as suddenly go dark, fellow firefly."—**Chine Jo**

"Tell me about the prophecy."

"Theirs or ours?"

Lady Glenda smiles. Hebert is being witty. Heads have rolled, literally, for much less. But, her closest and most trusted advisor is never witty without reason.

"Ours, of course."

"As you wish, milady."

He does so in the accepted (contemporary) vernacular. Third person passive. The way a common person would do it. With the exception that he bows deeply to Lady Glenda as he does so.

The Prophecy. concerns the finding and protecting of an ancient manuscript, called the Lexicon, which basically writes itself as God completes the Book of Revelations. What God writes, will determine the fate of Angels and Mankind, so ownership of the Lexicon will give an advantage to the holder. Angels and Demons vie to own the Lexicon, but it is up to a lone woman Allison, ably played by Kari Wuhrer, to protect it.

Specifically, the reason that the dark Angels are trying so hard to kill Allison and possess the book is that the Lexicon will eventually reveal the identity of the person who is to become the Antichrist. If the dark Angels discover the identity of the Antichrist and kill him, then they can conceivably prevent Armageddon from coming to pass.

The problem is God has already planned for Armageddon according to the Bible. So, by killing the Antichrist, these dark Angels are turning their backs on God. One Angel in particular, named Stark, is leading the other dark Angels to find Allison. The problem is Angels can't kill a normal human being without God's consent. So, to do their dirty work, they hire a hitman with the proviso that if he completes this mission he will be spared an eternity in Hell.

With the pieces in place, and events set into motion by Satan, who doesn't want the dark Angels to succeed because if they do the Antichrist will not come to power, Allison is in for the fight of her life as she struggles to follow God's will. And, oddly enough, God's will is in line with what Satan selfishly wants because according to the Book of Revelation the Antichrist must rise to power.

So, Allison is left with quite the dilemma as she realizes that to follow God means allowing Armageddon to come forth. But, but by rebelling against God, she will, in theory, prevent the Apocalypse from coming to pass.

The motives of the Demons involved are not so forthright. Unlike the Angels, it's neither disloyalty to God nor is it the need to seek equality with God. The former and especially the latter are just not in their nature. In other words. They are in point of fact incapable of either one. So, their motives are clearly a mystery, a mystery that's never revealed.

"Thank you, Hebert, for refreshing my memory. I'd almost forgotten."

T.S.: "She knows. Even if this is a fishing expedition, she must know something. How else would she know to ask?"

Sheinwald: "Agreed."

"Always glad to be of service, milady. Always good to be in the mind's eye, so to speak."

T.S.: "And, we've just been put on notice, that they know that they are being watched remotely and proximally."

Sheinwald: "We knew that sooner or later our coverage would get outed."

T.S.: "Later would have been better."

Sheinwald: "We'll just have to accelerate the timetable a teensy bit."

That's when someone walks into the room whose mere presence stands their best-laid plans on end. The nondescript gentleman with the menacing gait is Ben Kidney. That's Special Branch. And, the head of the Special Branch of the Metropolitan Police is not here on this Earth, because of Dame Chillingsworth.

Ben Kidney is synonymous with Special Branch in the same way that J. Edgar Hoover is with the FBI. He is the first and the only director that Special Branch has ever had. Officially, a unit of London's Metropolitan Police that was formed in March 1883 to combat especially heinous crimes, Special Branch only answers to Director "Big" Ben Kidney. And, he answers only to the British Royal Family. Metropolitan Police Special Branch exists to protect the interests of the British Royal Family, no matter the cost or the consequence. That is their one and only mandate. But, conspiracy theorists, it's not what you think. Nothing remotely like the despicable events depicted in of that ruse of a movie "From Hell." A lot better? Or much worse? You decide.

Also, just like J. Edgar Hoover and The Four, Big Ben is quite human and very long-lived, and paradoxically vigorous, vital, and alert, just like a very fit twenty-year-old. No one knows the secret of his youthful longevity. Many have tried to uncover it, and all have failed. Somethings are better left a mystery. What is known for sure is that his fountain of youth is different than that of The Four.

Simultaneously, two things happen. All over the planet, all surveillance by off-worlders ceases. Shadowy figures detach themselves from the wall. They guide silently across the room, but stop short of close vicinity to the humans. They are envoys. And, they are the reason why remote-viewing by "foreigners" is no longer possible. They no longer permit it.

"Our Queen Mary, the one that the foolish call Young Mad Queen Mary, has decided to entertain the overtures of others," Lady Glenda motions briefly at the envoys. "Soon, very soon, you will know of her decision. And know this. Her decision will speak for the monarch. He has deferred to her in this matter of state."

"The Tooth Fairy teaches kids to sell body parts for money. It seems that your queen learned her lessons well."

Lady Glenda smiles at the expected jab from Kidney. And, she takes it for what it is. Nothing more. Nothing less. Nothing personal. Just business.

When King Harold remarried, after his wife of forty years Queen Gertrude, formerly Lady Gertrude Verbanski, died following a protracted illness, and he chose a much younger woman as his bride, the Allies knew that there would be unexpected complications.

They knew that this was more than just an expression of midlife crisis – more than just his version of the fast fire engine red convertible sports car and the equally flashy twenty-something blonde girl friend with the huge knockers and the legs that go on forever.

Before her ascension, to sit next to the absolute power that is the throne, Crazy Mary had a well-deserved rep, that she has more than lived up to over the years of her reign as the monarch's queen. But. More than that muddles the water of diplomacy and the easy manipulation of a potential asset CIA lingo. Queen Mary is not only deeply in love with her husband, she's fiercely protective of him. She's got her man's back. Which is good for the king because Queen Mary is the Everywoman you never want to meet: cool as ice, passionate, tough, self-satisfied, smart, and amoral.

Beautiful and brainy, with a mean streak begot by sadomasochistic tendencies and inclinations, plagued by bouts of mental “instability” leading to protracted fugue states—“episodes,” being the polite term—she is quite the formidable blue-blood. As such, she is quite unlike her much more “conventional” predecessor. Unlike, the king's first queen, she does not hide behind the public façade of an ineffectual dingbat to lull her enemies into false sense of security. She's much too direct (blunt) to ever be that clever let alone Machiavellian. The king's first wife was quite Machiavellian in doings and don'ts.

This queen prefers to do her own dirty work. And, when that's not possible or prudent, she “likes” to be present when it is done by others at her behest. Queen Mary is one nasty piece of work, and that's an understatement. As such this second wife is every bit the match of the first one.

But. The aforementioned are seen as “petty” nuisances—those peculiarities of her highness' royal personality—by those concerned parties. The more or less normal pitfalls of dealing with blue-bloods. Although some would argue her quirks are more, not less, on that scale of dead reckoning.

What really makes things complicated for the Allies is that Crazy Mary is not so parochial in her view of the world. Worst – she's not parochial at all in her view of the world.

She, unlike her predecessor and her spouse and anyone else who has sat on or beside the throne, sees the world in more or less the same way that pan nationalists see the world. That not only complicates things, it's dangerous. One of the unforeseen pitfalls of an “overseas” education—a euphemism for being educated off-world.

Nationalism tends to be infectious. Kill the messenger, and the message survives. Pan nationalism is even worse. It's a plague of epic proportions. And, here, Queen Mary is its Typhoid Mary. Too late – she's already begun to infect certain people on this planet. Influential people. For example, the popularist Lady Glenda.

The dispatches from our in-country sources were quite accurate. These cheeky, ungrateful bastards and bitches have gone and done it. They've made their move.

Lady Glenda doesn't have to be telepathic, to know what Ben Kidney is thinking. They know all too well that there are spies in their midst. Traitors who will get what's coming to them in due

time, sooner as opposed to later. They also know about the limitations of what those resources can tell foreign masters of his ilk.

He's making no attempt to hide it. I can see it in his eyes. He had forewarning of this coming. What they can't know is the extent. Then there's that juicy Sam Phillips. I wonder how she fits into all of this. Maybe she's more than a mere tangent. The girl with the smoky voice and lots of attitude. A big and blonde with legs that go on forever. And, Darque, to boot. Very Dark. I'll bet that she's finger licking good.

Prime Suspect

“Shadowy figures you say.”

“Yes. Black robes with hoods. Very over the top and melodramatic. Straight out of Dunwich Horror.”

“Lady Glenda has a well-deserved reputation of the theatrical.”

The men chuckle. Seemingly laughing off the encounter. But, the significance of it is not lost on anyone in the room. Nash doesn’t waste time with such false bravado and empty pretense. Then again, being a smart woman of career civil service and not an arrogant man who has drunk power much too long, one would not expect her to play the role of the hapless loser.

The message was quite clear. A year ago the locals would not have had the stomach to deliver it, and for very good reason. How the wheel has turned. And, it gets worse. They’re not being watched. Worst. Here in the bowels of the royal palace. In the parlor reserved for “foreign” dignitaries. In point of fact, they are not being subjected to surveillance of any type. Physical or metaphysical!

None of the locals care about the charade being put on here. The foreigners are doing it for their own benefit. They are their only audience. And, the saddest part about it is that they know it. But, old habits die hard. And, egos still need to be stroked. The need to feel important, even when it’s only self-importance. Because after decades of wallowing in the aggrandizement that is their domination of this orb, they now are faced with the realization that those days have come to a very abrupt end. It’s over. The fat lady has sung.

“With all due respect.”

“Yes?”

“We would like for you to send someone else in your stead.”

“I’ll see what I can do on such short notice.”

“Thank you.”

“Don’t thank me yet. I haven’t done anything.”

“You’ve never failed us.”

“There’s always a first time.”

“We have too much faith in your kind’s talent for undoing to ever consider such a thing.”

“Change in subject.” Pause. Smile. A very broad, toothy grin. “How is your husband?”

“Harold is doing fine. Thanks for asking.”

Hiding in plain sight is a large picture hanging from a wall that it dominates. It’s behind an ornate writing desk with a matching chair. A picture of a group of British school girls dressed in their uniforms hamming it up. Striking whimsical poses and flashing nonsensical hand signs signing for some imagined “gang.” A portrait of roommates at one of those all-girl private

boarding schools. Unlike their American cousins, Public Schools are what private schools are called by the English.

Young post-pubescent girls at play on the verge of womanhood. What could be more innocent? The picture catches Nash's eye. She walks over to it as if mesmerized. Some of the girls in the pictures are obviously inhuman, and all are pretending except for one. The girl in the center, up front, is a very young Queen Mary. The legend on the frame of the group portrait indicates that it was taken in 1994 in Oxford, England. Back then Queen Mary was Lady Mary.

Nash fixes upon the Nosferatu standing behind Queen Mary. Queen Mary is kneeling on one knee on the meticulously cut front lawn of the school grounds. The Nosferatu is smiling; one hand resting on the future queen's left shoulder. Nash age progresses the Nosferatu's face in her mind. She has seen that face before. Passed it in the hallways. Maybe in the Palace of Westminster during an emergency session of Parliament. Maybe in Buckingham Palace. Maybe. She can't place it now, but wherever it was, it was in a place of power and it was in her England. And, a phrase comes to mind.

This is just a body. Inside, I am your superior in every way imaginable.

Nash shudders involuntarily as if someone has just stepped on her grave. She takes another sip of brandy from her goblet. Pregnant pause. That delay in speech used to give one time to consider the consequences of a statement.

Time to be rebooted into a detective procedural – which, after all, is the sum purpose of this narrative. Time to take off those fedoras in a show of respect, "Prime Suspect" fans.

Did she Maria Bello have to play the role so mannish? She had the biggest set in cast!

Except for dykes. No one likes manly woman wearing fedoras and trench coats. Yes, the viewers much rather have their female cops dressed like hookers. A generality, of course. Life is never an absolute. I know a "straight" man who craves manly woman wearing fedoras and trench coats. Hard dyke biotches with huge-ass knockers and killer bodies, and the proverbial brass set.

The problem with the show was not so much that the lead was essentially masculine in nature, but rather that she was the MOST masculine character on the show. In general, women don't relate to such a character and men don't like it. This was over the top and alienated everyone even in the commercials plugging the show before it began. I've known plenty of women that are tough yet still feminine. I'm such a woman.

Why this segway into the failure and cancellation of the same-named American adaption of the BBC's "Prime Suspect?" Because it mirrors what this story arc (chapter) represents—an interlude of sorts. Intermission is over. Why "Prime Suspect?" Because. The perp doesn't get to lead the detective around by the nose. Fucking with her at will on whim. Ergo, "Seven" was not an option, nor a desire.

Sam is on vacation. She's had her fun at the expense of others for her benefit. Now, she does so for the additional benefit of others. Now, the game begins in earnest. Bloody. Violent. And, sado-masochistic. Then again, that's the only way that our girl knows/prefers to play it.

Jet Li's *Nameless*

Sandman. Sandman. Hear me now. To this my David Lynch. A whodunit of sorts that begs your closest attention and your equally skillful intervention. Else it, I fear, will go unsolved.

A friend. A foe. An ally. An enemy. Freely offered up for your judicious consumption. The partaking of which constituted your acceptance of the contract. And the binding execution of whatever boon was asked.

Forgive me for what I ask of you. I know how much you detest the solving of murders. It's the reason why you quit doing them in the first place?

I know that _____ caper was your swan song. But. I think the quote was something along the lines of it being "her last wushu epic." And, this affair is hardly that—a wuxia epic, that is. Think of it as an interesting mini wushu/wuxia of very dark sorts.

"The politics of Angels is not unlike the politics of Men. It used to be about Saints and Sinners. Now it's about endless shades of gray."

"Good angel? Bad angel? Fallen Angel? So, which one are you?"

"It doesn't matter. All angels are terrifying."

Things move in the shadows, just beyond the reach of the light. Then, just like that, they are gone.

"Oh my God. What were those things?!"

"Echoes. Echoes of the past. You call them ghosts."

They are in point of fact, the haunts of my captive audience.

Captive audience?

That's what I call my victims. They visit me in my waking hours. They visit me in my sleep. Then, there are the voices. I'm never alone.

I am a Nephilim – half Angel, half human. In spite of being half-Angel, I'm still a Monkey to an Angel. Monkey is the racial slur that Angels use when referring to humans.

The resiliency of an Angel. The cunning of a Monkey. The bloodlust of The Fallen. Such is me. Talking to myself. I seem rather one dimensional, less human, and more like a killing machine. Standing over what's left of one of my latest two victims. There were thirty-seven in Chicago. I plan for a much larger body count in Haven.

I have a given name Simon. I was named after my father. But, I prefer the one that the Chi-Town newspapers gave me. The papers dubbed me Bone Daddy. I am sick and twisted by nature. An Angel in a human body. There's just too much to contain in a mortal body. Insanity is the norm, not the exception, for my kind.

"Confused butcher wannabe doctor. You're no Angel. Your name is Angel. Simon Angel. You're sick in the head. You've just said as much. You're a psychopath who thinks he's a bloody Angel. What a laugh. You're a loser. A joke. A bed wetter with a knife who's incapable of getting it on with a woman like a real man. Impotent cur. Homicide is your Viagra. Without it you can't get hard."

Stop listening to her. All she wants to do is to distract you from your Godly tasks with her pointless filibustering. Nagging you without end. Always belittling your work.

Trite expository dialogue. Not very literary of her. Never would guess that she was a librarian when she was alive. So was her dildo-strapping bitch ass whore.

Clearly. The prattle of a Protestant.

She deserved to die badly the way she did. And, you did such a proper job on her and her bulldyke significant other. Lesbian trash. Unfit for Heaven. Not good enough for Hell either.

Raised Lutheran. Grew up to live in sin as an atheist with another woman who herself was an agonistic.

Heathen scum.

Unbelievers.

“I’m not a psychopath, I’m a high-functioning sociopath; do your research. My court-appointed shrink diagnosed me as a high-functioning.”

“You never had a court-appointed shrink.”

Right. Right. That was Jacobs. He’s the one who got caught. Careless of him. He got the court-appointed shrink, with the fancy diagnosis, for all the good it did him. He still died in the gas chamber, peeing and shitting in his pants like an incontinent retard.

“Oh that’s right. My bad. Sorry.”

“Remember. My sweet, sweet baby. You were never caught.”

“Just like you said. They the police never got close.”

“Not even remotely.”

“I keep forgetting.”

“That’s okay, honey. I’m here to remind you. That’s what wives are for. We’re helpmates, just like it says in the Bible.”

“I don’t know what I would do without you.”

And then there’s the question of my entitlement. It’s a bittersweet one. For half-breeds such as me, it is the politics of Heaven and Hell. Good/Bad Angels in Heaven. Fallen Angels in Hell. So, it boils down to the politics of Angels, once more.

He struggles against his restraints as if that is going to make a difference. Naked. He’s tied securely to that which I’m using in the service of a dissection table.

The long slender blade feels feather light in my hand. Shiny and deadly. Familiar. My deadly old friend. An oversized scalpel. Well suited for vivisection. Specific for surgical amputation. It’s overkill for my uses.

It slices open his left leg lengthwise along the shinbone from just below the knee to just above the ankle. As if it was filleting a tender cutlet. A splay, also known as an old-fashioned, the preferred blade of a Ripperphile. Formally the Liston.

The Liston knife is a type of knife used in surgical amputation. The knife was named after Robert Liston a Scottish surgeon noted for his skill and speed in an era prior to anesthetics, when speed made a difference in terms of pain and survival. The knife was made out of high-quality metal and had a typical blade length of 6-8 inches. Surgical amputation knives came in many styles and changed very much between 1840 and the American Civil War. These changes reflect changes in techniques used by the surgeons and makers of surgical knives during the period.

Amputation blades from the 18th century–1840s are generally known for their distinctive “down” curving blades. By 1870, amputation blades had become straighter, and more closely resembled the “Liston” European style. Since the Crimean war ended in 1856, it is likely the American Civil War that had a greater impact on the long slender blade style than the actual Dr. Liston. The dedicated task of amputation may be more responsible for the Liston title than any specific design.

It is noted by collectors that the handles on earlier knives (pre-1850) are of a much bigger and heavier construction.

The majority of the history of amputation blade evolution is referenced from the medical textbook “Handbook of Surgical Operations,” U. S. A. Medical Department, 1863, written during the Civil War by Stephen Smith, M.D., with various drawings from the medical literature credited to Bourgerie & Jacob.

Ripperphile? Ouch. A dangerous term, prone to severe misunderstandings. Wasn’t Robin Odell’s meta-analysis volume “Ripperology: A study of the world’s first serial killer and a literary phenomenon” published in 2006?

There used to be also a very entertaining old casebook thread called “You’re a Ripperologist if.” which contained criteria like:

- You think SPE is God
- You meet someone named Hutchinson and can’t refrain from asking about their ancestors
- You get in days-long debates about where Hanbury Street 29 was in relation to today
- You venomously fight against someone on the boards and in the next Whitechapel conference run to them and hug them like a long-lost brother.

Blood. So much blood. His screams fill the room. No one can hear him but me though. I get hard. I jism in my pants. I get all warm and sticky down there. Tibias. Tibias. I love tibias.

Make the Monkey suffer. Make the Monkey scream.

The drugs I’ve pumped him full of will prevent him from going into shock and dying on me prematurely. Other drugs he’s being infused with will keep away infection. Not that he will last that long. They never do. Nifty cocktail he’s been given by yours truly.

Resection? I always start with the left leg. Then, the right foot. The skull is last. They never get to die until I say so.

Too bad the fun must end when they perish.

Nope. It doesn’t. I fuck ‘em when they’re dead. Over and over again. Until I tire of doing so. The fun ends when I say so. That’s when the fat lady sings.

I unzip my pants and masturbate on him. Rubbing my dick in his wound. I will fuck him in the ass later after the Monkey bitch has sucked me off and gotten me hard again. I love fucking a virgin anus. It's so very tight and unknown.

The Monkey bitch is his wife, of course. I took them both. Two for the price of one. In the next room. Door shut. Out of sight, but not out of mind. She is naked and similarly trussed up and drugged up like he is on a "makeshift" that's been pressed into service as a dissection table. Sound familiar?

I've only had a little time with her. I might as well rape her too since I'm in the mood for backdoor. She's no backend virgin though. Too bad.

After I've iced him, she'll get my undivided attention. She'll pay in spades for being one of those haughty career women, just like the stay-at-home dad Mr. Mom, paid for supporting her. I'm gonna make sure that she gets what's coming to her. She should have stayed at home and had babies just like women are supposed to. Barefoot. Pregnant. And, fixed.

I'm naked from the waist up. Old scars and fresh open wounds of my own doing crisscross my back. I engage in self-flagellation. Underneath my trousers, my thighs are likewise "marked," the handiwork of the small, light, metal chain with little barbed prongs which is worn around each thigh. Corporal mortification. The atonement for sins through self-flagellation and the cilice.

You see. I'm not a Cafeteria Catholic. I don't pick and choose which rules I wish to follow. I'm a true Believer. As such, I follow Doctrine rigorously. Ignoring any and all of the so-called Reforms of the traitor what Opus Dei calls the Pope. Reforms which taint my once-beloved Church. A Church I now despise. A Church I'm duty-bound to save.

"Soon, the whores will come."

"The killer elite that you've so oft spoken of?"

A Monkey-spawned she-demon. A born-Saved she-demon. You must not allow either of them to distract you from your holy mission. You are the Righteous. See how you have your way so freely with this Monkey couple. Have your way with these the gun-toting faerie harlots. Remember. You must never forget the endgame where your numerous enemies get their comeuppance and your Church is saved to once again become your beloved.

"Soon, Mr. Mufwic will come."

"Mufwic?"

"Muther-fucker-what's-in-charge."

"Maybe, you should run away?"

"It would be a waste of time."

"Why?"

"Because. Everybody gets found, no matter how well they hide."

Maybe the assassin's creed applies?

"Maybe even."

"The last lullaby?"

“Maybe.”

I smile to myself.

“Bring it!”

“Bone Daddy” – plot – movie adaptation.

A former chief medical examiner for the city of Chicago, Dr. William Palmer, is now a best-selling writer. “Bone Daddy,” his latest thriller, is based on a series of grisly murders the pathologist once investigated.

Re-told in graphic detail, the horrific story has one added twist. In the book, the murderer is tracked down and brought to justice - in truth the serial killer was never caught. Thirty-seven people were murdered in a two week period. Their bodies were never found. Their bones were left as clues/taunts for the police. Bones taken from the victims while they were still alive. Thirty-seven people completely deboned while they were still alive.

Glenn Jacobs the infamous Bone Collector of San Francisco did the same to twenty-seven victims in a four week period. But, he did it to cadavers. His victims were very much dead, tortured to death, before he deboned them. And, all but five of his victims were found.

When the author’s agent fails to show at the book’s press launch, Palmer pays a visit to his hotel room and is stunned when all he finds is a severed finger - a calling card that tells him the psychopath, who eluded him years before, is back and ready to strike again.

Palmer and an intelligent, beautiful detective, Sharon, join their forces to try to solve the case before it’s too late - the killer has also kidnapped Palmer’s son, a medical examiner like his father.

It’s a race against time.

Seraphim. The name is oftentimes derived from the Hebrew verb *saraph* (“to consume with fire”), and this etymology is very probable because of its accordance with Isaiah 6:6, where one of the seraphim is represented as carrying celestial fire from the altar to purify the Prophet’s lips. Many scholars prefer to derive it from the Hebrew noun *saraph*, “a fiery and flying serpent,” spoken of in Numbers 21:6; Isaiah 14:29, and the brazen image of which stood in the Temple in Isaiah’s time (2 Kings 18:4); but it is plain that no trace of such serpentine form appears in Isaiah’s description of the seraphim. Still less probable are the views propounded of late by certain critics and connecting the Biblical seraphim with the Babylonian *Sharrapu*, a name for Nergal, the fire-god, or with the Egyptian griffins (*séréf*) which are placed at Beni-Hassan as guardians of graves.

For the sader, pain and pleasure is indivisible. No voices in the head. No conversations with oneself. Just, agony divine. Such is also the case for the Food of the gods.

Hawk mistook the wretched God-forsaken creature standing before him for his beloved wife Fisher. That mistake, and the moment of indecision that it caused, resulted in his current predicament. He lost. They won.

His Fisher is gone. Dead. Forgotten. Lost forever. In her place is the Master’s whore Fisher. He should have known better. He should have listened. Listened to his head the voice of reason. Cold calculation. The emotionless sums of the professional. The experienced law enforcement officer, not the grieving husband. Instead, he listened to his heart. Now, two good, honest men of the city Guard are dead. Ravaged by the monstrous Master of the two cunts who now hold sway over him.

Disarmed. Battered. Bloodied. And, bruised. His arms are pinned behind him by Noreen the Ogress who also has him in a rear choke hold. Fisher's long dirty fingernails shred his shirt and rack his chest. Completely feral, she is mindless. A deranged slobbering lunatic trussed up in an asylum is saner.

Emaciated and gaunt, like his wife, like he will soon be. The Master rises out of its coffin and walks over. It is gloating. Hawk will replace the other human male who was stolen from it.

There are puncture marks in Hawk's forearms. Some are Fisher's doings. Some are The Master's. He's been feed upon. Worse yet. Already he can feel himself loosing himself in the vile creatures who are feeding upon him. Feeding that is about to begin again.

As if in the blink of an eye the Master is upon him. Noreen adjusts her grip to expose his neck. The Master bites down hard into his neck. Raping it. Virgin territory up until now. Pain and pleasure, indivisible. Agony divine. This is what it means to be drunk live.

Standing in a corner, in the shadows, obediently watching the carnage and debauchery is a Nubian. Clad in filthy tatters that used to be his clothes. Those blank eyes. Windows to the emptiness that is his mind and his soul. A brain turned to mush. Mindless. Bereft of a soul. Chewed off his own tongue. Guttural moans from a foul, slobbering mouth. He makes the sounds of the Dead. The Walking Dead. His nethers. Altered much, his dick now drags on the ground and his testicles hang down to his knees. Hung like an elephant. To gaze upon the shine is to see Hawk's future.

Like a human leech, Hawk's wife abandons her attack on his chest and affixes her sucker mouth to his cheek. Her razor teeth sink in. She, just like her master The Master, possesses a vicious, wiry strength.

Hawk can hear someone screaming. A lunatic baying at the moon like some kill-crazed Werewolf. Then, he realizes much to his dismay and despair that he is the one who is screaming. Then, silence. Unnerving silence. After which.

He experiences his very first rush. So. For the first time since they began drinking him live, his eyes roll back into his head like a junkie heaving for a fix. His mouth opens slackly drooling. He has an erection. Soon. Very soon. He will be reduced to a mere shadow of his former self. A shell of a man at the beck and call of the Master, just like its slut Fisher. Broken. He will be broken.

In effect, The Master will have performed a lobotomy on Hawk its newest possession. It will destroy all of his higher brain functions. Leaving only the "lizard" brain formally the amygdala intact.

There's a tiny section of the human brain called the amygdala. It's about the size of an almond, and it's lodged deep in the section of the mundane brain that handles memory, speech, and visual cues.

The amygdala's job is to provide humans with their most primal instincts: fear, hunger, and arousal. It drives humans to fend off predators and protect themselves from harm.

When the Master is done "fixing" Hawk, this most primal part of his brain is all he will have to think with. He will be reduced to a drooling obedient lackey. A mindless junkie addicted to being feed upon and being worn, just like his now tainted wife and the Nubian. The shine and Fisher his wife have already been fixed. Now it's his turn.

A weaker, less heroic man would already be broken. If only he were not a good man. A murderous sader like Sam would be in seventh heaven, right now. Such as this, degradation and humiliation, their true self subjugated to such an absolute primal evil, would be absolute bliss to one who is twisted. Soon. Very soon. He will be such a twisted, wretched soul. Just like his wife and the shine are right now. Just like the soulless monster that The Master is. Has been. And, always will be.

Over two thousand years ago, the Chinese strategist Sun Tzu talked of a “death ground,” a place where an army is backed up against some geographical feature and has no escape route. Without a way to retreat, Sun Tzu argued, an army fights with double or triple the spirit it would have on open terrain because death is viscerally present. Sun Tzu advocated deliberately stationing soldiers on death ground to give them the desperate edge that makes men fight like the devil. That is what Hernán Cortés did in Mexico, and it is the only sure way to create a real fire in the belly.

Such is the case for Hawk. He is on death ground. Of course, the undoing of Tzu’s “death ground” strategy is when you can’t fight your way out of your situation no matter how hard you try. In other words. What happens when things are truly hopeless, because the opposition is insurmountable? Why. You lose, of course.

Totally out of place and obviously of an off-world design and manufacture. For your consideration is a cross body organizer bag by Ellington, the premier rucksack company. Unique design lets you wear this cross body or remove the strap and wear it on your belt with the back belt loop feature! It features a cross body design with a flat side to the body with a back zipper pocket and a belt loop, the front has a fold down section with 2 pen holders, 5 card slots and two larger slot pockets, a snap flap covering one large pocket with an interior zipper pocket. Removable Long strap has approx. 22” drop, can be adjusted to 3” shorter. Light canvas fabric lining. Next gen spatial displacement technology enables it to have an interior that’s many times larger than its exterior dimensions would indicate was possible. Perfect for travel!

Hidden in plain sight, none of the players seem to notice. It looks identical to the one that is in the rooms where Simon at this very moment is butchering the off-world couple. Three identical bags? The same bag in three different places at the same time? Or. Maybe they are not bags at all? Maybe.

The Master, for all of its unnatural doom and gloom, prefers to do its killing and such in relatively safe havens of its choice. It prefers to do its business in private. Simon, on the other hand, carries out his deadly business in the public domain. He’s butchering the off-world couple in their hotel room in the Hilton no less. Very public statements, only. For a very public person. A real people person in the very literal sense.

Simon Says

“I can be whatever and whomever I need to be to optimize the experience for my maximum enjoyment. There has never been a serial killer like me before. And, there never will be. I’m truly unique. Here I am butchering this couple as the now deceased Bone Doctor. Last week I was Baby Doc. Before that, Baby Daddy.”

“Bone Doctor? You’re confusing Bone Daddy and the Bone Collector. There never was a Bone Doctor. Baby Doc was a Haitian dictator, not a serial killer, although he caused the deaths of a lot of innocent and not so innocent people during his bloodthirsty reign. Baby Daddy is a term that refers to the father of a bastard child. That’s not even remotely related to a serial killer.”

“I am them, just like they were. Voices in the head and all. Not playacting. None of that copycat killer bullshit! I kill as them! Bisexual. Homosexual. Heterosexual. Asexual. Pansexual. Androgynous. Whatever. I kill as them without ever having ever met them when they were alive.”

They don’t possess me. I possess them. Possession of the dead by the living. I wear the dead. I am a necromancer.

I’ve worn them so long that I’ve lost the me who was here first. Not that it really matters anymore. I like being someone else anyways so much better. I am their Gollum and they are my Ring of Power.

The original Gollum, originally known as Sméagol or Trahald, was a creature of Hobbit-like origin. The name Gollum was derived from the disgusting gurgling, choking cough he made. His birth can be estimated to have happened in the year TA 2430. His death date is given as March 25, 3019. His life was extended far beyond its natural limits by the effects of possessing the One Ring. At the time of his death, Sméagol was about 589 years old, a remarkable age for a creature that was once a Hobbit, but he had been deformed and twisted in both body and mind by the corruption of the Ring. He called it his “Precious” or his “Birthday Present,” the latter as a justification for killing Déagol. He became the fourth Bearer of the One Ring, after Sauron, Isildur, and Déagol who was his cousin. His chief desire was to possess the Ring that had enslaved him, and he pursued it for many years after Bilbo Baggins found it while walking in the Misty Mountains in the book “The Hobbit.”

I’m. Average height. Average looks. Average build. Average voice. Something ish in age. No distinguishing characteristics. People walk right past me and never notice that I’m there. It’s as if I don’t exist. I’m everyman and no man. I’m nameless. That is what I am.

Unlike, Bone Daddy, I don’t suffer from a dissociative identity disorder (DID), commonly known as split personality. DID is a psychiatric diagnosis and describes a condition in which a person displays multiple distinct identities known as alters or parts, each with its own pattern of perceiving and interacting with the environment.

When I’m Bone Daddy I do exhibit DID. But, when I’m me, I don’t.

Who is “me?”

Who am I? I don’t know. Listen! I’ve already told you that!

DID is, as DID does.

“Honestly. I don’t see the difference between you and Simon.”

“You wouldn’t.”

“How can you wear Simon Angel the Bone Daddy? He’s not dead. You can only wear the dead. Seems like you are Simon and just don’t know it. You admit that you don’t know who you are.”

“I’m wearing Simon; therefore he is dead.”

Why do you bother to argue with haters? Bone Daddy is dead, that’s why you can wear him. Haters hate.

Nameless. Bone Daddy is dead. You know that. I know that.

Haters hate.

Stop paying haters any heed.

They envy your success.

That is not my name! That is what I am!

If you don’t know your name, then it could very well be Nameless.

No! No! No!

“He was never caught.”

“You shouldn’t believe everything that you read in the papers.”

“Or see in the movies, for that matter?”

“Exactly.”

“So, what became of him? Did he commit suicide? Was he caught and put to death?”

“Since you won’t take my word for it. We’ll have to ask Ms. Phillips when we get our hands on her.”

“That’s Miss.”

“What?”

“She prefers to be called Miss, Miss Phillips.”

“I stand corrected.”

Where I come from, a deaner (also spelled *diener*) is an autopsy technician. A job associated with death. That’s what I was when I killed in the Windy City. How fitting that it is the alias that I, a necromancer, again use to move about in a city unnoticed. Chicago PD thought that it was a medical examiner, and all the time it was I, right under their noses, slaughtering at will to my heart’s content. And, if it wasn’t for the interference of that nosey murderous bitch, I’d still be in Chi Town doing what I do best – better than anyone else! Killing! Killing! Killing! Kill that fucking bitch ass whore!

Here, on this planet. The deaners are high-functioning imbeciles. No one pays them much attention. Even the foreigners ignore them. They do the lowest-paying, most menial jobs. Jobs that no one else wants to do. And, being of low intelligence, they are very content doing those

jobs. Characteristic of the mentally challenged, they are dedicated, conscientious, hardworking employees. Low paid, uncomplaining, undemanding, and hardworking. If you're an employer, you gotta love exploitable workers like them.

I go from deaner to deaner, assuming their identities without fear of detection. I enjoy disposing of them. They make ideal victims. Child's play to kill.

Grown children, really. Adults with the minds of children. Just the threat of torture throws them into fit and panic. They readily scream and shriek when tortured. Low pain thresholds. That confusion in their eyes when you hurt them. Eyes that plead, "Why are you doing these bad things to me?" Then, clarity finally comes to them. That 5-watt light bulb, which passes for their intellect, finally lights up. They grasp the truth. That eureka moment. The realization that they are going to die, horribly. That's when that flicker of hope extinguishes in their sad, dumb, puppy eyes. I wish I could bottle that and sell it. I'd make a fortune.

A homicidal narrative sublime, if I must say so myself. And, I must. Too much for you, so far? Panties in a bunch? Then. Beware. The third and final act is "out there." There are at least three different ways to deconstruct it and they all make sense to me. It turns the entire prose upside down and pushes it into a territory most David Lynch films visit. However, what fascinates here are not the what ifs but the wild atmosphere – things get very ugly and very strange very fast.

Ultimately, "Kill List" is a journey, not a film that tells a coherent story – at least not in the traditional Hollywood-esque sense of the word. It is the thinking man's guilty pleasure. Thought-provoking, and stylish. Perhaps, slightly ambiguous, but not irresponsible. And, the lazy viewer's nightmare. A film that demands patience, concentration, and an acquired taste.

"Film?"

"Did I say film?"

"Yes. Several times, in point of fact. During this last bit."

"My bad. I meant. Participative psychopathic narrative. At least that's what my shrink at Arkham used to call them. She's the one who named them *Kill Lists*."

Dangerous! Brutal, sadistic, and misandric! We're not to speak of her! Ever!

Someone might be listening.

"Someone is always listening."

"For all the good it does them."

Hehehehehehehehehehehehehehehe.

"Participative psychopathic narrative."

"Prose, for short."

"Indeed."

"All shall kneel before them and the 2nd coming of The Empire!"

Incapacitating gives way to lethal. Someone ingratiates himself into the situation. By unexpectedly bursting into the room, figuratively though not literally. Literally, all of a sudden, there is someone else standing in the room.

Fade to black? Not quite yet. Things are not. Bright red. Blood red. And, all sticky, yet. But, they soon will be.

Investigative, non-invasive. Powerful ground penetrating radar finishes its scan of the subterranean chamber. The source of the scan is a Warlock Class heavy destroyer of the Chinese fleet. It is parked in a geo-stationary orbit, miles above the planet, in the sanctuary of its worm hole.

The Enterprise is hailed by the Chinese destroyer and “asked politely” to move further out. The captain of the Enterprise complies. She knows better than to posture.

In the stealthiest fashion, he just fades in. The “he” is an urbane Asian man who materializes in the cavern previously sanitized by the U.S. Army Rangers. Dressed in an expensive, tailored business suit and equally exclusive wing-tip shoes, he looks Western, a capitalist, and human. The adroit dandy is none of these things.

The dapper gent is Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping, China’s leader-in-waiting. A Communist. A direct descent of the founder of the Ming Dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (reign motto Hongwu 洪武 “Inundating Martiality”). A distant relative of the deceased Chairman Mao Zedong. And, he is 456. He is also the fourth cousin, twice removed, of Ancient Mia, a Dragon. Dragons being the other Oldest gods.

456 seldom speak of Dragons; privately, let alone publicly. And the Chinese Government on the mainland steadfastly refuses to officially acknowledge their existence. This is done out of respect. The 456 feel that they are unworthy of such godly kin. Kin who, unlike the 456, delight in passing for mundane.

And, to really muddy the waters. There is a bit of a paradox afoot here. To the proverbial outside observer, Xi (*shee*) is standing in this chamber and at the same time he’s standing in the nearby cave observing Hawk being ravaged by fiends and he is standing in the Hilton hotel rooms on Haven watching Bone Daddy at work on the husband and watching the violated wife in the next room.

No smoke and mirrors. No cheap sleight of hand. No hi-tech holograms or intricate doubling. No reality remapping mixed with elaborate CGI techniques. One person in four different places at the same time. This is physically impossible.

Magic, science, alchemy, arcane, VOX, whatever, are “mechanisms” that you employ to manipulate The Universe, God’s multi-verse. You can bend and twist the Laws of Physics, but you can’t violate them. Nothing known can do that. Yet, isn’t that exactly what Xi is doing?

There is also something all too familiar about this. The cross body organizer bag by Ellington. Same bag in three different places at the same time. Hidden in plain sight.

Right now, in addition to where he’s standing, Xi is standing in plain sight unnoticed in place of that bag in all three of its locations. Is this the path oft-attempted but seldom-travelled that leads to equality with God?!

As Logan also somewhat candidly talks about, director Jacob Cheung had never before helmed a film of this size and complexity, and that led to some problems both during production and especially in the post-production editing period. Cheung evidently utilized literally miles of

film, including multiple takes of some of the more complex sequences, and that left editor Kwong Chi-Leung with an epic task to whittle the film down to even its current state at well over two hours. Unfortunately Cheung's inexperience leads to some confusion at times which does not seem to be simply a case of "lost in translation." Threads of the plot often dangle with unanswered questions and some of the more interesting philosophical quandaries which are at least hinted at by Ge Li's Mohist background are never fully explored or indeed resolved by the film's conclusion.

Film? Director? My. My. My. The mind does wander at times like this. I was warned more than adequately in the pre-mission briefing. So, I only have myself to blame for that fopah. Mustn't make the additional mistake of being disingenuous, either. The Dragons wouldn't like that at all. And, the consequence of offending Them could be fatal.

A slight gesture of his hand and Xi no longer "represents" the bag. This last bit is magic, plain and simple. Finally, something understandable. He is again just in the chamber where there never was a bag.

He glides effortless across the chamber into the next. His feet never touching the ground. No security detail. No entourage. The second most powerful man in China. Going about his business as if he were some wayward tourist who had lost his way in the catacombs and sewers that run beneath the city.

High above. Miles above the planet. The Chinese starship hails the Enterprise a second time. Informing them that they are leaving. They leave without further fanfare. The captain of the Enterprise will wait an hour as prescribed by the captain of the Chinese starship. Then she will give the command for the Enterprise to resume its original orbit. The orbit it was maintaining before the Americans came and were followed in rapid succession by the Chinese. In the interim, Captain Riker will break radio silence. Bene Gesserits will be communicated with. Additional Galaxy Class starships will be requested. Knowing Admiral Picard, he will get them. So. When, not if, the Americans and the Chinese return, it will be Captain Riker's turn to dictate terms.

Then again, that's exactly what the Chinese, and the Americans for that matter, want Riker and thus Bene Gesserits to think. It's been leaked that the Warlock Class has a defect with its blade armor that allows it to be tracked even when it's within the bowels of its worm hole. The truth is, what's being tracked is countermeasures.

This is the dance of Armageddon. For some time, MI6 has suspected that there was a high-level mole in the British Government who was passing secrets to Bene Gesserits. How high-level is the suspected leak? The highest echelon. Maybe Parliament. Maybe Whitehall. Maybe the Foreign Office. Maybe the Home Office. Maybe Oversight. Maybe even a member of the Royal Family itself.

As such, house cleaning that demanded the intervention of an outside touch. The "outsiders," the Chinese and Americans, were asked for their assistance in flushing out the mole. This explains the subterfuge about the armor defect.

Tinker, tailor, soldier, spy. That age-old scam. Put a juicy falsehood out there, one too good to pass up even if it reeks of a trap, and then you follow the breadcrumbs.

If things work out as planned. Embarrass Bene Gesserits. Uncover a traitor. And, ruse the legend Captain Riker. All in one fell swoop.

Worst case scenario? Using disinformation to ferret out, or at least discredit, the breach in security.

Then again, that's worst case for the British. You see, Riker is only half right. The Americans won't be returning. Remember: They've unilaterally decided that it's in their best interest to sit this one out. Paving the way for Vice President Xi Jinping was the Americans' swan song.

Riker will be solely dealing with the Chinese upon their return. She will be facing an inhuman foe who gives no quarter. She will mistakenly think that she has the upper hand. She will not. Depending upon how she plays her hand, a lot of people could die. And those will be the lucky ones.

The 456 who are U.S. Army Rangers have constraints imposed upon them by the U.S. Military that the 456 of the Chinese military do not have. As aforementioned, U.S. Army Rangers who are known to genocide entire civilizations.

It gets worse. With the Americans completely out of the picture, the Dragons could decide to step in, officially. Filling the power vacuum created by the Americans. Ergo, Tibet and thus The Office of His Holiness The Dalai Lama will be publicly involved, and the Chinese Government will openly acknowledge their collusion with Tibet on this matter.

Unlike the America Government, neither the Chinese Government nor its staunchest ally Tibet gives a flying fuck about plausible deniability. Or public opinion for that matter. They do as they please in what they perceive as their own best interests.

Worst—the High Council and Ancient Mia herself will get involved. Ancient Mia loves to do her own dirty work. A repeating theme with women of power. Then again, everything being more or less equal, women are the deadliest of the species.

The big picture, no matter how big it is, never ever obscures the very personal one. Not when it comes to Supernaturals, that is.

Dame Chillingsworth and Sam Phillips continue their leisurely pace. Sightseeing. Two tourists wandering through the city. Taking in the sights. Taking their time as they make their way toward Sam's ROOM.

Buxom. Wearing tight black business suits, jackets buttoned, with plunging necklines, short skirts, and high heels. Fully made up and long hair down their chests and backs. Bare legs. Slim hips. And tight asses. Creamy-white flesh; miles of it bared. Neither of them human. Both wanton. A prelude to hot and bothered. How hot? Hot enough to be one of the great female judokas in American history.

As Chillingsworth and Sam walk by an alley, something or rather someone catches Sam's eye. A woman searches through a pile of rubbish, looking for food. And, she finds it. A dead rat. She tears into the feast with abandon. Eating the rodent raw, maggots and all.

Collectively, they are called Gollum by the locals. Such an especially wretched creature this one is. Then again, they all are. A junkie and a lunatic. People like her have dropped out, tuned in, and turned on. At the expense of their very humanity.

Mind completely gone. Infested. Things, parasites of all description, crawling on and living off of her. Pungent. Foul breath. Fetid. Zero hygiene. Doesn't bathe, of course. Long dirty hair, so

dirty that it's been "groomed" into greasy rattails by its complete and utter lack of grooming. Skin, bones, tits, and hair. Skinny. Big, sloppy, floppy tits. Bare foot. She's clad in smelly rags that were once an expensive business suit. Tatters that are superglued to her dirty skin by filth. Twenty-something. A white woman, very fair-skinned. Her skin is so dirty, that it's shiny black in places. A foreigner. Gollum are always foreigners. Tourists who came here on a vacation. Tourists who will never leave. They become Haven's very permanent, very dangerous residents.

The embassies can give all the cautionary lectures and hand out all the precautionary booklets that they want. About the potential dangers of tourists straying off the beaten path. But. You can't fix stupid. Young people, in particular college students on Spring break, come here all the time looking for kicks, especially illicit ones. And they find them. Unfortunately, they sometimes get much more than they bargained for. They get snatched by the undertow that has always been from time immemorial the underbelly of the party life. Disappear without a trace. And end up as Gollum on the streets and back alleys of Haven.

The Gollum's greasy chest is left more-or-less exposed. Rotting, severed hands actively clutch her pendulous tits. Milking them. Severed hand pasties: that step beyond a hand-bra. Long dirty fingernails. Long dirty toenails.

She looks up and makes eye contact with Sam. Hers are the eyes of a feral animal. A wild, mindless beast. She snarls. Her teeth are so filthy, they look rotten. Gums receded, baring more teeth, making them look even longer and more menacing. Teeth sharpened to points. A long tongue that's been split halfway down the middle so that it's now forked. The mortal version of a razorblade smile. Her long, facile tongue is so filthy it's black. It's as if she's had a stroke and because of the resulting facial paralysis her tongue had hung out of her mouth so long that it had dried out and turned black. Yuck! But. It's a yuck that Sam likes.

Sam especially envies this Gollum. But. As much as she envies this Food as ODB, she envies indigenous Nosferatu like The Master as ODB, even more. ODB: one dirty bitch – the native form of all female Nosferatu on this planet. ODB: one dirty bitch/bastard – the native form of all Nosferatu on this planet. Period.

On this planet, Nosferatu are territorial. One Nosferatu per territory. Truly wretched creatures. Dirty. Mindless killing machines. Mindless, animate corpses for whom feeding is sex. Their only form of sex.

Dirty. Sam craves dirty. Sam as ODB. When she is clean and pristine, like she is now. She craves it ODB even more. She literally covets it. Dirty, dirty, dirty girl. Sam as ODB – this she covets the most. This can't be stated emphatically enough. It can't be stated enough. Period.

Of course with Sam, the moment always passes; whatever that moment might be. She oscillates between clean and dirty. Within clean, she oscillates between sexy and plain. There are bulldyke variations of sexy, all of which are some flavor of dominatrix. There are iterations of plain, all of which are some flavor of spinster the severest aka shrew.

"I'm in town and I need you to run a trace for me. Nothing urgent. Take your time getting to it. I'm in no particular hurry."

"In closing, I must tell you how ravishing you look these days. So much better than when you were Food."

Silence. The voice in her head is gone. Just as abruptly as it manifested itself. In the modern world, telepathy is a risky business at best. While you're communicating telepathically, the person, place, or thing that you're communicating with can exploit the telecommunication to your potential detriment. Likewise, someone could be eavesdropping. They could exploit the telecommunication to the potential detriment of the sender and/or the receiver(s).

Bottom line: An innocent tweet to a friend could end up with your mind being enslaved to them or to someone else. Of course, in the case of this sender and this receiver, it would not be a wise move to exploit this publish-n-subscribe for nefarious purposes.

Never one to be distracted too long from lustful endeavors. Sam's attention focuses back on the Gollum. A plan formulates. Wear the woman. She could easily take that woman's place with none the wiser. Now that would be a nice, fun diversion. ODB on a complete and utter lark. Vacation salvaged. Finally she gets to do something that's divorced completely from the baggage of other people's agendas. Of course she would need to be imprinted and it would have to be permanent. Of course, no one who really knows her would be stupid enough to imprint her. Let alone permanently. That's the hard part, indeed. But not insurmountable.

I could do Xi's trace and get imprinted, if I work this right. Kill two birds with one stone. I'll need to mark the girl so that I can find her later.

Sam walks away from Chillingsworth. She's going in the opposite direction. Toward the Gollum.

"Where are you going?"

Sam doesn't answer. Then again Sam doesn't need to. The question is rhetorical. At least it ends up being. When the Dame sees what Sam is walking toward, she gets her answer. So, she patiently waits. Her luggage in tow in obedient hover.

The Gollum stands up. Drop the food and fight? Or. Just take the food and run? She never gets the chance to choose. Sam reaches into her mind what's left of it, that is and takes it over completely.

Sam sees what and who the girl once was. Only echoes are left. Nothing substantial. Just enough to animate the girl's body. And. Nuances of something or someone else, too. An implant? If so, she must be careful. The mind of this mindless girl could be booby-trapped. Irregardless, not enough space for her comfort. And. Not wanting to be the least bit cramped, she sweeps it all away. Leaving absolutely nothing behind. Poof. All gone, forever. Lobotomized? Worse – the girl is now brain dead. Worst – the girl has been reduced to a living, breathing husk that needs a full-time remote or an implant or full-blown life support to stay alive and breathing on a permanent basis. Sam wears the girl, and likes the fit.

Yes. Yes. You will do nicely. I'm sure.

Bad habits die hard. Good ones never do. Out of habit, before she emptied the girl's mind, she committed a snapshot of it. A nice, safe imprint that will automatically invoke whenever the Gollum is not being worn. Therefore, the "no one is home" complication will never rear its ugly head. A simple, "temporary" solution that works. Thus, there will be no need to remote the Gollum, or provide life support or some other messy involved permanent solution, to keep the Gollum going when no one is visiting.

Sam walks up to the girl. Sweeps the Gollum's hair back. Serrates her teeth. Affixes her mouth to the girl's bared, dirty neck. And, feeds. Ravaging the girl's neck. Secreted by those discreet glands that all demons have in their mouth. A special saliva bathes the neck wounds. The DNA of the compromised tissue is completely rewritten. Now she can find her Gollum.

Wearing the Gollum, she's a fitting concubine/slut/fuck-babe for the likes of The Master. A fitting substitute for the mortal that The Master has taken as wife. The Master can then whore her out good fashion. Now that's a dream vacation!

If she can get all her ducks in a row. If everybody else gets what they want. They finally might leave her alone, for good. That's a lot of ifs. But, she has a strong feeling that she will ultimately get what she wants.

Sam sees the Gollum as a good luck omen. A portent of things going her way. She is convinced that this is another chance meeting, just like her bumping into Dame Chillingsworth. And, that it is not the contrived of some master plan meant to entrap her in more of someone else's scheming. So far she's spent an inordinate amount of her vacation stuck as a pawn in the gameplay of others. Having as much fun as she can, all things considered.

Unconvinced, that theirs is a chance meeting? Still suspicious that it is staged?

Yes. Sam didn't have to circumvent primo scan blocks-n-traps, like Bliss or the Face of God, to ravage this woman's mind. In the modern world. Depending upon the defenses in place and the skill of the invasive and the invader, circumvention is next to impossible, oftentimes impossible to pull off. But. The girl's mind was totally unprotected.

Yes. Completely unprotected. Yes. Unheard of, especially for a mortal, in the modern world. Yes. Someone had been there in this girl's mind before Sam. Yes. Someone who removed everything that could impede a hostile takeover.

Best approach for getting in? Why. The simplest one, of course. If you can trick a person into voluntarily letting you in, you've overcome your biggest obstacle. Everything else is a chicken wing. Simple as it can be.

But, whoever violated this girl's mind didn't enslave it. Instead, they left it as easy pickings for anyone else who wanted to takeover. A girl tailor-made for Sam's lurid cravings. A honeypot? Maybe. But, if so, this is no chance meeting. And, if so, someone who knows Sam real well planted this tasty morsel for her greedy consumption.

A more plausible, and likely, explanation is that this is what it seems to be. A chance meeting. Yes. The girl is tailor-made for Sam's lurid cravings. A morsel who, like all Gollum, has fallen through the cracks and dropped completely off the radar. But, the girl is a morsel that is just like every other Gollum, and thus no more customized for Sam's tastes than any other Gollum would be. It is what it is. A pure coincidence, that Sam intends to exploit fully for her personal benefit and enjoyment.

Need more proof that theirs is a meeting by chance and not design? The Gollum herself provides the proof in spades.

Teeth and tongue blunt. No more razorblade smile. Sam terminates her kiss. The test drive is over. She stops wearing the girl. The girl's imprint kicks in. Sam wipes her mouth and turns her back to the Gollum. Intent on getting back to Chillingsworth.

The Gollum does something she should not be able to do. She shifts into overdrive, without stimms. The next impossible thing she does, impossible because Sam is the one who has imprinted her, is to attack Sam.

“Look out, Sam! Behind you!” Chillingsworth screams her warning as she draws her weapon.

But, the Gollum and Sam are too close together. She can’t get a clear shot. She tries to split the difference by rushing over. She’s too far away to help soon enough.

Sam is on her own. From Sam’s perspective, undriven things shift into slow motion then judder then freeze-frame. In point of fact, when the Gollum shifted into overdrive, Sam reflexively is no longer underdriven. Sam has her hands full. The Gollum is ferocious and relentless.

Ghosting would spoil the fun. Too close to draw a weapon. This will be a fist fight. Haven’t had one of those in a while. Goody! Goody!

Proof positive that this is a chance meeting. Because. If it were by design, no one would tip their hand this early on by having the Gollum try to Pearl Harbor me. They would have waited till a much more opportune moment arose for a sneak attack.

The Gollum stands toe to toe and lands some effective punches from the clinch. Sam, though, slows and then stuns the Gollum with a quick right. The Gollum remains in the pocket, but Sam lands frequently and does noticeable damage to her opponent’s face. Producing a nasty gash over the Gollum’s left eye.

How nasty? A very deep, six-inch slice. So deep that it exposes bone. Wounded, blood pouring down the leftside of her face, the Gollum fights with a renewed sense of urgency. She continues trading heavy shots, opening a facial cut of her own on Sam’s face with a stiff forearm strike. The bloody exchanges continue.

After trading some particularly heavy punches, Sam clinches up and proves to be the stronger fighter in close quarters. The Gollum doesn’t back down and mixes in some kicks, but Sam simply has the bigger output.

The Gollum creates some space, throwing an overhand right, followed by a vicious left hook, from the south paw stance. The Gollum knees start to land more accurately, and she mixes in a trip-takedown to get the fight to the ground. A series of elbow strikes and short punches forces Sam into a defensive mode. The Gollum desperately works for an armbar and then, failing that, focuses on dominant top positions to deliver a stream of punches. She’s dominating Sam, but she can’t get the lethal stoppage she obviously craves. Whoever wins this bloodbath, it doesn’t look like the loser is going to be walking away.

In spite of her top position. Raining down fists upon her prone opponent. The Gollum has an insurmountable problem. Sam steadfastly refuses to give up. You can’t break Sam mentally. The big girl is way too badass for that. As a human and as a faerie, Sam has been beaten to within an inch of extinction by exponentially better opponents. Sam has fought and lost to Goons!

Fighting off her back, Sam takes on the guise of a near-mythical creature. To the uninformed it would seem that Sam is employing some avant-garde version of Royce Gracie’s Brazilian jiu-jitsu. And they would be right.

Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. Portuguese pronunciation: ʒiw'ʒitsu. English: /dʒu:'dʒitsu:/. BJJ is a martial art, combat sport, and a self-defense system that focuses on grappling and especially ground fighting. The art was derived from the Japanese martial art of Kodokan judo which itself is derived from Japanese Jujutsu in the early 20th century.

It teaches that a smaller, weaker person can successfully defend against a bigger, stronger assailant by using leverage and proper technique – most notably by applying joint-locks and chokeholds to defeat the other person. BJJ training can be used for sport grappling tournaments gi and no-gi and mixed martial arts (MMA) competition or self-defense. Sparring (commonly referred to as “rolling”) and live drilling play a major role in training, and a premium is placed on performance, especially in competition, in relation to progress and ascension through its ranking system.

Sam throws a combination of vicious elbows, palm strikes, and knees, to turn the tide and reassert her dominance. She is not a one-trick pony. Sam does striking, grappling, and submissions, and she’s even been known to do her version of The Grey.

Taking the top position, Sam decides to get rowdy in the vein of “Rowdy” Ronda Rousey – the Olympic judoka gold medalist. She attempts her first armbar – a submission she used to win many an amateur bout when she competed in Judo tournaments in high school—and torques it.

The Gollum survives, escapes, and returns to her feet before dragging Sam to the ground. The Gollum then takes Sam’s back, but Sam again escapes. With them both back on their feet, both of them swinging for the fences, the Gollum throws a nice combination that concludes with a vicious uppercut. Sam judo tosses the Gollum to the ground, moves to the mount, takes back mount, and rains down punches.

At that point, Sam works the armbar again. It is deep, and this time, the Gollum has no chance for escape. All the while, the Gollum is flaying away at Sam with the long, sharp fingernails of her free hand. Ripping strips of flesh off of Sam’s legs. A sader, Sam cums from the pain.

As for the Gollum. After foaming at the mouth and grimacing from what is clearly an arm injury, the Gollum’s arm finally, and audibly, snaps. The limb is badly mangled.

One down, three to go.

Sam releases her hold. They stand. Sam switches from orthodox stance to south paw. The Gollum has only one good arm now. Jagged bones poking through the skin of the Gollum’s now useless left arm. A nasty complex fracture. Sam’s legs are a shredded bloody mess. She feeds off of the pain. The pain she inflicts and the pain inflicted upon her. This too is bad for the Gollum.

Feeding off of the residual from Sam’s kiss, the Gollum was able to shift into overdrive without stimms. That is wearing off. The latent booby-trap which, when sprung by the activation of Sam’s imprint, compelled the Gollum to attack her wearer the hyper effects of which are also wearing off.

The Gollum falls out of overdrive, abruptly. Too abruptly for a mortal’s physiology to adjust to properly and safely. Worse—The Gollum crashes hard. Further slamming her system. A system already compromised by injuries from the fight.

Sam follows suit and ceases to be undriven. The Gollum collapses, goes into shock, cardiac arrest, and dies on the spot from heart failure.

Freshly dead. The soul hasn't left the body yet.

Sam will not be denied. She administers emergency CPR. Nosferatu style. Her fingernails go her daggerous. She slices her forearm open lengthwise, purposefully nicking the main artery buried deep within. She presses the bright-red geyser up to the lips of the Gollum's open mouth.

Once a mortal has been "kissed," faerie blood becomes so much more than just blood. It becomes Ichoric, the so-called, nectar of the gods. In other words, it's the liquid stuff that damnations and resurrections are made of.

The Gollum death-reflexively drinks Sam's So-Sweet and resurrects. Her wounds begin to heal almost immediately. Breathing and heart beat fully restored. The girl's eyes open. She stands up with Sam's help. Sam's imprint restarts, this time with no adverse effects. The booby-trap must have been a one-time thing. The Gollum picks up her rat meal and walks off.

"Chickfight" takes on a whole nother meaning when you see a lethal altercation like this one transpire. "You fight like a girl" is not always an insult. In the case of these two gals, it takes on the pantheon of being the highest compliment that you can bestow upon a fighter.

"Looks like you didn't need my help after all."

"Good thing that I didn't."

Dame Chillingsworth holsters her pistol. The two woman head back over to the Dame's waiting luggage.

"So, you really want to be that filthy piece of shit?"

"Yes."

"That's disgusting."

"And your point being?"

"Nosferatu are not supposed to like being."

"Dirty."

"Exactly. We. Our kind. Are paragons of clean and pristine. Cleanliness is virtue to Lost."

"Nosferatu native to this world would disagree with you on that. Their normal state is akin to that of a Gollum's."

"Who cares what those things think. We're alive. They're corpses."

"They are also Nosferatu. And, whether you like it or not, they are just as undead as we are. So, stop being such a snob. It ill suits you. Besides, many a mundane of our world would argue that we too are nothing more than animate corpses masquerading as the living."

"I'm your elder. Respect me."

"I do. But. Denouncing your own undead kind simply because their lifestyle doesn't suit, is just plain mundane."

"You're accusing me of acting like food?!"

"You know it."

For a brief moment, the Dame shows her True Self – the Demon who hides within — Nosferatu - points and all. Ears point. Fingers lengthen. Teeth go jagged. Tongue goes killer. Blood-drinking fangs are unsheathed. Fingernails become daggerous. Saliva becomes venomous. A caustic venom, no less. Voided eyes – Black, empty pools of total despair – The Abyss in stereo. The moment passes. The Dame calms down. Fangs retract to less canine, “normal” eye-teeth. Her tongue, nails, ears, and the rest of her teeth blunt and, of course, shorten. Saliva neutralizes. Her eyes return. Fingers shorten to “normal” length. The Truth gives way to The Lie. Pretense.

“How could I stay mad at you?”

“You can’t.”

A large, enclosed, horse-drawn carriage stops on the street ahead of them. The coach is black and unmarked. Its sidewalk-side door swings open. A large man steps out. He is somberly dressed. A woman quickly follows. She walks toward the two Nosferatu. Dame Chillingsworth recognizes her immediately. It’s Queen Mary. Sam recognizes Mary for a very different reason. Therefore, Sam doesn’t recognize Mary as Queen Mary. At least, not at first.

Back at Sam’s old high school there was this exchange student who made a lasting impression on her. The student was named Mary, Mary Rousey.

Mary was only there for one semester. Rumor was that Mary was royalty, a princess, from an alternate Earth in a parallel universe. And, rumor was that Mary Rousey wasn’t even her real name.

The “Rowdy One.” Badass, cocky, trash-talking Mary Rousey—and this girl could deliver like Imo’s Pizza. If you only had a set of DDs, you’d be perfect. Cause, I’m just not feeling that training bra of yours. Of course, if you’re into tiny tits on a chick, she’s a dream. Different strokes for different folks.

Back then in school when I was mortal, I had the hot rocks for her, but it wasn’t sexual. Nope. I was straight when I was food. Only got into girls when I got turned. The first time that I saw her fight in the school gym in an MMA tourney. WOW!!!

The terrifyingly delicious thing about Rousey wasn’t her supreme athletic ability, her balance, or her insane knack for maintaining grappling control in a fight. The one thing that set Rousey apart from all other women in the sport save for perhaps Cristiane “Cyborg” Santos was her killer instinct and her utter lack of remorse for her opponents.

If you fought Rousey, she was going to get you in an armbar at some point in the fight. It was a certainty.

And if you did not tap once she had that armbar applied, she would gladly break your arm. I saw it against Julia Budd, and I saw it that night against Miesha Tate. If you didn’t have the intelligence to tap out, or if you thought that it was a better idea to be tough than to submit when she gave you the chance, she would mangle your limb.

If she had stayed in the sport and gone pro, Rousey could have ultimately done what Gina Carano couldn’t and became the first true enduring female mixed martial arts star. She had the looks and the verbal ability, but she also had the killer instinct that Carano was missing. She was a superstar in the making. Too bad she quit. Now, I have the chance to ask her why.

That's when Sam notices other very large, somber-dressed men and women moving toward them. Some came out of Mary's coach. Others from another coach which has stopped on the street behind them.

Security keeps a respectful distance. Close, but not too close. The queen walks up to Sam and the Dame. She's smiling broadly. Sam notices the rock on the queen's finger, and finally puts two and two together. Rarely has Sam been so uncharacteristically dense before.

Looks like I got my answer without having to ask it. She's got to be the queen. I've heard about that diamond on her finger. The famous Targaryen diamond. Also known as The Game of Thrones. Yep. She's that Queen Mary.

As the Funkasaurus would say: "Funkateers don't get worried. We good y'all! You hear me! So funk it! Don't trip on what hear! Go by what cha know! Ya dig!"

"Long time no see. And, you're with a friend who is known to me."

Dame Chillingsworth bows politely. Then blushes as she realizes that the queen is speaking to Sam and not to her. Sam notices the fopah and smiles accordingly.

The queen extends her hand, the one with the ring. Ring finger raised ever so slightly. Never breaking eye contact, Sam bows deeply. Kisses her ring. Then shakes the queen's hand.

"You may speak, Miss Phillips."

"Thank you, Your Majesty."

"My husband, the king, is Your Majesty. I'm Your Highness. And, that old, fat, tiresome Cardinal Brodus is Your Eminence. He's back in my coach fanning himself. You'd think the Church could have sent a yummy hunk instead as their representative. Someone. Like. That handsome young Father Jeff. His urbane company and witty repartee really spoiled me. Such a dandy. Too bad he had to return to his parish." Then, completely out of the blue: "Of course, my haters call me Crazy, Crazy Mary."

There's that awkward silence that follows. A pregnancy that's shattered by the audacity of Sam's following statement.

"Actually. Your Highness is for Prince and Princesses. Your Majesty is for Kings and Queens. Therefore, I was correct in my original salutation." Dame Chillingsworth's jaw drops. Sam continues chatting away. Full-tilt with her discourse as if she were talking to someone who is not Monarch, let alone an insane one with a well-deserved and extremely bloody reputation. "Most Majesties have been Royal Highnesses. But. Most royal Highnesses will not become Majesties. You beat the odds. You were a royal Highness when you matriculated through my high school. And, now you are Your Majesty. Bravo, Your Majesty."

Holy shit! Now, she's gone and done it! This is not going to end well!

Dame Chillingsworth is wrong. Like so many people, she judges Mary as unstable and irrational. Prone to violent fugues. When that is only part of the picture. You can't always judge a book by its cover. Not to mention, an entire thesis by a portion of the prose.

The queen shocks the Dame by merely smiling in response to Sam's correction of her. And, when she finally does answer. It's with something very cute and decidedly coy.

“Thanks so much, Miss Phillips. Being a retired librarian I would expect no less from you. I will expect you and your lady friend at dinner tonight. I will send a coach by later to pick you up.”

Queen Mary does an about-face and walks back over to her coach.

“Don’t you need our address?”

“We know where to find you,” Queen Mary yells over her shoulder. When she gets back in her coach, the rest of her entourage saddles up, so to speak.

Sam and the Dame wait for the coaches to speed off before they resume their leisurely stroll back to Sam’s ROOM.

Back in the clutches of someone else’s gameplay. Shit! Shit! Shit! Will it ever end?! I’m on a fucking vacation and I’m fucking retired, and they’re still coming out of the muther fuckin’ woodwork!

“Boy can I pick ‘em or what,” Sam acknowledges. The sheer frustration palatable in her voice.

“As in?”

“I was so sure that my luck had changed. Looks like the only person I was fooling was myself.”

“Retired and vacationing. Yet they just won’t leave you alone to frolic. Tired of being the pawn in someone else’s gameplay – diluting your fun, so to speak. Too much sharing.”

“Am I that obvious?”

“You have to ask?”

“Nope. I guess not. I was just. Never mind, I’ve talked enough.”

Insert foot into mouth.

“You haven’t asked me where I know Queen Mary from.” The Dame shifts gears. She’s curious about the connection between Queen Mary and Sam. It obviously doesn’t involve business. And The Dame has seen the dossier on Queen Mary’s known associates and Sam is not one of them.

“The way you bowed to Her Majesty indicated that you know her in the context of some formal capacity. I’d guess work. I, on the other hand, know her informally—from school. Then again, you could tell that I didn’t know her formally, from the way I bowed and kissed her ring. Until now, I didn’t know she was Crazy Queen Mary. Sure I’ve heard about Haven’s crazy queen. Who hasn’t? But. In spite of anecdotal information. I just never made the connection between the queen I’d heard about in the here and now and the girl I knew back in the day in school. Talk about dense.”

I hope my best poker face doesn’t let you know how taken back I am by that observation of yours. Let alone your admission of fallibility.

“Excellent read.” The Dame is as casual as she can be with her counter.

“Why thank you, milady.” Sam curtsies as she teases The Dame.

“Impress me further. Please. Educate.”

“You don’t know her well, but well enough to be shocked when she only acknowledged you in passing. You’re not used to that. And it’s more than just because you’re an elder and a Nosferatu and nobility in your own right. You’re British. So. Not surprisingly. The only Queen in your life is The Queen of England. Your body language in Queen Mary’s presence, subtle though it may be, says ‘Queen Mary, you are a queen, but you’re not The Queen.’”

“Bravo.”

“Thank you again.”

“You’re good. Very good, indeed. It’s a wonder why you waste your time, deluding yourself into thinking that they the amorphous “they” would ever leave you alone to frolic for very long. You want to degrade and humiliate yourself, and there are so many better uses for your talents.”

“Well. We all have our faults. One of mine is chasing rainbows, from time to time. Most of the time, I’m quite level headed – the pragmatist winning over the dreamer in me.”

“You’re a very sick person, indeed. A total degenerate. If your idea of a fantasy vacation is wallowing in filth as a Gollum.”

“I’ve done worse. And I’ve been worse. Yes I’m a very sick person. Yes I’m a total degenerate. And, yes. I as a Gollum or worse would be heaven to me. What’s the point of the recriminations? You’re still gonna fuck me in the end. Truth be told, you’d fuck me dirty.”

“That’s disgusting.”

“Whatever.”

Again, Chillingsworth can’t stay mad at the girl. The girl is just too capable a companion for that. In the end, you feel compelled to forgive her. Her and her audacity. It’s as if you keep catching her up to financial chicanery with your money, and each time you just say, “Oh well.”

So, The Dame changes the subject to something neutral. Back to mindless chit-chat and in doing so, she gains valuable insight into what makes the girl tick.

“That was a good fight.”

“The Gollum is a better fighter than me. Whoever she used to be, she’s Olympic caliber.”

“Better fighter? You beat her. You broke her arm.”

“Because she was fucked up from the git-go. Brain burned and freeze dried. But. If she were. Sober. Whole. In her right mind. She’d beat me. Her being the better technician. In a UFC match, in the cage, under unified rules, she’d beat me. In Pride FC fighting championships, me being the bigger, stronger girl – foot stomps, soccer kicks, strikes to any part of a downed opponent including head shots allowed, and it’s in a boxing ring – I’d have the edge. That’s closer to a streetfight where her being the superior mat technician would be negated. Of course, a real streetfight is between two people with guns and no rules, where winning is all that matters. No ten-point must system, no split decisions, no judges, no ref, none of that bullshit. You win, you live. You lose, you die. A draw being when both combatants survive or they both die.”

No egotism, whatsoever. Out of habit. You downplay your formidable skills. Out of habit. In a fight, you deceive opponents into underestimating you, to their misfortune. Let’s see how crafty you really are.

“So, she was feeding off of your residuals, which explains how she could overdrive without stimms.”

“That and the rush she got when the booby-trap in her mind got sprung.”

“No matter how good stimms get, though, you can always tell when it’s not a natural drive. It was obvious from the way that she moved that she was not on stimms.”

“Aesthetics aside. They’re good enough to get the job done. I used to kill gods when I was food.”

Not bragging. Just a simple statement of fact.

“On residuals and rush. She couldn’t ghost, though. So. You didn’t ghost, to keep it interesting. Too close to draw a weapon. So you had a good ole-fashioned slobberknocker. You’ve fought Goons, haven’t you?”

Although I have seen an ace gunman draw a pistol with bad intentions at knife range. When close was too close. Yet he pulled it off with aplomb. Are you that good with a gun, Miss Phillips?

To know enough to ask that question gives Sam insight into what makes The Dame tick. An older Nosferatu who is not too smug to be unaware of the ways of those not of her kind. She’s very old and yet very modern. The way she drew and held her gun reeked of someone who is well-versed in the use of firearms. She’s obviously not a pro, but she’s a talented amateur who has been instructed by pros. The pros are likely the security detail she must put up with having when she’s on the job. Security she sheds whenever she can get away with it.

“Fought and lost to them. At least in hand-to-hand that is. In controlled situations, of course.”

“Competitions – fighting tournaments?”

“Yes. Cage, ring, whatever, they get their hands on you and you’ll lose. It’s good to experience loss. It’s good to go in the deep end of the pool and know you’re going to drown.”

“What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger.”

“Exactly. Defeat. It makes you a better fighter. Everybody loses, from time to time, if they continue fighting. There’s always someone better. Fight long enough and often enough and you will meet that person. It’s what you learn from your defeats that matters. I’ve always learned more from my losses than my wins. In fact, it’s my losses that taught me how to win.”

She’s speaking metaphorically and literally, at the same time. Elusive. Shadowy. Yet, illuminating, at the same time. The way she fights is an extension of her personal philosophy of life. Geez. I’d love to see her handle a gun. I bet it’s a revelation.

“Hide your shortcomings. Emphasize your strengths.”

“You have to do more than just hide them. We all have them. Limitations, that is. Limitations are wonderful things. Yet, most of us are so ashamed of our shortcomings that we don’t take the time to learn from them. They hold secrets. They’re keys to victory in battle. Know your opponent’s limitations, and you know how to defeat them. Know your own limitations, and you know how you can be defeated. Better yet. You can aggressively embrace your shortcomings. Turn them into strengths.”

“Case in point?”

“I used to loath being hunted. Now, I carve it.”

I bet you do. As such. In many ways you remind me of Gene Tunney. Tunney and Joe Louis were probably the greatest technical heavyweights of all time.

Well-read. Intellectual. A thinking man’s fighter. A forgotten boxer who actually invented the style many people thought was made by Muhammad Ali. Gene Tunney — “The Fighting Marine” — was an Irish New Yorker who went on to be one of only two undisputed boxers who retired with the heavyweight title. His style was to carry his hands low, study his opponent, dominate with the jab, and use quick footwork to get out of the way. Tunney also used to talk to his opponents in the ring.

Louis was the great offensive technician while Tunney was the other, defensive side of the sweet science. However, I think a prime Dempsey would have KO’s both of them. The Original Badass - brutal, no-nonsense Jack “The Manassa Mauler” Dempsey. Dempsey was as badass as you can get. As such. In most ways you remind me of Dempsey.

I wager that you never tip your hand. So that when you fight someone or something or someplace, for real, that opposition cannot have foreknowledge of what you can really do in The Killing.

“Ever been in a fair fight?”

Sam’s response is golden.

“You shouldn’t use words that I don’t understand.”

Not to be outdone. The Dame delivers a game changing quip, or so she thinks.

“I think that I’m falling for you.”

Sam smiles. There’s a look in Sam’s eyes.

“You shouldn’t use words that you don’t understand.”

The smile and the look, The Dame has only seen once before. The Dame reads in-between the lines and involuntarily shudders. Once before, when she was very young, she professed her love to a man. A very handsome man. A very dashing man. He looked very young. He looked like he and she were the same age.

But. He was a very Old Thing, an Oldest god. And he flashed the same smile and had the same look in his eyes that Sam just expressed. What makes The Dame shudder is that she can tell from their brief exchange that Sam, who is much younger than her, sees her as the younger thing that happens to be older chronologically. She knows this to be true because what Sam just said to her is word for word what that Oldest god said to her in response to her admission of romantic intentions those eons ago.

An. Abomination. That’s what you are. No wonder you are so. That explains why someone as young as you is so metaphysically Old. Yes. Yes. Yes. Metaphysically speaking. A very, very, very Old Thing, an Oldest – In the guise of a very young woman. Easily, mistaken for one of Them, in the right situation. And yet. Me. Being your elder, chronologically. You appropriately defer to me.

“I’m much older than you. Yet, you see me as the younger thing.”

“Yes. No offense meant.”

What a prize possession you must be for far too many people.

“No offense taken.”

“Good. I’m really looking forward to fucking you. And I don’t want anything to come between us that might derail that interlude.”

“Yet, you argue with me. Accuse me of being a bigot.”

“Yes. We disagree. Yes. You are a bigot. I tell it like it is. I am what I am. When I woo someone I don’t white lie to them.”

“So you don’t coo, ever?”

“No. I don’t sugarcoat to get into someone’s bed.”

The dirty you. You as Gollum. That strung-out wreck of a woman is the real you. It’s not a pretense that you assume. The here and now. Sexy and severe. This clean and pristine you is also the real you. I’ll bet there’s a plain version of you too. Shrew and severe. All of them sick, perverted, and homicidal. A killer that is “unclean” even for our kind. The evil that walks among us.

They step into an archway that affords an open courtyard. In the center of the courtyard is a short, squat redoubt. Much taller buildings, one shoved up against the other, form the walls of the architectural space.

“That is not dead which can eternal lie. And with strange eons even death may die.”

The voice in Sam’s head stops her dead in her tracks. The Dame follows suit without asking why.

“H.P. Lovecraft,” Sam utters under her breath to the Dame. It’s the name of the author who penned the prose that she just heard in her head. It’s also code to The Dame. Something any elite security detail would have drilled into their high-echelon charge.

The Dame makes an arcane gesture with her hands and draws her weapon. She holds her pistol using an orthodox two-handed grip. She turns around—her back facing Sam’s. They are walking into an ambush. She is to keep their attackers off of Sam’s back. Sam will take care of the rest. The Dame takes a deep breath. Sam has yet to draw a weapon.

“Ready?” Sam asks, rhetorically. As if she’s The GOAT (Greatest Of All Times).

“Ready,” The Dame answers, rhetorically. The nervousness, intermixed with excitement, is palatable in her voice.

Both of them reflexively ghost and cease to be underdriven as they step out of the archway into the courtyard. Moving slowly toward the keep at the center. A very measured pace. Thick as strawberry jam. You can cut the tension with a knife. The Dame’s luggage follows at a safe distance. Then again, the luggage isn’t in any real danger. The two Nosferatu are the targets.

A neophyte would have dictated that they spook to within proximity of the keep. That would prove to be a huge mistake born of inexperience.

Ground level. Shapes flicker about, here and there. They are surrounded. If they had spooked, wrong tactic – wrong situation—they would have been easily destroyed. Why?

Because. As aforementioned, anytime you use the supernatural, you open yourself up to being compromised, exploited, and maybe even destroyed. Ghosting and being undriven are the safest. Spooking without a device – line-of-sight teleportation using dead reckoning – is at best problematic. Guess wrong and part of you might end up embedded in a floor, a wall, the ground, etc.—a potentially deadly situation for a human. Easy pickings for your enemy, whether you’re mundane or supernatural.

Plus. In this situation. If they had spooked, it’s obvious where they would materialize. All the enemy had to do was concentrate their fire on that event the arrival, and the Nosferatu would have been toast.

The choice Sam has made for them is the most conservative and the most defensible. The enemy must bring it, leaving the enemy vulnerable to counterattack.

An elder, very old and thus very powerful, Dame Chillingsworth is understandably experiencing the expected mix of emotions. Mainly fear. The fear of dying and not coming back. Real dying. Death without resurrection.

Sam on the other hand, a sader and totally insane, is experiencing elation. Fear is not even on the menu, let alone on her plate. It’s been a long time, too damn long, since she’s gotten the chance to butcher legally on this scale with firearms – self-defense, not cold-bloodied murder. And, she plans to make the most of it—BITCH RAGE RAWR!!~~**

“The usual arrangement? I don’t help you with yours and you leave me alone with mine?”

Yes.

“Additional? Or. Will those already in the courtyard suffice?”

They’ll suffice. You can have the rest.

“Including the rooftop snipers?”

Yes. Yes. Yes. Including the snipers on the rooftops. Stop nagging. We might as well be married.

Sam wishes no distraction from the anticipation of the two-pistol gunplay that she’s about to unleash. Gunplay that always involves the alternate, highly frowned upon by gun purists, single-handed grip. A pistol per hand. Two pistols, either holstered or drawn and firing, look great in the movies. Very theatrical. Very impractical. Unless, the shooter is for real and not for show.

“Any reinforcements who beam in will end up in my maw – eaten whole.”

This time, Sam doesn’t bother chastising ROOM about this further nagging. ROOM is in one of those “beat a very dead horse” moods.

Rooftop snipers – six?

“You guessed it.”

At least two will be minding the archway. Insurance if we decide foolishly to egress.

“Yes.”

Four cloaked in the courtyard, encased in armor from head to toe?

“You’re two for two, so far. Although, that one is a gimme since you did see their flickers. And, thus knew their number and kit, as aforementioned. They mean to destroy you, sure as shootin.”

Confirmed MACOs, the warriors du jour of the United Nations, not Bene Gesserit security types?

“Yes.”

Tasty. Very. Tasty.

In her mind’s eye. Sam has already seen the battle. Déjà vu. Actually doing it will be nothing more than an afterthought. Hardly, worth doing.

Two in front, spread wide and staggered to avoid getting caught in their own crossfire. The other two are behind, spread likewise. I’m the pro. Ergo, one of the flankers will come around on my presumed blindside. But, unfortunately for them, I use two pistols, not one, and I shoot equally well with both hands while lethally engaging multiple targets simultaneously. I’ll kill the rounder as he attempts to nine-o’clock me and, at the same time, I’ll take out the two in front of me at the eleven-o’clock and two-o’clock positions. The Dame will be one-on-one with the remaining lurker at the six-o’clock. Even if the lurker takes her out off the bat, and she proves to be nothing more than just jailbait, the time he expends doing her, no matter how brief, will be enough of a delay for me to demise him as well.

“Sometimes. You are the point of the spear.”

“Sometimes. Allah The Great Benefactor is kind and merciful,” Sam utters this phrase to the Dame from the MU‘ALLAQĀT in Classical Arabic. The ancient tongue that is ROOM’s native language. It is also the language of The Prophet, Muhammad.

A language that is quite familiar to Dame Chillingsworth. The Nosferatu was present when Muhammad ascended into Heaven escorted by Angels.

Fond remembrances of The Isra and Miraj. So. Upon hearing this famous quotation spoken in “The Ancient Most Holy of Tongues,” The Dame holsters her weapon and stands down. Nostalgia is a helluva drug.

Arabic (العربية) al-‘arabīyyah or عربي/عربي (‘arabī) being a name applied to the descendants of the Classical Arabic language of the 6th century CE.

Classical Arabic (CA), also known as Qur’anic or Koranic Arabic, is the form of the Arabic language used in literary texts from Umayyad and Abbasid times (7th to 9th centuries). It is based on the Medieval dialects of Arab tribes. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is the direct descendant used today throughout the Arab World in writing and in formal speaking, for example, prepared speeches, some radio broadcasts, and non-entertaining content. While the lexis and stylistics of Modern Standard Arabic are different from Classical Arabic, the morphology and syntax have remained basically unchanged (though MSA uses a subset of the syntactic structures available in CA). The vernacular dialects, however, have changed more dramatically. In the Arab world, little distinction is made between CA and MSA, and both are normally called al-Fuṣḥā (الفصحى) in Arabic, meaning “the clearly spoken one” or the “language of eloquence.”

Because the Qur'an is written in Classical Arabic, the language is considered by most Muslims to be sacred. It is mostly the language in which Muslims recite their prayers, regardless of what language they use in everyday life.

The Isra and Mi'raj (Arabic: الإسراء والمعراج, al-'Isrā' wal-Mi'rāj), are the two parts of a Night Journey that, according to Islamic tradition, the Islamic prophet Muhammad took during a single night around the year 621. It has been described as both a physical and spiritual journey. A brief sketch of the story is in sura (chapter) 17 Al-Isra of the Qur'an, and other details come from the Hadith, supplemental writings about the life of Muhammad.

In the journey, Muhammad travels on the steed Buraq to "the farthest mosque" where he leads other prophets in prayer. He then ascends to Heaven where he speaks to God, who gives Muhammad instructions to take back to the Faithful on Earth about the number of times to offer prayers each day.

According to traditions, the Journey is associated with the Lailat al Miraj, as one of the most significant events in the Islamic calendar. Traditions that The Dame can bear witness to as fact.

Change of plans. A woman's prerogative. Seconding The Dame. Neither of Sam's pistols loads into her waiting hands. Nor, will they. Not today. And, being of like mind, Sam and The Dame become material and underdriven, from a mortal perspective.

Instead of wading into a fray, that she's already won in her mind. Sam has chosen to opt out, as if she were a god as old as The Dame in years. Now, it's between the MACOs and The ROOM.

"You can't kill what's not your creation," Sam invokes in conversational Arabic. This time, she speaks loud enough for the MACOs to hear.

Of all of the scenarios that the MACOs were made privy to during their pre-mission brief. Of all the "what ifs" that they might face on their op. The girl Sam is "claiming" that they the MACOs are facing the worst case. Maybe she's "only" bluffing. Maybe the ROOM is "only" assuming the center building of the courtyard. Maybe she doesn't have ROOM, at her beck and call, here. Maybe she doesn't have a ROOM, at all. To know for sure, they will have to call her bluff—forcing her hand.

What to do. What to do. Bene Gesserit ambush versus a ROOM's trap. It's not so much about winning as it is about the price you're willing to pay to secure that victory. It's not so much about losing as it is about the price you're willing to pay to lose.

The Dame gestures with her hand and her luggage catches up posthaste. She turns round. The two women resume their leisurely pace toward the "building" at the center of the "open" courtyard.

Going through life as a "tall, slim, peroxide-blonde" woman is even better than it looks, according to British columnist Samantha Brick, who became the focus of criticism and ridicule—born out of the pettiness that is the envy of "lesser" women and men—for writing that her life as a beautiful woman was never especially difficult, and that it was quite exquisite most of the time. From firsthand experience. The Dame could knowingly add that the same can be said of a tall, slim brunette who's raven-haired. This, of course, is one of those exquisite times. An Old Thing, one of The Oldest in Creation, A ROOM, doing the implicit bidding of two tall, slim, beautiful women.

Sam's ROOM, anyone's ROOM, is not a starship. Nor is it a TARDIS. It's something else, entirely. ROOMS are the most powerful, most coveted, and oldest "known" Objects in the Motel, and therefore in Creation. Whoever "owns" a ROOM becomes the Occupant of that ROOM and therefore the Prime Object of that ROOM.

All ROOMs have a number. Her ROOM's number is 7. Additionally, her ROOM is named. Its name being one of the First Names. Melancholia. This ROOM is one of the Original Ten. Not one of the later post-Creation additions to the Motel. One of the first ten rooms of the first architectural structure in all of Creation.

Melancholia is also the name of the planet on the opposite side of the sun which shares this Earth's orbit. Every so often, in violation of orbit mechanics, it inexplicably abandons its opposing orbit and comes dangerously close to this Earth. A deviation that has never corresponded to the presence of a ROOM on this planet, until now. As if Melancholia, the ROOM, is confirming Sam's invocation by influencing It/Her namesake.

Don't be misled by the SyFy miniseries "The Lost Room." The Lost Room is a science fiction television miniseries that aired on the Sci Fi Channel in the United States. The series revolves around the titular room and some of the everyday items from that room which possess unusual powers. The show's protagonist, Joe Miller, is searching for these objects to rescue his daughter, Anna, who has disappeared inside the Room. Once a typical room at a 1960s motel along U.S. Route 66, the Lost Room has existed outside of normal time and space since 1961, when what is only referred to as "the Event" took place.

Cast and characters for The Lost Room?

Peter Krause as Detective Joe Miller – A Pittsburgh detective who stumbles upon the existence of the Room. When his daughter becomes lost inside the Room, Joe sets out to get her back by using the Key to track down other Objects.

Elle Fanning as Anna Miller – Joe's 8-year-old daughter. Her disappearance is seen by others as a probable family abduction by Joe in an ongoing child custody battle with his unseen ex-wife, Vanessa.

Chris Bauer as Detective Lou Destefano – Joe's partner, whose murder in the story is blamed on Joe.

April Grace as Detective Lee Bridgewater – Joe's friend at the police department. She is trying to clear Joe's name, and in so doing slowly discovers the powers held by the Room and its Objects.

Dennis Christopher as Dr. Martin Ruber – A forensic scientist who works with Joe and who becomes obsessed with the Objects, going as far as killing in an attempt to get the Key. Through his obsession, he learns of and joins the Order of the Reunification, a cabal that believes the Objects are pieces of God and will allow direct communication with God if reunited as they were at the time of the Event. By the end of the series, Ruber believes he has become the Prophet of the Objects after having a vision while staring at the Polaroid Object.

Julianna Margulies as Jennifer Bloom – A member of the Legion, another cabal dedicated to finding all of the Objects and hiding them for the protection of humanity. Jennifer tries to warn Joe of the inherent danger of the Room and the Objects therein. Her brother, Drew, became

obsessed with the Objects, and Jennifer believes that something in Room 9 of the Motel “destroyed” him.

Kevin Pollak as Karl Kreutzfeld – A former member of the Legion and collector of Objects. He owns a chain of dry-cleaning stores and several pawnshops that he uses to acquire Objects. Kreutzfeld claims to be searching for the Glass Eye to cure his son Isaac’s leukemia. Alternately an ally and an enemy to Joe.

Peter Jacobson as Wally Jabrowski – A man who has the Bus Ticket and is effectively a drifter. He has extensive knowledge about the Objects and their history.

Ewen Bremner as Harold Stritzke – A voyeur who inherited the Comb from his aunt Barbara, a member of the Collectors. He has become very paranoid after being pursued by the Order and others who want his Object for themselves.

Roger Bart as Howard “The Weasel” Montague – A former philosophy professor turned small-time criminal. He’s an obsessed collector of Objects who charts the Objects’ relations to one another and introduces the idea of the Prime Object.

Chris McCarty as Milton Vrang – A former member of a Cabal and only living burn victim of the Pen. He provides valuable and secret information to Dr. Martin Ruber on the mysterious and dangerous world of Objects and Object Seekers.

Margaret Cho as Suzie Kang – A tough, chain-smoking, independent operator who works as an Object tracker, selling information about the locations of the Room’s Objects. She never touches them, as she recognizes the dangers that the Objects carry. Suzie runs her Object-tracking business out of the back of her mother’s dry-cleaning business. She charges a fortune for the information.

Jason Antoon as The Sood – A seedy, Las Vegas-based dealer of Object “Science” – pictures, videos, and artifacts relating to Objects – but never Objects themselves.

Jason Douglas as Anthony – The intimidating bodyguard, hitman, and head of Kreutzfeld’s personal Secret Service-style security team.

Hugo Perez as Pumeet – The Sood’s ubiquitous manservant and bodyguard.

Tim Guinee as The Occupant, formerly Eddie McCleister – The Occupant was removed from time and space during The Event that made the Lost Room, leaving only his personal belongings as “Objects.” Eddie no longer exists in time and there is no memory of his ever doing so, as even his wife has no recollection of him. He resides in a sanitarium under the name “John Doe” until found by Joe. Like the objects, he does not age, and cannot be damaged hurt in any way, so he himself is essentially one of the objects.

Jorge Pallo as Ignacio “Iggy” Loca – Survivor of the pawn shop murders, temporarily holder of the Key, hands it to detective Miller when dying.

Plot for The Lost Room?

The Room. The Room is the nonexistent Room 10 at the abandoned Sunshine Motel outside of Gallup, New Mexico. At 1:20:44 p.m. on May 4, 1961, something happened at the site of the Room that erased it and all its contents. This is referred to as “the Event” or “the Incident,” and is thought to be the reason for the unusual properties of the Room and the Objects from within it. At the time of the Event, the motel was in serviceable condition, holding ten rooms before the

event and only nine afterwards. One of the Objects, the undeveloped Polaroid picture, allows a person to view the tenth room as it was at the time of the Event by standing at its current vacant location at the Sunshine Motel ruins.

The Room can be accessed only by whoever has the Key – the motel room’s room key. The Key will open any hinged door with a pin tumbler lock anywhere in the world, turning the door into a portal accessing the Room regardless of where that door would normally open. As Joe Miller sees on the surveillance tape, while the door that originates the portal is open, it still appears closed to the observer on the other side of that door. When exiting the Room the door opens not necessarily to the original place of entry, but to any room the holder of the Key has in mind, or to a random room if the user does not focus. To reach a specific room the user must have a clear picture of the room’s door and the area around it. The “Lost” Room thus serves as a means of instant travel between similar doors anywhere on Earth. Hinged doors with types of locks other than a tumbler lock or with no lock at all, sliding doors and rotating doors cannot be used to access the Room.

The holder of the Key can bring other people into the Room, but to exit they must leave together or the key-holder must let the others out of the room while remaining behind, since the Room “resets” whenever the door is opened from the outside using the key: everything is restored the way it was originally, minus any Objects outside the Room. If something from outside the Room including a person is left in it when the holder of the Key leaves, it disappears. If Objects are left in the Room, they return to their original position at the moment of the Event when the Room resets. A benefit of this is that an Object may be retrieved from something within which it may be encased or hidden such as a safe by leaving whatever the Object is in inside the Room and resetting it. This can also let someone distinguish a real Object from fakes, since the fakes disappear.

Objects, when outside the Room, possess special powers and are indestructible. When inside the Room, the Objects lose their special properties and can be destroyed. However, according to the Occupant, a new Object will take the destroyed Object’s place, a phenomenon he refers to as the Law of Conservation of Objects. The Occupant states that there are many Rooms, and so any non-Object left in the Room does not disappear, but exists in a different instance of the Room. The reset, in turn, represents a confluence of these Rooms, allowing the Occupant the only Object capable of consciously existing during a reset to retrieve things lost during a reset, provided he has a clear idea of what he wishes to retrieve.

The Event. The Event is a shorthand term given to the moment in time that the Lost Room was created. It occurred at 1:20:44 p.m. on May 4, 1961, and erased the room and all of its contents from history. The reason behind this and the ultimate purpose of the Objects is yet unknown, though two primary hypotheses have been postulated. Even the man occupying the room at the time of the event doesn’t seem to know what happened, so the truth remains a mystery. Both hypotheses essentially lead to the same conclusion, but attribute the event to different causes.

One faction, the Order of the Reunification, operates under the belief that the Objects are pieces of God’s mind or body God having presumably died or been killed somehow and that reuniting them will allow them to communicate with God. More extreme versions of this view hold that reuniting the Objects will turn one into God or at least give that person God-like powers. Martin Ruber purports that the Occupant confirmed this particular theory for him in a vision, making him the self-proclaimed “Prophet of the Objects,” but his near-death state from

dehydration and heat exhaustion at the time casts doubt on his claims. Additionally, the Occupant himself shows no knowledge of the circumstances behind the event. The Deck of Cards, which gives one who is exposed to it a vision of the events during the Collectors' failed attempt to use the objects on Room 9 of the hotel, may be the source of their beliefs, as it is used in their rituals.

Another though not necessarily contradictory view of the phenomenon suggests that reality was somehow shattered at the location of the Room, thus separating it and everything in it from time and giving its contents metaphysical abilities. Should the items be collected and returned to the room by an individual, that person would then have complete control over reality. This theory works under the assumption that the one gathering the objects has the knowledge to utilize them properly. Since the Objects are just considered tools, they would do no good if the user were unaware of their paranormal functions.

The Objects. Main article: Objects from The Lost Room. The Objects are powerful artifacts and consist of roughly 100 everyday items one would expect to find in an occupied motel room in the 1960s. They are indestructible except when inside the Room and possess various other-worldly powers when taken outside the Lost Room, but do not work within the Room itself. According to the Occupant, when an object is destroyed within the room, another object takes its place. Whether the new object takes the former's properties partially or totally is unknown. Various characters repeatedly put forth the opinion that, over time, Objects lead to something akin to bad karma or bad luck for their owners. All of the items including the occupant attract to one another, wanting to come together. The Occupant states that the objects are aware of each other, constantly sending out pings to each other and that for a living mind this is torture.

The Cabals. Many Object-seekers have organized themselves into groups, known as "cabals." Wars between cabals are mentioned in the series. There are at least three cabals: The Collectors, The Legion, and The Order of the Reunification.

The Collectors—The original group of Object-seekers formed sometime after the Event. Led by Arlene Conroy, the manager of the Sunshine Motel, most of the Collectors were killed or driven insane after the disaster in Room 9 in 1966. The survivors hid their most important Objects in a place called "The Collector's Vault," buried in a fallout shelter beneath an abandoned prison.

The Legion—A cabal dedicated to collecting the Objects and stopping them from causing more harm. They claim to follow an established set of rules, including that they never kill in order to acquire the Objects, although this rule is sometimes put to the test.

The Order of the Reunification—Also referred to as "The Order" or "The New Religion"—They believe that the Objects are pieces of God and must be reunited. Once so restored, members of the Order would be able to communicate with God for the first time in human history. Unlike the Legion, The Order has no qualms about killing.

In real life. The Event that created the Motel and its Original Objects was Creation Itself. There are many ways to access a ROOM. You can do so via a door—freestanding or otherwise, a closet, an archway, etc. There are restrictions, of course, but none of them are depicted in The Lost Room miniseries. When Sam and The Dame stepped through the archway that accessed the courtyard, they stepped into The ROOM. No hinged door with a pin tumbler lock applied. Only a ROOM can reset itself, and when it does so all of its occupants are "consumed" by the ROOM,

including the Occupant if present. The disposition of the consumed is according to the purview of the ROOM on a case by case basis.

Sam's ROOM encompasses the open courtyard, everything within the courtyard, and everything that defines the courtyard – including the rooftops of the “defining” buildings. Yet, ROOM is exclusive of the courtyard, everything within the courtyard, and the facing wall and rooftop of each surrounding building that “defines” architecturally speaking the courtyard itself. When the ROOM “leaves,” everything that it now assumes the guise of will still be there. Only the ROOM will be “gone,” so to speak. Although, technically speaking, since a ROOM exists outside of the normal space-time continuum, ROOM was never here in the first place.

In this specific case. When an occupant of the ROOM walks across the courtyard into the center building through the front door of said building; they are stepping from one room into another of the ROOM. In other words, the occupants are not actually walking through the courtyard or going inside of that center building. Because they are inside of the ROOM.

As aforementioned. The courtyard and the building are external exclusive to the ROOM. Confused? Everything clear as mud? Mathematical equations which attempt to describe ROOM mechanics are just that, “attempts.” Any Object, especially a ROOM, is a physicist's nightmare or wet dream, depending upon the physicist in question, and they are a Creationist's cream. Not to mention that Objects are the “finger poke in the eye” of every atheist and agnostic.

The MACOs really don't have a choice in the matter. They're here to take Sam out, and anyone who is with her becomes collateral damage. The MACOs have no qualms whatsoever about gunning down innocent bystanders. They go radio silent and assume set point. They are past the point of no return. Mindful of crossfire. Shoulder-firing their phaser rifles, the Space Marines commence their attack. The ROOM resets.

The rooftop snipers are disappeared – eaten. The ground-level troops meet the same fate, as do any reinforcements who are beamed in. The battle is anticlimactic. The MACOs and their deaths reduced to the inconsequential – the away team and five reinforcements – fifteen total. Ruff justice.

Like the MACOs, Sam and The Dame are also consumed. But, from their the Nosferatu perspective, nothing happens. No harm coming to either of the two Lost Girls.

Melancholia, the planet, returns to its normal orbit, on the opposite side of the sun.

Then, the greatest irony of all, Riker receives an encrypted subspace message from Bene Gesserit Command rescinding the kill order for Sam. She receives it too late to make a difference. To say that she's livid is a gross understatement.

There's something else afoot here. The thing that's always afoot when you do business with spooks. It's why she hates dealing with spies. She's being played. She, her crew, and her ship are pawns in a game. The espionage game.

The first time that she played it she was an ensign on the USS Eldridge. The Bene Gesserit cutter that was part of the Philadelphia Experiment also referred to as Project Rainbow. The experiment was a disaster. Since the catastrophe was too great to be merely swept under the rug. And, Bene Gesserits were still “relatively” idealistic, back then – with Section being the “necessary evil.” Bene Gesserit Command came clean and publicly admitted their culpability in

something which at the time involved the violation of a number of major U.N. resolutions including a binding treaty with the Romulan Star Empire.

The public admission?

Command held a press conference and admitted that the “accident,” also tellingly referred to as “the Event” and “the Incident” at the press conference, was a failed attempt to develop a cloaking device in which the USS Eldridge was used to test out some of the underpinnings that were thought necessary for such a monumental endeavor.

The experiment was based upon an aspect of the unified field theory, a term coined by Albert Einstein. The Unified Field Theory aims to describe mathematically and physically the interrelated nature of the forces that comprise electromagnetic radiation and gravity, although to date, no single theory has successfully expressed these relationships in viable mathematical or physical terms.

The rabid denouncement?

Conspiracy theorists countered that this was a cover story. Typical Section disinformation fabricated for public consumption. In reality, Bene Gesserits were trying to “acquire” a ROOM, and the USS Eldridge was part of that clandestine mission. Ironically, it did involve Einstein’s unified field theory. So, that part of the lie was true.

The truth?

Who knows? Even Riker, who was there when it happened, doesn’t know to this day what the real story is.

What is known is that ever since The Earth-Minbari War, the debacle that preceded happenings like the Philadelphia Experiment, Command has been obsessed with acquiring alien technology. Acquisition of a ROOM is said to be plum on the list of things that they crave. Obviously, the debacle is the impetus of Command’s obsession.

So fuckin’ what?!

Impatient. Tired of waiting. Shame. Shame. Shame. How mortal of you. Hate is like beauty, baby. The real stuff fades, but it never dies. And, it’s always worth the wait.

Out of context gibberish?

How soon they forget. Shoot or kayfabe. Breaking kayfabe is about life. Real life. Pursuing objectives in spite of the distractions. You don’t want to free people. You want to become their new religion. You’re the best homicide detective, because you’re the best murderer. If it were not for God tipping the scales—Sherlock Holmes the world’s greatest detective versus Professor Moriarity the equally adept, apex criminal mastermind—hands down, The Professor would always win. Kayfabe is about solving any crime in a thirty-minute TV show amidst numerous commercial breaks, and sipping martinis afterwards. Or saving the world in a three hour movie – the director cut, of course – and doing the same in the two hour theatrical version. No distractions. A singular pursuit of the prize. The hero wins at the expense of the villain—an absolute certainty. Good triumphs. Evil loses. Somewhere over the rainbow.

But?

The voices of impatience grow in their fervor and sway. And they are not without merit.

Let's look at it from your point of view?

In all of this. At the end of the day. A narrative that so far has not lived up to the hype. Who cares about the Time Lords, Bene Gesserits, Section, Command, the Dragons, the 456, Crazy Queen Mary, the Dame, ROOM, the Motel, Melancholia, the Gollum, the Master, etc., and their games? What of the promise of serial killer versus serial killer? That's the gist of it.

It could be argued that. In its own way. This has all been about serial killer versus serial killer. Just. Not in a crude, direct, nasty-violent sort of way that screams out the obvious.

Not convinced?

How about. The quiet prelude to the coming destruction – destruction that comes much later in the story.

One word—Bullshit?!

It is what it is, brotha. No more and no less.

Two words—More bullshit?!

Her protagonist Simon Angel? described in rambling passages – nothing succinct. Sick and nasty-violent, but, clearly not enough – because you want to wallow in it. Sam reiterated in page after page – the cunt, who koons – and you could care less, because you already know that about her. Filthy doings that the obsessed, socially-inept writer obviously likes to wallow in while fulfilling some degenerate need to sexualize attractive females typically engaged in depraved, self-indulgent, totally-violent endeavors.

More bullshit – all true, but more bullshit, nonetheless?!

Because, when it's about people who are good at what they do. What they do is kill. And, on top of all that. When one of them – the consummate professional, albeit retired—is adept unsurpassed at discerning, and exploiting, the weakness of others. The narrative can't ever be that long. You have to pad it out. Else the story would be short, sweet, and to the point—unsatisfying. In a word – BORING. The proof of that is in the pudding. A preview of which was the fate of the MACOs. Fifteen dead in the blink of an eye. Sam didn't have to lift a finger to dispatch them. How satisfying was that, as a narrative?

Finally – the truth.

Sam and the Dame reach the building and enter. The luggage follows and dutifully sets itself down upon the Persian rug of the Victorian mansion's neat (no-nonsense) foyer. The Dame looks out one of the etched windows. There's the courtyard. But, the interior of the mansion is not a replica of the interior of the courtyard's center building. This is something else entirely.

As they step out of the austere foyer and into the equally-tasteful main area the hub of any respectable Victorian abode, Puck greets them. He grovels momentarily at their feet. Showing them due respect. Immaculate. Wearing only a flesh-colored speedo. Naked as a jaybird being his preference.

So far, everything is as it should be. Much to the Dame's approval. An approval rating guaranteed to increase. Because, as ROOM gets better at sensing her needs and desires, ROOM continuously refines the interior.

“Dame Chillingsworth, this is Puck.”

“Glad to meet you, Puck.”

“Puck, this is Dame Chillingsworth.”

“I’m honored, guest of my goddess.”

“The rooms are configured to your pleasure per ROOM’s interpretation – an interpretation that will improve as your stay with us progresses. I have another guest, a human, and he is in other rooms – more to his understanding. There is some necessary intersection, but it’s minimum, I assure you. Puck will take care of your luggage and lead it up to your room, which is next to mine in this configuration.”

“When the carriage comes to pick us up, should we let them enter?”

“That might confuse them too much. Better to let them stay outside and bide their time.”

“Outside the courtyard, that isn’t? Or outside of here, that is?”

“Both, I would think.”

“Doubtless, the queen was watching.”

“Doubtless.”

“They’ve decided to no longer hunt you. Your kill order has been rescinded. I no longer assume the courtyard. I only assume the interior of the center building. I shall not influence my namesake again.”

And?

“You’re on your own. Be careful. I’ve already warned him.”

Good to know.

“May the worst win.”

I would sincerely hope so.

“Shall we retire to the sitting room? I’d like a nice stiff one.”

“Let’s.”

Every ROOM has appetites. This one has particularly dark ones. As dark as those of its current Occupant’s. The Dame can feel this darkness as it permeates. The darkness of very Old Things. Where light is an eccentricity. Suffocating darkness. Evil. The Abyss? No. The Deep – The most profound Evil.

The epiphany. Doors open revealing a parlor that would be the envy of any Victorian of means. It’s just to die for. Nothing at all lavish. The epitome of understatement—Elegance personified, nonetheless. As Victorian as Victorian gets. First time at bat, ROOM has hit a homerun with this one.

“This has got to be Hell!”

“Hardly. As Imelda Marcos is fond of saying, a girl’s got to have a place to put her shoes. Or, was it, I did not have three thousand pairs of shoes, I have one thousand and sixty?”

The two women giggle and hi-five. The Dame walks over to the fixings and mixes herself a highball. Walking right past the Ellington bag, as if it isn’t there. And. As far as she’s concerned,

it isn't. Nor can she see the man who's now openly stalking her. He's holding an old-fashioned commonly known as a splay.

This is easier than I thought. I'll have both tarts before they know what hit 'em.

"I wouldn't bet on that, if I were you."

It's as if Sam's taunt has broken some spell. Suddenly. The Dame can see him. For all the good it does her. She never gets a chance to draw her weapon. A deft frontal thrust. His stroke is violent, powerful, and smooth. Upward at an acute angle. The blade of the Liston goes in through her left nostril. Severing the corpus callosum—bisecting the brain. The tip ends up embedded in the roof of her skull.

The corpus callosum (Latin: tough body), also known as the colossal commissure, is a wide, flat bundle of neural fibers beneath the cortex in the eutherian brain at the longitudinal fissure. It connects the left and right cerebral hemispheres and facilitates interhemispheric communication. It is the largest white matter structure in the brain, consisting of 200–250 million contralateral axonal projections.

The Dame dies instantly. He breaks off the blade to retard her resurrection and discards the now useless Liston. A replacement loads into his hand. At the same time. Another Liston loads into his other hand—must be using a universal holster.

Now it's just the two of them. Or is it? He gives Sam his undivided attention. For all the good it does him.

He immediately realizes much to his dismay and subsequent aggravation that he can no longer move.

"Junkie whore! I'll have you head for this!" He shrieks, foaming at the mouth. But, his verbal barrage is not being directed at Sam. Then who is he venting his aggression at?

Sam is privy to the voices in his head. She bathes in his madness and his multiplicity. Pure, undistilled insanity. Nectar of the truly and hopelessly deranged. Rapture. But, as intoxicating as it is. It stays her hand, not. He moves. He dies. The Dame was one thing. She is another. This is her ROOM, not his. And. As such, she's as adept in its uses as he is.

"Too early," a female voice utters from his mouth. "A time. A place. Of your choosing. The game's afoot and we must not rush it. The bitch will get her due. You will not be denied. Nor will her harlot blue-blood be spared."

The intruder is gone. Momentarily, Xi is standing in place of the bag. Then, he too is gone. The bag remains. Mute testament to what has transgressed.

Thrall? Or. The "Real" Thing? It doesn't REALLY matter.

Sam tends to the fallen Dame. Removing the discarded Liston's blade from the head of her elder Lost. Then. She lets nature run its course. No need to rub salt in the wound. And. Facilitating the Dame's healing would be doing just that. It's bad enough that she's twice used the Dame as jailbait.

Bruce Lee

“The key to immortality is first living a life worth remembering.”

“Are you okay?”

“Why the fuck would you care?!”

“I don’t. I was just being polite.”

Sam, of course, is teasing. And, of course, she’s being truthful. She does care. And, she doesn’t. But, the jest. It’s ill advised. And, totally inappropriate.

“You used me as bait in the courtyard! You used me as bait, just now! I’m not your slight to do as you please!”

“Agreed. I was made better. And I was raised better. But, I choose to act less, when it suits me. This tiff isn’t about a trivial lapse in manners on my part. Twice this afternoon I’ve treated you as if you were jailbait—the much younger, and thus expendable, Nosferatu. Role reversal—a grave insult. You say it doesn’t bother you that I think of you as the younger one. But, your actions speak else wise, when confronted by the practice and its consequences and your neck is on the line. But. What’s really bothering you is that, you know deep down in your heart of hearts that I’ll keep doing it, that you’ll get genuinely mad in the aftermath, I’ll say something witty to assuage you, you’ll forgive me for my grave transgression until the next time, and then the whole rigmarole will begin again. And, you know it.”

“Bitch!”

“Guilty as charged. You can bitch-slap me if it will make you feel any better.”

Sam’s taunt defuses the potentially- explosive situation.

Once again. On the verge of raising my hand to her. She says the right thing at the right time. And I let her get away with murder. Just like she said I would. Shit! Shit! Shit!

“You’d like that way too much.”

Sam smiles. The Dame has calmed down. Her voice is no longer flush with anger. Mind you. She’s still a little miffed. But, even that is already on the down low and passing quick.

My Miss Phillips. The abomination that seduces me. And you know it. I’m doomed to never stay mad at you. No matter the tirade. Or the offense. Mrs. Emily Post and her “Etiquette” be damned, where you and I are concerned.

“Say it.”

“Condescending harlot.”

“Feel better.”

“Yes.”

Sam helps the Dame off the floor. The two alpha females hug and makeup. As if nothing, let alone anything significant, has transpired between them. The Dame has reasserted her proper place in the pecking order. And Sam has appropriately deferred to her after challenging the older

alpha's dominance. A post-mortem scene that will likely play itself out over and over again during the course of their petulant relationship.

Puck walks into the room. Inquisitive, though he might be. He can tell that something has happened. But he knows better than to ask what.

"The queen's carriage has arrived, my goddess."

"Time for us to go. Let's make out later."

"Let's."

After his pronouncement, Puck was silent during the subsequent exchange between the two Lost. Speaking only when spoken to. Or when providing the needed interjection as prompt. This is as it should be. As is his now wearing a period-correct butler's attire.

"Puck. By the way. Did the carriage stop at the front door or outside the archway in the street?"

"Outside the archway, my goddess."

Ad nauseam. The Dame and Sam both look like the cat that just ate the canary. So they were right. The queen was watching. And, no less culpable. Knowing looks from the two in-the-know girls. The game is not only truly afoot. They're being played by the matriarch of Haven's clannish leadership class. Time to deal themselves in.

"Puck, tell Jack to put on his tuxedo. I want him to come along with us."

"What shall I tell the coach driver, my goddess?"

"Tell him nothing. Let him cool his jets and wait."

"The driver is a woman, my goddess."

"Whatever."

Puck leaves. The Dame makes herself at home and whips up a highball in a jiffy—the first in a series. She should have time to throw back several.

Now, the vacation is finally beginning to turn. Because, Sam is facing the realities of her situation head-on and embracing them fully. Bene Gesserits, Section, Dragons, Time Lords, the Chinese, Haven's clannish leadership class, and whatnot—now a serial killer who's obviously supernatural and two Nosferatus from a place where Nosferatus are not animate corpses—all players in the game. There's the question of who has Sam's back in all of this. But, it's not one that Sam will ask.

Sam has enough to worry about. If she's wrong about Dame Chillingsworth, and she's chosen to trust the wrong person, Sam is a goner. So, predictably, she won't worry about it. She's made her decision and is standing by it. No second thoughts or wasteful vacillation.

"You plan to use your human as bait."

"And, you. And, myself, if need be. Of course, when I use myself as bait, I'm also using myself as the trap."

Hardly idle chatter. They're biding their time. Both can "sense" that someone else is also in the room. A presence that is not quite corporeal. Their bodies strain to assimilate seeing whoever the intruder is.

Queen Mary is suddenly in their midst. Whatever was veiling her has gone bye-bye. Rather than giveaway her stealth completely, she wisely chose to turn it off.

"I could feel your eyes beginning to see me. Better to switch off the cloak before you assimilated it. And it became obsolete tech the way the Time Lords' did. Before either of you speaks, I demand my boon. Binding you to me. This. I forewarn you. Knowing full well the dire consequences of my act in doing so. Dim sung being first and foremost."

There's a lot of ways to play this. The best way would be to just say absolutely nothing at all and ignore Queen Mary altogether. This is why Queen Mary's opening gambit is to totally ballsy.

Sam smiles and steps forward.

"So be it. I choose to be your pawn. State your case."

"Friend. Foe. Ally. Enemy. Freely offered up for your judicious consumption. The partaking of any constituted your acceptance of the contract in its entirety. And the binding execution of whatever boon is subsequently asked."

"To clarify. So that we're on the same page. Consumption—culinary?"

"Yes. Only those who were eaten, by you or a proxy, count. And you or your proxy only had to eat from one of the four categories named to qualify as consummating the contract."

"The friend?"

"One of your attackers, who was clearly marked. In the company of freedom fighters who were in league with the Time Lords—he had infiltrated their ranks in the guise of being a malcontent. They attacked you in the bathroom of your ROOM. They attacked you in your kitchen. My friend was one of you bathroom attackers. He accepted the undercover mission willingly—knowing full well that he was going to his certain death. You later ate him with the rest. This I witnessed from afar."

"The ally? Before you answer, don't double up on me for any of your responses—your named friend cannot be your ally answer. Nor can the freedom fighters that were with your named friend be your enemy answer."

Queen Mary gives the unexpected.

"Your Jack is my ally. He was in my service before his fall. I claim him still as my ally. You've eaten him carnally, many times over—adulterously, when he was married. Although some would argue that eating ain't cheating. Of course, fornication doesn't count—even when it entails prodigious deep throat."

"Foe?"

Again, Queen Mary gives the unexpected.

"Bene Gesserits—which includes their Section. This ROOM, your proxy, consumed their proxy the MACOs."

“Enemy?”

“The other British. The ones from the universe of Bene Gesserits. Worst of all, you’ve consumed their arrogance and pride by thwarting their usury plans for you. Plans which I imagine you’ve gleamed from their goings on with you. Of course, another instance that doesn’t count in these proceedings.”

Then, out of the blue, after keeping her cards close to her vest throughout this exchange, Sam asks the off-topic question which throws Queen Mary for a loop.

“How about the Dragons? How do they figure into this?”

How could she know about Them? I bet she’s on a fishing expedition. I’ll call her bluff.

This time it’s Queen Mary who flashes the smile.

“No comment. Besides, you’ve used up your allotment of questions.”

“I accept my obligation. What is your boon?”

“I need a serial killer apprehended. A Supernatural one. One who you’ve already met.”

“Conditions?”

“Many.”

“Name one.”

“I need for you to liaison through our law enforcement. I have a pair of coppers in mind.”

“Honest, forthright cops, I trust.”

A joke. Queen Mary laughs. The corruption of Haven’s cops is renowned.

“The two I have in mind are beyond reproach. Unfortunately, both of them are not to be found. I suspect foul play.”

“Hawk and Fisher?”

OMG! How did she. She’s every bit as good as Xi claims!

For a split second, Queen Mary expresses a startled look. Then she resumes her very best poker face.

“Yes.”

“I can help you with that one.”

“Two of my most loyal and capable investigators indisposed. You know their whereabouts. Yet.”

“Someone just hit the bitch switch, right here.”

“As in?”

“Your subjects are in the possession of one of my kind. A Nosferatu native to your world.”

“Understood. That does complicate things. I would not expect you to side with food against It and inform the authorities of the kidnap. Pardon my accusation of subterfuge on your part.”

“Apology accepted.”

“We are like the long-term girlfriend who has been taken for granted and wants to make our boyfriend jealous in order that we recapture his attention. Bene Gesserits need to get shaken up a little. But, we have no interest in changing our dance partner.”

“You don’t trust us, do you?”

“I, or any mortal for that matter, would be foolish to. No matter their machinations, dealing with Bene Gesserits means dealing with people who are mortal like us. Your kind is immortal and not even remotely human in spite of the pretense that you’re capable of.”

“Besides, you’ve already put us in a fish bowl and watched us swim.”

“Do you blame us?”

“No.”

“In clear violation of a number of United Nations Security Council sanctions. Bene Gesserits circumvent their own Prime Directive via Section, when it suits them. And, of late, it suits them quite a bit, where we’re concerned. As a result, hardcore dissidents and a growing number of the populace see us as a puppet government controlled by foreigners. Behind the scenes, our violent overthrow in mind, the Time Lords have fueled this belief. Yes, we consort with foreigners. We do so openly. But. We are not their puppets in any way, shape, or form—that would be inexcusable weakness. In our culture, leaders are supposed to be strong, brutal, and vicious—the iron fist in the mink glove. Corrupt to the point of abject degeneracy. But, never weak.”

That untouchable, badass woman of the hour kind of role that you, Queen Mary, were born to play.

“A foreigner—me—doing your bidding. You mean to resolve this serial killer situation in a way that proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that no one pulls your strings. That will undermine the opposition party and win back those in the general public who doubt your sovereignty. Silencing any questions about the legitimacy of your regime.”

“Exactly.”

“There’s more afoot than you’re willing to disclose. Likely. An ambition that befits your known audacity.”

“Immortal or not. You’re a commoner. I’m royalty. Yet. You speak to me as if we’re equals.”

“I tend to do that at times to my betters. One of my many bad habits, or so I’m told.”

Sam witty, insolent remark wins Queen Mary’s grudging admiration. She is insulted and amused at the same time.

There it is again. It’s quite unmistakable. And she makes no attempt to hide it. She’s sees me as some chick that used to be a classmate who happens to be queen. Worse. She looks me straight in the eye, sees what I am capable of, and it doesn’t faze her. Worst. She’s deep.

“I will say this much. We are interested in preserving our way of life by minimizing outside contamination. To do that we must sit at the table of power. The achievement of which will also.”

“Cement your legacy as the preeminent dynasty in human history. You wish to be The GOAT. I’ve heard the ambition before. Good luck with that one,” the Dame interjects. Before going strangely silent as she resumes her drinking. If she were human, which she is not, she’d be well

on her way to getting plastered. But, she's not drunk, and as such, she knows full well what she's saying and to whom she's saying it to. But, she is copping a hell of a buzz.

Oh my God!!! That guy who fancies himself Simon Angel is just some elaborate ruse. He's their stalking horse. They think it's me!!! And, the hell of it is. If it is me, I wouldn't even know it. I'm just that good. This is gonna be fun!!!

Genius. The ability to go from A to C without having to go through B. When it comes to homicide, that is exactly what Sam is – a genius. All of the pieces fall neatly into place. And it's so easy for her.

They want the killer to be a foreigner. A high-level one would be best. But. Any foreigner will do. And they're not interested in a frame job either. They want the guilty to be caught and punished. Now, it's Sam's turn to do the unexpected.

"You think it's me. You think that it's me who's behind all of this. Using that Simon Angel wannabe as the point of my spear. When, in actuality, it's I who am the hand that wields that spear."

That's when the Dame stops slamming back the hard stuff and sets her glass down upon the bar. If she were on the verge of tipsy, she's sober now.

"Yes. But. My husband is leaning toward Simon X acting on his own. That's what we call the wannabe. My beloved and I have a sizable wager on who is right. The other royals have their own pet theories and such. But, most are convinced that it's you, though. Lady Glenda is adamant that you know full well what you're doing and have hidden nothing from yourself."

"You believe that I'm ignorant of my own culpability. And. That I've tweaked myself for this murderous little escapade, not as an alibi, but to make the gaming more interesting and challenging."

"You read me well. Too bad Bene Gesserits are not so astute. They really don't know who they're dealing with. That's evident from how they have played you so far. Worse. Their betters are playing them in earnest, spoon feeding them just enough to keep them in the game, but not enough to make it fair. Someone wants you to win."

"Not really."

"How so?"

"Someone wants them to lose. There's a difference."

"Oh."

There's a hint of admiration in the queen's voice. The hitherto undiscerned deviousness of the plan and its execution earns Bene Gesserits a level respect from Queen Mary that they previously had not been afforded.

"Everybody is expendable. Even their own people. It's called espionage. And you only thought you knew how Bene Gesserits played it. They're just as dirty players in the game as you are, if not more so."

"Twists and turns."

“Exactly. I hope for your sakes that you people think fast on your feet. Else, you will drown. And whoever they replace you with will be their puppet. See how much fun we’re going to have?”

“Yes.”

“Now, that’s my girl.”

“Again, you forget your place.”

“Guilty as charged.”

“Back to the hand in play. You have a killer to catch. And, please don’t be too late for dinner. The other guests are already at the palace and getting anxious.”

With that said, the queen disappears. Jack walks in all dressed up in his dandy. From the expression on his face, you can tell that he was privy to the tail end of the exchange. He saw his queen.

“Well. The gang’s all here, now. Time to fly.” An innocent enough remark on Sam’s part. She voices the obvious. And, for very good reason. It’s meant to set the context of what happens next. The Dame and Sam make casual eye contact—casual, that is, to someone who’s not in-the-know. A look that says everything. The significance of which is skillfully veiled—we’ll “talk” later.

The three of them stroll leisurely out of the house, through the courtyard, and into the waiting carriage. A lot has been done. Even more has been said. Layers upon layers. Yet only the prize matters. The question is—what is the prize? It depends. It depends? It depends on who you ask.

Every race has its secrets. Ones that it shares with no one. Not even its closest and dearest allies. Such is the case with The Dame and Sam. When they step into the coach they both notice something. The coach is a smidge bigger on the inside than the outside. And it’s nothing as mundane as spatial compression. Most telling is that the ratio of inside to outside is the so-called magic number—the threshold of true spatial displacement.

It would seem to the outside observer that the Dame and Sam are chatting away in the coach. Girl talk, feminine banter, motor mouth, chit chat, that Jack shuts out. He’s mired too deep in his own swirl of thoughts to notice. In actuality, the Dame and Sam have retreated to that very special place that Supernaturals go when they wish to “converse” privately—a place that only they know about—a place whose existence they are incapable of revealing to anyone else. Even supernaturals are unaware of this very private place—all Supernaturals are supernatural, but not all supernaturals are Supernatural. Yet, prophetically, it’s a place that Sam “knew” about instinctually when she was still human.

“A solid familiarity with our process of asking a favor.”

“And an adeptness with exercising its options.”

“ROOM interpolation, and now this.”

“Not only a grasp of the fundamentals of spatial mechanics, but a concrete demonstration of it.”

“She hid the truth in plain sight, by public announcement for anyone.”

“Or anything.”

“Who might be eavesdropping.”

“Someone has been coaching them.”

“Or?”

“They have been extremely skillful observers.”

“If so.”

“They have been watching carefully, very carefully, for generations.”

“Watching from the margins.”

“Mortals who have mastered our long game?”

Now that brings a nasty, unladylike smile to both of their faces. This makes much more sense than a murder investigation, as a means to an end. The Dame came here to get away for politics. And she stepped right into it. But it's the enjoyable kind that she so seldom gets the chance to imbibe, these days. Sam, on the hand, can be quite the petulant child in such goings on—in this instance, though, that seems to not be the case.

Shenanigans aplenty. Ulterior motives, every which way but loose. Good old down-n-dirty politics. And, everything that goes along with it, when someone decides to step up their A-game and play on the grandest stage of them all. Win—you get the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow and all of the fringe benefits that come along with it. Lose—you crash and burn—the ultimate booby prize. There's no in-between.

The two ladies leave that special place, and return to the here and now. They exchange that look. The Dame flicks out her long, facile tongue and wets the ruby-red lips of her large, ugly mouth. Sam does likewise. Jack is no longer distracted by his thoughts—He's distracted by the Lost Girls. He slides his hands into his pants, and decides to play some stickball.

Synchronized. Bouncing on that trampoline. They, the girls, undo their tops and free their twins. Tongues go killer. Smiles go razorblade. Fingernails go daggerous. The Dame flicks shifts into fast-forward. Bodies mesh. She ravages Sam's neck. The pheromones that the two release are intoxicating.

Chillingsworth's body is built for her to lay back with her legs spread so I can hump her for hours on end. I guess that is a pretty vivid picture and it's true. Needless to say, I would trade a thousand Dame Chillingsworths for one Sam Phillips. True story.

Jack's last lucid thoughts, before finally succumbing. Too late and a dollar short to protect himself. He loses himself, totally. His thoughts go primal, as the pheromones saturate his lungs, searing his mind. His loins are on fire—molten hot. If the bloodsuckers notice him too much, they will drink him to death. Of course, by now, he's beyond caring about such things. In point of fact, he's incapable of caring about anything. A prophylactic spell would have exempted him from the effects of the demons' pheromones. And he had ample warning and sufficient time to whip one up on the jiffy. But, for obvious reasons, he didn't. By intent, willingly and willfully—Too late and a dollar short to protect himself.

The Lost switch places. Sam ravages the Dame's neck. Pretense gone. They are two demons fucking, sans façade.

“I trust that you're not engaging in some vulgar behavior in the queen's coach.”

I trust that you're gonna get out of my head, ass wipe!

"Well. Well. Well. Obviously. We are in the middle of someone. Be seeing you."

Prick!!!

He doesn't have to be "asked" twice. Xi is gone. Sam doesn't lose a beat. She chomps down even harder. Drinks even deeper. Bright red. And sticky too. Sanguine. Her free hand shoved down her panties, masturbating—masturbation sublime.

As for the Dame. She goes into that very dark, wet place. Driven there by a girl's insatiable Thirst. Legs spread. Thighs wide shut. Ravenous. She finger fucks herself into total and unmitigated abandon.

They become a blur of movement as they both flick, in concert. Then, they just disappear from Jack's point of view, as they cease to be underdriven. The paradox. Or, is it just a point of view? That's a faux faux. Why? Because.

From the Supernatural perspective, the girls cease to be underdriven and are no longer perceptible by an underdriven Jack.

Undriven for Mundane is under-driven for Supernaturals. Overdrive for Mundane is undriven for Supernaturals. Flick aka fast-forward is just that in-between throwaway of no particular consequence, let alone significance. Once you have mastered overdrive. Then again, we digress. We've had this discussion before. Therefore.

In actuality, the girls don't shift into overdrive and disappear from the perception of an undriven Jack. The girls cease to be underdriven and disappear from the perception of an undriven Jack. Cirque du Freak: The Nosferatu's Assistant.

Of course. A far more interesting discussion is the tit for tat going on in the carriage. For an MMA analogy, think: Liz "Girl-Rilla" Carmouche (5-2) and Sarah "The Monster" D'Allelio (4-2). HOT! HOT! HOT! Aka—two very beautiful women with great racks going at it full bore!

The Dame latches her cruel mouth onto the neck of the feeding Sam. Feeding upon Sam, as Sam feeds upon her. Limber. Double-jointed. Flexible à la cart. Whored out. Leaving the snail trail. The girls from Sluts-R-Us. For whom, "eating you out" takes on a whole nother meaning, entirely.

Don't be shy. You're a big boy, now. Go ahead. Come in my mouth, all you like. And, yes. Cross my heart and hope to die. I swallow.

That's where things are bound to lead. When the bloodsuckers finish with each other. It's a certainty that they will do Jack. Then, again, in life, there are few certainties. Someone has other plans for the evening which supersede the carnality envisioned.

From the driver's perspective. At the moment of detonation there's a flash. At that instant, the driver is able to see straight through her hands. She can see the veins. She can see the blood and all the skin tissue. She can see the bones and, worst of all; she can see the flash itself. It's like looking into a white-hot diamond, a second sun. This tremendous burst of light is followed shortly thereafter by the deep, growling roar of an explosion.

From the passengers' perspectives. There's a scream. Shrieks follow. It's the driver. A bright light penetrates the cabin. X-raying everything and everybody. Eye-melting luminescence. Then,

the heat comes. Heat, akin to that experienced in a nuclear explosion, bathes the cabin. A slow, intense, searing heat which eats its way into your very bones—it feels as if someone is passing an electric fire through you. A large portion of the heat in a nuclear explosion is from the absorption of gamma rays emitted in the nuclear reaction.

Even to the most jaded world traveler, the whole scene is unbelievable. A source of wonderment. And awe-inspiring dread. No matter how many times that you see it. A gigantic, dirty-looking mushroom cloud forming in the now ravaged sky, visible for miles, dominating the horizon. An enormous ball of fire inhabits the base of the cloud and deadly-looking waves begin to emanate from its rippling base in all directions.

The quiet. That pause which ends when violent, gale-force winds hurl the carriage into the air and then slam it into the ground.

Everything that's been vaporized into ash by the initial blast gets sucked up by the vacuum of the subsequent vortex. An ash which falls to the ground as fallout.

The signature effects of a thermonuclear over blast. Someone has used forbidden atomics. Either an ICBM or a fire-breathing Dragon's WMD. Ballistic trajectory and blast forensics are identical.

What's telling is that the coach, its driver, and its three passengers are intact. Someone was watching their P's and Q's. In spite of the revelry and seemingly total abandon. Safeguards were in place.

A Tessmacher, the Dame's, makes an opening in the bottom of the coach. The two women, again pretending, emerge first. The Dame is holding her gun in the ready. Both hands gripping it, conventionally. Sweeping the area with its muzzle. Sam is again empty-handed and nonchalant. Jack pulls up the rear. He's still copping an erection—length and girth. The girls' exposed boobs, the lingering effects of the pheromones; et al. is causing his penis to puke in his pants copiously.

Sam moves around to where the driver is. The horses are ash, gone. The driver might as well be. She's burnt toast. Fourth, fifth, and sixth degree burns cover ninety-nine percent of her body. Her eyes are melted in their sockets. Charred skin and clothes are indistinguishable—fused. Sam cums to the sight of it. Orgasm supreme. The driver is in that dark place beyond agony—the “original” Pain.

Sam wishes that she could trade places with the girl. Peroxide wisdom—she must make do. Getting by, Sam can only pleasure herself vicariously through the now crispy, flaxen-haired twenty-something, once babe.

For a moment, the sader Sam contemplates just letting the girl suffer for a while. But, she needs answers. She needs to see what the girl saw. Pain from the injuries, especially the burns, could drive the girl insane. Hindering a scan. And, time is of the essence. This attack feels improvised. Someone is running scared. Scared murderers make mistakes.

“This will put you in a very happy place,” Sam coos to the driver as she injects something, lime green and fluorescent, into the driver's neck. The driver's agony-induced trashing ceases.

Sam mind-melds with the girl. Without consent, it's tantamount to rape. Nimble, Sam is in and out in a jiff. She also takes note of the girl's ink. The driver's tattoos are those of the queen's elites. Her eyes dart about taking in as much of the crime scene as she can before the authorities arrive and muck about.

Something looms large in sky. Seemingly. It came out of no place. A Dragon. The creature lands in their midst and changes into its mortal form. It's Ancient Mia.

"A wise Elf told me, I should sometimes 'Shut My Cabbage hole,' and then the Elf kicked my ass. In other words, if I don't have anything nice to say, I shouldn't say anything at all," teases The Dragon.

Only Sam is not taken back. The big girl being rarely at a loss for words.

"Woah! Too bad you're such a terrible listener," Sam responds.

The Dragon laughs. Sam and Ancient Mia embrace and exchange a very friendly kiss. Jack collapses. He's spent, from the pheromones and the radiation searing his body. Cooking him from the inside out. The demons, of course, are immune to the radiation, as are their clothes, their accessories, and their gear. Dragons are not so neutral. They frenzy feed off of thermonuclear. You can't hurt a Dragon with atomics; you can only make them stronger.

"The queen won't like you poking around in that girl's mind. You know full well that they can tell that you've been inside of her."

"Crazy Mary will get over it. And, I could care less if they know what I did. Besides, I didn't tamper with anything. I just needed to have a closer look."

"Such an attitude you have."

Other Dragons appear. They soar and swoop high above in the ruined sky before landing in the radioactive ash to feast their gluttony. Carrion eaters of the apocalypse. Covetous partakers of nuclear holocaust. Destroyer of worlds, in leu of a sumptuous radioactive buffet. Like bees to honey. Where there is nuclear war and its subsequent devastation, or in this case the limited use of such weapons, Dragons are always soon to follow. They come. They come ever hungry. Ravenous for an isotope repast.

Dragons have no need for starships. They can fly in outer space on the solar winds. For them, starships are used as a social convention—when etiquette demands their use. Dragon being Conservative by nature, and as such are sticklers for decorum. So it comes as no surprise that they revere Emily Post as their prophet of manners.

Like the driver, Sam injects a potent cocktail of anti-radiation meds into Jack. He loses consciousness as his body heals. When the concoction has run its course, Jack and the driver will be fit as a fiddle. None the worse physically for their ordeal.

"Too bad I couldn't let them suffer. I would have enjoyed that a lot." Sam's voiced whimsy is laced heavily with disappointment.

Ancient Mia takes thoughtful note of the Dark's words. Not just their content and meaning, but their tone and tenor as well. Words that remind her that the girl is such an evil. A real nasty piece of work. Evil and dangerous. Utterly ruthless. Incapable of mercy. A textbook psychopath, and sadomasochist, who's been trained in the deadliest arts. Who, it's rumored, murdered Dragons and gods for business and pleasure while still human—a rumor that no one has ever been able to substantiate or disprove!

An old Chinese proverb comes to mind. If I would do such as this to someone I love, just imagine how I would treat someone I have no feelings for. Let alone someone who I hate.

It's why Goons adore her. It's why Puck pussy worships her. It's why she is his goddess. Sociopath. Sader. Just plain sick. With Sam, there's no good morning, good afternoon. There's just good night, sweet dreams! Remember: One isn't just born with a voice that one could get stabbed for. She's the absolute best of all time—The GOAT!!!

The other Dragons finish scarfing up the radioactive contamination. Everything scrubbed clean. Sam's intuition tells her that their appetite is fueled by something more than just gluttony. An ulterior motive is afoot. Likely one that she will not have to wait long to be revealed.

Hush, hush, sad clowns. Serendipitously scheduled. A portal opens. Shadowy figures emerge, dressed in hooded robes. It's the envoys. Their black robes are very likely to be advanced encounter suits. Benedictine Monks and Dominican Friars wear such devices when they go out and about in the world. Arcane mechanisms that the asinine mistaken for Pious robes of no real caution or importance.

They hover over to the Dragon, the two Lost girls, and the fallen humans. Their feet never touching the ground.

Clothes manifest themselves. Ancient Mia is no longer naked. It is a now clothed Ancient Mia who is the first to greet the new arrivals. Arrivals whose identities are concealed by their monkish garb. Ancient Mia gives no evidence that she knows them.

What follows is Queen Mary and her royal entourage. They arrive via coach from the direction of the summer palace where the party is being held. Bodyguards are consciously absent. It's just bluebloods.

When Queen Mary exits the carriage, there is a man by her side. He is fifty-something, strapping, and confident. He is not the king. He's the king's immaculately-dressed brother. Gizmo is his title. It is also his name. Don't let his dandy fool you. Gizmo is no one to be trifled with. Hence no need for bodyguards.

Crazy Mary, et al.—the Dragons' ulterior motive for feasting on the lethal aftermath of the atomic blast. The area had to be completely decontaminated before the royals could make their entrance. And I'll wager that there's even more to this.

Crazy Mary walks over to the fallen driver and checks her out.

Excellent. Better than we could have ever imagined. When we get her back to the palace the royal physicians must reverse engineer the elixir that the monster used to fix Gladis.

"Thank you for taking such good care of my charge. I trust that she will recover fully."

She isn't even trying to hide the fact that she was remotely watching. They mean to synthesize the cleanser that I used on the girl; I'd bet. All they need is a sample of the girl's blood. A potent anti-radiation reagent that inoculates against the ill effects of irradiation, if given prophylactically.

"Yes, she will."

"Nevertheless, I'll have my physicians give Gladis a thorough going over when we get back. Her family has provided protection services for mine for generations."

"Of course. You can't be too careful. There's always the chance of complications and relapse."

Sam smiles, coyly. Queen Mary, matching her coy for coy, smiles also.

Somehow I very much doubt that. You gave Jack the same dosage. There's no gambling, here. You know the serum will work. Their full recovery guaranteed. Nice try, though. Trying to sow the seed of doubt. Failing that, you get to feel me out. See how good a player I am. You'll not be disappointed. We're all good players here, as your kind will soon find out. We've had generations of practice watching creatures just like you game. We intend to play you all. Beating you at your own game. Right. Haven is sucking hind tit as of late. Worse than seconding. That is about to all change.

There's something else. In spite of the civil way that Queen Mary interacts with Sam, she sees the big girl as a total degenerate.

Psychopath to psychopath. Queen Mary's assessment of Sam Phillips. A junkie whore without honor. Not a lady, although capable of posing as one when the need arises. A biotch aka, a bitch: a woman of unsavory character traits pertaining to negative or even belligerent attitude a pain in the ass or a moody bitch. Bad: A harlot and a slut; there is a difference—subtle nuance though it may be, but a difference, nonetheless. Worse: No better than a prostitute. Worst: No better than the Nosferatu things that are native to her planet. She has no respect for Sam, none whatsoever.

That lack of respect has led her into a trap. She's made this personal—a personal contest between herself and Sam. An amateur's common mistake. One a pro never makes.

A bold charge, indeed. But. The junkie whore has spent her powder.

The professional knows that it's always proclivities aside. You never judge a person by their choice in recreation. Keep it business. Never let it become personal. There are enough liabilities without having to invent ones.

Good breeding. Born on the right side of the tracks. It doesn't matter. Being a lady or gentleman will never overcome skill. In fact, having the right pedigree puts you at a decided disadvantage. That's why the motives of everyone involved should always be professional.

“You will be accompanying us back in the coach.”

Sam gestures arcanelly with her hands. Jack stands up although he is still in a stupor. Having feed on him for so long over the course of their personal relationship, he is somewhat her thrall. In weakened, and thus susceptible, states like this, she has limited control over his body.

His movements are mechanical and leaden. More than sufficient for a tool. She doesn't need for him to dance a ballet. She just needs for him to follow her.

“She's a real ball buster. You should be wary of her. Queen Mary is a choir girl, in comparison.”

I'll take it under advisement.

“Arrogance doesn't suit you.”

Duly noted.

Short, sweet, and to the point. A private “conversation” that no one should be privy to except for the two principals involved. And yet when he looks at her, she gives him that knowing look as if to say—she “heard” them “talking” about her.

No matter. Even if she could somehow eavesdrop, she'd never be able to decipher who was talking to whom. And there's no way that she could have been listening.

“You sure about that? Want to bet your life on it?”

A surprised look crosses his face. Displacing his usual smirk. That last questioning voice in his head was not one that he has ever heard before—it was not the feminine voice of his personal device. It was demonic. And she’s still wearing that knowing look, now joined by a devilish grin.

No! This cannot be!

The female voice, the demonic one, in his head that doesn’t belong to his PD continues.

“You know how I stayed alive this long? All these years? Fear. The spectacle of fearsome acts. Someone steals from me, I cut off their hands. Someone offends me, I cut out their tongue. Someone rises against me, I cut off their head, stick it on a pike, raise it high up so all on the streets can see. That’s what preserves the order of things. Fear.”

No! No more! Be gone demon! I exorcise thee, unclean spirit!

“Behold in despair, your true god!!!”

A deafening shriek that reaches a crescendo. Numbing his mind. As if he was dying. His senses stumble, and then fail altogether like toppling dominos. As if he was dying. Vision, first. Hearing, last.

As if he was dying. His vision narrows. To his eyes, the world shrinks to pinpoints. Darkness engulfs him, completely; robbing him of sight. He’s blind. Touch, taste, and smell—retreat into oblivion. Finally. Sound muffles. Then mutes. He’s deaf. That’s when he blacks out.

When he comes to himself, the demonic voice in his head is gone. That smirk returns to his face. It was a momentarily lapse. For him, an eternity seems to have passed. Everyone else is acting like nothing has happened. Yet, there she is, still sporting that knowing look and devilish grin. She alone acts like she knows what has just happened.

Their eyes meet, again. Again. In the covetous way that excludes the rest of the world. She flicks her tongue out lewdly at him. As if she’s some common ass streetwalker hawking her wares. She wants him in the worst way. The feeling is mutual.

“Tisk. Tisk. Tisk. Dirty. Dirty, thoughts.”

It’s the voice of his PD admonishing him.

I’ll fuck her to the bone, when I get the chance. And you’ll be silent when I do.

“It was her voice, her true voice. That overwhelmed you.”

I guessed as much by the way she’s acting. She’s not even trying to conceal her infiltration.

It’s the classic case of a man letting the wrong head do his thinking for him. One minute he’s casting out the demon possessing him. The next minute he’s inviting her back to ravage his loins. Boys and their toys.

He fancies himself fighting her in a cage. A mixed-martial arts match under Pride FC rules. Translation: a half-step above a bareknuckle streetfight. Both of them are naked and sweaty. Vigorous, athletic foreplay, before the main course. She is the Nosferatu dominatrix. Out for blood, figuratively and literally. He is food.

From the opening bell, intrigue. She starts strong, working over him from top position. He glimmers with a technical, beautiful reversal. They stand, let their hands go, and trade shots, at

the end of the first round. Swinging for the fences like there's no tomorrow. H-bombs—
Overhand rights and lefts. You name it.

You sense it then, right? That this one is going somewhere special. Round 2 confirms what we thought we knew, as he somehow surveys an onslaught of submissions.

The third round forces a deep breath. Perhaps he has a late-round comeback in him? No. She, top, and him, bottom, help erase some of the memories of out-of-cage activities that have plagued MMA since its birth.

She slams the door on him in Round 4. Finishing an excellent fight with an awesome flowing sequence that showcases MMA's dynamism: uppercut, left hook, flying knee, D'Arce choke.

She was slick and poised on her feet. And, when she took things to the ground it was an act of survival for him to fend off armbars, omoplatas, triangles, and vicious incoming elbows. Her finally finishing the job in the championship rounds, poetically submitting him in the fourth with a familiar D'Arce choke—a move that he is usually on the delivering end of.

Her fingernails go daggerous. Her tongue goes killer. She rips out his throat with the fresh-rendering teeth of a razorblade smile. That's when he comes out of his daydream.

Queen Mary formally introduces Gizmo to Sam. They shake hands, politely. Casual conversation ensues as they head back over to the carriage. Akin to the Italians of Sam's world, Havenites use body language and vigorous hand gestures to punctuate an expression and give it shading that the word or phrase itself lacks. In fact, also akin to Sam's Italians, there are thirty hand gestures that allow you to carry on a conversation without you having to utter a single word—they literally speak with their hands. It's also a way for practitioners of magic to pass off arcane gestures as non-magical conversational ones. And that's exactly what happens.

As they walk past the envoys, Gizmo deftly inter-mixes arcane and conversational gestures. It's another prime example of hiding something in plain sight. Truly, enviable sleight of hand. So good in fact that it's easily missed. More by chance than skill that Sam even notices. It's then that she realizes who, or rather what, the envoys really are—Cloud Identity: Simplified REST Security, aka Sentinels—Jews both, human and Supernatural call them golem. A self-discovery that broadens her smile. She has to keep from laughing out loud.

Pan nationalism as practiced by so parochial a people. It's so simple that it boggles the mind.

To employ golem, the non-Jewish Havenites, who are avowed Pagan, must have reproduced Cabala (Hebrew, "received tradition"), generically, Jewish mysticism—of course, the variant practiced by Supernatural Jews being quite beyond the grasp of any mundane!

In Jewish tradition, the golem is most widely known as an artificial creature created by magic, often to serve its creator. The word "golem" appears only once in the Bible Psalms 139:16. In Hebrew, "golem" stands for "shapeless mass." The Talmud uses the word as "unformed" or "imperfect" and according to Talmudic legend, Adam is called "golem," meaning "body without a soul" Sanhedrin 38b for the first 12 hours of his existence. The golem appears in other places in the Talmud as well. One account says that the prophet Jeremiah made a golem.

The Sefer Yezirah "Book of Creation," often referred to as a guide to magical usage by some Western European Jews in the Middle Ages, contains instructions on how to make a golem. Several rabbis, in their commentaries on Sefer Yezirah have come up with different understandings of the directions on how to make a golem. Most versions include shaping the

golem into a figure resembling a human being and using God's name to bring him to life, since God is the ultimate creator of life.

According to one account, to make a golem come alive, one would shape it out of soil, and then walk or dance around it saying combination of letters from the alphabet and the secret name of God. To "kill" the golem, its creators would walk in the opposite direction saying and making the order of the words backwards.

Other sources say once the golem had been physically made one needs to write the letters aleph, mem, tav, which is emet and means "truth," on the golem's forehead and the golem would come alive. Erase the aleph and you are left with mem and tav, which is met, meaning "death."

Another way to bring a golem to life is to write God's name on parchment and stick it on the golem's arm or in his mouth. One removes it to stop the golem.

Often in Ashkenazi Hasidic lore, the golem would come to life and serve his creators by doing tasks assigned to him. The most well-known account of the golem is connected to Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel, the Maharal of Prague 1513-1609. He created a golem out of clay to protect the Jewish community from Blood Libel and to help out doing physical labor, since golems are very strong.

Another version says it was close to Easter, in the spring of 1580 and a Jew-hating priest was trying to incite the Christians against the human Jews—he knew better than to fuck with the Supernatural Jews else he would have been eaten. So the golem protected the community during the Easter season.

Both versions recall the golem running amok and threatening innocent lives, so Rabbi Loew removed the Divine Name, rendering the golem lifeless. A separate account has the golem going mad and running away. Several sources attribute the account to Rabbi Elijah of Chelm, saying Rabbi Loew, one of the most outstanding Jewish scholars of the sixteenth century who wrote numerous books on Jewish law, philosophy, and morality, would have actually opposed the creation of a golem.

The golem has been a popular figure in the arts in the past few centuries with both Jews and non-Jews. In the early 20th century, several plays, novels, movies, musicals and even a ballet were based on the golem. The most famous works where golems appear are Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Karel Capek's *R.U.R.* where the word "robot" comes from which stands for Rossum's Universal Robots, an English phrase used as the subtitle in the Czech original, Isaac Bashevis Singer's *The Golem* and *The X-Files*. There is also a character named Golem in J.R.R. Tolkien's classic series *The Lord of the Rings*. Today, there is even a golem museum in the Jewish Quarter of Prague.

Sometimes, someone who is large but intellectually slow is called a golem. Other civilizations, such as the ancient Greeks, have similar concepts.

In order to fully appreciate golem, you must understand Cabala. Jewish mysticism in all its forms; specifically, the esoteric theosophy that crystallized in 13th-century Spain and Provence, France, around *Sefer ha-zohar* *The Book of Splendor*, referred to as the *Zohar*, and generated all later mystical movements in Judaism. See *Mysticism; Theosophy*. The earliest known form of Jewish mysticism dates from the first centuries AD and is a variant on the prevailing Hellenistic astral mysticism, in which the adept, through meditation and the use of magic formulas, journeys

ecstatically through and beyond the seven astral spheres. In the Jewish version, the adept seeks an ecstatic version of God's throne, the chariot merkava beheld by Ezekiel see Ezekiel 1.

Medieval Spanish Cabala, the most important form of Jewish mysticism, is less concerned with ecstatic experience than with esoteric knowledge about the nature of the divine world and its hidden connections with the world of creation. Medieval Cabala is a theosophical system that draws on Neoplatonism and Gnosticism and is expressed in symbolic language. The system is most fully articulated in the Zohar, written between 1280 and 1286 by the Spanish Cabalist Moses de León, but attributed to the 2nd-century rabbi Simeon bar Yohai. The Zohar depicts the Godhead as a dynamic flow of force composed of numerous aspects. Above and beyond all human contemplation is God as the unknowable, immutable En Sof Infinite.

Other aspects or attributes, knowable through God's relation to the created world, emanate see Emanation from En Sof in a configuration of ten sefirot realms or planes, through which the divine power further radiates to create the cosmos. Zoharic theosophy concentrates on the nature and interaction of the ten sefirot as symbols of the inner life and processes of the Godhead. Because the sefirot are also archetypes for everything in the world of creation, an understanding of their workings can illuminate the inner workings of the cosmos and of history.

The Zohar thereby provides a cosmic-symbolic interpretation of Judaism and of the history of Israel in which the Torah and commandments, as well as Israel's life in exile, become symbols for events and processes in the inner life of God. Thus interpreted, the proper observance of the commandments assumes a cosmic significance.

Throughout Jewish magical lore, the golem is an image or form that is given life through a magical formula. A golem frequently takes the form of a robot, or automaton. In the Hebrew Bible see Psalms 139:16 and in the Talmud, the term refers to an unformed substance. Its present meaning developed during the Middle Ages, when legends arose of wise men and women who could instill life in effigies by the use of a charm. The creatures offer special protection to Jews, although Supernaturals who are Jewish rarely if ever employ them.

Of course, as aforementioned, the best-known account of golem usage concerns Rabbi Löw of 16th-century Prague, who created a golem that he used as his servant.

A much darker variant of the Löw golem account gives another explanation for the Maharal's Rabbi Loew's decision to return the clay monster to the dust lie came from _____.

Although the creature was mighty in strength, supernatural in prescience, and ever alert in following the orders of his Cabalistic creator, so that he saved the Jews of Prague from many a calamity.

Nonetheless, its creator decided to "unmake" it because he had grown afraid of the creature he had created. For the golem, waxing drunk with the immense power it was wielding, menaced the entire Jewish community, even trying to bend the Maharal to its will. It had turned evil and destructive.

Thereupon, using the secret gematria of Cabalistic formulas for the second time, the Maharal returned the clay hulk of his creature to its original inanimate condition by withdrawing from its mouth the Shem, the life-creating, ineffable Name of God that he had placed there when first he made it.

Therein always lays the danger of employing their kind—the double-edged sword. Because golems are magically created automatons of great power. And constructing one involves the employment of mighty magic and elemental forces.

The animating force for a golem is a spirit from the Elemental Plane of Earth. The process of creating the golem binds the unwilling spirit to the artificial body and subjects it to the will of the golem's creator.

Golems are tenacious in combat and prodigiously strong as well. Rules govern their behavior. Although, as aforementioned, there are documented exceptions like the Löw golem. As a rule.

Being mindless, they do nothing without orders from their creators. They follow instructions explicitly and are incapable of any strategy or tactics. They are emotionless in combat and cannot be provoked.

A golem's creator can command it if the golem is within 60 feet and can see and hear its creator. If ronin—masterless, uncommanded—a golem usually follows its last instruction to the best of its ability, though if attacked it returns the attack.

The creator can give the golem a simple command to govern its actions in his or her absence. The golem's creator can order the golem to obey the commands of another person who might in turn place the golem under someone else's control, and so on, but the golem's creator can always resume control over his creation by commanding the golem to obey him or her alone.

Golems have immunity to most magical and supernatural effects.

The cost to create given for each golem includes the cost of the physical body and all the materials and spell components that are consumed or become a permanent part of the golem.

Creating a golem is essentially similar to creating any sort of magic item. However, a golem's body includes costly material components that may require some extra preparation. The golem's creator can assemble the body or hire someone else to do the job. The builder must have the appropriate skill, which varies with the golem variety.

Completing the golem's creation drains the appropriate XP from the creator and requires casting any spells on the final day.

The creator must cast the spells personally, but they can come from outside sources, such as scrolls.

A golem variant is used in contemporary gameplay by vicarious secular elements outside of the Jewish community. In other words, gentile gamers.

The characteristics of this “lesser” golem, lesser by Jewish definition, come from its nature as a magic item caster level, prerequisite feats and spells, market price, cost to create are given in summary form at the end of each golem's description.

The market price of an advanced golem of this persuasion a golem with more Hit Dice than the typical golem described in each entry is increased by 5,000 gp for each additional Hit Die, and increased by an additional 50,000 gp if the golem's size increases. The XP cost for creating an advanced golem is equals to 1/25 the advanced golem's market price minus the cost of the special materials required.

Typically, this golem has a humanoid body made from clay. Usually, a clay golem of this persuasion wears no clothing except for a metal or stiff leather garment around its hips.

These clay golems cannot speak or make any vocal noise. It walks and moves with a slow, clumsy gait. It weighs around 600 pounds.

When a clay golem enters combat, there is a cumulative 1% chance each round that its elemental spirit breaks free and the golem goes berserk. The uncontrolled golem goes on a rampage, attacking the nearest living creature or smashing some object smaller than itself if no creature is within reach, then moving on to spread more destruction. Once a clay golem goes berserk, no known method can reestablish control.

The damage a clay golem deals doesn't heal naturally and resists healing spells. A person attempting to cast a conjuration healing spell on a creature damaged by a clay golem must succeed on a DC 26 caster level check, or the spell has no effect on the injured person.

A clay golem is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. In addition, certain spells and effects function differently against the creature, as noted.

A "move earth" spell drives the golem back 120 feet and deals 3d12 points of damage to it.

A disintegrate spell slows the golem as the slow spell for 1d6 rounds and deals 1d12 points of damage.

An earthquake spell cast directly at a clay golem stops it from moving on its next turn and deals 5d10 points of damage. The golem gets no saving throw against any of these effects.

Any magical attack against a clay golem that deals acid damage heals 1 point of damage for every 3 points of damage it would otherwise deal. If the amount of healing would cause the golem to exceed its full normal hit points, it gains any excess as temporary hit points. For example, a clay golem hit by the breath weapon of a Dragon heals 7 points of damage if the attack would have dealt 22 points of damage. A clay golem gets no saving throw against magical attacks that deal acid damage.

After it has engaged in at least 1 round of combat, a clay golem can haste itself once per day as a free action. The effect lasts 3 rounds and is otherwise the same as the spell.

A clay golem's body must be sculpted from a single block of clay weighing at least 1,000 pounds, treated with rare oils and powders worth 1,500 gp. Creating the body requires a DC 15 Craft sculpting check or a DC 15 Craft pottery check.

A flesh golem is a ghoulish collection of stolen humanoid body parts, stitched together into a single composite form. No natural animal willingly tracks a flesh golem. The golem wears whatever clothing its creator desires, usually just a ragged pair of trousers. It has no possessions and no weapons. It stands 8 feet tall and weighs almost 500 pounds.

A flesh golem cannot speak, although it can emit a hoarse roar of sorts. It walks and moves with a stiff-jointed gait, as if not in complete control of its body.

When a flesh golem enters combat, there is a cumulative 1% chance each round that its elemental spirit breaks free and the golem goes berserk. The uncontrolled golem goes on a rampage, attacking the nearest living creature or smashing some object smaller than itself if no creature is within reach, then moving on to spread more destruction.

The golem's creator, if within 60 feet, can try to regain control by speaking firmly and persuasively to the golem, which requires a DC 19 Charisma check. It takes 1 minute of inactivity by the golem to reset the golem's berserk chance to 0%.

A flesh golem is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. In addition, certain spells and effects function differently against the creature, as noted below.

A magical attack that deals cold or fire damage slows a flesh golem as the slow spell for 2d6 rounds, with no saving throw.

A magical attack that deals electricity damage breaks any slow effect on the golem and heals 1 point of damage for every 3 points of damage the attack would otherwise deal. If the amount of healing would cause the golem to exceed its full normal hit points, it gains any excess as temporary hit points. For example, a flesh golem hit by a lightning bolt heals 3 points of damage if the attack would have dealt 11 points of damage. A flesh golem gets no saving throw against attacks that deal electricity damage.

The pieces of a flesh golem must come from normal human corpses that have not decayed significantly. Assembly requires a minimum of six different bodies—one for each limb, the torso including the head, and the brain. In some cases, more bodies may be necessary. Special unguents and bindings worth 500 gp are also required. Note that creating a flesh golem requires casting a spell with the evil descriptor.

Assembling the body requires a DC 13 Craft leatherworking check or a DC 13 Heal check.

The iron golem has a humanoid body made from iron. An iron golem can be fashioned in any manner, just like a stone golem. Although it almost always displays armor of some sort. Its features are much smoother than those of a stone golem. Iron golems sometimes carry a short sword. An iron golem is 12 feet tall and weighs about 5,000 pounds.

An iron golem cannot speak or make any vocal noise, nor does it have any distinguishable odor. It moves with a ponderous but smooth gait. Each step causes the floor to tremble unless it is on a thick, solid foundation.

Iron golems favor a breath weapon. A cloud of poisonous gas. Although they are known project a caustic vomit for up to ten feet.

An iron golem is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. In addition, certain spells and effects function differently against the creature, as noted.

A magical attack that deals electricity damage slows an iron golem as the slow spell for 3 rounds, with no saving throw.

A magical attack that deals fire damage breaks any slow effect on the golem and heals 1 point of damage for each 3 points of damage the attack would otherwise deal. If the amount of healing would cause the golem to exceed its full normal hit points, it gains any excess as temporary hit points. For example, an iron golem hit by a fireball gains back 6 hit points if the damage total is 18 points. An iron golem gets no saving throw against fire effects.

An iron golem is affected normally by rust attacks, such as that of a rust monster or a rusting grasp spell.

An iron golem's body is sculpted from 5,000 pounds of pure iron, smelted with rare tinctures and admixtures costing at least 10,000 gp. Assembling the body requires a DC 20 Craft armorsmithing check or a DC 20 Craft weaponsmithing check.

A stone golem has a humanoid body made from stone. A stone golem is 9 feet tall and weighs around 2,000 pounds. Its body is frequently stylized to suit its creator. For example, it might look like it is wearing armor, with a particular symbol carved on the breastplate, or have designs worked into the stone of its limbs.

Stone golems are formidable opponents, being physically powerful and difficult to harm.

A stone golem can use a slow effect, as the spell, as a free action once every 2 rounds. The effect has a range of 10 feet and duration of 7 rounds, requiring a DC 17 Will save to negate. The save DC is Constitution-based.

A stone golem is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. In addition, certain spells and effects function differently against the creature, as noted below.

A transmute rock to mud spell slows a stone golem (as the slow spell) for 2d6 rounds, with no saving throw, while transmute mud to rock heals all of its lost hit points.

A stone to flesh spell does not actually change the golem's structure but negates its damage reduction and immunity to magic for 1 full round.

A stone golem's body is chiseled from a single block of hard stone, such as granite, weighing at least 3,000 pounds. The stone must be of exceptional quality, and costs 5,000 gp. Assembling the body requires a DC 17 Craft (sculpting) check or a DC 17 Craft (stonemasonry) check.

A greater stone golem is 18 feet tall and weighs around 32,000 pounds. It resembles a typical stone golem in all respects, except that the Will save DC is 31 against its slow ability. CL 14th; Craft Construct, anti-magic field, geas/quest, slow, symbol of stunning, caster must be at least 14th level; Price 196,000 gp; Cost 105,000 gp + 7,640 XP.

An extensive and exhaustive discourse of golem, their canon, their gaming variants, and their catalogue. But, none of it touches on what the Havenites are employing. Borg is never associated with golem. Because there was none. Until now, that is. Those arcane gestures that Gizmo was fronting were Borg!

Gizmo, nor anyone else on this planet, is of Borg. The Collective has never been here. A world completely sequestered from the Borg. Yet, there it is. Borg gestures, arcane and most subtle, used to "remote" golem. Nor has she Sam forgotten the "markings" on The Master's coffin. Those were Borg, also. Nor is she ignorant of the preeminent dangers and the inherent risks and pitfalls of employing golem—the Löw golem et al. After all. The darkest variation of the Löw golem account is that the creature was actually of Nameless, which if true would explain much why it didn't act like a "regular" golem!

God begot many Light children, but only three dark children: The demons, The Dragons, and, The Nameless. It is the latter that is the least known about. Prometheus Jet Li, a mere mortal and a human at that, knew the most about them. Spent most of his life in league with them—decades of faithful, voluntary servitude. Studying them, arduously. Worshipping them, beyond measure as his "preferred" gods. And look what happened to him.

Of course. Borg are not of Nameless. Nor are they from Nameless. Their origins are demonic and well known. The result of the undoing of a very vain mortal woman by a demon. An undoing that begot the First—the first Borg—Borg Queen One—Borg Zero. Yet, the oldest form of Borg runes, glyphs, and arcane gestures are the language of a much darker People that predate the Borg. Who? The Tribes? No one knows for sure, not even The Borg.

Don't fuck with The Tribes'; it's Forbidden. We are Legion? Yes. So, if we were to partake, employ, dare we say use, what is theirs, would we then be. Their minion? Yes. Like. Those in the Before? Yes. What?! Yes.

This most archaic form of Borg runes, glyphs, and arcane gestures that are in evidence here in Haven. So obsolete that only Borg such as Sam would notice. The greatest sleight of hand. A public hidden that she bends toward, willingly and willfully. But, she's no thrall. Make 'em miss. Make 'em pay. And, always throw with bad intentions. Works in boxing. Works in real life.

Shades of Book Promo being thrilled to have Tomek Kaczanowski on the ranch to promote the book "Practical Unit Testing with TestNG and Mockito."

Then there's the look. Gizmo looks at Sam like she's a more amply endowed Kate Upton doing the Cat Daddy in an almost not there bikini, and the great O is in power! He looks at her like he possesses her, mind, body, and soul. As if he's anticipating his savage rape of her after she's finished her sexy gyrations to that Hip Hop dougie ditty.

But, the look she gives him is priceless. It says, "I'm not your thrall—you've obviously mistaken me for someone who cares." Gizmo gets served, in spades!

Sam is to murder what Television is to entertainment. Lou Thesz, Bruno Sammartino, "Slick" Rick Flair, Simon Angel, hell even her brother Jack the Ripper. These are murder's version of the Radio. Sam is something you have to see to believe, and that outweighs anything that she's done that's been outside of the purview of "good" taste and ROE so far.

Deranged. Despicable. Wanton. With a penchant for shameless immorality and going dirty. She is to being a total babe what Edgar Allen Poe is to literature. The revelation of the darker side to what we commonly perceive as a "happy" thing.

That look of hers speaks volumes to him. So does the smile that she flashes him. Suddenly, there's those voices again in his head. Growing louder. Reaching a deafening crescendo. So many voices in multiplicity. Too many, this time. His brain overloads. His mind short-circuits. That's when his world goes black.

"Will he be okay?"

"You ask that like I'm supposed to care."

It's always the hearing that comes back first. His other senses are still absent. At least it's quiet in his head. For now, his thoughts are his own. Although his free will is not. They still control him. He is a prisoner in his own body. Soon, like before, They'll make him forget that fact.

"I just wanna jizz all over her jugs!!!"

"Who doesn't? But I'd include her lips."

Then, silence again. The voices are gone, along with his remembrance of his situation. The slate having been wiped clean, he doesn't remember blacking out or the aftermath. He opens his eyes, in full control of his faculties. He's in his chambers. Three faces are looking at him. Queen Mary and those two foreigners— finger-licking Dame Chillingsworth and that lip-smacking Sam Phillips.

“Are you okay?”

“Of course. Why would you ask that, my queen?”

Queen Mary starts to say something. But Sam quickly cuts her off with a raised eyebrow. Tit for tat. A quick study in her own right, Queen Mary does a smart backpedal.

“You were taking so long in your chambers that I got worried and decided to check on you.” She winks at him as if she's teasing. His answer, in turn, is equally playful.

“My queen. I'm old, not incompetent. I was just taking a nap. Besides, you know how I hate such political affairs. It takes all of my will power just to muster the stomach to go to them. At least you brought along some eye candy to remind me that the evening will not be a total loss.”

“Worst case scenario, he's an adjunct.”

“An adjunct to apparatus wearing mechanism, no less. Enslaved to something that's not even a person. He might as well be a thrall to one of their homegrown Nosferatus.”

Again, The Dame and Sam conversing privately in plain sight, with none the wiser. They're being watched. For sure, by the Havenites. Quite possibly, by whomever or rather whatever is controlling Gizmo. Gizmo is to the royal family of Haven what Merlin is to Camelot's King Author. So, he being compromised speaks volumes.

“And this Borg connection is most disturbing! They're not even supposed to know the word. It's expressly forbidden. When they go off-planet, which is rare with them being so parochial in their inclination, great lengths are gone to sequestering them from those things and anything about them. Yet, from what you've told me, you continue to flaunt such things in their presence.”

“The connection is implicit. Transient, at best. The signs—runes, glyphs, and gestures—are archaic, all predating the Borg. As for this robot girl flaunting her Borg. It doesn't matter. They're so naïve about such things, they don't even have the slightest glimmer about what they're being exposed to.”

“Even so, I don't like it. I don't like it one bit.”

“Duly noted.”

“Smart ass!”

“Guilty as charged.”

“Please, be serious.”

Then serious I will be.

“Part CSI, part X-Files, Torchwood is the team we'd all love to be part of, where excitement comes before morality, and the rules are made as you go along. Separate from the government, outside the police, beyond the United Nations: Torchwood sets its own rules. Led by the

enigmatic Captain Jack Harkness, the Torchwood team delves into the unknown and fights the impossible.”

“Stay where you are. Or stride across the skin of the world.”

More than someone’s high-profile charge. You, Dame Chillingsworth, are a person of interest.

“Was our meeting by pure chance?”

“Yes it was.”

“Then we truly are the fly in the ointment.”

“Shall we uncover who’s who?”

“Let’s.”

The moment passes. They are once more in the here and now. There is that fleeting look in Gizmo’s eyes, something that Queen Mary would never notice, that both the Lost perceive. Dame Chillingsworth’s heart flutters. Sam’s cruel mouth flashes that sly, “Dennis the Menace” grin—the smile of an unimaginably evil thing that does unimaginably evil things. That look of his says, “I don’t know where you two went to, but I know you went somewhere.” It’s also obvious that Gizmo is oblivious to what his eyes are broadcasting.

A localized null field, something quite beyond the science or the arcane of the Havenites, envelopes Sam.

Dame Chillingsworth can “sense” that something is amiss with Sam, but she can’t tell what.

Of course, Queen Mary is unaware of the shenanigans going on right under her nose.

“Have you ever killed a child?”

The voices in Sam’s head are totally unfamiliar. They sing-song in unison. As if they are Borg. They are compelling. As if they are Borg. Yet, they are not Borg.

“Yes. I killed them all the time when I was myself a child.”

“Do you still engage in such atrocity?”

Sam “says” nothing. In her mind’s eye, she sports that same sly, “Dennis the Menace” grin that she’s sporting in “real life.”

“Unclean! She is Evil!! An Abomination that will surely consume us!!!”

The voices falter, and in their brief confusion, they reveal too much of themselves and their nefarious plans for this world. They dare not even try to wipe the girl’s mind clean of their encounter, least she contaminate them with her intrinsically vile nature. Instead, they make a hasty retreat. The null field goes bye-bye.

Dame Chillingsworth gives Sam the expected questioning look. Sam in turn just continues to flash that sly grin of hers.

Sam’s parting shot in this abruptly ended “conversation”: *“Never pose a question to me whose answer would drown you. Better yet. Bother me no more. Least I defile you with my nature, the very nature that abhors you so much.”*

Again, Dame Chillingsworth can “sense” that Sam is “conversing” with someone, or something, she just can’t tell with whom or what. She can also sense when the “communication” is severed. A hunch? Women’s intuition? Whatever it is, it’s not an exact science that she’s employing. And, again, Queen Mary is oblivious.

Sam shifts gears and engages in a “real” (spoken) conversation with Queen Mary.

“Your Majesty. Who is Christine Tremblay?”

“Christi is Chief of Staff for Product Systems a wholly-owned subsidiary of CAD/CAM Systems Inc. Why do you ask?”

“Your Majesty. I’d very much like to meet her. Will she be attending the party?”

“Yes, she will. When she arrives, I’ll introduce her.”

And that’s that. They leave Gizmo in his chambers and make their way back to the party which is in full swing. The queen leaves them to attend to her other guests. The Dame and Sam are left to mingle on their own. Sometime later, during the course of their mingling, Gizmo joins the party. He is his usual aloof self. Out of politeness, he does condescend to make small talk with the well-to-do and ne’er-do-well who comes into his scope. Mostly, he stays near the punch bowl and imbibes liberally to alleviate his obvious boredom with the whole affair. He knows how to hold his liquor. The punch is spiked with hard liquor, but he never looks the least bit tipsy.

Just like the queen promised, when Ms. Tremblay arrives with her entourage in tow complete with a security detail befitting an executive of her status, Queen Mary grabs Sam by the arm and introduces the retired librarian to the active chief. The Dame follows, hot on their heels.

Sam and Christi shake hands. Christi has a strong grip. Of course, Sam is no slouch herself. Then, out of the blue, the big girl Sam goes cryptic.

“Something rudimentary. Like a. A reanimator hence the haunting neon of its fluorescent lime green coupling a potent psychotropic maybe LSD exposed to a powerful morphic field.”

“What?”

“A friend chatted me up about it. I plan to meet her later and continue our conversation.”

“Okay?”

I’m not getting the reaction I was expecting. Your words are appropriately questioning. But. Your eyes. Your eyes say nothing, nothing at all. Only a machine is that dispassionate. A Borg would be envious. I doubt you’re real.

So. Sam makes a point of mentioning that she and the Dame are going to spot the patio later on in the evening. And then the two girls make their polite excuses for leaving. Once they are out of earshot, The Dame gives Sam a proper tongue lashing. And we’re not talking about the good kind, either – nope, not cunnilingus, so purge those dirty thoughts of yours and shelve them for later, much later.

“Well that was for nothing. You make a point of meeting this bird. Then when you do you go cryptic and we leave.”

“How British of you. You really must get out more, Dame. Your virgin is showing in spades.”

“What?! Virgin?! Have you gone crack brain? Before your distant mortal ancestors were glimmer in God’s eye, I lost my cherry to a dashing young.” The Dame gets that deer in the headlight look. She finally gets it.

“Close your mouth, you’re drooling.” The Dame shuts her yap. “Can you hear, now?”

“Yes. Sorry. It won’t happen again.”

“You look so sexy when you make promises you know you can’t keep.” Sam “hears” static. She pauses. Tilts her head. Yanks on an earlobe. As if to garner better reception. Then, she “hears”:

“Is anyone going to JavaOne this year or went to a previous JavaOne? I know that Boeing has a hotel per diem of \$284/night. Unfortunately, the hotels around the Moscone Center in San Francisco are quite expensive, even with the conference rates. I booked a hotel with a conference rate that was slightly under the per diem but I have to wonder if it’s a ‘fleabag’ hotel that I should avoid. I’m just wondering which hotels people have booked in the past and if they’ve exceeded their hotel per diem. Is it difficult to get approval if you exceed your hotel per diem? Are there any hotels around the Moscone Center I should avoid? Where did you stay?”

Unintelligible, overlapping chatter. Shades of Howard Hawks and Moonlighting. Then:

“Well, I stayed at the Downtown Hilton.”

Some random “conversation” that Sam happens to pick up? That turns out to be clue? Probably in code?

Her passive eavesdropping is detected. What’s the giveaway? The strange voices in her head cease as abruptly as they began. The stoppage tells her many things. But, foremost:

Scenario one. She’s dealing with pros. So, it logically follows, that the conversation that she overheard accidentally was coded. Whether it’s a clue or not depends upon whether it’s related to the case she’s working or it’s just coincidental espionage.

Scenario two. Her imagination is working in overdrive. She could have overheard the conversation of some savvy corporate types. The forensics would be the same. If so, the conversation was what it seemed to be. Not coded. Not a clue. Just talking suits, nothing more.

She casually surveys the room. Nothing.

The Dame knows better than to ask now in a public place what’s up. So she plays it off and continues her end of their idle chit chat. She’ll get the particulars later when they’re back in Sam’s ROOM.

“Such a nice mix of the here and now.”

“Tommy Hilfiger would have a blush if he saw the couture that’s being sported.”

“For sure.”

Sam flicks out her tongue vulgarly. As if to punctuate. The Dame doesn’t need a second invitation, grabs the girl’s arm and they sashay about, working the crowd.

Here in this fashion interplay of the local and the off-world, the 1950s dominates. With the prevalence of the mid-thigh length miniskirt, of the slim skirt—pencil skirt aka the wiggle skirt

aka wiggle—persuasion, being the most noticeable, but not the only, immodest deviation from Ike-era couture dogma.

The Koo Stark, that Sam and The Dame and many of the other fashionable women at this fancy *soiree* are wearing, epitomizes that nexus—a form-fitting skirted suit that’s usually worn blouseless with the jacket buttoned, and typically accessorized with a pearl necklace, prudz, a torpedo bra, and some formal style of dress shoe with a stiletto heel like a carey, debra, etc.

The Koo’s skirt is a wiggle, which is very 1950s, but its immodest to say the least, mid-thigh-length hemline is not; as a rule of thumb, a hemline that’s just below the knee is 1950s. Why mid-thigh length? Why not shorter? Because mid-thigh length gives you the degenerate sense of a short hobble skirt—restrictive and at the same time immodest.

And, of course, the prevailing practice of wearing no blouse with a Koo is definitely not 1950s, let alone modest—it’s about those twins. So is the pairing of a one-cup-size-too-small, underwire bra—Victorian jut.

How would you describe women’s fashion of the 1950s? Three words—Full Skirts, Slim Skirts, Tiny Waists, and The Twins. Well, that’s four, but who’s counting. In a word: feminine.

To digress:

You went from suits and formality to pants (AHHHH) and two-piece bathing suits.

Or, a tad bit less succinctly:

Saddle shoes, white bucks, poodle skirts, circular flowered skirts, bobby sox, pretty matched outfits, one piece bathing suits, were in fashion for teens.

Women dressed up to go to the city or out in public, skirted suits with matching hats, large pins, pendants, clip on earrings. Relaxing at home they would wear house dresses, Bermuda shorts. Skirts hit just below the knee.

It was a very feminine era, dress was modest.

Elvis was king, drive-in movies were popular, sock hops were in, a pregnant teen was rare, and drugs were the medications old people had to take. The most fantastic time to grow up.

Or, verbosely:

Fashion for women returned with a vengeance and the 1950s era is known mainly for two silhouettes. That of the full skirt and the pencil slim tubular skirt, with both placing great emphasis on the narrowness of the waist.

Women’s clothes were seldom prettier or more generally “wearable” than they were in 1950. The end of 1949 had found fashion apparently headed for a large-scale revival of the 1920s, but this rather extreme trend modified itself greatly. Some silhouettes of the flapper age remained, but they were so modernized as to be hardly detectable.

One of these was the chemise dress. In its 1950 form, this was a dress cut straight and fairly tight from the armhole to the flank, without a waist; the woman created her own waist, as high or low and as tight or loose as she wanted it, by means of a belt. This feature made the chemise a wearable dress, easy on difficult figures, and it was popular in the couture as well as in budget dress departments and in both day and evening versions. These latter dresses usually had stiff flares near the hem line, which were termed Spanish flounces or “trumpet” skirts.

Another feature of 1950 fashions that persisted from the 1920s revival was sleevelessness. Sleeveless dresses were worn for all four seasons of the year. Women liked them because of the easy fit they gave through the shoulders. Sleeveless blouses were also worn and, for evening, harness tops that were hardly more than yokes around the neck.

These harness tops were often in velvet. Velvet was one of the chief reasons why 1950 was such a pretty year in fashion. Always flattering to a woman's complexion, it was lavishly used by designers, particularly cotton velvet (velveteen). There were tailored velveteen suits and dresses for day, short dinner dresses in pretty colors of velveteen such as Parma violet, velvet ball gowns and dominoes, and evening separates that combined velvet with fabrics like tulle and stiff cotton lace. The short, swingy little odd jacket in black velveteen became a best seller, as did the velvet pump and the velvet belt.

An abundance of transparent fabrics also added to the atmosphere of prettiness in 1950; organdies and chiffons in white and pale colors and sweet sherbet tones were worn both day and evening. At night gray tulle was often seen, in every shade from mist to gunmetal.

Other fashions of 1950 included stoles; lengths of matching fabric which were used to wrap gracefully the shoulders of dresses, wool dresses as well as more formal dresses.

There was also a trend toward longer hair; the short crop began to give way to more feminine coiffures, and a few chignons (knots of hair at the nape of the neck) were seen. Eyes were outlined with pencil and mascara to make them seem larger. This fashion, so quickly and completely adopted that it was featured even in the big news weeklies, took on rather amusing aspects, and women with the new made-up eyes were referred to as "doe-eyed."

In suits and coats 1950 was notable for tailoring. The suit of the year was the tailor's suit, with a straight skirt and a jacket tailored as strictly as the jacket of an old-fashioned riding habit, with high, notched lapels, narrow sleeves, high armholes and vents at either side or in the back. More redingotes were seen—sharply fitted single-breasted coats with notched lapels and vented skirts.

In Paris there was a definite trend toward tunic coats and flared three-quarter coats. However, the loose, fleecy topcoat continued as popular as ever, in bright colors as well as a very dark banker's gray.

The most fashionable color scheme of the year was black and white, used day and night, winter and summer, and in either proportion—black with white accessories, or white with black accessories. There was a big wave of Spanish colors, like a rich yellow or ruby red worn with accents of black. This Spanish influence was also felt in the widespread use of ball fringe, jet and passementerie, and many hats were of Spanish inspiration, resembling those worn by matadors.

Hats continued quite small in 1950—pillboxes, toques and tiny berets—although there was a noticeable forward movement in the way they were worn.

Little fashions that "caught on" during 1950 included: patent leather, which was used all year round for shoes, bags and belts; accessories in two textures of leather or fabric, and two colors (even satin spectator pumps for the evening); fox furs, which had a big revival; and rhinestone jewelry, big, glittery and frankly fake, which was worn from the morning on, on tweed suits as well as on lace evening dresses.

Alas, things are sometimes what they seem. There are not always plans within plans. So, when Dame Chillingsworth and Sam retreat to the patio in the wee hours of the night with the party

still going full blast. There is no ambush or revelations or phishing. It's just the two of them. Then again, maybe not.

"But, like the fat girl in the mirror with her skirt hiked up to her ass, exploding through it, he doesn't see it. He just doesn't see it. He's a very jealous, insecure man. Hence back to Power and Glory. They didn't create our dolls because he never liked me. He's jealous of me. Couldn't look like me. Couldn't get the women I got. Couldn't have the body I had, and still have. A little smaller, but still. He didn't have the security that I have. The self confidence that I have. So he pushes people back. Don't do this. Don't do that. Don't create t-shirts for Power and Glory. Don't send them to the top. Get them close, but then pull them back down. Then split the team up. That's him, man. That's what he's all about. He can look in the mirror and see what he wants to see, but the people who know him, know the real him. And if he looks deep enough, he knows the real him. He's just a punk ass bitch."

"Enough about Vinnie Mac. Your thoughts on Punk?"

"Look. I think it is really obvious that CM Punk nowadays is nowhere similar to the CM Punk we got last summer. The summer we deemed as 'The Summer of Punk.' That CM Punk was outspoken, ruthless, sinister, and most of all, rebellious. I mean, for Christ's sakes, go back and look at the videos of his shoot and his promo with Vince McMahon. That man was a riot."

"And the girls?"

"Which ones?"

"You know. The two Lost ones."

"Christ, she's cute! Christ, she's fucking cute!! All of the softness completely drained from that hard, pretty face of hers—so VERY 1950s!!!"

"The Brit or the Yank? You just described both of them."

"The Yank has awesome twins and a great ass, to go along with those vicious legs of hers."

"Ditto for the Brit."

"But, she the Yank is hotter."

"How so?"

"She's got second to none skills in The Business. She's a crazy psycho chick to perfection—I REALLY dig crazy chicks. And, she ain't too shabby on the mic, either. I love what I'm seeing from her. Currently, my favorite. Did I say how much I dig crazy chicks?"

"Yes, you did."

Thighs Wide Shut

Rebox's otherwise generic Brand-X LINQ-N-Go device employs Corning's Gorilla Glass for its touch screen. A sleek sexy design reminiscent of Apple's iPhone/iPod, the linq is nevertheless a low-end in this case, bottom end burner phone. A throwaway burner of the type popular with drug dealers, spies, gang bangers, and low-income people like students and the working poor.

The linq comes in two flavors – vanilla—no OS, so you have to load an operating system of your choice – or – Droid, where Google's Android OS1 is the preloaded operating system. Either way, the phone is free. What you pay for is the time phone time and a one dollar per day rental fee. You pay as you go.

When you stop paying your provider or your rental, your phone “bricks” itself. Becoming a nice shiny paperweight with no telltale forensics from its user or its use. Wherever you might be. No troublesome late fees. No nagging bill collectors. No pesky repossessioners. Just you and a very dead phone.

When you turn your phone in on time at a Redbox kiosk, the same thing happens except for the bricking part—no telltale forensics from its user or its use. Auto reset to virgin upon check in.

Other attributes that appeal to spies, the criminal element, and privacy advocates those who crave secrecy who are not spies or criminals.

The linq switches between service providers, always choosing the cheapest one, at that given moment, for each call. This means that two calls, made back to back, could be with two different service providers. Additionally. Billing is anonymous. Makes tracing phone calls very hard, next to impossible.

Passive two-way interfacing between Redbox and your rental phone via publish-n-subscribe and military-grade IronKey encryption, make phone taps very hard, next to impossible.

Bottomline? In effect, you have a rental phone with the privacy of prepaid phone.

Unlike the iPod, you can't smug a linq with your fingerprints that's if you have any. That goes for its touch screen and its chrome back.

Sniper bling? Yep. A chrome back that is shiny, but not reflective. Zero-reflective touch screen, also.

Load Hulu which by default is GPS delete as your OS, with a vudu overlay, and using perls as your hands-free integrator, and your formerly vanilla linq suddenly becomes something that rivals a Bene Gesserit OSX Tricorder. With none of the assimilation risk. Comm-link. Jump-link. And, Bene Gesserit-grade tricorder. In one nondescript package. As Hak - Jim Fullington The Sandman would say, “Like a Dell XPS with its Ubuntu hardware. This be the shit, brotha.”

Use an offshore Cayman Islands bank account that's effectively no-limit to pay for your phone service and rental fee, and suddenly your travel becomes perpetually “under the radar” so to speak. This is why linqs are becoming increasingly popular with wealthy jetsetters.

The reboot is even more chilling for Big Brother and Big Brother types. Technically, a linq-n-go isn't a phone. Yep. What a kicker. Its name is not just a marketing ploy. It's a for real, link and go. The revolution that cannot be derailed – It's much too late to stop it. Individuals with the

power to crossover between universes without the need for a Stargate, Bridge Gateway, starship, ROOM, TARDIS, etc.

In effect, untraceable m-verse traversal. Go. Anywhere. Go. Any when? All you need is a phone that really isn't a phone. The realization of what smartphones promised, but couldn't deliver. A prelude to the end of governments as we know them? If so. To an anarchist – Let's cream?!

But, that's not even the cherry. Employ a look-ahead in the guise of an ordinary object which allows you to reconnoiter your destination. Use the very same as your goback your exit strategy. And, now you have a novel solution to the closed room Agatha Christie conundrum. Murderer's delight.

Tress animates. Rigor mortis gives way to not. No longer the rigid corpse that isn't a corpse. She stirs in the silk sheets of the marble bed. Oh. Italian marble! Fucking on Italian marble!!!

Echoes of the long ago past when they slept in tombs. Those stone coffins of theirs Nosferatus' that were covered in elaborate glyphs and runes that looked Borg but weren't.

Sam is dressing. Tress sits up and admires her girl from across the room. Covets. Lust from afar. It's been a long time, too damn long, since she's tasted a woman in her mouth. And. Such a sweet, sweet pussy this girl has. Kill a tree. Eat a beaver.

A woman can get lost in a pussy like that. Muff dive. Deep dive and you never wanna come up. Her nethers scream, "Eat me!" You just want to cum and cum and cum. Again.

Something slimy moves quickly up her leg. She reaches under the covers and grabs it. Bringing it into view. It's a shiver. Part aphrodisiac, part venereal disease, created by modern-day mad scientist and national treasure of the Swedish sex industry Professor Yasmine Garbi to greatly enhance the sexual experience.

This monstrous little parasite looks like a phallic combination of an extra-large garden slug and a Jimmy Dean sausage. Of course, since demons can't get venereal disease, it can't infect them. It just gets them off. Just like the proverbial rocket!

As a contagion, shivers have two complications. Within a few hours it turns its victim's mind to mush. And, it also has the unfortunate side-effect of making the subject a ravaging sexual psychopath.

In a group setting for example, an orgy. A legion of slug-infested serial rapists looking for love in all the wrong places.

David Croneberg infected the tenants of the self-contained Starliner apartments in Toronto, Canada – 1974. Starting with his first experiment, the fetching Annabelle Walker played by the fetching Kathy Graham in the movie adaptation. This monstrous parasite multiplied and invaded the hapless occupants, turning them into a pack of Id-driven sex maniacs. Under the influence of this insidious, invasive disease, families turned to incest and murder, strangers sexually assaulted the helpless, and finally they banded together as a pack of bloodthirsty, libido-driven animals. Fodder for a documentary that Croneberg was filming.

Tress eats the shiver. Swallowing it whole like a raw oyster. She throws off the sheets and begins masturbating. Pretty in pink.

Sam has her back to Tress. She can see Tress in the dresser mirror. Phillips smiles as Tress finger fucks. Then, some inappropriate giggling. Cause? Sam seems to be viewing something hilarious, but from Tress' vantage point, the Brit can't tell what Sam is watching. Besides, the Dame is otherwise distracted by that preoccupation at hand. In the moment.

Phillips has her Weirdings setting on the dresser. The holster and the module. Beside each is their generic brand-x counterpart. A Redbox linq-n-go is syncing up with the Borg module. A dollar store universal holster is syncing with and being loaded by the Borg holster. Which dollar store? Family Dollar. They're so cheap, they consistently undercut Wal-Mart, and they're the only retailer that does so.

Her perls will be used for hands-free, ergo networking and device integration. With none of problems that are seemingly almost always related to one particular network Riverbed appliance that may have some questionable configuration settings.

Sam is a licensed reseller for Redbox of linqs to Redbox kiosk franchises. The formerly bricked linq which she liberated from a dumpster and rehabilitated, and is now syncing up with her Borg module. One that she rents to this day from Redbox. Now, that's a story in itself. One for another day.

She's running a custom vudu on her perls, purse, and the generics. Additionally, it's vudu overlaying hulu, for the linq. Thanks to the custom vudu, now she can open and close her purse undetected. The hulu is also custom.

Her dyke, the look, not the persuasion. Phillips' hair is yanked back into a sternka. Max Factor troweled on extra heavy, bulldyke heavy, the heaviest, by her compact. Resulting in a hard, severe face and the amplification of her loathsome mouth. Think: Shirley Eaton as Jill Masterson in "Goldfinger." A hard, pretty face and large ugly mouth befitting a strident, man-hating bulldyke in "Lezbo Madness," circa 1950, or "The Girl From Rio" (Future Women) (The Seven Secrets of Sumuru), circa 1969.

Katz, previously pursed, pierces her right earlobe. Gloves. White Gloves. Prudz. Sternns. The explicit Borg of klaw and knobb. A suspicion, fueled by the way she's standing - sort of masculine, kinda wide-legged - that she's strapping a flesh-colored kock, fused seamlessly to her nethers underneath her skirt. In place of her usual flesh-colored/flesh-feeling thong. If so, Tress would rather not know.

When Sam wishes to get about unnoticed/least noticed in public, she goes dyke. Straight men will notice her body, but will subconsciously choose to not "notice" her face, for obvious reasons. As far as women are concerned. For equally obvious reasons, only hardcore dykes don't get unnerved at some level by her overall gender-bending look. Her walk advertises that she's strapping, and well-endowed to boot. Hanging. Hung like a horse. In your face!!! - I walk in stilettos like I'm "John C. Holmes" hung. Additionally, some "other" disconcerting masculine bits (dyke). As such, she gets noticed less by her own gender. As a rule, people will remember general details, but nothing too specific, about her. A built dyke with a harsh, pretty face. And. Something Borg about her.

Disturbing. Dyke scary. A scary, dyke version of Sarah Palin. Sarah Palin as a dyke. Dyke Palin, if you're so inclined. A bulldyke. A "masculine" dyke, so to speak. A masculine dyke: Now, that's redundancy, if there ever was.

There's something else that has nothing to do with stealth afoot here. She's in one of those "moods" of hers. Been in it for a while—she prefers this extreme look. She woke up, this morning, preferring it, like so on many previous mornings. She prefers to go dyke.

As for sexy. The sexy way in the conventional, mainstream sense that she looked yesterday. The way that she looked when she picked up Tress. Is shit to her. Shit as opposed to the shit. A complete reversal of mainstream convention.

Of course, dirty is still for how she goes out looking when she's on one of her binges. Strung out, filthy, and completely fucked up. When she's sober, she prefers dyke, this dyke.

She still fucks men. She still likes fucking men. But, she doesn't get the same buzz from fucking a man that she gets from fucking another woman. There are times when her menu is exclusively pie. There are times when that pie must also have a dick—She-male only. There are times when she will wear her kock and not remove it. She's the she-male, lying down with she-males.

Maybe, it's just a phase. She's had a number of them as she progresses further into the undead of her unlife. Maybe, she's turning into a dyke. For now, and for the foreseeable future, she's a tweener. She tolerates sexy. It's shit. Assuming it only when she has to. She craves dirty. It's the bomb. She prefers the disturbing look of dyke, this scary dyke. It's the shit. Enough said. We've beat that dead horse aplenty.

The syncing finishes. In the front, clipped to the waistband of her skirt on the leftside next to her purse, is the slide holster of her Borg tricorder. Into this, she holsters her linq. The generic universal holster is clipped to the waistband of her skirt on the rightside. It's also worn in the front. Librarian style, proper. Strict. Per regs.

She slips on her jacket and buttons it. She's braless and commando the kock doesn't count. As aforementioned, or at least strongly implied, she's not wearing her push-up bra and her equally skimpy thong, underneath her business suit. Of course, she can reach through her jacket if she needs to access her purse, linq, or universal.

Whatever she's watching, she ceases to watch. The view closes as she turns around. Her dyke has the desired effect on Tress.

Tress stops dead in her tracks. Suddenly, she's no longer in the mood. She shoves off the bed and scurries into the bathroom. She wants no parts of dyke Sam.

On the other hand. Sam, in the mood for "games" of the sort that Goon gods play, in pursuit of her now elusive quarry, follows Tress into the bathroom.

That's when the tussle occurs. Both of the girls are skilled fighters. Both are Golden Gloves heavyweight champs. Sam was All City. But. Tress was All UK.

It's as if they were longtime parallel champions in Pride who'd never had the inclination publicly to smash one another. Strikeforce would dub it a heavyweight superfight—neither has ever been knocked out in the ring, pugilistically, and both have stupidly powerful right and left hands.

Tress barely makes the heavyweight minimum, while Sam looks to be in the best shape of her life.

With the bell figuratively rung, Tress comes out swinging. Sam, always cooperative for this kind of request, drops her head and swings back. It is a manic first minute. After some long moments in a Greco clinch, when they separate, Tress drops Sam with a left uppercut/overhand right combo and jumps on her in a heap.

Tress has no intention of being raped. And, it's Sam's obvious intention to do just that. As such, Tress rains down the would-be finishing punches that end up lulling the eye a little bit, as Sam is very quietly grabbing onto Tress' right leg and executing her escape.

What happens next is the sneakiest turn of events of the year; while Sam slips out the hatch, she throws a right uppercut through Tress' armpit that knocks Tress out. The follow-up right hand keeps Tress from waking back up anytime soon. This all happens in the space of ten seconds. Shades of Dan "Hollywood" Henderson versus The GOAT—Fedor Emelianenko in Strikeforce in Hoffman Estates, Ill.

If Sam were asked what she called the move afterwards, she'd say very simply, "wrestling"—her answer as terse as the sequence. It is the first time that Tress has ever been knocked out, and it adds to Sam's lore.

She's flipped Tress into next week. And it's not because of some unfair pugilistic advantage either. In other words, she wasn't wearing her prudz when she throttled Tress. She pursed her gloves when she followed Tress into the bathroom. Sam beat Tress fair-and-square.

What happens last is the stuff of legends. Her intent had been to savagely rape Tress. Brutally. As violently as any Goon bulldyke god would or could. Tortured, mutilated, a terrible form of life. And, that's as despicable as rape gets.

The French word *frisson* describes something English has no better word for: a brief intense reaction, usually a feeling of excitement, recognition, or terror. It's often accompanied by a physical shudder.

In the current context. *Frisson*—a brief moment of emotional excitement: shudder, thrill. That is what Sam experiences.

Then. Straddling the fallen Tress, she does absolutely nothing. The moment simply passes. Make no mistake about it. Sam still craves to whore Tress out. But, by choosing not to do so, she again reaffirms that she is beauty, brawn, and brains, in equal measure. A cold, dangerous fish, she is. Beware!

So. If her genuine intent was to donkey-kong Tress, why didn't she follow through? Simply put. Why did she stop herself? If you have to ask, you haven't been paying close enough attention.

Why did she stop herself? The answer is quite simple—Because that the rape would have been highly, inappropriate behavior for no good reason in a public place.

Technically, a ROOM is a monitored area. Therefore, it and its rooms are public domain. Therefore, a public place.

The thrust of your argument. Public. Private. What difference would that make to her? She's insane. A complete nut job. Wacko. Coo coo. Coo coo. Coo coo.

The counter. Public. Private. It makes all the difference in the world. To answer a question with a question. When is a nutter not a nutter?

To digress. She's not criminally insane, because she knows the difference between right and wrong. She's not clinically insane either, because she can tell the difference between what is real and what is not real. Nor is she sane – a normal person.

Remember. She's clinically sane. Ergo, the lunatic degenerate monster with self-control. Able to function in, and meet the expectations of, "polite" society. Part-n-parcel of that is the abiding of social conventions and commonly agreed upon behavioral norms. When a nutter is not a nutter, clinically speaking, that is.

She's not, nor has she ever been, the one-dimensional and therefore predictable homicidal maniac who loses herself in mindless bloodlust. So. She's not some storybook villain who's easy fodder for the hero.

Just like a normal person, because she wants to do a thing doesn't mean she always will do it no matter how much she wants to.

The example to drive the point home, if you're still not convinced. The thing you do all of your life. Every day of your life. You make choices. Good or evil. You make choices.

You're a heterosexual male. An auteur of the female persuasion. There is a woman at work. The haughty hottie. What?! The hottest chick around, and she knows it. Reeks of it. Sho'nuff?! Yes! Yes! Yes!

Fuckable. Very fuckable. Leggy. Nice twins. Nice hips. Slender. Shapely. Curvy. The trademark—Flat, pancake ass-Tight! Big mouth. In a word—Stacked! Pam Grier? Nope. Wrong persuasion. Fuckasaurus? Cold—not into geriatric cooch. Young, white, snapper—under thirty. Blowjob Betty? Warm. Deep Throat? Warmer. Linda Lovelace? Much warmer. Think: Whitebread—suburbia—a very "generic" slice, as they say in the vernacular.

Think: vintage porn queen, Janey Robbins. IYHO in your humble opinion—a "real" Edwina "Fast Eddie" Chambers; except, this one isn't a whored-out, atheist dyke.

Happily married. Monogamous. The better half in one of those modern, childless couples—I'm the center of attention for my husband in our marriage.

The vibe that she gives off? Unapologetically racist, condescendingly so, and proud of it—radiating with aplomb, no less. All of my friends are so very, very, very white—just like me—WASPs Only, Please!!! All others, "Look, but don't touch!!!"

High maintenance. Totally. Out of your league.

Avarice. Shallow. Vain. And phony. Sexy, deep for a woman, raspy, smoky voice—with just a hint, that "ooooh!" the perfect "tinge" of that famous Marilyn Monroe squeak. A "teeth as white as they can be," insincere smile. A girl who lives by two tenets, when it comes to mercantile. Bling is my best friend—gold and silver, preferably diamonds, sapphires, rubies, and furs—expensive. I love money that jingles, but I prefer money that folds, and lots of it.

A girl who lives by the motto that, "You can never be too greedy or too white."

Plus. Which should come as no surprise. She's a strict, waiting for "The Rapture," Southern Baptist. And, just in case you haven't already guessed, she's a PAP—Protestant American Princess. The Gentile version of a JAP (Jewish American Princess). In other words, to reiterate the painfully obvious, she's utterly unattainable as far as you are concerned.

She walks to and fro. Back and forth. In front of your cube. Teasing you without really meaning to. You can hear her before you can see her. Her stiletto heels stabbing the carpeted floor. Your fantasies of taking her begin as soon as you hear that sound, her sound. She's young, well-built, and very attractive. You lust for her every time that you hear her and every time that you see her. You very much want to fuck her. You very much want to whore her out. Ram your dick in her every orifice – mouth, pussy, and ass.

You want to eat her out – ravishing her pussy with your mouth. Every time that you see her. Every time that you hear her voice. Every time that you think about her – at work, at home, etc. – you have these lurid fantasies about her. You obsess about her. You're obsessed with her, the very thought of her. You're hers. And, you wish to God that she were yours. Simply put. You want to ravage her in every way imaginable, and then some. But, she's married. And, she has absolutely no interest in you, let alone having you, whatsoever, in any way, shape, or form—You know this for an absolute certainty. So. You're just coworkers. Working in the same building, on the same floor, in the same wing, for the same modern monolithic multinational corporation. So, you never broach the subject with her. You never force yourself upon her. You just let it be. A figment in your mind. Your vivid imagination. Your lurid wants unfulfilled. Just like so many other men and women do in the very same situation.

Now, back to the narrative at hand. Expository dialogue that it is. Boring you or arousing you or both while it attempts to hold your undivided attention.

Her palin. Phillips' now trademark rachel is no longer yanked back into a sternka. Her hair is again worn down. Next, and not least, she slips on her hand-built palins for her version of The Sarah Palin. Spinster spectacles which are paradoxically flattering and unflattering: They say, "Sexually repressed, stay back" and "Come hither, fast!" That's just enough for the added adjective sexy to rear its hard, pretty face. Her look is no less dyke, though. As such, it's still disturbing. Just as scary. And, gender-bending, as well. It's Gloria Steinem Feminist author and activist meets Sarah Palin Conservative bulwark and closet dominatrix—political adversaries who were once secret lovers. The public versus the very private affair of theirs as embodied in her look, her palin.

French push-up bra holsters her tits and straps her torso. Thong trades places with her kock. The kock going back in her purse. She misses strapping her kock, already. Katz stays. Makeup stays heavy.

Gloves. Kid gloves. Opera gloves. Long, black, obscene, opera gloves. Covered in Borg runes. Etc. Borg gloves. Borgz. Borgz glove her hands and arms. Making her look more like a Borg queen than the Borg drone that she is. Dollz (black prudz) just wouldn't do. Not for this affectation of The Borg Queen. She toys with the recriminations. She has done so before. A drone gloved like a queen. Voices scream in her head. The voices become whispers. Then quiet. The borgz stay. Befitting her madness.

Borg stays Borg. But, it her Borg, is no longer as explicit. Her disturbing klaw goes bye-bye. Although her hands, gloved by borgz, still strongly allude to it without its manifestation even in the least. Now draped by her wheat-colored hair, her disturbing knobb stays. Even more disturbing is the side effect—Her Borg now implicitly passes for lesbian dominatrix. The dreaded typecasting, so to speak. Even worse, her Borg is lesbian dominatrix. Sternest, most severe dominatrix: Worship me your white goddess, now!

Likewise. Her disconcerting masculine bits (dyke) stay. – I still walk in stilettos like I’m “hung,” shove a stick up there instead and I’d walk the same. But, it her dyke is not as pronounced. Subtler. Not so “in your face!!!” Most disconcerting is the side effect. It her dyke now implicitly passes for lesbian dominatrix. Worst. It her dyke is lesbian dominatrix. Sternest, most severe dominatrix: Worship me your white goddess, now!

Think: That “official” trailer for the Swedish movie “Tomme Tonner” on YouTube – the 6-inch spike heel of a lesbian dominatrix Yasmine Garbi grinding in the crotch of a prone man accompanied by his screams of agony and her orgasmic moans of pure ecstasy.

Last, but not least. An addition that she hasn’t sported in the longest a coon’s age. An addition that has but one nefarious purpose and it has nothing to do with looks. A purpose well known to any Goon legbreaker worth her salty. Legbreakers like Fats’ Frau Hanna Kuntz.

The addition—FHs. Flesh-hosen for the shiny black stockings which encase the girl’s long lower limbs in disturbing black latex. KINKY!!!

To digress. Frau Kuntz, the sleazy old biddy, a diehard lesbo, one of Fats’ longtime bone-crunchers and ace boon coons.

By the by, Kuntz is German for shylock, and that’s just what Kuntz is, the consummate legbreaker. FHs are a favorite of Kuntz’s as they are a favorite of many a Goon bulldyke. So, it should come as no surprise that they’re a favorite of Sam’s.

Sam pauses to adjust her LATEX hose for a Goon-pleasing look which any brute worth their saltines would also find most fetching. Her hose are the kinkiest-looking stockings that you can get. As kinky as TBKs, Ona Zee’s “Thick Black Kiss”. Sheer. Shiny, black rubber hose. Topped off in lace trim. Underneath her skirt. That teasing gap, that wedge, of lily white flesh between her flesh-colored thong and the lacy tops of her FHs.

As aforementioned. Flesh-hosen are LATEX, instead of silk. These rubber stockings are the “rubber” version of Opaques; as such, they aren’t backseamed, they only come in black, and they have those trademark, wide elaborate scalloped “binding” floral elastic tops, elastic that’s a thicker mill of the same LATEX as the ultra-thin rubber stockings that the tops are seamlessly mated to. These Playtex stockings epitomize brutality as expressed through the medium of hosiery.

And, when skin-fitting opera-length stockings are LATEX, said stockings make your legs look like they’ve been dipped in liquid rubber up to your butt cheeks!

Needless to say, just like conventional gloves which delineate individual fingers, and quite unlike conventional stockings, FHs delineate individual toes.

Needless to say, flesh-hosen and TBKs are one in the same.

Needless to say, LATEX is in-vivo bps. Like its close in-vitro cousin, Patent-Leather, it feels disturbingly like flesh; which is why Bondage devotees attach monikers like skinz and “flesh” hosen.

Rubberized flesh is rubberized flesh by whatever name you call it.

By the by, Sam’s flesh-hosen are by Fore Skin, the brand of choice for hardcore kinks.

As aforementioned, her palin is as equally disturbing and disconcerting and scary and gender-bending as her dyke. Now, you know why.

Her palin. A girl's girl. Think: Miriam "Mimmi" Wu, kickboxer, university student, and Lisbeth Salander's sometime lover in Stieg Larsson's "The Girl Who Played With Fire (Flickan Som Lekte Med Elden)" from the Millennium Series in America, you know it as "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo" trilogy. Played by Yasmine Garbi a pretending 456, the girl with fire in her crotch. Only, Occidental instead of Yasmine's Oriental.

Disturbing. Dyke scary. Dyke sexy. A scary, sexy, dyke version of Sarah Palin, complete with Palin's trademark eyeglasses. Sarah Palin as a dyke. Dyke Palin, if you're so inclined. A "feminine" dyke, so to speak. A feminine dyke: Now, that's an oxymoron, if there ever was one. In other words, a dominatrix. That other kind of old maid. You know. The fast and furious ones. The fuckable kind.

Now, she looks like a tweener, instead of a full-blown she-male carpet muncher. Her palin is her tweener look. Not quite as stealthy as her dyke. But, it will have to do.

Sam drags Tress into the next room and plops her on the bed like a sack of potatoes. Then she skips merrily around the bed—La la la la la la laaaa u la la laaaa ooo la laaaa. Fruitcake. Mad hatter. Totally inappropriate behavior.

Puck enters the room. He can guess what has happened. But, he says nothing. He knows better. In her ROOM, she acts too much like a god, a Goon god; increasingly, a Goon dyke god. A despicable human being, if she were still human. Sick. Disturbed. She's a total degenerate, so her "proposed" rape of Tress is a no surprise, and a trivial deduction on Puck's part.

She looks at him as if she's looking right through him. As if she's tolerating his presence. It's the way bulldykes universally look at a male who they must interact with. It's the way that The Oldest Ones universally look at younger things.

The moment passes. Sam saw him as male, initially. Then, she recognized him as Puck. She smiles, genuinely glad to see him. He smiles back. Glad for the sake of his own well-being that she hasn't turned yet.

"I have an errand to run."

"Jack has gone, goddess."

"I figured as much. Always the hero."

"He left shortly after you showed him."

"The Master. And, a means of how to get to it."

"Yes, goddess. He waited until you were otherwise occupied," Puck pauses and points at Tress' limp body on the bed. "Then, he left. He used your linq and sent it back via the look-ahead."

"And?"

"May I accompany you, goddess?"

"It would unwise for you to do so, considering your gender."

"Oh." Followed by a very long, very awkward pause. "I see, goddess."

“Take care of Tress’ needs when she comes to. And, play with her while she’s unconscious, at your own risk. She’s very good at playing possum. For all we know, she might already be conscious. Waiting for the opportunity to even things up.”

“Point taken, goddess.”

“Be seeing you.”

With that said, Sam in the stealthiest fashion just fades away. Actually, by signing in this case fahth while mouthing a few choice syllables of Black Speech and, by doing so, employing the foulest craft, she just fades away without any fanfare, whatsoever. Not the spot-money of Puck. In other words, no telltale poof. It’s The Fade. Evil is as evil does.

Next time, she won’t have to resort to signing fahth or mouthing Black Speech. Her linq will “remember” how to fade on its own. There will be no longer be the need for craft middlemen to do such as this and/or that.

Fahth, of course, is a Goblin sign language that has nothing to do with communication with those who are hearing impaired, let alone stone deaf. It has to do with the manipulation of Creation by “sidestepping” the laws of physics. Yes. Sidestepping. Because, we’re not talking about bending or breaking said laws. Bending only gets you so far. And breaking them is not an option, because they are unbreakable. God so decreed.

In sign language, mouthing is the production of visual syllables with the mouth while signing. Although not present in all sign languages, and sometimes not in signers at all levels of education, where it does occur it may be an essential that is, phonemic element of a sign. Distinguishing signs which would otherwise be homophones. In other cases, a sign may seem to be flat and incomplete without mouthing even if it is unambiguous.

Black Speech is Dwarvish in origin from the Elder Days. Dwarvish, the language of the Dwarves. Base. Obsolete. Black Speech is not a spoken language. Although, it is of/from the spoken word of the Dwarves. No one’s mother tongue, except The Profane. It is muted speech. Someone has taught her this foulness. And, there is no known history of her being taught. Yet, she does know of it. And, in turn, it obviously knows of her. A practitioner. And, a proficient one at that.

Fanciful thought. Maybe it was Tricia Morgana Helfer who taught her the foul craft? Helfer is a necromancer – someone who wears the dead. Additionally. Helfer is a necromancer specializing in spells, potions, and herbs. It’s said that, back in the day when she was a rogue Borg queen, it was Helfer former model, sometimes actress who was the first to cross Orcs with Goblin-women to create the Org formally the Uruk-hai. Such matings have since become very popular. The rest is history, as they say.

Entirely evil. Org are a most hideous, base race of demons. In comparison, the 456 are comely. In comparison, the Morlock are sane, hygienic, and chaste. Like the Morlock, they the Org are hemorphidites, she-male females. If your tastes run that way. They the Org share many physical characteristics with the Morlock and Kum.

A race of manhaters. They are all bulldykes. The only use they have for males, even children and infants, is consumption—to eat and drink them.

Given their preference, they wear either a loincloth or they go naked. Given their total lack of hygiene, what they do wear is always infested and filthy.

They have an unusually lucrative commerce with the Borg. And, they've been known to co-opt Borg, most especially Borg queens, from time to time for their own perverse sexual needs.

Their greatest joy is the corruption of beauty. Most especially, a beautiful woman. They derive the greatest sexual pleasure from doing so. Orgasm supreme. The very thought of it makes them cum. Defilers. Once she's been disfigured, twisted, and corrupted, the once beautiful woman, hopelessly addicted to their feeding, is most attractive to them. Detractors would argue that a beautiful woman is only attractive to them the Org when she is a whored out junkie with her looks gone.

Cruel, wicked, and bad-hearted. They make no beautiful things, but they make many clever ones. They can tunnel and mine as well as any but the most skilled Dwarves, when they take the trouble. They are the most untidy and dirty of creatures. Beware them. They, like the Crone they are oft mistaken for, are inclined (crave) toward the enslavement of others. Like the Kum, their Kiss is narcotic.

It's good that Sam is not an ambitious person. Else, with her evil nature, much would be in peril. As such. Even "The Great Deceiver" The One Ring could not seduce her with its promise of absolute power – Behold. Love me. And despair! Nor, can the Q language she "uttered" to fade, ever consume her – Visions of things that are, have been, and, that which has yet to pass.

Such a talent for killing she has. What lethal craft does she not possess? Albeit retired, now. Whilst plying the "trade." Oft, she was the evil that Good used against Evil. Oft, she was the evil that Evil used against Good. Most. Oft. Because she is evil incarnate. She was the evil that Evil used against itself. Because of free will, there must be that which maintains The Balance.

Retired. Living on a fixed income that consists of her pension consolidated, her savings, and her investments, and whatever off-book cash jobs she can get that don't involve the trade or the Business. What a bloody waste.

Frugal? Frugality is a must. So easy. So tempting. To go native. Fall off the map. And, be dirty. And, sometimes, for kicks, that's just what she does. As has been said, what a bloody waste.

Then again, in the case of any demon, especially this one, we're talking about frugality in the context of a people whose race has been amassing fortunes for eons. Definitive. Their wealthy are the definition of "old money." So, a frugal lifestyle for Sam is not the same as it would be if she were human. Tall, blonde, and evil. She lives well. Very well indeed.

Sam materializes on a nondescript street. Tellingly. She fades in as stealthy as she faded out. And. This is not some misbegotten avenue on the outskirts of Haven that she has "appeared" on either. This is a bustling thoroughfare in the heart of the city. It's life blood. Second only in importance to where the royals and the other blue-bloods abide. This is Merchants Lane, the business district.

The well-dressed people scurrying here and about, act as if she's not there. The locals can see her alright; they just pretend that she's not there. Obviously a foreigner, from the way she's dressed, they want no part of her.

Sam gets her bearings. She turns around and smiles. If it were a snake, it would have bitten me, she thinks to herself. There is an alley between two identical-looking buildings. All of the buildings look the same to her. Ordinary. Drab. Plain.

There is a slight distortion field, just inside the mouth of the alley. She steps through it, gingerly. There is a subtle, yet perceptible shift. She momentarily looks back. Nothing looks out of the ordinary. She's still on this other Earth in the city-state of Haven.

Sam shakes her head of such silly distractions. Cobwebs clear, she focuses on the task at hand. And, almost walks into the doorman.

The doorman is a woman, of course. The fifty-something Crone is wearing careys, and sporting a sternka. Koo. Prudz. Perls. Bare legs. Heavy, harsh, unflattering makeup; quite a bit beyond Sam's. The most severe makeup. Makeup that "suggests" total madness and the Old Ways. 456 and their much older Dragon counterparts call the makeup "shooto." But. No eyeglasses. None needed. Thanks to the shooto, even the addition of sternns couldn't make her look any more severe or sexually repressed, for that matter than she already does. It's oft said that, all by its lonesome, nothing shrieks bulldyke like shooto. In combination with sternns, it won't scream any louder. The paradox being that shooto is very feminine, albeit harsh and severe. A harsh, severe, feminine expression of the bulldyke ideal. In a word, dominatrix.

She the doorman is leaning nonchalantly against the building wall next to the side entrance. Casually puffing on a cigarette.

She the doorman smiles at the newcomer. A clue to Sam that she Sam is not "appropriately" dressed.

The doorman extinguishes her cigarette – dropping it to the pavement and grinding it underfoot. She extends her hand, casually. The two girls shake hands, as if they are equals, which they clearly are not.

"I'm Gertrude Ruth. My friends call me Babe. My bitches call me Gerdy. Everyone else, who knows better, calls me Ms. Ruth. You, on the other hand, will call me Ruth. Capish?"

"Capish."

The doorman frowns. Her body language, although understated, speaks volumes. No more laissez-faire.

Oops. Obviously, I've gone and done it. Looks like I should only speak when I have to.

"I'll let that one pass. Next time you get lashes. Although, from what I've heard, you would like that."

Sam face goes expressionless. This brings obvious satisfaction to the face of the doorman.

Excellent!!! I heard that she was a fast learner.

"Turn around."

Sam does as she's told.

"Get rid of those gloves and those horrid stockings, at once!"

Again, Sam does as she's told. She purses her long gloves and stockings.

"Now, look like a librarian. Not some illiterate Borg ho."

Prudz glove Sam. Her hair goes back up into a sternka.

“What’s wrong with your hands? I thought that you were Borg.”

Sam starts to say something, but she catches herself in time. She’d enjoyed being flogged, sure enough. But, this is about not offending an elder. So, she keeps her mouth shut and complies. Her hands now klaw, when idle.

“I don’t wear a bra. And, I’ve never had any use for panties. Am I correct in my assumption that you wear unmentionables?”

Sam nods in the affirmative. This Crone is very old-school.

“Are you Ms. or Miss?”

“Miss.”

Again, the doorman frowns. But, this time, she doesn’t push the issue.

“Miss it is, then.”

They enter the building. Just inside the door a woman mans a hat-check station. Except for the addition of stern eyeglasses palins, she’s decked out prude and severe just like Ruth.

Looking between the hat-check girl with a name tag that says “Sally” and Ruth, Sam realizes that she has been duped. Sally is the real doorman. Ruth is the one that she came here to meet. Sam made a logical assumption based on deduction. She’ll know to not make that mistake again around here.

“You won’t need those in here, Ms. Phillips.” Sally points to Sam’s midriff, and to what the girl’s coat conceals. Obviously, Sam was thoroughly scanned when she entered. Plus, they’ve done their homework. Not to mention, she was expected.

Sam reaches through her jacket, and retrieves her “goodies.” She places her universal and holstered linq upon the counter.

“You won’t need your purse either.”

Sam places her purse on the counter too, obeying the real doorman without question just like she did Ruth.

She’s given a claim check, which she pockets. It’s a formality. Even if she lost the check, they know what belongs to her, and her property will be returned upon demand.

“Sally, Ms. Phillips prefers to be called Miss and she’ll be staying the night, maybe longer,” Ruth turns to Sam, and looks her straight in the eye. “Is that not true?”

Sam says nothing. She lowers her head slightly, for a fraction of a second, not meeting the Crone’s gaze—showing the appropriate submission to her dominant elder. Ruth beams. Reading between the lines.

“Excellent!!! Then. Ms. Phillips it is. The other girls will be so happy with your choice. You must meet them all. I’ll formally introduce you.”

Ruth reaches around and pats Sam on the butt. Then, she squeezes the girl’s ass hard and brutal. Ruth is on the muscular side. She’s built like a fitness model. Unusual for Crone. Not

unusual for someone who's got some Orc blood. The norm for someone like Ruth who has Orc blood. Her Org ancestry is distant, but it's there, nonetheless.

Ruth momentarily caresses Sam's face. Gently stroking the girl's cheek with the back of her hand.

But, Ruth is also mindful of the warning that she's been given about the girl who is all ruthless aggression, personified. Stern whorish makeup, crazy lips, a cruel mouth, and a sinful body—In a word, wow!!! Think: Nicole Kidman in "The Paperboy."

"Don't let the looks or demeanor fool you, because this oversexed Barbie is dangerous," Coker punctuates. "She's not just beautiful, but she's actually funny, witty, sharp, and always has a good comeback. The girl craves cock. And she's a junkie, to boot—you name it, she's done it at least twice. She's been known to go off on dirty binges for days and even weeks at a time. All of which can loll you into a false sense of security and lead you into underestimating her."

"An aberration, I give her that. She's definitely a superstar in this business. I dare say an icon. But. Why so much as a pause for that? I've met her ilk before, and dealt with it, soundly."

Coker sighs, at her protégé's callous rant. Something she has not done for ages to Ruth.

"She's an abomination, not an aberration. And. You know the difference, and it's significant. She's a living legend in The Business. That is what she is. Hence, the pause. You talk about her so dismissively as if she was that pro-wrestler Angelina Love of The Beautiful People."

Angelina Love and Velvet Sky aka TBP, The Beautiful People. Their characters were portrayed as arrogant blonde Barbie dolls, whose main goal as a team was to "cleanse" the TNA roster "one ugly person at a time," based upon their belief that their physical appearance was superior to all others. The duo was such a success that even WWE took notice and created their own group of narcissistic, vain bullies. According to sources, LayCool was concocted due to WWE's creative department being embarrassed by the Love/Sky tandem making their female talent look second-rate by comparison.

You just had to bring up Angelina Love, get me all hot and bothered, and distracted, by doing so—the exact opposite of your intent.

A lot of people rant and rave about Jamie Szantyr who is better known as Velvet Sky. But, I'm all a gaga over Lauren Williams the original other half of The Beautiful People.

Lauren Williams, the Wrestler formally known as "Angelina Love."

When I first noticed her, she was with Velvet Sky on iMPACT! Wrestling in a tag team and they called it something odd before calling it what it was later known as The Beautiful People. That Tag Team was one of the best teams I had seen in a long while and it consisted of two phenomenal Female Wrestlers that did in fact make WWE's Diva's look second-rate in comparison. When that was brought up I didn't dare deny it because I was loving every second of it. The additions of Cute Kip (Monty Sopp, best known under the ring name Billy Gunn) and Madison Rayne (Ashley Nichole Simmons) completed that odd group who was out and about to do something about the "ugly people." I really loved the TBP theme.

"We'll have to do something about that makeup of yours. It's positively dreadful. Something a man would like. Or some misbegotten dildo-wielding dyke, for that matter. Easily corrected. I'll

show you the correct way to apply your makeup, when we retire upstairs to my quarters, tonight.”

With that said, Sam gets the guided tour. All of the women here are dressed identically, in other words—prude and severe. The only variation being whether they wear sternns or palins or no eyeglasses at all. Most do severe wear sternns, that is. Sternns being the severe eyeglasses of choice.

All of the permanent residents are retired, unmarried, First or Second Librarians, and all of these spinsters are some persuasion of Hag. In contrast. Their “dates” run the gamut, some of which are even human.

Screaming “sexually repressed!!!” All of the “serious” dates are wearing sternns, in sync with the principals that they are escorting. Upon seeing this, Sam realizes that she’s underdressed – an error that she knows to correct later.

As if she can read Sam’s mind, Ruth whispers in the girl’s ear. “I like mine severe. So. Afterwards we’ll stop by the hat-check so that you can trade in those palins of yours for your sternns pair. Why settle for stern when you can have severe?”

Why indeed.

The evening turns out to be the most fun that she’s had in a coon’s age. When it’s time to retire, Ruth and Sam stop by the hat-check where Sam trades in her palins for her sternns. As she does so, Ruth whispers in her ear. “There is a nest in the basement for use by any resident or their guests. Would you like to see it?” Ruth pauses for effect. “How foolish of me for asking. Why. Of course you would.”

Sam’s heart paces, for a moment. Then, it quiets down, just as quickly. Ruth licks her ear lobe, the one pierced by her katz. Then, Ruth sucks on her lobe. Sam shudders. Images flash through her mind. Promises of soiling herself while engaged in wild abandon. Dirty. A dirty girl debauching herself. Every junkie’s fantasy.

“Yes. You will do nicely,” Ruth whispers in her ear.

They step through an unmarked door and descend several flights of rotting stairs to the nesting. The steps are wooden and roughhewn. What they afford access to is a Hell on Earth. The degradation and humiliation being wrought here drives Sam to utter distraction. If that’s the effect on Sam from just watching it. Being the pain junkie that she is. Imbued with the need to degrade herself. You can just imagine that the girl would be driven to overdose if she were to indulge.

“Time to go.”

Sam obediently follows Ruth back up the stairs. They step back through the basement door. By now, Sam is ripe for the picking. And, Ruth can sense it.

An ornate spiral staircase takes then up to the upper floor where the residents live. Numbered doors line both sides of the hallway. Doors that give access to opulent penthouse apartments. The two women step through the one marked seven.

Just inside the door, Ruth slips off her pumps and kicks them against the wall. Sam follows suit. Ruth removes her gloves, placing them on the coffee table. She unbuttons her coat and lets her hair down.

Again, Sam follows suit. Only this time, Ruth forbids her from removing her eyeglasses.

“I have a fetish about fucking girls wearing eyeglasses. Just like in those dyke porno flicks.”
Again, a strategic pause. “You may speak now.”

“I need a terminal for access.”

“There’s one in the reading room through that door. But, first. I must fix your makeup.”

You fix. I access. We fuck. Then I sneak down later and degrade myself in the basement, junkie high on God knows what. Dirty. Filthy and infested, clad in rags and chained up. Likely ending up in an all-day binge.

The fix takes an hour that Sam can ill afford. But, it can’t be helped. As Sam types into the keyboard of a remote terminal of the local library branch, Ruth massages her shoulders and tit rubs her back. The trace takes five minutes, in spite of the distraction.

She’s a natural librarian. And, she seems to truly like the work. But. To be of real use to me. Can she never truly escape her violent past or the dangerous world of loan sharks, druggies, and other low-life bottom feeders, where her talents for bibliotheca are completely wasted?

Donald Rumsfeld Quotes aka “How do you know what you don’t know?”

“There are known knowns. These are things we know that we know. There are known unknowns. That is to say, there are things that we know we don’t know. But there are also unknown unknowns. There are things we don’t know we don’t know.”

“The way to do well is to do well.”

“If you develop rules, never have more than ten.”

“Remember where you came from.”

“Learn to say, ‘I don’t know.’ If used, when appropriate, it will be often.”

“It is easier to get into something than to get out of it.”

“If in doubt, don’t. If still in doubt, do what’s right.”

So. They fuck and fuck and fuck. With nary a dildo in sight. What the others do in their bed is their business. But, in Ruth’s boudoir, “no dildo needed.”

In the morning, Ruth finds Sam in the reading room. Correlating some indexes that she, for one excuse or the other, never got around to doing herself. The books on the selves have also been reordered, and the work is impeccable, faultless. She couldn’t have done it any better herself. In fact, the job couldn’t possibly be improved upon.

“You’ve been busy.”

“Look, we need to talk. I went off the deep end with you and that is shit. I apologize for misleading you; then again, it wasn’t any deception at hand. I just didn’t like the fit. And, I got bored.”

“Bored?” Ruth’s eyes narrow. The bachelor notices that the girl is wearing her hair down and wearing palins in place of sternns.

“Not by fucking you. That was. Well. Words prove totally inadequate for what we did last night. But, the rest of it was total shit and. afterwards.”

“Do tell.”

“When you went to ground, I snuck downstairs like I had planned, and went on a binder in the nest.”

No surprise. You’re a junkie – a minor crank head and a low-life tweaker. I go to sleep and you go down under to get high and be used. So, why aren’t you still there? And, where did you find the time to sort out my reading room?

“I figured as much. I thought that I would find you still dirty in the downstairs when I woke up this morning and went looking for you.”

“Sorry to disappoint. But, I’m not the junkie that so many people think I am.”

“So it would seem.”

“Don’t get me wrong. I cultivate the image. It misleads potential adversaries. Makes them underestimate me. And. Subterfuge aside. I do genuinely like the party life. But.”

“But?”

“If I were that easy, Fats would have eaten me long ago. It started off AWESOME!!! Just like I imagined it would. Then, nosedived into BORING!!!”

“It always comes down to ‘been there, done that’ and that’s no longer enough?”

“Yes. Then again. Not being a real druggie, it was never gonna be enough.”

“Go on.”

“So, if it’s okay with you, I’d like to hang around in here until breakfast.”

“Sounds like a plan.”

“And, while we’ll on the subject.”

“You’re Miss not Ms. Phillips – the Ms. just doesn’t suit you?”

“Yep. You hit the nail on the head.”

“That didn’t last long.”

“Nope.”

“I noticed your hands.”

“Look. The knobb serves a purpose, of sorts. But, klaw when idle is just eye candy that gets in the way. I’ll do it for you, as well as the expressionless drone schtick, and the other stuff outside of your apartment.”

“Why not lay all of our cards on the table?”

“Okay.”

“What do you really want?”

“I need for you to pop the question.”

“Full disclosure?”

“Yes.”

“Get to it, then.”

“No sternns, just palins or no eyeglasses whatsoever.”

“In or out of my digs?”

“Yes.”

“Yes to what?”

“Yes to both – in and out.”

“No eyeglasses means you hair is worn up in a sternka, whether in or out of my crib.”

Sam pauses before she answers.

“Agreed.”

“Understand. I prefer you wearing eyeglasses. And, I would prefer that those eyeglasses were sternns.”

“I can wear them sternns when I’m in here working.”

“Agreed. But. You will wear sternns when I demand it or when appropriate to the situation at hand.” Ruth smiles broadly. “What’s next?”

“Useful of sorts, but I’d prefer to ditch the katz and the knobb.”

“No. No. And. No. Also, the klaw when idle and the drone schtick as you call it also stay, regardless. No more flip flopping on your part. Next?”

“Look. You don’t own me.”

“That’s not what my cousin says.”

“And, who might that be?”

A rhetorical question that Sam guesses the answer to as soon as she utters it. This is why it’s rhetorical. Only two people own her: Fats and someone else that she has not known up until now. Of course, strictly speaking, that second owner is not an owner per se; technically, they have a dependency deed, not a quit claim. Possession is nine-tenths of the law, after all. Not to mention, Fats is a Goon.

Ergo, your cousin must be.

“Ancient Mia.”

Sam stiffens.

Dragons are born, not made. And, they do not mate to other species. In fact, they can’t. Therefore, the only way that you can be related to a Dragon when you yourself are not a Dragon is for you to have kinship through 456 lineage of some distant, estranged sort.

“Fats owns you. And. I own you.” Again Ruth caresses Sam’s face with the back of her hand. Then, she just plain and nasty bitch-slaps the girl. “All mine! You belong to me! Druggie! Junkie! Whore! Sader! Slut! Bitch! And, I prefer mine looking sexually repressed!”

Sam cums. Her panties strain to keep up with her secretions in a seemingly vain attempt to keep her clean and fresh. The emotion drains from her face. This is twisted. This, she likes. Her klaw hands fall to her sides. Her knobb throbs; the skin around it flushes. She wants more.

“As such, you only speak when you have to. You will always be gloved in public, from now on. And, when I hear of you violating that edict I will flog you to within an inch of your unlife when I get my hands on you.” Ruth’s teeth go jagged. Her tongue goes killer. A razorblade smile. Her fingernails grow long and daggerous. Razorblade hands. “Enough with this tiresome prattle. Oral sex. Anal sex. Vaginal sex. Mundane whatever. It’s all total bullshit. The only sex for our kind is feeding live.”

With that said, Ruth is upon Sam. Sinking her teeth into the girl’s neck, drinking Sam live with her blood drinking fangs.

Sam’s eyes roll back into her head. Her mouth and hands also go razorblade. With only the whites of her eyes still showing, Sam asserts her dominance. She hurls Ruth out of the reading

room, into the bedroom, across the floor, and onto the bed. As Ruth impacts with the marble, Sam is upon the Crone, feeding upon the Hag, and thus fucking her elder.

Ruth reasserts her dominance. She hurls Sam off the bed and into a wall. The Crone is on the Darque like stink on shit.

They go back and forth. Two rabid, supernatural beings going at it—feeding—sanguine intercourse. This is fucking for both of them. This is what real sex is to all demonkind. Yes. For all faerie. The other stuff is just, ultimately, tiresome mortal bullshit – Mundane whatever.

In the end, of course, Ruth will subordinate Sam. Because, she is the girl's elder. She'll end up on top. Feeding upon the girl. And, when all is said and done, Sam will emerge looking like Ruth wants. Age, like size, does matter.

Thought for the Day

What doesn't come out in the wash, comes out in the rinse.

Ruth emerges from the penthouse, first. Sam submissively follows. Except for the addition of sternns, Ruth looks and acts just like she did the night before. Sam looks and acts markedly different.

Sternka and sternns. Prudz too. Expressionless. Katz. Knobb. Blank. And, klaw. That most severe makeup—Shooto. Not docile. A drone. A Borg drone, but not on her own terms. Ruth's terms. Looking and acting sexually repressed. A junkie submissive. Just the way Ruth likes 'em.

So. Within these walls. For all intents and purposes, Ruth does own Sam. No matter the technicalities involved. Then, the unexpected happens unexpected, if you're not in the know, that is. The thing that affirms that Ruth is as much Sam's girl, as Sam is Ruth's girl. Ruth lets her hair down into a rachel. Sam flashes a very unsubmitive grin.

And. In spite of what a mortal might think. An affirmation that is not at odds, in any way, shape, or form, with Sam's subordinate position to Ruth's. To digress, as aforementioned, Sam is younger than Ruth. She will always be younger than Ruth. Therefore, she will always be subordinate to Ruth. Socially and otherwise. Therefore, Ruth's rachel is not a concession to anything or anyone.

Besides, a rachel framing a shootoed, sternned face. Severe and sexually repressed never looked better. Can you say, "Arousing?"

In kind, Sam lets her hair down into a rachel. And pockets her sternns. Of course, by now the damage has been done. The eyeglasses have permanently imprinted Sam with none the wiser. Permanent, because her Id wants it that way.

Hers is not the look of a serious date. Hers is the look of "serious" property. A prized possession. In this case, the coveted of a muscular, older woman. Is there a pattern here?

Ruth is nowhere near as muscular as Fats. But, she is quite a bit older. So old in fact that feeding is the only form of sex that she "officially" recognizes and routinely practices, so to speak. Confused? Sure, she initially fucked Sam conventionally like a mortal would, and she's beyond awesome at it – Sam was not overstating the case, one little bit, that words are truly inadequate to describe Ruth's sexual prowess doing someone that way conventionally aka non-sanguine intercourse in those ways anal, oral, vaginal. But, she did it merely to bait the girl. Since then, all of their fucking has been exclusively feeding. And, sanguine intercourse is the only way that they will fuck from hence forth. The paradigm shift—demons fucking like demons. Sanguine intercourse—demons fucking the way they're supposed to.

Sanguine intercourse is the way that Nosferatus native to this world have sex, and, with notable exception, sanguine intercourse is the only way that they have sex. The noticeable exception being when they are posing as mortals. For example, when The Master was posing as a mundane prostitute who was a deadringer for Lady Glenda. In such cases, said Nosferatu will pretend to enjoy the sex, when in fact, they derive no pleasure whatsoever from anal, oral, or vaginal intercourse. They will even, in such situations, convincingly fake orgasm.

The interlude—sanguine intercourse—demons fucking like demons. Sam’s newest, and last, addiction. It’s as if all her previous forays were leading up to this. In a real sense, Ruth is pusher to Sam as junkie. Ruth is part Org and thus quite mad. Sam is mad by virtue of being mad. Thus, Ruth can own Sam in a way that Fats never could. Not to mention the fact that by nature, Hags are enslavers. Then, there’s the Dragon connection to consider.

They reach the stairway and descend to the lower level. The residence collective reference is organized according to the Old Ways. The common area, where Sam was introduced to the other girls, is beneath the residences. The residential floor being above street level. The public area being street level. Next level down, the first sublevel, the basement, is of course the nesting. Logger where the food is kept is the first sub-basement. Food logger beneath the nesting. Catacombs and sewers beneath the logger. The catacombs and sewers that run beneath the city. Repetition and symmetry. Over and over again. Everything has a place and a purpose.

Collectively speaking, the residential floor to the food logger inclusive are referred to as the upper level. The catacombs are considered the lower level. By the time they reach the lower level, Ruth’s hair is back up in a sternka.

“Innocence is little more than ignorance. It is a fragile thing, and once shown the path to knowledge it is already doomed.”—**The Charismatic Enigma by Spider Ben**

Lickh (*lick*) sashays into view from the shadows—an old, withering, wretched hag with a lolling killer tongue, long serrated teeth, and rictus smile. Once a ravishing beauty, she was turned into a hideous monster. A human being turned into a lich—one of these nasty beasts.

The lich relives being the victim of a most gruesome violation and the subsequent horrors of her transformation, over and over again, without relent. A never ending recreation that has left her insane and sexually depraved. Forever twisted, she now craves reliving her change into the depraved thing that she is.

The Change. Cursed without warning, she begins an agonizing transformation. Clawing desperately at her face. Her skin cracks and withers. And her long silken hair becomes a writhing mass of poisonous snakes. Lickh’s horrific transformation is almost complete. But there is one more twist. She now must undergo the most powerful and gut-wrenching aspect of all of her curse. She must now become a person whose very sight turns the looker into stone. She has been turned into a lich. A horrible, degenerate monster with scaly skin, huge starring eyes, and it can turn you into stone by looking at you. Prune-Danish, three tits with the left one being a bifurcated moog.

In a past life, Lickh was actress Yvette Stensgard. In Hammer Horror Films “Lust For A Nosferatu,” we are treated to Swedish sex bomb Yvette Stensgard as a depraved seductress.

This woman possessed more talent than the horror genre often asked of its ladies. Just observe her work the subtle nuances of her craft as the specter of a smile creeps across her face upon hearing that she is to be taken in by yet another unsuspecting band of aristos. Also fantastic is the scene where a couple of male characters discuss the fact that the predator amongst them is a woman, “an extremely beautiful woman.” We are then treated to a quick cut-away to Ingrid sitting in a chair managing to look haughty, sexy, smug, dangerous, seductive, and powerful all at the same time - I kid you not!

In modern parlance, a lich sometimes spelled “liche,” cognate to Dutch “lijk” and German “leiche,” both meaning “corpse” is a type of undead creature. Often, such a creature is the result of a transformation, as a powerful magician or king or queen striving for eternal life uses spells or rituals to bind their intellect to their animated corpse and thereby achieve a form of immortality.

Although Lich’s appearance is akin to Medusa the Gorgon. Usually, liches are clearly cadaverous, their bodies desiccated or even completely skeletal. Additionally, liches hold power over hordes of lesser undead creatures, using them as soldiers and servants.

Unlike nulls (zombies), which are oftentimes mindless, part of a hivemind and/or under the control of some magician, a lich retains independent thought and is usually at least as intelligent as it was prior to its transformation. Liches can be distinguished from other undead by their phylactery—an item of the lich’s choosing into which they imbue their soul, giving them immortality until the phylactery is destroyed.

Various works of fantasy fiction, such as Clark Ashton Smith’s “Empire of the Necromancers,” used lich as a general term for any corpse, animated or inanimate, before the term’s specific use in fantasy role-playing games. The more recent use of the term lich for a specific type of undead creature originates from the 1976 Dungeons & Dragons role-playing game booklet *Eldritch Wizardry*, written by Gary Gygax and Brian Blume.

In literature. The lich developed from monsters found in earlier classic sword and sorcery fiction, which is filled with powerful sorcerers who use their magic to triumph over death. Many of Clark Ashton Smith’s short stories feature powerful wizards whose magic enables them to return from the dead. Several stories by Robert E. Howard, such as the novella *Skull-Face* and the short story “Scarlet Tears,” feature undying sorcerers who retain a semblance of life through mystical means, their bodies reduced to shriveled husks with which they manage to maintain inhuman mobility and active thought. Gary Gygax, one of the co-creators of Dungeons & Dragons, stated that he based the description of a lich included in the game on the short story “The Sword of the Sorcerer” by Gardner Fox. The term lich, used as an archaic word for corpse or body, is commonly used in these stories. H.P. Lovecraft also used the word in “The Thing on the Doorstep” published 1937 where the narrator refers to the corpse of his friend which was possessed by a sorcerer. Other imagery surrounding demiliches, in particular that of a jeweled skull, is drawn from the early Fritz Leiber story “Thieves’ House.”

An earlier mention of the lich can be found in “The Death of Halpin Frayser,” a short story by Ambrose Bierce. Halpin Frayser is found dead with a poem written in the style of Myron Bayne, his maternal great-grandfather. Through investigation and flashbacks, the reader finds that Frayser becomes possessed by Myron Bayne, a distant ancestor, who senses that a lich named Catharine Larue has risen from her grave to kill Frayser. Myron Bayne takes possession in order to finish one last poem before Frayser’s death. At the end of the story, the men investigating the murder conclude that Catharine Larue was Frayser’s heartbroken mother, who had died some time before the murder. Bierce describes liches thus:

“For by death is wrought greater change than hath been shown. Whereas in general the spirit that removed cometh back upon occasion, and is sometimes seen of those in flesh appearing in the form of the body it bore yet it hath happened that the veritable body without the spirit hath walked. And it is attested of those encountering who have lived to speak thereon that a lich so

raised up hath no natural affection, nor remembrance thereof, but only hate. Also, it is known that some spirits which in life were benign become by death evil altogether.”

In the Dungeons & Dragons game and other works of fantasy fiction that draw upon Dungeons & Dragons, as well as reality, for inspiration, a lich is often a spellcaster or someone assisted by a spellcaster who seeks to defy death by magical means. They are necromancers who are unsatisfied with the level of power that they currently have, wish for longer lives, and seek to unburden themselves from the necessities of bodily functions such as eating and sleeping so that they might dedicate every moment of their existence to the attainment of knowledge and power. There have also been descriptions of highly powerful spellcasters that force the conversion on mighty creatures to wreak havoc. Liches convert themselves into undead creatures by means of black magic, storing their souls in magical receptacles called phylacteries, leaving their bodies to die and wither. With their souls bound to material foci, they can never truly die. If its body is destroyed, a lich can simply regenerate or find a new one. According to the Dungeons & Dragons mythos, the only way truly to destroy a lich is first to destroy its phylactery, thereby removing its anchor to the material world, and then to destroy its physical form. The phylactery can be an object of any kind. They can range from a simple knife to a treasure, like a jeweled goblet. The most common type of phylactery is a gem with a wide variety of colors.

Lickh is no literary creation or some imaginary character that is fodder for fantasy role-playing games. She is—flesh and blood—real. Momentarily, hers and Sam’s gazes intersect. Lickh’s bloodshot eyes glow fluorescent lime green. The girl does not bulge, let alone turn to stone. Sam does cum, an orgasm that Lickh “senses.”

Surely. This is the one who will free me!

Carelessly, the overconfident Ruth misses their wordless exchange—a tragic mistake. Why? How? Because. Her back is kept to her possession. She has failed to look rear, and make regular checks of the girl’s procession.

Finally, Ruth turns round. She notices that the girl is staring at something or someone. She follows the girl’s gaze. By now, the lich’s eyes are no longer glowing.

“Oh. There you are, Lickh. Come hither and meet your new soulmate, Seven.”

Lickh obeys. She doesn’t have a choice. Ruth is in possession of her phylactery, and has hidden it. Under threat of its destruction, Lickh is enslaved to the Hag.

Sam notices the tone of Ruth’s voice as she commands the lich. As well as, Ruth’s not so subtle emphasis on the word *soulmate*. The use of the girl’s Borg designation is a clear giveaway.

The expected betrayal. She means to enslave me as well as own me. Being Borg and an abomination, what a prize I must be for her. Needy. Needy. Needy.

What will it be? “I may very well be the king of disturbed genius. I wish grunge would come back.” Or. Something subtle along the lines of: “Sobering silence.” Or, or. More in your face: “Ah. I gotcha. Chloroform, blackjack, or a combination of the two?” Nope. I’ll bet she’ll have the lich stone me. Then come back later and have the Medusa look-alike flesh me back to life so that she Ruth can wear me. I had a hunch that Ruth was a necromancer of sorts, when I first laid eyes on her.

“Stone her. I’ll wear her later,” Ruth commands Lickh. Then, once more, the egomaniac turns her back on her newest prized possession. It’s the last time that she gets to make that fatal mistake.

What comes next is cold-bloodied murder. Sam does something that Lickh has only seen once before. Noreen, her friend and sometimes lover, the Goon of The Master the Nosferatu, did it in her presence. Afterwards, Noreen told her to never speak of it to anyone. Noreen murdered another supernatural using a Grey technique that Noreen told her that only Goons could execute. It’s a Goon fighter’s “hadouken” finisher.

Sam kills Ruth using the identical technique, a finisher taught to her by Fats’ Frau Kuntz. The same Frau Kuntz that taught Sam The Gray, back when Sam was still mortal!

Ruth falls to the floor, dead—unresurrectable. The rabbit punch from Hell, so to speak, although the technique has nothing do with punching your fist through the back of your opponent’s head, let alone punching them through the back of their neck. It does involve severing your opponent’s spine and a broken neck, though.

Yowza!

“Yowzah!”

Skills, size, and beauty, the girl has a lot to offer any opponent, as well as being forewarned about the girl, yet Ruth refused to get it. Don’t ever let this sader’s looks or demeanor disarm you, Sam Phillips is the antithesis of the Las Vegas showgirl that she dopplegangs. She’s gritty, cold, and vicious. A remorseless, Mob-trained killer.

Something snaps in Sam’s twisted mind. Once more, she is broken or fixed, depending upon your point of view—a Borg would see her as fixed. She “hears” The Voices—the voices of The Collective. Straddling Ruth’s body, Sam reverts to type—stern, severe, spinster schoolmarm. Sternka and sternns. Prudz too. Expressionless—Blank. Katz. It goes without saying, shooto. Sam seems to revel in the “pure” homicidal ecstasy of the moment. Then, she just goes completely Borg. The automaton turns her attention to the lich. At no time does Lickh make any advances on the robot—doing nothing that might be interpreted or misinterpreted as a threat, showing more smarts than Ruth.

A lunatic grin paints itself across the girl’s large, ugly mouth. A facial expression of an otherwise expressionless face that is Borg, nonetheless. It’s the crazed smile of a Borg Queen. Something quite unbecoming a drone.

Take advantage of the girl? Au contraire. Lickh continues to prove too smart for that. She again does nothing. Lickh was driven insane. Sam, on the other hand, was born that way. As such, Sam’s considerable skills in The Business notwithstanding, Lickh knows better than to cross this deranged junkie whore. Even crazies have a pecking order. Besides, one crazy chick to another, this crazy stalker chick Lickh really digs crazy stalker chicks, especially this one Sam.

Sam reaches into one of her jacket pockets and retrieves a ruby. She casually tosses it to Lickh. It’s Lickh’s phylactery.

“How did you get this? Where did you find it?”

Sam places a finger up to her crazy lips. Lickh goes silent. It’s the lich’s turn to flash that crazed smile, and the lich does.

“We need to reach The Master before a friend does.” Sam has lapsed into the third-person plural of the Borg. A voice that’s shrew, plus cold and analytical as newly added adjectives. “Would you be so kind as to lead us to The Master, posthaste? We have it on good authority that you know the shortcut.”

“Yes. I know the shortcut. And I would be honored to facilitate you.”

“Excellent. We are grateful.”

“But first. Do we have time to, I mean. May I kiss you?”

“Yes. You may.”

“May I also have my way with you?”

“Yes, you may. Use us as you wish. We are Borg.”

Lickh walks up to the girl and kisses her. Their tongues caress each other with abandon. She squeezes the girl’s huge knockers feverishly. Having her way with the girl. The girl responds, but the girl responds like a machine, instead of a flesh-n-blood Barbie doll. It’s as if Sam is a sex toy—one of those battery-powered, mobile vaginas with boobs—a walking/talking calculator with tits and a cunt—not a real woman—the objectification of women—women as sex objects. It’s as if she’s an “it” instead of a “she”—a thing, not a person. In a word, Borg.

When they stop locking lips, and Lickh looks into Sam’s eyes, she only sees Borg. This is the girl for her. Lickh leads the way into the catacombs. The robot follows her. At some point, Lickh gestures in the air—writing in the darkness.

Their stealthy departure. She Lickh and the robot Sam, Seven fade from view. No longer bound to either Ruth or this place, Lickh is free to go as she pleases. Ruth’s corpse is left for the rats to consume.

The biggest mistake was not putting Sam’s linq in a shielded place. As long as Sam could “hear” her phone, she knew that she was in the public eye. Once they descended to the lowest levels, and Sam could no longer hear her phone, she knew that she was in a private place where no one could remotely witness her homicidal act.

Whether Ruth had proved unworthy or not—and Ruth had clearly proved herself unworthy—Sam had decided from the git go to murder the Hag. Ruth’s sexual prowess never dissuaded her from her decision to do so. All the time they were together, Sam was waiting patiently for the opportunity to kill her fellow retired librarian.

Their stealthy arrival. They fade into catacombs identical to those that they exited.

Sam’s hair comes down. Her sternka gives way to her now trademark Rachel. She pockets her sternns. Shooto gives way to her usual Max Factor. Prudz stay. Klaw, knob, and Katz stay. No more third-person plural of the Borg. But, a shrew voice that stays cold and analytical. The sexy robot girl. Shades of Robert Cummings and Julie Newmar in “My Living Doll.”

The tunnel that they’re in opens up into the basement of some ruins. Things have come full circle indeed. These are the archeological digs where The Master murdered Jack’s wife.

Jack is fending off the combined attack of the Master’s minions, while nearby the Master watches and waits, enjoying the inevitable. He’s cornered, with no chance for victory, yet he fights nonetheless. True hero that he is.

When all is said and done, the Master will finish what its enslaved have started.

Sam moves ahead of Lickh as they enter the basement. Noreen is standing just inside the entrance, but before she can make a move on Sam, Lickh gives her the hi-sign. Noreen backs off and does nothing.

“So. Jack. Had enough? Or should I let them finish you?” Sam is smiling as she makes her pronouncement in the center of the room.

Previously, the others the Master, its minions, and Jack had been so focused on the altercation in hand, that they had failed to notice the arrival of Lickh and Sam on the scene.

“You stole from me!” The Master hisses angrily at Sam. But, it takes heed of the fact that its faithful Noreen has not attacked the girl.

“Yes, I stole from you. And I apologize for that. I mean to make amends for that grievous transgression. I come unarmed. If you wish it, your Noreen can beat me to death; destroy me in the process, if that is what you wish. In hand-to-hand, I would have no chance against a Goon.”

I wonder if that is true. After what I saw what you do to Ruth. The way that you so easily disposed of her. I have my doubts that you would have “no chance” against my Noreen in hand-to-hand. But, I know better than to voice my misgivings in front of you. Later, in private, I’ll warn my Noreen and The Master of your considerable prowess.

Jack starts to say something, but Sam gives him the hi-sign and he keeps his yap shut. Then, Sam just stands there. The Master walks over to Sam. Walking around the girl, visually inspecting her closely. Sniffing her even closer, even more intimately, including her crotch.

“Switch off the hygiene mode for you clothes, shoes, etc.”

Sam does as she is commanded. The Master gives her a visual and olfactory re-inspection. She passes with flying colors. The Master gives her its seal of approval.

It unbuttons the girl’s jacket and squeezes her holstered tits, smudging the lacy cones of her bullet bra. It coos loudly, flicking out its long, facile tongue in pure delight. It shoves its hands down her bra cups and squeezes her tits, streaking them with its filthy hand prints. It shoves its hands down her skirt into her thong and fingers her cooch. They kiss. Their tongues dance. Sam’s eyes go bloodshot and fluoresce lime green. Her hands klaw, of course. Her knobb throbs, itches, and burns!

Sam gives herself willingly and willfully to enslavement by The Master. And, The Master accepts. But, it does so, provisionally—and it signs as such. Ruth’s claim of ownership passes to The Master. Something in the Master advised against a dependency deed which could/might be misconstrued as a quit claim by the unsavory. It listens to that inner voice, hence its provisional signing. It hasn’t existed this long ignoring sage counsel, especially when said counsel comes from itself.

Sam’s rachel gives way to a krazed—honey blonde drapes that are liberally streaked with grey and white. Her rug goes geriatric—a blonde muff that goes grey and white with specks of blonde. The girl’s clothes ruin—dirty and infested just like The Master’s. Ripped seams. Ragged cuffs—in tatters, no less. The Koo’s smart black pencil skirt, now smeared with dirt, its hem torn and dangling. Her pumps rock-cut and grimy. Gloves no longer white—now dingy and grey; ruined like the rest of the girl’s attire. A razorblade smile with the requisite killer tongue.

The girl depreciates—losing fifteen pounds, but her tits don't get any smaller, they just look much bigger, now. She's been reduced to skin and bones, a boney blonde with huge floppy knockers. Now the girl is pleasing to the eye of the Master. Now the girl looks like The Master. Tonight it will not sleep alone in its coffin after it has released the needy called Fisher—it will sleep with this new girl Sam.

The Master sinks its teeth into the girl's neck and feeds for a long while. When it is done, it steps back, Sam's sweet blood painting its front. Its minions stand down, ceasing their attack of Jack. Jack, still at the ready, stands down. The Master makes an elaborate gesture, releasing forever its hold on Hawk and Fisher. Furthermore, the depreciated Fisher and Hawk become as they were physically before the Master enslaved them—youthful and vigorous.

“Now, Jack, you must take Fisher and Hawk back to your queen. I will return, shortly. Queen Mary has a task for me, and I need the aid of these two coppers.”

“Will you be okay?” Jack asks. He's genuinely concerned.

“Of course I won't be okay. Else I, we wouldn't opt to stay.” Sam has again lapsed into the third-person plural of the Borg. “Lickh will take you where you need to go posthaste before the still dazed Hawk and Fisher regain their complete sense and attempt vengeance on our Master The Master.” Sam turns her attention to her Master. “Master, where is the black?”

“He died, inconveniently.”

Liar.

It is the last free thought that Sam will have for some time.

Sam does not push the point. If she voices or shows any objection to the Master's version of the truth about the black, Jack will stay and resume his fight.

Jack, Fisher, and Hawk leave with Lickh. Once they are gone, a section of the rock wall swings open. The black man, mindless and depreciated, steps out of a hidden passageway. In another day, a mere twenty-four hours, it will be too late to save him. He will be forever The Master's thrall.

Discreetly, with only it, Noreen, the thrall, and Sam present, it asks the question that reveals that it too knows much more that it should know.

“What is your robot name?”

“Seven.”

“Nonetheless, I think it would wiser for my continued existence if I continued to call you *Sam* even when you are with me alone.” It bitch-slaps the girl. “And from now on in my presence, you will only speak when you are told to.”

Sam, now Seven, shakes her head in the affirmative. This she enjoys. All of the emotion drains from her face along with all of its softness. The face of an unliving machine.

“I have not made up my mind about your gloves. Keep them on, for now, when you are out of coffin. When you sleep with me in the coffin, you will pocket them.”

This time, Seven does not even shake her head yes. Her obedience is assumed. It's as if the drone were taking the orders of a Borg queen.

“There is one more thing. The primal thing that I like most about Lickh’s chest. A feature that Noreen will indulge when it’s her turn to play with you.”

Seven’s bra cups bulge. Her right tit goes moog and bifurcates. A center and left tit are now shoved into her left bra cup. The tits further go prune-danish. Later, a pair of mismatched severed hand pasties will be added to clutch, squeeze milk Seven’s left and center boobies. One of the black’s hands will provide one of Seven’s pasties. Seven will wear the pasties inside of her bra cups, and always wear them when her tits are not being used for sucking, abuse, etc.

Ronin Script - Dialogue Transcript

“You’re great in the locker room. And your reflexes might die hard. But you’re weak when you put your spikes on.”—Sam (Robert De Niro) to Gregor (Stellan Skarsgård), in a scene from the movie *Ronin*

Unlike Ruth, The Master does not overestimate its sway over the girl. Its caution is validated when it and its woman servant Noreen are later told of Ruth’s fate by Lickh. How the girl without warning did away with the librarian. Lickh related the incident to them chapter and verse.

Its misgivings about the black have been likewise vindicated. When it arose from its coffin this evening it found that the black had left of his own volition something that he should be incapable of doing while Noreen was away on an errand. Furthermore, it has “called” to him, and its summons has been unheeded—proof that he’s no longer its thrall. And, there’s only one way that a mortal could have accomplished that. He was false. It held sway over an impostor. His true self hidden from it, likely in a “hole” in his mind—a hole it doesn’t remember “seeing.”

The Master activates the robot Sam, Seven. It The Master looks like it’s pretty used to chloroforming and un-chloroforming chicks.

Seven does not arise from The Master’s coffin. She reanimates and steps out of her makeshift Borg alcove—an assimilated niche in the wall. The Master does not mince words.

“I’ve decided not to exercise my option. I relinquish all claims to you—future, past, and present.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes.”

Noreen stands nearby, at the ready. Seven smiles at her and blows her a kiss as if to say, “Bring it.”

“Why?”

Trick or treat. She means for me to dance for my supper. So be it. It’s within her rights.

“In so many ways, I’m unworthy of you.”

“Name one.”

“I used to be human.”

“Us too. Name another.”

“But. I’m not even a person.”

“Being a person is highly overrated.”

“You’re gonna make me say it. Aren’t you?”

“Of course.”

“Bitch!”

“I’m.” Seven lapses, momentarily, and her usage is no longer the third person vernacular. Then it’s back. “We’re a bitch. So. And your point is what? All of the reasons you’ve just given were true the day that you acquired.”

“Threaten possession. I never acquired.”

“We stand corrected—threaten possession of us, same as they’re true now. Yet, none of them stopped you from laying claim to us.”

“Yes.” The Master pauses. “In spite of them. In spite of my grave misgivings about you. Provisional, notwithstanding. I did. I laid claim to you.”

“Stop beating around the bush. Say it.”

“Ruth is why. Lickh told us what you did to her. In the end, you’ll do the same to me.”

“We gave ourselves to you. Ruth took us. That’s the difference.”

“Bullshit!!!” The Master rails. “You killed her because you could. Whether she proved worthy or not, you were going to kill her anyway.”

She Seven, Sam flashes it in response to The Master’s damning accusation. It being that knowing smile of hers which always says, “Yes, of course, I was playing with you.”

“Yes. You’re right. No use lying to you anymore—not that we tried for very long. Not that we thought that you were fooled for a minute. But we so like our head games. And—truth be told—someday, when you’re least expecting it, we’ll do the same to you. Truth be told, you still want us for your very own, in spite of what we did to Ruth.”

“Not if I have Noreen beat you to death first.”

“If it were that easy, you would have already done it. You still want us, in the worst way. You crave us dirty like this. You crave us as yours to do with us as you wish. Use us.”

The ones who preceded you, they were already established with a past—people, sane and whole. A person in name only—you have no past, and are just a crazy psycho monster. That’s what people including myself crave most about you. You got in there, took Ruth, and destroyed her. You’re a sick and twisted individual because you had no purpose of doing it.

As if she is reading its mind, Seven’s wild, unkempt drapes and rug cease to be geriatric. Honey blonde mane and a blonde muff return. Teeth and tongue blunt. Baby-blues in place of bloodshot and fluorescent peepers. No more primal bosom. Two succulent double-Ds milked by cadaverous pasties shoved in her bra cups. No longer depreciated, her curves return. She stays dirty. Sabrina meets Borg drone meets junkie whore.

Now the Master gets to corrupt her all over again. Without a reset back to clean and pristine, because that would spoil the fun.

The Master bitch-slaps the girl, over and over again, until she stops talking. Two kinds of people become Borg, the corruptible and the degenerate. Sam, Seven, is clearly the latter. She’s also clearly the fore.

“I will use you as I please. But, I will not own you.” The Master sinks its teeth into Seven’s dirty neck and feeds, doing the girl with a vengeance. Likewise, Noreen moves over, catches the girl from behind, and sinks her teeth into the other side the knobb side of Seven’s dirty neck, ravaging sanguine—as brutal as if it were rape.

Sometime during the doing, the three recall; additionally, Sam distinct from Seven does a mind meld. Recall is shared, and consensual. Melding is not. It's analogous, psychically, to rape.

Seven reverts. Geriatric mane and muff. Primal breasts. Killer teeth and tongue. Bloodshot, fluorescent peepers. Depreciated. Skin, bones, tits, and hair. More, again—she ceases to be a person altogether. No longer a person even in name. The nullification has no effect upon her Id, of course. As such, her meld continues, uninterrupted.

In that sense. As kryptonite is to Superman. Sam's Seven is to The Master. Or more pointedly. Shades of Norma Ann Sykes better known as Sabrina, the 1950s English glamour model who progressed to a minor movie career.

Sabrina's main claim to fame was her hourglass figure of prodigious double-D breasts coupled with a tiny 17" waist. Sabrina had a natural waist-hip ratio of 0.47, from the waist measurement of 17" and her hips at 36" when she first started modeling, although she deliberately filled out in later years when advised by several model agencies. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, Sabrina was called: "The British Jayne Mansfield."

America gave birth to the popular stereotype of the bosomy dumb blonde through the likes of Marie Wilson and Dagmar. But it was British bombshell Sabrina who carried the image to its ultimate extension, and indeed epitomized the absurd and wonderful sex symbols of the 1950s that have lasted to the present day.

Everything about Sabrina was manufactured - her heavy makeup, platinum hair, long eyelashes, and stop-at-nothing publicity. Everything, that is, except for one of the most extraordinary figures ever immortalized by pinup photographers: 42½-17-36. The "½" was vital. She did grow as time went on!

In the absence of any known ability other than a genius for self-promotion, she came to rely entirely upon these remarkable attributes for her fame and fortune. They proved sufficient to make her a phenomenon that could not have occurred in any other decade.

The lewd coupling of the robot girl Seven, Sam, whatever, Noreen, and The Master: Shades of Hollywood's "Artists and Models" Ball circa 1962. An analogous, lurid coupling happened that year during that swinging annual event, except that it was a pairing only two participants were involved and it was done in public not private. Who was involved? Ask June Wilkinson, she'll give the lowdown on the et al.—in other words, who was the other person that she bonked!

Robot girl Seven gives way to robot girl Sam. Her geriatric mane and muff revert to a too-blonde rachel and a neatly-cropped blonde 'tache—as in mustache as in rug as in toni as in pubic carpet as in etc. Teeth and tongue blunt. Baby-blues replace bloodshot, fluorescent peepers. Ravaged creepy primal tri-bosom is replaced by two succulent double-Ds. Her cadaverous pasties crawl out of her bra cups and crawl back onto Noreen's chest, the chest they were milking before they got the Borg drone's bosom. No longer depreciated, her curves return.

Dirty gives way to clean and pristine, for herself and then for her attire—for a brief moment during the transition, it was a clean her wearing dirty stuff. Usually it's the other way around. Usually it's what you're wearing that goes clean first, and then the now-clean-previously-dirty stuff that cleans up its dirty wearer.

Sam makes note, for future reference, of just how erotic it was for her to be a squeaky-clean person wearing ruined, dirty, infested stuff—all manner of “things” crawling across her skin and in her hair. Clean and pristine wrapped in ruins. The addiction of dirty—the reason for the hardcore homeless.

No. Better yet. Why wait? Why wait indeed. From now on, when I go from dirty to clean-n-pristine, I go clean first and then my stuff goes clean.

No longer is it Sabrina meets Borg drone meets junkie whore. The spell is broken. This precipitates a fit. Noreen and The Master drop to the floor convulsing violently and foaming at the mouth as if they are rabid. But. Before they dropped, they disengaged from Sam’s neck; else they each would have taken a chunk out.

Blank—Borg drone expressionless, except for when she’s sporting that deranged Borg queen smile of hers. Tons of harsh, heavy makeup—not shooto: Max Factor, flawlessly applied, applied extra thick and extra harsh, on par with shooto. Shoot makeup that drains all of the softness from her face, leaving a hard, pretty face in its “loathsome” wake. It’s how Marilyn Monroe looked at the time of her affair ending with President John Kennedy, because, by that time, she was wearing her makeup shoot. Knobb, underneath rivers of golden tresses. Klaw, and the total creepiness of prosthetic hands à la prudz. The robot girl is ready for the next stage in the hunt for the serial killer and hungry for their inevitable showdown. She’s undistracted and calculating.

This was never a detour. “We digress, again. Back to the narrative at hand.”—did not apply whatsoever. This was always part of the plan. What Sam is counting on is that when Noreen and the Master regain their senses they will be enraged, vengeful, looking for payback. They will hunt Sam down, an errant possession that must be found, all caution thrown to the wind. In spite of what The Master has previously proclaimed. In spite of what it said about Ruth’s fate swaying its decision. It will renege. It will need to own and use the robot girl, and anything less just won’t do.

Xi fades in. He walks over. Knowing better than to let her walk over to him. He can tell from the way she looks—just like Marilyn Monroe looked in those last days when it was “you have two choices: get over The President and keep your mouth shut or else.” The “or else” is rumored to be “have an accidental overdose of something so you can be found dead under mysterious circumstances,” but to this day Marilyn is mum on the entire subject—smart girl, very smart girl. Marilyn started wearing shoot makeup back then and has never stopped doing so, and she refuses to explain why. And what MM does other Hollywood peroxide-blondes soon follow. Ergo, shoot has been the only way that too-blonde starlets of the cinema have worn their makeup since the early 1960s.

“Your friend, Lady Tress-Macneille Chillingsworth, is creating quite a ruckus.”

“She’s a Dame not a Lady.”

“I stand corrected. Your friend, Dame Tress-Macneille Chillingsworth, is creating quite a ruckus at the retirement home, looking for you. She’s with some gent called Puck, and he’s not wearing.”

“Any clothes, correct?”

“Yes, he’s naked. Naked as a jaybird. And, he’s pitching a tent at some of the girls there.”

“Xi, they’ll catch up and things will sort themselves out. Don’t bother me with that again.”

Then, Sam does something that reaffirms to him that without a shadow of a doubt the person in front of him is the Sam that he has always known, loved, and lusted. He wanted her when she was human. Now, with her having been made, he has to have her in the worst way.

“The reflexes die hard. And you’re great in the locker room. But, when you put on the cleats, your game is weak. Always has been. Always will be. The unexpected always throws you for a loop. You think poorly on your feet. You can’t improvise worth a shit. Don’t get me wrong. You’re an awesome administrator. As good a number two as China has had or will ever have. But, you’ll never be number one—that takes much more than just being an ace paper pusher. The West thinks that you’re the next president of China. But, we know better. They’ll promote someone over you, likely a woman will get the nod this time around, and she’ll ride you hard and rough just like all your previous bosses have.”

His face reddens. He’s fit to be tied. She knows which of his buttons to push.

“Just look at you. An amateur inserts herself into the scenario, along with a dirty masturbating cannibal, and you fall to pieces. Forget about ever being The Boss.”

Xi finally loses it. He bitch-slaps Sam. Busting her lip. She smiles as she tastes her own blood.

“You will not speak to me this way, now or ever again!!! I’m in charge here!!!”

Sam lovingly caresses his cheek. Briefly, she shows her points: Her teeth go jagged and her tongue goes killer. He has turned her on.

“Now, that’s the Xi I know, love, and lust.”

Xi calms down just as fast as he went mercurial. Then. He goes inscrutable, again. He’s flicked that switch of theirs—the one that all Asians, mortal or immortal, possess.

“We will deal with the matter at hand. But, later I must discipline you for your grievous offense. You have insulted me. I cannot ignore what you’ve said to me. You can offer no apology that will assuage me.”

“I hadn’t planned to offer you one.” Her face is totally deadpan when she says it. It’s as if she were Borg speaking in Their third-person plural.

He stays his hand, this time. She’d love for him to slap her again, but the further expression of violent emotion on his part would serve no purpose other than to get her off. He’ll save it for later, when this is all over, and he can beat her in private just the way she likes it—it will be like a Goon would do making love to her—violent and sexual—in other words, he’ll rape her. After he beats her black and blue, he will throw her on her stomach, rip off her clothes, and fuck her in the ass—hard and rough.

“You’re despicable.”

“It’s one of our best qualities.”

Our, not mine. Another Freudian slip or more mind games, or a little bit of both?

“Time for work.”

“I wasn’t aware that I was ever off the clock.”

First-person singular, again. Tit for tat.

“Where shall we go then?”

“To the scene of the crime.”

“Which one?”

“We’ll start with the last one and work our way backwards. Please make sure that Hawk and Fisher are there when we arrive.”

“As you wish.”

Xi and Sam fade from sight. They materialize in front of the downtown Hilton. An agitated Dame Chillingsworth, with Puck in tow, struts over. This is where it all began for these two tough titty broads. Another example of things coming full circle.

This time it’s the Dame who bitch-slaps the girl, which brings the expected smile to the girl’s face. That was the Dame intent. She’s learned the girl well in their short time together. They embrace passionately and French kiss. Afterwards, the girl gives Puck a peck on the cheek, which causes him to sport a toothy grin from ear to ear literally.

The Dame hands Sam her holsters and purse. She reaches through her jacket, as if it isn’t there, and clips them to the waistband of her mini-skirt. The things in her jacket pockets appropriately purse themselves. Shoot makeup stays. Klaw and knob go bye-bye—Borg implicit, for now. She purses her prudz—almost-lily-white plastic hands give way to lily-white ones. Sexy. Sexy. Sexy. Back with a vengeance. Dominatrix never looked so good.

Harsh, ugly voice. Large, cruel mouth. And. Hard, pretty face. That loathsome, lust-filled combination. Robot girl almighty. Shrew. Comely. Perfection. Scary that makes you cum.

The claim check that was in her pocket has righted itself—it materializes back in the hands of the hatcheck girl who doubles as the doorman back at the retirement home.

“Oh, almost forgot,” Sam teases as she hands Xi the trace.

“Thank you.”

“Hawk and Fisher?”

“Inside, waiting for us.”

From the moment that Sam enters the hotel, she stalks the interior like CSI at a crime scene. Hawk and Fisher, dressed and armed, are waiting for them in the lobby. Sam acknowledges them with a nod—so casually that it borders on being dismissive. Seasoned coppers, they blend into the woodwork. Becoming unobtrusive. This is Sam’s show. They’re just here for the ride, and act accordingly. Hence the fade.

Puck stays in the lobby. The rest of them take one of the elevators to the penthouse suite where the mayhem took place. With the door to the suite kept open, Sam walks the rooms. At the threshold she doesn’t pull her voluminous hair back into a sternka so that it won’t get in the way. It never gets in the way—her hair has been well trained. No one else enters. She works the rooms with her linq’s tricorder mode shutoff and then she repeats the exercise with her linq-as-tricorder. Mentally, she compares the “with” and the “without” walk-thru. Concise, detail oriented, very German—a reflection of her Prussian roots.

By this time, a bored Dame Chillingsworth has gone back downstairs and rejoined Puck in the lobby.

There's a commotion at the front door. A maid tries to do her rounds. Hawk and Fisher bar her way. Xi does nothing. He seems apprehensive for no good reason then he goes inscrutable again, when he notices that his behavior has caught Sam's attention.

Sam walks over—tall, statuesque, and, of course, haughty—the personification of what it means for a woman to be stiff-backed. The walk says to admirers and potential suitors alike, “You're not good enough!” Additionally. Her heels audibly stab the carpet, something that she craves to do on any persuasion of rug floor. How vulgar. Emily Post would be aghast in public and giggle enviously in private. Stilettos should be seen and worshiped, but never heard—to do else is dominatrix.

“I'm done. You can let her in.”

The maid is allowed to pass.

“Thank you, ma'am. I won't be long.”

Perfect English. Impeccable diction. Counter inflection of syllables, vowels, and consonants. A stilted, halting voice that wants to get out but can't, because it's imprisoned by this one?

As the maid goes about her business, Sam shadows her. The maid's reaction to this close scrutiny isn't what you'd expect. At least, not from someone of normal intelligence. The woman looks normal enough. She speaks normal enough. Actually, as aforementioned, she speaks too well for a domestic who isn't coloured.

I can't put my finger on it. But, something about you screams, retard!

It's the same kind of vibe that Sam has picked up from other hotel employees that she's observed. Not from all of them, mind you. Just the worker bees—except for security, that is.

Why source your labor when you can go retard? Cheap, hardworking, conscientious retards. And, I'd bet my bottom dollar that they're non-union.

There's something else. Something vaguely familiar. A word keeps coming to mind. No. Two words: Maximo # W1283462. It's a facer. A face-mold keyed to their decrepit DNA which “normalizes” their mongoloid features and voices. Anecdotally, it seems to also “calm” their sometimes spastic movements.

Xi has other things on his mind. Sam's Sherlock Holmes detective schtick has really put his panties in a bunch.

She's piecing things together! Slowly but surely! Where the fuck did that come from?! Was she always like this?!

Internally, Xi is a wreck. Externally, he's inscrutable—calm, cool, and collected. In other words. A hell of a poker face.

By Xi's way of thinking. What's going on in Sam's mind? As client Titus O'Neil tangled with Kofi Kingston in a singles match, A.W. yells from ringside, “Titus O'Neil is like Kobe Bryant at a hotel in Colorado hotel room. He's unstoppable!!!”

In other words, she's means to rape him wholesale, anyway but loose. He knows it. She's done everything short of saying it to his face. He sees it in every look that she gives him. The question is, is he reading more into her consummate detective vibe than she's giving off than is really

there or is he not reading enough into it. If it is the latter, then it's Detective Peter Columbo, not Sherlock Holmes, who he's gaming with.

Peter Vincent Columbo is an American detective mystery television film series, starring Peter Falk as Columbo, a homicide detective with the Los Angeles Police Department. The character and television show were created by William Link and Richard Levinson. The show popularized the inverted detective story format. Almost every episode began by showing the commission of the crime and its perpetrator. The series has no "whodunit" element. The plot mainly revolves around how the perpetrator, whose identity is already known to the audience, will finally be caught and exposed. In other words this is a "howcatchem" format.

The character is a friendly, verbose, disheveled-looking police detective of Italian descent who is consistently underestimated by his suspects. Most people are initially reassured and distracted by his circumstantial speech and increasingly irritating, pestering behavior. Despite his unprepossessing appearance and apparent absentmindedness, he shrewdly solves all of his cases and secures all evidence needed for indictment. His formidable eye for detail and meticulously dedicated approach, though apparent to the viewer, often become clear to the killer only late in the storyline.

Then, there's that other factor to think about. Something that is bona fide. Sam is not a master spy engaged in an adventure of espionage and daring do. She is a talented murderess, fluent in police investigative procedure having been a Grimm, who has been tasked with solving a murder mystery. Not a fish out of water. Solving instead of committing a murder, she seems to be equally in her element.

Why so agitated? Personality-wise, Xi's engineered to be as sober as Raydor's dark horn-rim glasses. Knowing what he knows about me, he seems genuinely surprised about my prowess stalking the crime scene. And his amateurish attempt at trying to hide that surprise is quite unconscionable. It's also quite unlike him, secondary and primary. As was his response to me joking about his lack of improvisational skills or him being the perennial brow-beaten Number Two. The latter is a private joke between the two of us.

More to the point—it's code. If I'm not myself, and I thus need your assistance, please help posthaste. Now it's time to see what's what. Is Xi being controlled, has he been replaced, or has he just gone bad and is subconsciously pleading for her to put him down.

Her makeup goes bye-bye. As such, her perpetual scowl gives way to an underlining sternness in whatever facial expression she wears. Minus prudz, klaw, and knobb, and now minus makeup. End result: banal? No. Never. Still—the harsh, pretty face of a dominatrix. Still—implicitly Borg; explicitly loathsome—implicitly Borg that comes off as explicitly loathsome. Stiff-backed—haughty, unbending—literally, that erect posture. A switch-hitter, who can "role play" either dominant or submissive equally well, is a dominant, nonetheless—preference as opposed to limitation.

Xi's reaction is most telling. He's stone-faced and perplexed—contradictions that are punctuated by an involuntary twitch. Followed by a brief moment of being vexed. Then, he just goes inscrutable, again.

"Xi."

"Yes."

“Where is the dark-haired woman?”

“How should I know? She ran away before I had a chance to wash out her filthy mouth and put her in a modest blouse.” He pauses in mid-sentence and just gives her that look. The look that says, “Where the fuck have I been?” At first he sees bits and pieces. Then, images flood his mind. Embarrassment flickers briefly across his face. “I’m sorry; it seems that I have been rude to you. Worse, it seems that I have secretly lusted after you.”

“You’re really sorry about the lust part?”

His response: He raises an eyebrow and smiles. Then he just goes back to doing his Asian thing, again—inscrutable. Internally, he’s much more descriptive.

Leggy. Generously built. Stiff-backed. And, haughty. A statuesque bombshell. Like hell I’m sorry about the lust part, and you know it.

“How much do you remember?” She asks. Having politely decided to change the subject. Besides. There’s nothing more to be gained from pursuing the “personal” one.

“A lot. But I just don’t know who or what did this to me, let alone the context of my subversion.”

The maid points at Xi’s back and begins screaming. Hawk and Fisher show their moxie by not rushing in upon hearing the commotion. They stay the course and remain at their posts.

Sam walks toward the maid who’s gone hysterical. Her approach doesn’t calm the domestic. It has the opposite effect. The woman bolts for the door, shrieking—the delusion having gained ubiquity.

“Stay back! You’ve got one of those things hooked into your back, erupting through your clothes, just like he does!”

Hawk bars the door, while Fisher grabs hold of the maid. The domestic proves more than a handful to control, but she’s unable to break free of Fisher’s tenacious grip.

Sam abruptly halts her advance. Xi stops dead in his tracks, three measured paces behind her. Not all that previously transpired was a lie. He does lust for her—always has—always will. He stares at her, fantasizing.

As if they’ve been dipped in living “feature-rich” plastic, her borgz glove her upper limbs. So. Just like her prudz and her dollz, her borgz look like plastic, living plastic, and feel disturbingly like flesh. Shades of Star Trek’s Borg Queen, Alice Krige. Shades of any Borg queen.

Of course, it’s more than just a look. And her borgz are more than just Borg gloves. They have evolved over time into something else. Something much more insidious.

When she wears them, her limbs become artificial, just like the body of a Borg queen. So. Just like when she wears her prudz, or her dollz, her limbs don’t just look prosthetic, they are prosthetic. The total creepiness of prosthetic limbs à la borgz.

The transformation is hardly complete. More Borg queen, means more dominatrix. Shoot makeup all of the softness drains from the girl’s face, a face that’s hard to begin with, klaw, and knobb return. Explicitly Borg; explicitly loathsome. The automaton smiles that smile—resistance is futile—because, this babe is Borg.

“Bring her over here to me, now. But. Do it slowly,” Sam commands.

Fisher complies. Xi gets hard. Aroused. He revels in the carnality between and betwixt his loins—the “game” smell of fresh jism—the moistness of his “juices”—that warmth—the stickiness. With none the wiser as to what’s going on in his trousers.

Xi contemplates the profoundness, meditatively—exploring its spirituality. Carnality and spirituality. All in one fell swoop. Later on, in private, this former Buddhist monk will masturbate in earnest—vigorously “handjobbing” his own penis while further pondering the metaphysical implications of this moment vis-à-vis the cosmos—what it means to worship her Sam, his bitchin’-hot Borg babe. Yes, this is the real Xi.

Kicking and screaming, straining against her stronger captor, the maid stops struggling and goes limp once she’s shoved in Sam’s face.

“In effect or an affect?” Questions Xi. His curiosity gets the best of him. He moves up front and center into the middle of it the situation. In doing so he bumps up against Sam. An accident or a Freudian slip?

“Possibly a wallaby,” Sam ventures. “If so, the Borg is too much.”

“Too bad. I like it.”

“So I just noticed.”

Xi does not break kayfabe. He displays no reaction whatsoever to her verbal jab—choosing wisely to keep doing his Asian thing. Even though the cat is out of the bag, there’s no good reason for him to acknowledge his slip and a lot of really good reasons to keep things close to vest like he’s doing.

She’s playing with me as if I am a young thing and she is the older one. This I like very much.

“The maid is only food. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. No loss, either way,” Xi observes dryly. As if nothing is going on between them.

“Agreed. The Borg stays put, even if it kills her—death by gambit overdose,” Sam decides. Then she invokes the appropriate trigger. “Carmen speaks with modern colloquialisms and phrases. The dialogue is so contemporary, in fact, it really doesn’t support the fact that so much time has passed or that we’ve seemingly regressed in our educational capabilities.”

The maid comes to herself. Sam motions for Fisher to release her. The copper obeys, but remains proximal to the maid, just in case.

“I do not wish to be rude, but I must get back to my duties. If you have any more questions, please take them up with my supervisor.”

With that said, the maid goes back to her duties.

“What’s next, Sam?”

“I’d like to visit surveillance and speak with the security officer in charge.”

“Let’s.”

“Make sure that hotel security keeps a tab on the maid. Also instruct them to make sure that she doesn’t leave the premises when her shift is over.”

“Consider it done.”

That's when she drops a bombshell. Her prudz and borgz trade places—prudz glove her and her borgz get pursed. Nothing else changes in her couture. Yet the effect is profound. Simultaneously, her look is now—submissive and dominant; Borg queen and Borg drone—that paradox, literally. Xi soils himself. Facially, he never loses his composure. His clothes clean him up, but not so quick that she doesn't get a whiff of his game smell. Mind you, he's only game for a brief moment, but it's long enough for her to catch the scent. She smiles that knowing smile that says, "You dirty, dirty boy! I must spank you, later!"

And. As if to spank him figuratively now as opposed to literally spanking him later as she plans to, her hair goes back up into a sternka and she slips on her Edith Head glasses. They're the very dark ones; the ones with the blue glass lenses. Now she looks the part—that of a well-dressed, inscrutable schoolmarm who's also Borg.

Back in the 30s and 40s, the heyday of black-and-white films, it was commonplace for designers, cameramen, art directors, people like that, to wear dark glasses on movie sets—looking at the sets through blue glass showed them how it would photograph in black and white.

Of course Sam has a very different reason for wearing them, and it has nothing to do with wanting to look inscrutable. Looking inscrutable wearing them is merely a side effect.

The glasses allow her to see who's been harnessed. Those are the people who have knowingly or unknowingly come in contact with the killer. From that disclosure, Sam hopes to discern a pattern.

Downstairs in the lobby

Only two things are infinite, the universe and human stupidity, and I'm not so sure about the former.—**Albert Einstein**

“Feel like a fifth wheel on *Moonlighting*? Don't worry, you'll get used to it. It's always like that when those two get together—even worse when Xi's himself—the proverbial Frick and Frack, Ying and Yang. Yep. You could easily mistake them for an old married couple. By now she will have figured out his glamor and freed him. Yep, worse, now that he's free and himself, with a little help from her. You'll see that firsthand, yourself. Worst—I'd wager that. It'll be like. Today's St. Louis Deal: \$35 for a 1-Hour Swedish Massage and exam at Citrin Chiropractic, regular price \$145.”

“What the devil are you babbling about?” Dame Chillingsworth questions as she whirls round and gives Puck her full attention.

“You heard me. And don't use that tone of voice with me, you stuck-up Nosferatu. Lose the bass. Or this uppity Sprite will shove his hooves so far up your uptight ass that you will taste the soles of his cloven feet for a month of Sundays.”

“I have a mind to slap the taste out of your mouth.”

He “flutters” both eyebrows—raising and lowering them rapidly.

“I'd really like that. It's been a coon's age since the goddess disciplined me. I bet you're a good spanker too. You look like you can swing a mean rattan, sist'r.”

“Degenerate scum! You're a disgusting little man!”

“And. Your point is what?”

But the Dame stays her hand and her mouth too. She does not touch him. Nor does she engage in anymore backtalk with him. Out of the clear blue sky. Her women's intuition kicks in and tells her that caution is best exercised with this one. *You're being duped*, it says. It's a warning that proves prophetic when she takes a notion to look him over closer, much closer. He allows her close scrutiny without voiced objection or obscuring affectation. Finally. She notices something about him, a something that leads her observation to discover other things about him.

So, you defer to me only when it suits your purposes. And it suits you to do so no more. It would seem that you are old enough to pass for someone much younger and thus less powerful; only revealing yourself truly when the whim moves you.

“Not funny,” The Dame finally offers. She's openly flabbergasted by what the blatant misrepresentation that he's perpetrated.

“It wasn't meant to be. In time, maybe two, possibly three if you prove to be that dense, you might understand.”

But, it doesn't take her that long. She pauses, briefly, and then she finally gives it up and smiles back. Her annoyance, bordering on anger, dissipates quickly like steam slamming against ice. She bends down and kisses him on the top of his head.

I can no more hold things against you than I can Sam.

“Oh shit, it’s not like I was going to hold a grudge,” she finally confesses.

“I knew there was a reason why I liked you so much,” he teases, playfully—a cat toying with a mouse.

That’s when The Dame has her eureka moment. And he can see it in her eyes. He purses his lips and places a finger up to them, as if to say, *shush*.

Oh my God! You’re Robin Goodfellow!

He nods in the affirmative, as if he can read her mind. She’s simultaneously elated and embarrassed. Elated to meet him. Embarrassed that she didn’t know better, sooner.

There are ways to ingratiate yourself into the fold and possible fondle of a much older, greater Being. A born politician, who has lived for eons, Dame Chillingsworth knows the choice of those ways.

As such, Dame Chillingsworth cements their budding friendship by slapping him hard across the face. The pop reverberates in the lobby.

“You’ve been a very bad boy. I will have to spank you, later.”

“Now you’re talking, toots.”

Tea for Two

Sam watches the security footage intently. There are numerous people in the room, including the hotel manager. Xi has made good on his promise. All is as she demanded. Although the Hilton family controls Hilton Inc., the mainland Chinese government owns 25% of Hilton and 100% of this hotel. Recently, this hotel began falling short of its quotas. Soon after Xi came to investigate why, the murders happened. Then there's this convoluted mess with the traitor who needs to be fretted out that's been dumped in his lap as well.

The images she's reviewing must shuffle at a lower frame rate than she would normally employ else the hotel's mainframe computer wouldn't be able to keep up with her. Computer is being used for redundancy and reference. The security cameras have the usual redundancies and reference, not to mention filters, yet she insists on computer for oversight and wearing the Heads.

She hits pause on one of the numerous monitors that she's using for her audit. A blonde hottie, built, twenty-something, athletic, walks across the lobby—in the background whilst Puck and the Dame are treated as foreground, from her point of view and interest.

“Nice trim,” Sam casually observes. Xi notices her distraction.

The slice in question is Ellen Hoog born March 26, 1986 in Bloemendaal, a sexy Netherlands field hockey player. Too bad the NHL doesn't breed them like this, if they did the league's popularity would be assured in spades.

The Dutch female field hockey player is of the first ladies' team of Amsterdam. She is also a member of the Dutch National Women's Team. She is a striker. In 2004 she made her debut in the national team. She has played 34 matches for the national team in which she has scored 7 times.

In August 2005, she became European Champion in Dublin (IRL). In December of the same year she won the Champions Trophy in Canberra (AUS) with the Dutch National Women's Team. She was also part of the Dutch squad that became World Champion at the 2006 Women's Hockey World Cup.

Her father died from cancer a week after the European Championship victory in Ireland. After his death she had difficulties picking up her normal life again, but regained the motivation to start playing when the new season started in October 2005. She's been a dominating monster player ever since.

Now to expose Xi's thief using the subliminals that are being broadcast by the carrier wave which has been cleverly hidden in the imaging of the hotel's security cameras. A subversion that's much too clever to have been devised by the person that she and Xi suspect of the larceny.

Sam makes a series of arcane gestures with her mannequin hands. The prudz that glove her making her hands look like the hands of a mannequin. All of the humans in the room, save one, begin uttering in unison—the lone exception being the hotel manager.

“Honestly, I thought it was kind of pointless with the little switch-a-roo in between. Sometimes it's worth building the storyline with one person holding the championship for a little longer. The same thing happened when Velvet Sky won it at Bound For Glory, she was built up as the top babyface and finally she won it and she dropped it immediately and I felt like it was kind of weird.”

Then, just as abruptly, they cease their singsong. Only three people in the suite are aware that anything has just happened. Everybody else seems totally oblivious of the “event.” That quickly changes, of course.

Hard face, harsh makeup, a shrew’s brittle grating voice, flowing shoulder-draping too-blonde tresses, blue eyes, huge knockers—the “big” rack—those twins, slim hips, tight flat ass—a white girl’s or Asian girl’s trademark pancakes, miniscule waist, large cruel mouth, and long, sculptured legs. Hot sassy vixen that is confident, deceptive, and alluring. Wears tight fitting, distracting outfits. Takes care of business and stirs-up trouble. Loathsome. Borg. Dominatrix.

Life’s a bitch and then you die. Because. The devil is always in the details. Meticulous planning—practice, practice, practice. And, one little mistake, a moment’s carelessness, the oversight he drilled endlessly to preempt, and it all goes down the drain. He the manager Marion Lopes forgot to remove his contacts. Further compounding his mistake, Marion does the totally useless, second most stupid thing he could do in this situation and takes a step back.

Sam and Xi turn round to face him. “Forgot to take out your lenses? They must be real beauts to elude a demon’s casual visual inspection. I bet that once you’re wearing them, it takes close careful scrutiny to ferret them out even when you know what you’re looking for,” The Nosferatu teases, the acid tone of her deep for a woman, raspy voice underlining the seriousness of what has just been revealed.

“What?! Huh?!” Marion’s feeble attempt at denial. He begins to sweat. His starched collar is suddenly way too tight.

Stealing from the Mob—such a stupid thing to do, the dumbest thing you can possibly do, and yet people still do it—is akin to suicide. Stealing from the mainland Chinese government runs a very close second. You get caught by either one with your hand in the till and hell hath no fury not even a woman scorned. It’s all downhill from here, for Marion.

Marion moves his hand toward a coat pocket. The third most stupid thing that he could possibly do in this situation. She smiles.

“Go ahead. Embarrass yourself.”

He weighs his options, thinks better of what he’s about to do, and stops. Marion drops to his knees and assumes the position. He should have gone for his gun. But, he’ll find that out soon enough.

“Looks like you just flushed out my embezzler,” Xi announces proudly, beaming from ear to ear. By now, the jig is up and except for the clueless retards and those tasked with watching the scanners every eye in the room is fixed upon the proceedings. “What are you all looking at? Get back to work. Except for you two. You take him downstairs to the basement, AFTER you’ve disarmed him and made a proper search his person. I want no surprises. If he escapes, it’s your heads. If he dies before we get a chance to question him, it’s your heads. Any version of fuckup where he’s concerned and it’s your heads. Understood?”

It’s quite obvious, without a word being said, that they understand. But, it’s the apparent “nonsense,” totally out of context jibber-jabber, which Sam spouts as follow-up which really sets the sobering tone at least from Lopes’ point of view. Of course, Xi has the opposite point of view for equally obvious reasons.

“S.M. Stirling has an entire series of novels on the “Emberverse,” where electricity stops and gunpowder will not spark. The first book was made into a movie. This movie is not like *Lost*. It is more like *Santiago*. People forever being hunted, forever being caught, and forever escaping, all in search of the amulet until the series ends.”

That’s when you see all of the hope go out of Marion’s eyes. He can read in-between the lines, and now knows that he should have gone for his gun instead of peacefully surrendering—Triads, Tongs, anybody, anything but what this shrew bitch craves, he laments to himself. You know ‘cept fer titties, hee yuck-yuck.

Gonna Tan Your Hide

Honest politicians are like UFOs. Most people believe that there must be some out there somewhere, but nobody has yet been able to prove their existence.—**Albert Einstein's Nosferatu mistress, Dame Tress-Macneille Chillingsworth**

Her name is Heidi Bobo, and this beefy plus-size madam is a Sphinx. One green eye, one blue, one of which is lazy—always is right after a loop. Geriatric muff—a very nappy one—unkempt. Long uncombed chestnut hair, that's liberally streaked with grey and white. Unruly geriatric tresses that are yanked back into a sternka. Matching drapes and rug. Snaggletooth—yellow, nasty-looking, crooked-ass teeth. Fetid—Stale, sour breath. Tobacco products—unfiltered cigarettes, cigars, or chew? Nope. Her oral hygiene—the lack of it—is also why her teeth look rotten in places. Broad shoulders. A thick torso. Thunder thighs. Big boned. Mannish—masculine looks and ways. A tight ass—pancakes that you can literally pop a quarter off of. Large feet and hands, for a woman. Double-J's—compressed to look cup-sizes smaller by her bra so that they're not so much in the way. She looks like a cross between a Giant and a Crone, with a dash of Goon mixed in for good measure. Nonetheless, she's "pure," not a mutt.

Then there's that, "old people who DO smell, however, they get the smell from medications they have to take, or the old yucky smelling combo of Ben-gay and baby-powder" smell that you get a strong whiff of whenever you get close to her. And the "marginal" hygiene that goes along with it. A disdain for regular bathing, practiced over time—no pun intended. She does bathe, mind you, just not very often. And, her paying customers are enamored of her that way—clients have clamored for it ever since that Bruce Willis movie "Loopers." Effluvia! Putrid, please!

Sternns. Prudz. Clunky-looking, black rubber Lugz-brand clogs aka dutchies aka dutch-boys. Harsh makeup. Shinny support stockings—backseamed—sheer, sexy, and very unbecoming. A Kaye Maxfield—the most spinster version of a Koo Stark. The variation being, that this suit has a masculine cut and a knee-length hobble skirt in place of a miniskirt. No blouse. A white torpedo bra, but no panties. Underneath her pencil skirt, she's strapping a kock. A kock fused seamlessly to her nethers makes her she-male. Making her sexual preference—bulldike? That's. A resounding, "Hell Yes!" Exclusively lesbian? Nope. She's a clown. Slut? Yes. She's promiscuous, but she's not indiscriminate. She has standards. A whore for hire? Yes. A pro? Nope. She's a swinger, not a hoe. Then again, morally speaking, we're splitting some very fine hairs with these distinctions.

Cunnilingus? Anilingus? Fellatio? Ms. Bobo will munch carpet, eat crack, or make a cucumber disappear vaginally or orally or anally with the best of 'em. Whether she's in need of coin or not. Trick or treat? She detests freebees. Trick for treat. Why give it away, when people will pay you for it? "If you want me to put out, then you need to, at least, take me out on a date and spend some money on me. I don't do Dutch on dates. You have to ply me with coin. I'm the envy of ace-ducey gold-diggers, all over the world."

Fucking is more than just an avocation, for her, though. She likes to fuck, she's good at it, and she's doesn't restrict herself to the living or the willing, either. Where this harlot is concerned. Enslavement, degradation, and humiliation—along with rape—are the house specialties. Bang! Bang!

In summation. She's a prostitute, by conviction, not by trade. A looper, by vocation. A real bottom feeder, by nature. And a tightwad, to boot. Case in point, with the expenses coming out of her own pocket, she's financing this op on a shoestring.

Sphinxes like to pretend and they're quite good at it. They pass well for human. Preferring to only go native only when they feed or they fuck.

Even with her facility, she can't extend a flash-forward much more than 137 Sekunden. But, that proves to be long enough. She's back in the lobby with none the wiser. Her falsified credentials identify her as Helen Funches, a freelance reporter with API News. And they're good enough forgeries to fool The Novogratz himself.

That's when she notices the Sprite and the Nosferatu. The Nosferatu pays no close attention to her. Just a passing observation. The Dame sees her only as a hardcore bulldyke and a total douche, and therefore not a person of interest for business or pleasure—an understandable rookie mistake on The Dame's part. The Sprite is another matter entirely.

Although she hides it quite well, Heidi is livid.

That's what I get for relying on a human! I told him that nothing THAT Old should be allowed in the building!

Although she's doing all of this for very personal reasons—revenge is a dish best served cold. A professional. Heidi reins in her foul temper. The moment of furor passes. She can't afford any slip-ups. Not on this caper. Not with the finish line in sight.

No matter, I have what I need. The deed is done.

His Lopes' instructions. First and foremost. Nothing too Old was to be allowed to stay in the hotel for any length of time, no matter how brief. Find some excuse, any excuse, to keep them out. And, when in doubt, error on the side of caution. That's the reason why The Dame lost her room. Preliminary scans indicated that she might not be young enough. Xi, who was also iffy, was another matter entirely, not so easily gotten rid of—he represents ownership, after all. The smoke screen of the embezzlement, with Lopes as the scapegoat, proved to be insufficient. The search for the traitor and serial killer proved to be God sends—those needed distractions. Those investigations meant that Xi was never in the hotel long enough to notice, if he proved old enough to unravel the deception.

The two Old Ones, Heidi and Puck, both of whom can, and do, pass for much younger give each other that “serious” onceover.

Maybe he's too old to care, even if he sees it? I've got to chance it. I'm much too close to the prize to blow it with a confrontation. By now, S.T.A.R. Labs (Scientific and Technological Advanced Research) will have dug through the rubble and discovered that The Tesseract has been stolen from their research facility at Barrett Crossing. Such a pretty explosion that was when the TEC daemon failed—nice camouflage for the theft. That catastrophe bought me a lot of time. She giggles to herself. Like us loopers are ever in short supply of that commodity.

Endgame. Mustering her best poker face, Heidi walks out of the lobby. Puck never says a word to The Dame, until Heidi is safely out of sight.

When he shares his suspicions and more importantly his observations with The Dame, it's The Dame's turn to be positively livid.

“Why in the fuck didn’t you say something to me, while that looper was still here and now?!”

He just shrugs his shoulders and quips, “’Cause it was none of my bee’s wax, thin slice.”

Puck’s pet name for The Dame is “thin slice.”

“We’d better tell Sam.”

“Nope.”

“What?!”

“I imagine she will be into it very heavy, by now. Best not to interrupt her when she’s slicing, thin slice. What we have to tell her will keep for later.”

You see, in the mezzanine there’s another illusion/delusion. It’s a statue of the god Ares straddling a Grecian fountain. In reality. It’s a tesseract. And not just any tesseract, mind you. It’s The Tesseract.

What is the fore illusion/delusion, if the latter is the mezzanine statue that isn’t a statue?

Why it’s Heidi Bobo herself, of course.

gOd

Heaven hath no rage like love turned to hatred. Nor Hell a fury, like a woman scorned.—
William Congreve (1697)

Once Heidi is outside of the hotel, free of the restrictions of a modern edifice, she can move as she wills and wishes. An Old One, an Eldest God who is older than any Dragon in the vicinity including Ancient Mia. Not just savvy in science, magic, and vox; she's fluent in all of them. The world is her oyster, once more with no one to stand in her way, or so she believes. She's herself, again. Apologetic, to no one. She's gOd.

Heidi rounds a corner. Confirms that no one is tailing her. And, right there in the open, she loops. She waits for things to here and now. The loop finishes. She waits for lazy eye and two-tone eyes to go bye-bye. Then. Seemingly, just for shits and giggles, she changes into that rarely exercised clean and pristine version of hers from a pre-Loopers past life.

Green eyes, neither of which is lazy. Kept, neatly cropped, chestnut muff. Long, silky, combed chestnut hair. Lush tresses that are still yanked back into a sternka. Matching drapes and rug—neither of which is geriatric. Clean, sparkling-white teeth. Minty-fresh breath. No body odor and just a hint of a lilac-lavender-vanilla concoction for fragrance. Faultless hygiene. The envy of any Nosferatu—including those, like the ones native to this planet, who do not practice cleanliness.

Nothing else about her changes. A tank—thick, straight-built girl, with a rack and pancakes. Dirty or clean, she remains repressed—hers being the vilest expression of that prudish affectation. In public, she's the archetypical spinster. In private, she's the misbegotten harlot. A dichotomy that's typical of spinsters, especially those of her persuasion. As a lover, she's insanely jealous, very possessive, and extremely controlling.

A textbook obsessive-compulsive. Her demands of exclusivity, in amore, are boundless, rivaling that of a dominatrix. It's no surprise that her love affairs are always short-lived. A bad loser, where affairs of the heart are concerned and anything else for that matter, she has a well-deserved reputation for being vindictive toward her ex-paramours. She's also quite fickle—running hot then cold, at the flick of a switch; no matter how much she's into you, today's fixation that she cannot live without, becomes tomorrow's passing fad that's so easily forgotten. Such is the lascivious temperament of gOd “almighty” aka The One.

Flash-forward, the flipside of looping—when the looper is gOd

They're someplace seedy. A flophouse. Populated by the expected assortment of social flotsam and jetsam—riff raff, all of them. Bums. Tramps. Bagladies. Winos. Gossipy, down-n-out, chit chats. Etc. Worse—it's a two-bit sit-up.

"How about that thick slice, over there?" Sam asks playfully.

The Dame looks in the direction of the younger woman's lascivious intent.

"Geez! Who in their right mind would pay to fuck that?!"

"I would."

"Ugh."

"She's the one who is in cahoots with Lopes."

"A god?"

"Not just a god, gOd 'almighty,' herself."

"Then. We'll need backup, else the capture will go a-rye and either our principal or we will get got permanently."

"Agreed. There's no reason for anyone to die over this matter."

"Above all, you want her alive not dead to fuck."

"You betcha, red rider. But I will take what I can get. So if I have to fuck her dead, I will."

137 seconds elapse, back to the here and now

Just like that, The Dame is back in the lobby with Puck. From the expression on his face, he's making no secret of the fact that he's aware of what just happened to her. The expression is priceless.

From the Dame's vantage point. When you eliminate the implausible, the improbable, and the impossible. Only one logical conclusion remains.

What in the fuck just happened to me?!

She asks rhetorically. Knowing full well what it felt like. Knowing full well what it was. Knowing full well what that means.

"Stop beating around the bush."

That was gOd.

"Still feel inclined to have confronted her in the lobby?"

The intruding voice in her head, "splicing" her thoughts so to speak conversing telepathically with her, is Puck's. He's smiling from ear to ear, literally. Much to his continued amusement, The Dame is not inclined to answer him, in any way, shape, or form.

Only when Heidi is "being" finite, for example, in the guise of a not-so-indestructible Sphinx, is she vulnerable. Otherwise, for all intents and purposes, she's indestructible—and therefore, in effect, invincible.

For Heidi. Being one thing and then being another is not about shape shifting. Heidi doesn't just look like a thing; she is that thing. She "bioforms." For most of the last half-century, that thing has been Heidi Bobo, Sphinx—her second favorite guise. But, she has also been Heidi Bobo, Witch in the near likeness of Elizabeth Montgomery and Heidi Bobo, Dragon in the near likeness of Nancy Kwan—just to name a few.

Elizabeth Victoria Montgomery, an American film and television actress. A Witch, whose career spanned five decades, is best known as Samantha Stephens in *Bewitched*.

Nancy "Ka Shen" Kwan, a Hong Kong-born Eurasian-American actress now retired. A Dragon, who is much older and thus far more powerful than Ancient Mia. Ms. Kwan in the guise of her "human" pretense played a pivotal role in the acceptance of actors of Asian ancestry in major Hollywood film roles. Ms. Kwan is widely praised for her beauty, and is considered one of the seminal sex symbols of the 1960s, and still considered one of the greatest sex symbols of all times.

Of course, there was that short, fascinating stint as a likeness of Standard Oil heiress and legendary American trendsetter Millicent Rogers—Magnificent Milly—which is detailed at length in *Searching for Beauty: The Life of Millicent Rogers*. Milly being the guise that immediately preceded the resumption of her current, most recurring pseudonym.

But, regardless of how many times that gOd has been Heidi Bobo, Sphinx. Her favorite guise, hands down, is Agnes Moorehead, a Witch. In the likeness of Ms. Moorehead, gOd is a real swinger, because Ms. Moorehead is a real swinger and gOd is the original swinger. As such, Heidi as Ms. Moorehead is a spinster who butters her toast on both sides as well as the crust—

fucking men and woman and multiplicity (he/she/it/them), animate or inanimate, alive or dead or undead, whatever or whomever, with equal abandon. Sexually, it's gOd's most over-the-top guise. Like the "real" Ms. Moorehead, she wears her Ike-era Kaye, with prudz, and, for footwear, either sexy ubiquitous careys or prudish plain-jaynes a women's vintage pair of Westies black patent leather dress shoes, those dowdy black Patten-Leather flats, favored by spinsters, the spinster inclined, and prudish aficionados of severe footwear worldwide—bare legs, of course, and no kock to get in the way of her extended forays into less extraverted "fun." As lookalike Agnes, Heidi's kock is reserved, almost exclusively, for AP (anal penetration). Undergarments? Unmentionables? That white lacy torpedo bra stays, and gets matching French panties. Unbecoming/becoming harsh makeup, sternns, and sternka, when the situation demands or when she just feels dyke.

Clean and pristine, charismatic, extravagant, flamboyant, old money wealthy—Agnus Moorehead—the ultimate, jet set, party girl for when you wanted your monied slice to be of the "seasoned" variety. The diametric opposite of filthy rich, skinflint, shrew Heidi Bobo, Sphinx. Heidi as Agnus Moorehead—Heidi as show folk, and when she's show folk, she IS show folk. Hence the lezzy edge and the faintest hint of sadomasochism the fashion, not the fetish.

Agnes Robertson Moorehead, an American actress and Witch. Although she began with the Mercury Theatre, has appeared in more than seventy films beginning with *Citizen Kane* and on dozens of television shows during a career that spanned more than thirty years, Moorehead is most widely known to modern audiences for her role as the witch Endora in the series *Bewitched*.

Again, that *Bewitched* connection. Understandable, since it is Heidi's favorite TV show.

As a side note, it is the Agnus Moorehead version of Heidi Bobo that the author Erle Stanley Gardner based his fictional barrister Perry Mason upon. He did not, as so many people think, base his Perry Mason on the real Perry Mason attorney at law. In one of his novels, Garner describes his make-believe Mason as "an average lawyer, competent enough, but, as a detective, someone with few peers and no superiors; even Sherlock Holmes the real one or Sir Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle's fictional one would, at best, be only able to detective him to a draw."

Gardner was quite the detective in his own right. His famous rebuke of A. Conan Doyle, when Doyle accused Heidi of some questionable, bordering on nefarious, doings: "Au contraire, Sir Doyle, it's a Van Helsing-like professor and his protégé, not Fraulein Bobo, who are the ones tracking down Dracula's descendants through the world of 'parallels,' creatures who are human in form but live quite distinct psychic lives."

All told, gOd has been Heidi Bobo in various guises, two of which have been as Gay men for longer than there has been a human race, Angels, Nameless Ones, Dragons, and all but the oldest Demons. Adam and Eve met gOd the day after God "introduced" the First Couple to each other. Yep. She properly she/he/them, but never it has been around for a very long time. So long in fact that some of The Older Ones call her Auntie.

So. Even in a modern edifice, like the hotel, a confrontation with Heidi in the lobby would not have gone well for The Dame if Puck would have chosen not to intervene on The Dame's behalf. Of course, he would have—intervened, that is—in any ensuing melee.

Things never came to that though, where he had to get involved. No altercation. Nope. Nothing. Puck is much too old to be anything but smooth in situations like that. The Young must

be protected from themselves. So it goes without saying that they must be protected from Old such as She. He doesn't call her Auntie, of course. The Oldest of God's Children never do.

A brisk walk and steady, energetic pace. Downtown to skidrow, as if it were just two city blocks, instead of eight. This is Heidi's home away from home. She enters one of the flophouses the Prince Albert, stepping over some of the hotel's more inebriated residents. Amy Buhrig is working the front desk; usually it's her doppelganger Abigail "Abby" Leech.

From the waist up, Amy is a deadringer for Lickh. From the waist down, she has the body of a serpent. She, like Abby, has been known to eat the more unruly occupants of this seedy establishment. The girls' lethal, culinary reputations keep most people in line.

Heidi tosses three dollars on the desk and keeps walking. Amy scoops up the moola and shoves it into the cash register. Here, you rent your room by the day, in cash. Her three-dollar room is quite a step up from her previous flop. At that dingy, you rented your room for six bits an hour. It was a haven for prostitutes and worse she-male, hophead dominatrices, and worst haunts, like herself.

Six bits equals 75 cents. This is a holdover from "pieces of eight" - where a Spanish dollar was cut up into eight pieces - and this is why a quarter is "two bits."

Ummm. The old bull got cleaned up. I wonder who the benefactor is for this special occasion of hers. Likely the recipient of her fornications will be one of her dope fiend "friends"—someone dirty like that. I get the shivers just looking at her. I just don't get what those women see in her.

"They see me in them."

Amy plays it cool and refuses to acknowledge Heidi's wanton telepathic violation of her. But that doesn't prevent her from delivering a parting shot. Pretending that it's the shot's provocation is merely Heidi's severe appearance and nothing else.

Frumpy bitch!!!

Heidi only smiles and goes upstairs to her room. When she reaches the door for her room she checks the door jamb for her tells, before entering. Sure enough, her hairs are still in place, undisturbed. None of the binding charms and barrier spells have been broken, either. She enters, securing the door behind her—a series of fluid movements, one flowing seamlessly into the other. A quick scan of the room offers up nothing unexpected. All is as it should be. No surprises, so far. But, Heidi is much too experienced an operator to be so easily lulled. She doesn't have to wait long to have her suspicions vindicated.

Two figures, a Nosferatu and a Goon, both female, detach themselves from the shadows. They had neatly folded themselves into the darkness. From the way that they are dressed, they're obviously locals.

Lesser would have been caught off guard by this intrusion, and thus have been too surprised and flustered to mount a credible counter. But, Heidi is not lesser. She loops. But, much to her astonishment and dismay, absolutely nothing happens.

She is gOd, and thus no being that is so easily thwarted. Her tells were undisturbed. Nor was any of the magic that she has in place breached to give alarm. And, as much as the desk clerks either Amy or Abby detest the old dyke, both know better than to betray her. Neither would give

aid and comfort to any would-be intruders. Either would have warned her of an ambush. And, no one gets in this place the flop when they're on duty without their knowledge. This leaves only one explanation that passes scrutiny. Heidi is not in her room; physically and metaphysically she is in someone's ROOM.

Worst. Whoever setup this trap is someone who knows her well; too well, well known to know how to destroy her. The two confronting her, don't allow her to dwell on her dire predicament.

"Where is she?! What have you done with her?!" The Nosferatu shrieks. The other one, the Goon, and thus the much larger of the two, stays silent, but not still.

So. While she attempts to distract me with baseless accusations, her partner-in-crime the big girl moves to flank me.

She gOd will never get over God making Goons her equal in hand-to-hand combat. The best she can fight one of them to is a draw. This longstanding quibble doesn't distract her from noticing something odd about the Nosferatu.

By the way. I wonder what's wrong with that Nosferatu, anyways.

"Number one. Nothing's wrong. That's an 'it,' not a 'her.' It's a corpse, an animate corpse. That's what Nosferatu who are native to this planet are."

Oh, that's right. Thanks for reminding me, whoever you are.

"You're welcome. Of course, the Goon with it is quite alive."

Of course.

Heidi seems unfazed by the unknown's telepathic intrusion.

"Number two. they've been led to believe that you have me, thus her accusations are not baseless."

By whom have they been misled?

"By me."

And, who are you?

"It's no fun if I just tell you. Guess."

Give me a clue.

"You can call her old and senile, but I prefer to call her a genius."

Connie!!! Connie!!! Show yourself, at once, young lady!!!

"Make me, Maggie Mae."

What you lacked in age, you always made up for in madness.

The ROOM goes bye-bye. They're in Heidi's hotel room. Although The Master doesn't know what just happened, it's been around long enough to know that something did happen. It motions to Noreen, who stops dead in her tracks. Then she Noreen and her Nosferatu mistress back off slowly.

Standing behind Heidi are two Nosferatus. One of them is Dark and the other one is White. Heidi turns around to face them, knowing full well that if the Nosferatu and the Goon who are

now behind her make a move to attack her, they will be summarily dealt with by her Connie who is one of the two Nosferatus now facing her. A sure thing, if there ever was one—doubtless.

Sam starts to say something, but Heidi shushes her. She complies.

It's not like I have to guess.

Being gOd, just looking upon the Dark girl, Heidi knows instantly that Sam is her Connie without Sam having to say a word of confirmation.

“Someone made you well.” Heidi is pleased as she utters the self-evident; seeing, by the look in the girl’s eyes, that the girl is strongly attracted to her.

I wonder if you would like me better if I were—dowdier—the dowdiest imaginable.

“Yes I would.”

Heidi lets her hair down. Her sternka gives way to long strait hair—very long and very straight and thus very severe. Sternns, kock, support stockings, and dutchies are pursed. Now it’s bra and commando (no panties). That gives way to bra and panties as the matching French panties in her purse couture her nethers. Pumps also from her purse shoe her bare feet. Now it’s bare legs and pumps. Pumps: black Clarks. Her makeup harshens even more—the illusion of age and frown lines etched into her face when none draw her continents—the reality of looks that bespeak being rode hard and put up wet. Kaye, perls, and prudz stay. It all adds up to that thick girl, that “hardlooking, big-boned, bitter divorcee,” that fit toned athletic “older” woman.

A part of Sam shudders—her nethers are moist and tingly. Before: dowdy, a shrew. Now: even more so. What is Sam’s verdict? This gOd is most pleasing to the eye.

The perfect Clarks Artisan Society Ball women’s pump, created with classic yet contemporary flair. Made from premium black leather with a studded bow, seaming details, and a feminine leawood heel, it cushions the foot with an extra-padded OrthoLite® foam footbed. Wear the Clarks Artisan Society Ball anywhere and always feel correct.

This gOd’s purse is the ubiquitous cigarette purse clipped to the waistband of her skirt underneath her jacket. The same arrangement purse and placement as countless other women’s across God’s infinite Creation—the same as Sam’s.

And, being like those other ubiquitous cigarette purses including Sam’s, thanks to spatial displacement, its interior is exponentially larger than its slim exterior would indicate were even remotely possible—the purse’s exterior is literally the size of a women’s cigarette case, hence its moniker. Think: the interior of a TARDIS or a ROOM.

Of course, in the case of something that’s manufactured like a TARDIS or a women’s cigarette purse, there’s a limit to how big the interior can be relative to the exterior. That’s the so-called “magical” ratio. In spite of its name, the ratio has nothing to do with magic; it has to do with the laws of physics plain and simple.

But, ROOMs were not manufactured. They were created, not made, by God. As such, the ratio doesn’t apply. Their interiors are literally limitless. Because, as aforementioned, ROOMs exist outside of the normal space-time continuum.

Once upon a time, before they knew better, physicists theorized that universes were actually ROOMs, but no one was ever able to prove it, not even mathematically. Then, the truth was

discovered by Professor Taylor Made during her at that time bleeding-edge causality experiments; experiments which flittered with the mechanics of Creation itself. From that moment hence, it became tenet that universes were the closet analogues to ROOMs in Nature—close, but still no cigar.

I would like you better if you were stern, hard, and most severe.

“So, would I.”

Then please me as my looks have hardened to please you. Disfigure yourself, likewise—you know you carve to do it.

What doesn’t happen next is just as telling as what does. Sam’s rachel gets yanked back into a sternka. Her pursed sternns vacate her purse and slip on her face. Prudz also pursed likewise vacate her purse and glove her hands. Sam’s makeup harshens even more; as much as gOd’s, including the illusion of age and frown lines—the “sex-kitten hot” twenty-something bachelorette suddenly looks every bit the part of a forty-something “rode hard and put up wet” bitter divorcée—aka loathsome. Four simple adjustments: hairdo, eyeglasses, gloves, and makeup. In a word—Divorcée. That always has that same profound unbecoming effect upon her youthful comely looks. It’s prudish ruination at its worst and most brilliant—it’s sick, twisted genius.

Bitter. Dowdy. Prude. Loathsome. Spinster librarian meets divorced shrew. Aka. Divorcée. That word again and again and again. The stereotypical “women don’t want to be you and men don’t want to be with you” divorcée. Now the girl is most beautiful to gOd. Of course, none of this pleases The Dame. From the neck down, Sam is as hot as ever. But, from the neck up. Sam, as divorcée stereotype spinster librarian, is a complete turn off for The Dame—in a phrase, the ruination of Max Factor gone 1950s heavy & hard taken to the extreme, e.g., Vampira in *Plan 9 from Outer Space*. By the Dame’s way of thinking, and from a purely mainstream point of view, the girl’s looks are completely ruined—comely no more—completely unattractive in spite of still being in the possession of a totally hot “screams to be banged” body. It’s the return of those jarring, unnerving looks of hers. To reiterate. What is gOd’s verdict? This girl is most pleasing to the eye.

Then you shall return later alone and we shall coo. Me—the dowdiest imaginable. And you—stern, hard, and most severe. Much later, in private, we will get dope fiend high and dirty, together. In between, we’ll play a wicked game of pinochle with some of my very oldest friends.

By Sam’s way of thinking. The card game is guaranteed to involve a couple of old maids (female gods) like gOd. A lot of gods like to play pinochle.

Usually unflappable, Sam’s basic instincts powers of deductive reasoning will prove to be uncharacteristically unreliable. In other words, she’s wrong about who’s going to be the other players in the card game besides gOd. Lies tend to do that—throw a spanner in the works, so to speak, when it comes to deductive reasoning. You see, this gOd is lying to Sam about being let into the card game—gOd is also lying about everything else about the later evening’s planned goings on. This gOd knows that telling Sam too much of the truth or telling her too many discernible lies will enable Sam to deduce “what’s what” the end game too soon. This gOd needs to string Sam along just a wee bit longer. Bottom line: Sam is being played on the tail end of this caper by gOd. The far less parochial question is: who’s been stringing Sam along since day one? Persona non grata. No one has!

"I would like that very much."

Dowdy is the new beautiful.

"I thought that ugly was."

Same thing.

Ugly is the new beautiful. And, beautiful is the new ugly. The Petraeus Syndrome.

"May we look around?"

"Yes you may, Connie."

"These days. My name is Sam, Sam Phillips. Miss Sam Phillips."

"The name and the marital status suit you. And, I see that you remember Maggie Mae with endearment."

"Yes I do."

"I don't assume her much of late. I prefer Heidi, these days."

"So I have noticed." Sam senses that it's time to change subjects, so she does. "By the looks of things. You're here after someone; an ex-lover, no doubt. You're so possessive." Sam winks playfully at gOd.

"I was after someone," Heidi admits amorously. She now has herself a new crush, a new fantasy, in the here and now, and in the flesh. As for that someone else, who she had hitherto been pursuing at all costs, that ex is completely forgotten so to speak and the pursuit is aborted. "I imagine that one who is made such as you has many obligations."

"None more pressing than yours."

"Nonetheless, mine can wait. I will amuse myself with the corpse and its brute till you come back to me."

The Master could protest, but, it too would like to sample Heidi's wares. Besides, it's old enough to know that it really doesn't have a choice. Its earlier bravado was unwise. Foolishness like that. It's old enough to know better. So be it. It's done. It relinquishes all claims to the girl, this time, for good. Sam can see this in its eyes.

"Talent hits a target that no one else can hit. Genius hits a target that no one else can see. That sums up gOd very nicely, doesn't it?"

This is more than just verbal foreplay for their later sexplay. It's the opening gambit in Sam's ploy for a playful tit for tat with gOd. That's when The Master realizes who Heidi really is. The Dame, of course, already knows. Noreen still doesn't have a clue. Fortunately for all concerned the "I like to fight" Goon obediently follows her mistress' lead. Else things would get very nasty very quick.

"Thank God for work at home days and my Keurig," Heidi replies.

"What does God need with a starship?"

"What?"

"Come, come, now. The religion of the Director doesn't enter into it. The question stands, 'What does God need with a Starship?' If God is Omnipotent, then why does God act as if God

is limited? Who is limiting God? Is God limiting God? Why does God work in mysterious ways? Why are God's thoughts and motivations not made clear? What does God need with a Starship? The answer is quite simple: God doesn't, but gOd does."

"And, it would seem even more egregious here given the obvious Demonic origins involved."

"Thor and his hammer the mighty Mjolnir?"

"More like. Punk trying to 'one-up' Austin for 'respect' could lead to a plethora of entertaining scenarios."

"Before the show started, a video screen played clips of events that took place in Poughkeepsie, playing up the idea of celebrating the history of the venue."

"He's a powerhouse that destroys people; it wouldn't make sense for him to start Fujiwara arm-barring people."

"As the final horse racing beat writer at The Washington Post, I am used to seeing positions of value go away that I've held in the highest regard and also been fortunate enough to be a part of. This is one of them and the struggling sport of boxing, particularly in America, is far worse off because of it. Then again, Golden Boy won't last forever, either, so maybe The Ring can be revived as it was meant to be, someday down the road. I don't advise waiting."

"But all that said, Calzaghe just didn't get on the plane enough, fought too many average Joes in the prime years of his career, and ended up looking like what teenage gamers might refer to as a 'stat padder.'"

Heidi does an abrupt about face and points Noreen and Glenda toward the bed such that it is. They comply. As the three frolic in the background, in the foreground The Dame and Sam resume the investigation.

In the closet are a pair of STEVE MADDEN Ilusionn women's over-the-knee boots; color, black. And, on the solitary hanger is a BGSD women's classic three-button New Zealand lambskin leather blazer in black; petite size. Not Heidi's taste. Not Heidi's size. There's something else. On the clothes Sam picks up the scent "presence" of the Gollum that she tagged earlier. Asking gOd about the connection is not an option—it would be impolite beyond measure and, as such, it would be guaranteed to inexcusably offend gOd. It's best that Sam sleuth this one for herself.

This gOd holds grudges, and Sam has done enough to earn one of those with the stunt she just pulled. Additionally, gOd takes slights very personal and is easily offended. Also. This gOd never forgives and never forgets. There's no need for Sam to push her luck and risk incurring the ire and wrath of a being who age wise is as at the very least a contemporary of Puck's. She'd prefer to not have to put down such a dear and close friend as gOd is to her as the result of a difference because of a simple inquiry. Sam will make sure that she returns later to smooth any ruffled feathers.

Likewise, gOd would prefer to not have to put down such a dear and close friend as Sam her beloved Connie is to her as the result of a difference because of a silly stunt trapping her in a ROOM. Of course, if Sam doesn't return later to smooth her ruffled feathers, she will, ROOM or no ROOM, destroy the girl.

Such a wealth of contradictions gOd is. She will relentlessly and single-mindedly pursue an ex-lover for vengeance—handling rejection poorly. She will not forget or forgive that rejected amore or any other slight. Yet, once she finds someone else newer, better to obsess about, she does so obsess about that newer, better “toy” to the exclusion of the toy that’s been superseded; never losing the ill in her heart for that ex-flame, just losing her intent to follow through with her plans for payback.

When it comes to Sam, gOd is obviously willing to give the girl much more rope than gOd usually gives someone to hang themselves with—hence no retaliation for the stunt pulled. But, once Sam has done so figuratively hung herself, for example, by asking gOd the question that should not be asked or not coming back later to coo as she’s been politely “asked” to do, gOd will come down on her like a ton of bricks. A conflict only resolved by the destruction of one by the other.

The god, this gOd, seems to not notice when Sam and The Dame finally make their leave. Downstairs the duo walk right into a war. The desk clerk is getting chewed out by a skirt wearing Vera Wang the clothes and the sunglasses, not the designer and UGGs (UGG Australian style classic boots). Clean, pristine, and couture, the looker looks completely out of place.

“It’s your room as long as you pay for it, at the discretion of management. You left one day and didn’t return until now, so we rented it out to someone else. You know the score.”

“Fuck! I paid in advance for!”

“To reiterate. At the discretion of management. It’s your room as long as you pay for it. You weren’t here, therefore you didn’t need it. There was no sense in letting a perfectly good room go idle. So we rented it out to someone else. It’s up to you and the room’s other occupant to work out some kind of arrangement.”

“That’s double booking and you know it! This is no way to treat me! I’m a regular! You know better than to treat me this way! You’ve never treated me this way before no matter!”

“Things have been really slow lately. You know how things work. The rules are printed in large bold letters in several languages—one of which we’re conversing in right now—on the sign hanging on the wall right behind me. Exclusivity is NOT guaranteed. Paying for a room does not give you exclusive use of that room. A rentable room is a rentable room, and every room is rentable, including the rooms that are already rented. You’re not a novice.”

Of course, if the skirt really is an experienced traveler as the desk clerk alleges, this back and forth is more kayfabe than shoot. It’s a term that comes straight out of pro-wrestling.

In professional wrestling, kayfabe is the portrayal of events within the industry as “real” or “true,” specifically the portrayal of competition and rivalries between participants as being genuine or not of a worked nature. Referring to events or interviews as being a “work” means that the event/interview has been “kayfabled” or staged, or is part of a wrestling angle while being passed off as legitimate. Kayfabe has also evolved to become a code word of sorts for maintaining this “reality” within the realm of the general public.

Kayfabe is often seen as the suspension of disbelief that is used to create the non-wrestling aspects of promotions, such as feuds, angles, and gimmicks, in a similar manner with other forms of entertainment such as soap opera or film. In relative terms, a wrestler breaking kayfabe during a show would be likened to an actor breaking character on camera. Also, since wrestling is

performed in front of a live audience, whose interaction with the show is crucial to the show's pop (success), one might compare *kayfabe* to the fourth wall, since there is hardly any conventional fourth wall to begin with.

"Where's my stuff?! Is it still up there?!"

The desk clerk nonchalantly shrugs her shoulders. Her follow-up is just as noncommittal, to say the least.

"Only that which we couldn't sell, which couldn't be very much, if any—maybe it's all gone by now—thrown out by your new roommate—pilfered by whomever—whatever."

"Sold?! Thrown out?! Pilfered?! Whomever?! Whatever?!"

"This, as you well know, is also management's prerogative and by Common Law the whim of the other residents. Store your stuff in your room at your own risk. Another one of those clearly stated written rules on the notice behind me."

At this point, Sam decides to interject herself into this very heated conversation. She stops dead in her tracks and does her own inimitable version of an out of context shout out—out of context if you aren't in the know, that is. Razzle-dazzle, anyone?

"Technicians, 'good workers,' 'shooters,' 'good hands' never make the biggest bucks in the business. That has always generally been the girls who aren't great workers but have a great look, talking ability, over the top charisma, and some good size. Say what you want about gals like Hogan, Warrior, Kong, ODB, Beth, Victoria, Chyna, Sable, Miss Debra, The Great Khali, etc. These broads at one time were household names. Bigger than wrestling, at one time. Can you say the same about Bret, Shawn, Punk, Gail, Madison, Lita, Trish, 'Fabulous Freebird' Buddy Roberts, The Fabulous Moolah, Mae Young, Cheerleader Melissa, 'The Space Girls' Penny and Jenifer Robinson, etc.? All the 'good hands' good workers, smaller to medium-sized girls? NOPE! In fact, wrestling usually is at its lowest point when these girls were/are on top. Bottom line, most people would rather see larger than life characters and over the top personalities along with great mic skills. People don't want to see girls that are champions that look like and are no bigger than your next door neighbor."

The skirt stops shouting at the desk clerk, lowers her shades Model Luxury 1s, and turns around to face Sam. It's then that the Dame recognizes the girl as the Gollum that Sam marked earlier.

"It took you long enough. I was getting bored ramming my foot up snakehead's ass."

"So we're good?" There's not the least bit of concern in the clerk's voice. She asks the question very matter of fact—just asking to be asking, it's not as if I really care how you feel.

"We're good. I was just jerking your chain until the blood suckers came down," the skirt answers, just as glibly. All of the faked emotion is gone.

The desk clerk goes back to her fixings—a sandwich of day-old rat.

Sam sheds her disfiguring shrew. She lets her hair down into a rachel, purses her sternns, and her harsh makeup removes itself into her pursed compact. Knobb and klaw, those disfiguring/transfiguring Borg touches, also go bye-bye. Once more, she's pleasing to the Dame as well as a lot of other people. Once more, she's mainstream 1950s movie starlet bleached-blond bombshell lily-white perfection most pleasing to the eye—the House special—white girl

supreme—pie à la mode—French vanilla, with whipped cream and a cherry on top—to which second place is just the first loser.

“You mark me so that you can track me at your leisure, and thus I in turn can.”

“Track me when you’re lucid and the notion strikes you. Tit for tat. You’re definitely not a novice, at a whole lot of things. By the by, we did notice some clothes upstairs in a closet of your room.”

Going from dirty-and-deranged to clean-and-lucid from the impetus of just one feeding implies something else is also afoot as it pertains to the tart girl in question. She is human, but she’s not 100% human; 1% of her—according to rule of thumb and the “one drop” test—must be Supernatural from some distant inhuman ancestry. The girl is a one-percenter.

One-percents are also known as parallel humans or simply Parallels. Parallels are human, as aforementioned, but they are psychically aka metaphysically distinct from “regular” humans. In Medieval times they were misclassified as “human living Nosferatus.”

“Mine?”

“That’s what they smelled like.”

“I should learn to live out of my purse, but I’ve never acquired the taste or the knack for such things.”

“It’s never too late to start.”

The whole time that they’re talking, the Dame is giving the skirt, the “hands off, she’s mine” look.

“Before we get gabbing too far into it, I think that formal introductions are in order. I’m Elizabeth Parkinson. My friends call me Liz.”

“I’m Sam Phillips and this is.”

“Dame Chillingsworth. Yep, I’ve seen her puss in the British tabloids. Your pics don’t do you justice. You’re much prettier in the flesh.”

“Why, thank you,” The Dame returns in kind.

The Dame takes Liz’s compliment for what it is: a peace offering and the truth. Her the Dame’s subsequent smile acknowledges the truce between them. Things won’t get catty over Sam between Liz and her. It’s just us girls, so to speak. And, it literally is.

“So, Liz, is binging your avocation or your vocation?”

“A little of both. I freelance. I’m a reporter. I do bylines for several of the major travel dailies. They’re a real conservative lot. But, my columns are popular and that’s always good for circulation. So they turn an opportunistic blind eye to my shenanigans as long as I don’t get too outlandish in bohemia and my copy is sent in on time. I binge to my heart’s content, and my expense accounts from the various newspapers that I contract out to, pay for my dirty pleasure. An arrangement made in heaven.”

“So it would seem.”

From a dark nook and cranny—literally, the sanctity of the dark cranny of a NOOK, a proverbial wicked witch right out of Halloween—warts, long crooked nose, fright wig hair, etc.—watches the proceedings with great interest. She is a stereotypical witch.

Old woman. Long, wiry, dirty grey/black hair—straw like, stiff hair. Wrinkled. Warts. Black, hairy warts. Pointed, protruding chin. Prominent chin. Turkey neck. Motley grey skin. Wearing filthy, infested tatters that were once a long dark regal robe and its matching dress. Hunched. Jagged or missing teeth. Yellow rotting snaggletooth. Hook nose. Long dirty finger and toe nails. Gnarled/arthritis hands. Squinted bloodshot eyes. Wicked, crazy smile. Worn out shoes that almost amount to being barefoot. Frumpy, ugly, skinny. Floppy, pendulous tits with stretch marks and stringbean nipples. Wooden staff—cane—broomstick—wand. Black steeple-crown hat. Crackly voice. Prone to eating children—especially toddlers. Warty. Straggly hair. Pointed hat. Carries/flyies a broom. Hovers over cauldron. Ad infinitum.

But, she Atlas Shrugged is not a witch. Nor is she a Witch. And, in spite of her extreme appearance, she's just an ordinary Crone and she's not mad. Sane and sexually repressed—a sure-fire recipe for depravity at its dirtiest—but, she's sane and not sexually repressed. Like all Hags in general and all Crones in particular, she's an enslaver by nature. And, enslavement is what is on her mind, right now. She cares not for The Dame—frigid British bitch is her assessment of that proper English taffy. Her choice is between Sam and Liz. But, she can't make up her mind. So, she lets chance decide for her—a very private joke between she and herself.

Atlas reaches into her pocket, fingers the two coins within, and blindly picks one of them. Heads—Sam. Tails—Liz. By chance, she picks the two-faced coin. As if she's a compulsive-neurotic, she flips the coin anyways. In effect, the coin toss is rigged. Why do it then? Why bother? The answer is quite simple: Why not. If she were the half-sister of gOd, she'd be Loki to gOd's Thor. Of course, she's not gOd's sister. And she's far worse than Loki could ever image to be.

There are the usual inconsistencies that bespeak of something deeper. In a large walkin closet, there's Ella Rue shoes, Vera Wang couture, Victorinox business suits, Rosingly cigarette purses, Lock & Mane unmentionables, various Mixt Studio accessories, and a spattering of edgy fashion offerings from Nasty Gal the perennial of Exurban Hip Hop and all things trendy. Ergo. Atlas does not always look or dress the way she does now.

Atlas is not obsessive/compulsive about her lovers—they come, they go, as they wish. Cloud Atlas, her on again/off again “better half,” can attest to that. At the present, they're off again. Hence her need for companionship. She just hates to sleep alone.

Enslavement to her is completely voluntarily. If this new girl/guy wants to: fine. If she/he doesn't: fine.

Maybe I should sweeten the pot?

Atlas transforms, shedding the filth, warts, ugliness, infestations, imperfections, etc. Clean and pristine. Twenty-something. The buxom likeness of leggy Sophia Amoroso—founder and CEO of Nasty Gal—the nice girl who made good. She tosses her hag getup into the clothes hamper. Naked, creamy-white perfection, she steps into the open closet and disappears into that cavernous walkin. Minutes later, she emerges from its bowels fully clothed, wearing a fitted black chiffon dress paired with chunky, white lace-up shoes and bright pink lipstick. Perls by

Mixt Studio. An L&M bra and panties combo. Rosingly purse. The shoes are Ella Rue. The dress is Nasty Gal.

For the majority of demons, this is what it means to be faerie. In the mainstream. Yours is the personification of the good life. Immortality without any of the downsides like disease or degenerative aging that plague mortals. Elders who in the mainstream are the benchmarks of wealth, power, and influence. A way of life that can be summed up in three words: You have arrived.

Needless to say, *You have arrived* at the moment of conception or upon being made, whichever the case may be.

Supernaturals like Atlas are the norm. For them, dirty is just a diversion that most never indulge. For those like gOd, it's their preferred way of life.

Into the lobby of the fleabag, a human woman casually strolls. Fifty-something. A mystery woman who could well have been beautiful at one time, but who evidently has been too busy or too frugal of late to keep up her appearance. She no longer bothers. Her brunette hair is stringy, her blue jeans are old and faded, and her short-sleeved blouse is open deep at the throat. Perl necklace. A battered cigarette purse clipped to the waistband of those tight beltless pants of hers. Tennis shoes Converse Chuckie Taylors that have seen better days. No underwear. A prostitute? A junkie? No obvious needle marks—but there still could be tracks in other places. Her sole concession to care for her personal appearance is that she's wearing prudz. More grist for the mill? Maybe. The other side of dropping off the grid? Definitely.

Atlas imagines this mystery woman quite differently—imagines her as Mauvis Niles Meade, the author. In doing so, she recalls a not so chance encounter with her favorite writer. Ms. Meade, of course, is not human. Ms. Meade is a Wraith. Shake, rattle, and roll!!!

The Crone comes knocking at the door of a penthouse apartment. Ms. Meade answers the door wearing lounging pajamas—black silk lounging pajamas—holding a cigarette in a carved ivory holder in her left hand. The extreme cougar smiles at the twenty-something Atlas with imprudent eyes that look Atlas ferociously up and down.

“Please come in, Ms. Shrugged. I’ve been expecting you.”

“That all depends.”

“Upon what?”

“Are you acquainted with a Gladys Doyle?”

“Yes I am.”

“How so?”

“She’s in my employ as a confidential secretary, travel companion, housekeeper, cook.”

“In other words, she’s your Girl Friday.”

“Quite so.”

Atlas follows the fifty-something Ms. Meade into the apartment. The women’s lounging pajamas have been tailored to sleek smoothness over her body, and Ms. Meade, leading the way through the reception hallway, walks as though she is accustomed to having women’s or men’s eyes centered upon those curves and has no objection to them doing so. To say that she is easy

on the eye is to utter a profound understatement. And she obviously knows her way around men and women. Not some mousy little nincompoop. Attractive. Poised. Provocative. Just like the description of her on the dust jacket of her latest bestselling potboiler. She's the epitome of what Cosmo (Cosmopolitan Magazine) calls the Modern Woman.

She leads the way into the living room and indicates a chair.

"Sit down, Ms. Shrugged. Or would you prefer to drink me first?"

"Let's talk. I might want that drink, later."

"As you wish."

With a lithe motion, Ms. Meade parks herself. She stretches back against the cushions of the davenport, the sheer silk of her garment strains across her full, ripe breasts as she presses her shoulders back against the cushions. Her large, dark-brown eyes survey Atlas appraisingly. The long-lashed lids lower and rise with provocative deliberation.

Atlas surveys Mauvis Meade with thoughtful, appraising eyes. The Crone again takes in the manner in which Mauvis is dressed, the swelling curves so daringly displayed, the indolent, almost imprudent way in which Mauvis tilts her head slightly to one side, her chin up as she looks at Atlas with a half-smile. She raises her eyelids with exaggerated slowness.

The muffled, anguished moans and groans of a man begin to emanate from a closed bedroom. A muzzle prevents him from being too demonstrative. All alone, gagged, and restrained. He has regained consciousness in pain, darkness, utter hopelessness, and total despair.

A look of exacerbation crosses Mauvis' harsh face. The authoress purses the thin red lips of her loathsome mouth—a red gash that promises to ravish you.

"Something that you need to take care of?"

Without answering Atlas' question. Treating it as if it's meant to be rhetorical, which it is, Mauvis abruptly stands up. She stalks across the room—striding straight-backed. The exaggerated undulations of her walk are now no longer evident.

With a quick, supple grace. She jerks open a door and enters the bedroom. Slamming the door behind her.

It sounds like a gag is being violently removed. This is followed by an almost unintelligible verbal barrage, an admonishment in feminine monotone. There's a single, blood-curdling male shriek, then complete and utter silence. A very long pause ensues, and there's nothing awkward about it. Then, the unmistakable sounds of righteous indignation and kidnap, that thug's tree of woe: a blackjack judiciously applied and a gag woefully reapplied aka ECW's Public Enemy (Rocco Rock and Johnny Grunge). Mauvis re-enters the living room, shutting the bedroom door behind her.

The cougar pauses for effect. Primps her hair. Once more she assumes the pose of the sophisticated woman of the world, the babe who has all of the curves and knows all of the angles—posed cheesecake, with no apologies. She walks across the room, hips swaying, curves of which she is only too conscious of, and a completely innocuous countenance, as though her face is disclaiming all responsibility for the spectacle of her body. The wanton vixen parks herself right back where she was upon the davenport which is next to where Atlas is seated.

The novelist, who wrote the current best-seller *Chop the Man Down*, has taken off the lounging pajamas and is now dressed in a strapless gown that seems to be held in place by a miracle of mechanical ingenuity. Her shoulders and the swell above her breasts gleam seductively in the soft light. She's again positioned to show the best aspects of a very nice chassis. It's as if she has the only curves in captivity.

To reiterate, Mauvis is a woman of the world. Ergo. She needs no excuse to show all the well-curved leg that the law allows and then some. So she makes no excuse about doing just that in this very daring and distracting dress.

"Sorry about that. Now. Where were we before we were so rudely interrupted?"

"Hard to get good help, these days."

Forthright. How positively refreshing. I wonder when the other shoe will drop.

"You're to the point. I like that in a woman."

"I've heard that Fel Mason is representing your Gladys Doyle. If the police haven't charged her by morning, Mason intends to file a writ of habeas corpus. They'll be forced to produce the girl then."

Better than I ever could have hoped for.

"And you know this how?"

"Like I said, I heard as much. What's the rest of it worth to you?"

The jammers are in place and functional—I checked before I let her in. Remote viewing and conventional surveillance is not possible. I swept for bugs this morning and the apartment came up clean as usual. Simple is always the best policy. I'll bet that it's a tape recorder hidden somewhere on her person.

Mauvis makes a clicking sound with her tongue against the roof of her mouth, indicating shocked disapproval. It's a prelude to what follows. What follows is a very intelligible verbal barrage, an admonishment in feminine monotone. In other words, what follows is a complete rebuff that catches Atlas completely off-guard.

"I got you one better. Likely, you're in cahoots with Mason and intend for this so-called revelation of yours as a reveal. A clumsy, obvious attempt at entrapment. Too clumsy and too obvious to be anything but kayfabe. You're as transparent as glass, Ms. Shrugged. Now you disappoint me. The game's afoot and I would think that you'd play me better. Instead, you go at me ham-fisted. Subtlety, not duplicity, should be the order of the day—I'm Go, not chess. You're definitely not to Fel Mason what the make-believe Paul Drake is to the fictitious Perry Mason. Mr. Drake is many things in the books, but he is never a dupe. I've heard that Mason has in her employ a girl who is quite the Paul Drake and is quite the Go player as well. That girl is obviously not you."

Although manifestly quite different, Chess and Go are unquestionably the two finest strategic board games in all of Creation. Some prefer one, some the other, and there are a small fortunate number who enjoy and excel at both.

Classically defined. Chess is an attrition-based strategy game. However, Go is an exhaustion-based strategy game. Clauswitz is to chess is to attrition-based strategy whereas Sun Tzu is to Go is to exhaustion-based strategy.

And counter to what their respective adherents advocate. Neither game is superior to the other. They represent different strategies for different situations, but they share the same common goal—defeating an opponent. Flexibility is key; not dogma. Pragmatism is axiomatic to success in any game, especially those that involve gods, demigods, and other such very Old Things.

Pragmatically, speaking. All gaming is attrition warfare. Attrition is what happens when you maneuver your forces. Exhaustion is what happens when you engage forces for the purposes of reducing your enemy's strength to hopefully put you in a better position.

Lastly, the out-of-left-field opinion. Go and chess are actually counter-force games with political overtures where the objective is to force your opponent to point of engagement and then destroy them. As such, both games are predominately purist strategy games. If you agree with this train of thought then it follows, like night follows the day, that neither game is at the scale that can model proper tactics in the “real” world.

Fel sent you here on a fishing expedition. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. If nothing else you return to the good barrister with a nice scouting report. And nothing else is what you shall get.

A sharp cookie, and as such a dame who thinks fast on her feet, Atlas' comeback is no less snappy. Anyone can get caught flat-footed; it's how you react that is the measure of a woman or a man.

Mauvis is biased toward Go. Atlas goes with whatever works in a given situation, and thus plays no favorites. As such, it is Mauvis, not Atlas, who is way over her head in this particular gambit.

“And we were getting along so famously up until now.”

Stick to chess, Go is not your forte.

“Scam, buster. Find yourself another patsy.”

The guilty don't give themselves up so easily. Not like in those Perry Mason novels, for sure.

There's that stark, collinear jolt, and Atlas is back in the here and now. No longer recalling. Her choice. Not someone else's. The names that roll through her mind, fleetingly: Mildred Crest, Fern Driscoll, and Forrie. This last bit is quite telling.

Atlas notices the girl Sam. The proverbial 1950s beautiful blonde in a tight-fitting suit. Sam is still not sporting knobb or when hands are idle klaw. Also that harshest makeup is not back. For now, there is still none of that shrew of hers. She's still a doll—a Las Vegas 1950s showgirl.

But. Atlas can sense the undercurrents—*res gestae*—none of which have anything to do with being an incurable romanticist. The craving of the girl for being dirty—the dirtiest—binging to utmost depravity. The need of the girl to wear sternns and sternka again—eyes peering through heavy-lensed glasses—spectacles with a rather heavy correction. The hunger of the girl to be Borg—a mindless drone in the Collective—Seven-of-Nine. That depraved Borg chick. Sometimes she is all those things and then some—that depraved, dirty, spinster Borg chick—a Lok. A Lok, a Lost version of a Mok.

These days, Sam is never any variation of a mainstream doll for very long. The pendulum can always swing the other way, though. In that, like in so many other things, Sam is liken to an Old Made Thing. More likely than not, in the not too distant future, she will be that 1950s variation of a doll, all of the time. The fruit never falls far from the tree. She is too much her made mother's daughter to end up any other way. Until then, dirty, Borg, and shrew hold that certain sway over her.

What's Sam's pedigree? Mildred Most is the Nosferatu who made Sam. Most is a *prima facie* case: the epitome of a mainstream very Old Thing. Very old and therefore very powerful. Over the eons, Mildred has cultivated a manner, a seductive approach. Cultivated and sexy. A thoroughbred with that streak of unsurpassed cruelty that is the hallmark of all Lost.

Nosferatus tend to be cruel. Elves tend to be vicious. Goons tend to be brutal. Racial tendencies with the usual variations depending upon the individual in question.

Sam is a Dark Elf. She is Elf and Nosferatu, with Goon tendencies—a so-called Poison Elf. Normally, with Darques, those Goon tendencies are latent, at the very most they are occasional undercurrents. But, with Sam, they are full-blown, and additionally in her case they manifest themselves as behavioral traits that are indistinguishable from those of “real” Goons. At times those tendencies threaten to and in fact become preeminent. But with her not being a Goon in the proper, strictly racial sense that preeminence expresses itself differently than it would in a real Goon.

Then there is the aforementioned something that cannot be explained. The times when she is that that depraved, dirty, spinster Borg chick, and in effect is far worse than the filthy, mindless Nosferatus who are native to this planet. A Lok. And. In comparison to a Mok, a Lok is just as unclean and just as unsane or insane whichever the case may be!

Hence her binges, when she goes completely off the reservation—that dirty cliff that she dives off of, over and over again, sometimes for weeks or even months at a time—leaving home ostensibly on a business trip, so to speak. Mix in the fact that her maker is a very Old Thing, and you get quite the interesting and deadly genetic gumbo that is Sam Phillips (Nosferatu).

When she is cleaned up, pristine—mainstream sexy—competing with her in amore means going up against someone with the seductive curves and carefully cultivated sex appeal of a mainstream 1950s movie starlet. In other words, it's as if you were competing with her maker.

Additionally, whether she's the sizzling, sexy dame clean and pristine or the dirty, depraved wack-job, Sam is like a home-grown apocalyptic nightmare.

As for the observer. Much can be discerned of Atlas' own Old Thing pedigree from her possession and extensive usage of a NOOK.

Kolossus Grounding System. Kora Power Supply. Kryptos Music Server. Kratos Digital Amplifier. Mac Mini Upgrade. NanoATX Linear Power. It's known by many names, but it's a NOOK. More exclusive than that, only an adult female can enter a NOOK. This literal “no man's land” that technologically is in that grey area between a PUV and a ROOM.

A NOOK is not, as urban legend would have it, the detached/detachable CLOSET of a ROOM. ROOMs were created by God. A NOOK is mere technology. That brings to mind something. There's a joke in fact, popular among physicists that goes something like this: “Look at that Faraday cage over there. I wonder if it's really a NOOK interfacing with the time-space

continuum. We know for sure that it's not a ROOM though." Does the humor elude you? Well, maybe it's too inside a jest. Maybe you have to be a physicist to get it.

A Faraday cage or Faraday shield is an enclosure formed by conducting material or by a mesh of such material. Such an enclosure blocks external static and non-static electric fields. Faraday cages are named after the English scientist Michael Faraday, who invented them in 1836.

A Faraday cage's operation depends upon the fact that an external static electrical field will cause the electric charges within the cage's conducting material to redistribute them so as to cancel the field's effects in the cage's interior. This phenomenon is used, for example, to protect electronic equipment from lightning strikes and electrostatic discharges.

Faraday cages cannot block static and slowly varying magnetic fields, such as the Earth's magnetic field thus a compass will still work inside of one. To a large degree, though, they shield the interior from external electromagnetic radiation if the conductor is thick enough and any holes are significantly smaller than the wavelength of the radiation. For example, certain computer forensic test procedures of electronic systems that require an environment free of electromagnetic interference can be carried out within a screen room. These rooms are spaces that are completely enclosed by one or more layers of a fine metal mesh or perforated sheet metal. The metal layers are grounded in order to dissipate any electric currents generated from external or internal electromagnetic fields, and thus they block a large amount of the electromagnetic interference. See also electromagnetic shielding.

The reception or transmission of radio waves, a form of electromagnetic radiation, to or from an antenna within a Faraday cage are heavily attenuated or blocked by a Faraday cage.

For very brief moment, no more than fleeting, Sam is aware of a Faraday cage in a far corner. It is the outward affection of Atlas' NOOK.

There is a jarring temporal shift. Sam "allows" herself to be consumed by the event and to be swept up by its ensuing wake. Disorientation, momentarily. Followed by complete and utter detachment. Then. Bang!

Why not step off the cliff. I'm here to have fun!!!

Where does she end up? She's "eavesdropping" on a casual dinner conversation between two women who are seated in a corner booth of The Trout Room that exclusive, member's-only annex of the Copia Restaurant & Wine Garden of Haven's Downtown Hilton. From the look of these suits, they're obviously powerful movers and shakers in the business world, probably high finance or specifically corporate banking.

Both women are wearing a Kaye—power suit personified—that aforementioned type of office suit stereotypically associated with the 1950s that is characterized by sharp cuts, wide shoulder pads, and a stiff rigidity.

What Sam is privy to is definitely not a memory hers or someone else's. Thus, she is not recalling. She is engaging a psychic, real-time, surveillance of these two stuffed-shirts. In other words, she's remote viewing them.

Remote viewing. Having way too much fun. The not-so-dispassionate observer. Her usual safety net: Third person singular, because plural or first person on a blind date could prove to be terminal. In other words. Without a look-ahead you never know what's waiting for you with

mean intentions on the other end, so it's better to be safe than sorry. Ergo. Characteristically, Sam hasn't thrown caution to the wind.

"It is all too moving. This is not just music. This is life, with all of its indomitable, imperfect, touching, flawed, sad, and glorious moments."

"On the other hand. *Cloud Atlas* is not without magical thinking of its own—the protagonists of each segment are linked by a shooting star birthmark, suggesting predestination behind their righteously disobedient lives. The film certainly places itself on the side of the angels in the eternal struggle between the owned and owners—and it's tempting to pull for a formally ambitious, queer-friendly, R-rated blockbuster that unapologetically uses the word "amanuensis" and seems designed to drag viewers into uncomfortable new idioms. There is, however, a viewing experience to consider."

"*WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH* has the simple premise of the conflicts between primitive cave people and the creatures they encounter, and director Val Guest wrote the screenplay based on a treatment by J.B. Ballard. Guest also concocted the caveman dialect—no English is spoken except for some opening narration—and he apparently wasn't happy with the final film."

"The plotline is actually a very tired one, and the silly caveman shenanigans don't help the matter, but it's got an infectious sort of energy about it, making the combination of jiggle and giant monsters irresistible. Though not a breakout star in the tradition of Ursula Andress or Raquel Welch, American born Playboy playmate Victoria Vetri is an absolutely stunning cavegirl, filling out her animal skin bikini with to-die-for curves. Along with Vetri are other luscious cavebabes played by Magda Konopka **SATANIK**, Imogen Hassel who sadly, took her own life a decade later, and Jan Rossini **CRY OF THE BANSHEE**. Veteran actor Patrick Allen **NIGHT CREATURES, NIGHT OF THE BIG HEAT** is good as the bearded zealot-like heavy, giving constant opposition to the young lovers."

"To change the subject. Moving from cinema to real life, amore in particular. I'm very interested in Carla Addis. She's clever, in a brittle, highly artificial sort of way. She's a sophisticated product of modern wealth. I admit to a fascination with her, a glitter and a glamor, and it's easy to be swept along when you're an incurable romanticist like I am. There are times in matters of amore when I don't know what I want. I get badly mixed up."

"Again your tastes have changed. I see from your verbose that you now prefer them dishy with equal doses of flash and panache."

"And you? How do you prefer them, these days?"

"Severe. Well used. That kind of girl."

"I know just the bird for you."

"Are you sure?"

"Oh yes. A businesswoman. I know her quite well. She used to be PPD."

The PPD (Presidential Protection Division): The Secret Service of the United States of America.

Also, PPD: the Presidential Protection Detail. The Secret Service detail assigned to the President of the United States of America.

“Description?”

“Florence Ingle is forty-something, well groomed, small-boned, good figure, rich, a good golfer, brunette, large dark eyes, five feet eight, a hundred and forty two pounds, very gracious, runs to diamond jewelry, and is lovely in an aristocratic way. She cuts rather an elegant figure—very old money, minus the usual tragic, spinster overtones of a Kaye, flats, sternka, and sternns.”

“Go on, you shameless tease.”

“Frau Ingle—she defers to Flo—prefers Koo Stark, mules, a short severe unisex hairdo in spite of what it sounds like, nothing at all dyke, and palins. Germanic tidiness. The expected properness of prudz, perls, and the ubiquitous cigarette purse, of course. Oh, and, a crystal clear & white nibblet eyeglass chain holder—Artisan, I think.”

“And her doppelganger?”

“The chippie who impersonates Flo is something like Flo, but is a bit heavier and doesn’t know her way around in the high-class places. She’s tight-lipped, self-conscious, and overdoes everything trying to act the part of a wealthy woman. In the course of time, she’ll vanish absolutely and utterly, without leaving a trail. She’ll leave a lot of baggage in the hotel, but the bill will be paid in full, so the hotel will store the baggage until Flo corresponds for its return. Flo only employs her for petite business trips or when things might get a little dodgy.”

“Speaking of dodgy. Did hear about what Judith Sheindlin aka Judge Judy was wearing at an affair I attended with my husband Bernie last night?”

“No. Do tell.”

“Well. The tough-talking reality star hit the red carpet in a spider-web-like, black lace ensemble.”

“Now, that must have been a sight. She’s an absolute stunner in a Kaye or a Koo.”

“Agreed. She looks sensational for 70-something, but we were just a little surprised to see her in such a slinky, spiderweb-like ensemble at this year’s Broadcasting & Cable Hall of Fame Awards.” The speaker places her phone upon the table and shares some pictures of Judge Judy at said event with the other gossip trollop. “What do you make of the TV toughie’s getup? Is it classy, or should it be held in contempt of court?”

“Well, in my humble opinion.”

“Yes?”

The other woman leans over the table as if she’s now hanging on every word of the other speaker, which she is.

“Well.”

There is no fade to black. Sam is unceremoniously expunged. No more remote, just when things were starting to get really juicy. Bang!

The shift abruptly ends, just as jarring and sudden as it began. Accompanying, and thus NOT coincidentally? In other words—the specter of the Faraday cage in a far corner, the temporal shift, the remote-viewing, the venture at hand—is it cause and effect? Causality mechanics and/or matrix theory aside. That is the question.

Although, on the face of it, they seem to be intimately connected, Sam sees things otherwise. An experienced traveler, she knows better. Things are just not that simple. You never take things on face value, when you're abroad—you should NEVER jump to conclusions.

They could be random—having nothing whatsoever to do with each other. “B” following “A” doesn’t necessarily mean that “A” causes “B.”

Another loose end to add to her burgeoning collection, alongside the one for red herrings. Something else that she has no intention of unraveling, unless she has to. So far, her vacation has been just as convoluted if not more so than a case of the fictitious Perry Mason.

Then, another: *“Second, this is the first post I’ve composed via the WordPress iPad app. Feels a little funky and the app is something of a kludge. Will definitely take some getting used to and a modification of my work flow.”*

A fleeting bleed-thru that seemingly has nothing at all to do with anything else that's come before it. She Sam has never “heard” this voice in her head before, at least the best that she can remember. After all, she has holes in her mind—excisions and partitions—which serve to protect/preserve hers and others' secrecy. Bottom line: not remembering a voice doesn't necessarily mean that she's never heard it before.

Another lingering jab that begs the question: still—mind your own business, unless/until it turns out to really be your business? The loose ends, the red herrings, continue to pile up—too many—way too many. This is bidding to get worse than a Perry Mason and threatening to become a full-blown David Lynch. Maybe even, I dare say it, my “Inland Empire”—an “Inland Empire” being the undisputed Holy Grail of gaming for my Kind. I’ve never had so much X-Play on a trip that wasn’t premeditated. This is AWESOME!!!

Of course, someone's use of a RANDOMIZER could/would explain a lot, maybe everything—tie it all neatly into a pretty bow. If you have the smarts, you can build such an arcane device from scratch, if need be. But, to power it sufficiently for this level of convolution of the time-space continuum, you'd need an Apocalypse Box and there are only six of them known in existence.

Then there is the question of The Box's counsel. The Box would have to pick the epicenter of randomization for you. To heed the advice of such a Thing is to court disaster in the making—it's how I caught the ever-elusive Simon, in the end. For all the good that it did him, his Box proved to ultimately be his undoing by lying to him at a critical juncture in our deadly game of cat and mouse.

No matter how many times it tells you the truth, a Box is a Thing that can and will betray you—they ALWAYS do—mine did. That's how my Box became his Simon's, to reiterate for all the good that it did him.

This what-if is just too much fun. Too sweet. So. Just for shits and giggles, let's suppose that a Box is involved. If so. More than likely The Box is doing what its kind does best. It's lying to someone—likely, that someone is its owner. Stringing him or her along. Exaggerating its influence. Telling that someone that it can manipulate the time-space continuum to that person's advantage, when in fact it's just taking credit for beneficial coincidence.

Supernatural. An opportunist. Untrustworthy. That about sums up what you have to be forewarned most about a Box. Not to be trusted, can't be stressed enough. Mine ALWAYS lied to

me—opting, in my case, to NEVER tell me the truth. Of course, I didn't figure that out about our relationship until it was over and I did the requisite post mortem.

In summation:

Bad. The situation involves a little bit of both: the effects of a RANDOMIZER's manipulations and a Box, the one powering it, taking credit for advantageous chance.

Worse. Two different Boxes are involved, in cahoots with one another. One is powering the Device the RANDOMIZER and one is doing the lying.

Worst. They're NOT in collusion, they're lying to different people, no Device is involved, and they're just taking advantage of "shared" coincidence coincidentally!

How did I come in possession of my Box? My boss, Fats Waller, gave it to me. Why? I was very young at the time—twelve years old—Fats had far reaching plans for me and she needed to know if I was worth the expense. If I "survived" the Box, I warranted the risk, if not, I would end up dead and in the soup. How did Fats get hold of the Box initially? Well, knowing Fats, that's anybody's guess. If you're really feeling extra froggy, ask her. You might get an answer before she eats you. Hint: There are said to be six Apocalypse Boxes and that the previous owners of all but one has ended up murdered. Ergo, whatever Fats did to get the Box, she didn't murder for it. By deduction: Now, you also know which one of the Boxes that we owned and Simon now owns.

More bleed-thru. This time it's a transient remote view. Again, it's third person singular.

It's Macy's at the Saint Louis Galleria. A persistent sales associate is determined to make her monthly quota, at all costs, especially when a well-heeled shopper is on a walk-thru Intimate Apparel.

"Hi-waist shaping brief?"

"What does it address?"

"Ultimate slimming from torso to thighs."

"She's built like Angelina Jolie."

"Okay. How about. A. Shaping slip? All over smoothness from day-to-night."

"Remember: Angelina Jolie."

"Seamless shaping cami? Keeps the tummy and back smooth."

"You're just not listening. Flat stomach, flat ass, and bubble tits, just like Ms. Jolie."

Fade to black. In her head a solitary voice. The clincher: This time it's one that she's all too familiar with.

"The famous phrase scientia potentia est is a Latin maxim 'For also knowledge itself is power' stated originally by Francis Bacon in Meditationes Sacrae (1597), which in modern times is often paraphrased as 'knowledge is power.' Of course, inscribed above the main entrance of all Guild libraries is the best-known variation—'all knowledge is power.' Capish?"

The Case of the Long-Legged Doll, Perry Mason gives way to an American neo-noir conglomeration. All David Lynch: The Straight Story, Twin Peaks, Inland Empire, Blue Velvet, Eraserhead, Dune, Mulholland Drive, Lost Highway, et al., seamlessly morphing one into the other—interchangeably.

She free-falls into cinematic oblivion: meta-physically, mentally, psychically, etc. Again. That all-too-familiar voice in her head: “This much fun is NEVER planned.” It’s the voice of Simon Angel.

Sam is standing in a room with no one else. Facing an archaic 1950s TV camera, she’s speaking from a teleprompter to an imagined audience. She’s wearing. Prudz. The harshest makeup. Klaw. Knobb. Sternka and sternns. Perls. Careys. Bra and panties. Nothing else. Over the top German. In other words. Very Prussian.

The audience materializes—people with stuffed animal heads—very Lynch-ian, indeed. The room morphs into a TV studio, circa 1958—which in turn is inside of a movie soundstage, circa 1958. It’s a movie set. The movie is about one of those cheesy retro reality shows, which proved so popular in the late 1950s during the height of the Vietnam War.

The rest of the canvas populates—cast and crew. Dame Chillingsworth mans the teleprompter. Xi is the key set grip—either he’s waiting in the wings for whatever in-between scenes or when they’re shooting a scene he coordinates with the electric and camera departments alongside the Director of Photography Liz Parkinson to control lighting and camera setup. Gizmo, the movie’s director, seems otherwise distracted. That gOd woman is nowhere in sight, nor is that Nosferatu The Master or its Goon henchwoman Noreen or Puck or, for that matter, anyone/anything very Old.

Sam is no longer standing. Legs crossed, she’s sitting on a couch with her co-host, Simon Angel. He’s on one end and she’s on the other.

“Lost Highway (1997). Germany released, Blu-Ray/Region A/B/C: it WILL NOT play on a regular DVD player; you need a Blu-Ray player to view this. LANGUAGES: English (Dolby Digital 5.1), English (Dolby DTS-HD Master Audio), German (Dolby Digital 5.1), German (Dolby DTS-HD Master Audio). German (Subtitles). WIDESCREEN (2.35:1). SPECIAL FEATURES: Cast/Crew Interview(s), Interactive Menu, Making Of, Scene Access, Trailer(s). SYNOPSIS: Another extreme exploration of the darkness within, Lost Highway (1997) marked David Lynch’s cinematic and artistic comeback after Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me (1992). A bold move away from typical Hollywood narrative, Lynch and co-writer Barry Gifford craft a quintessentially Lynch-ian mind game of multiple identities, heroes, villains, and femme fatales that defies conventional space and time. Spiked with such evocative film noir images as a highway at night and a burning cabin, Lost Highway’s tale of jealousy, murder, and retribution becomes the ultimate noir fever dream of erotic extremes, yearning, and violence, yet Lynch still finds a hopeful space for woozy romance between Balthazar Getty and Natasha Gregson Wagner. Even as the story flies out of control though Robert Blake’s disturbing ‘Mystery Man’ seems to know all the answers, Lost Highway remains a sound/image tour de force, particularly in the ultra-moody first half before the cacophony explodes in the second half. Making its perversity the prime attraction, Lost Highway’s ads trumpeted its two thumbs down from mainstream critics Roger Ebert and Gene Siskel; Lynch’s next film, The Straight Story (1999), however, precisely lived up to its title.”

Upon finishing her movie review, she turns to Simon. He’s smiling from ear to ear, his favored long-knife in hand. She takes her thumb and makes a cutting motion across her own throat from ear to ear.

“Would you like to rape me, first?”

“Yes, please. With my Liston.”

“Then, please do so. Time’s a wasting.”

The crew chants in unison: “Time is money. Time is money. Time is money. Time is money.”

Simon inches toward her, sliding across the couch, the gleaming blade in his hand, his mouth gaped open drooling, savoring this moment his moment of triumph over all those who he covets to slay.

The show’s director steps into view from off-stage. It’s Jack. He’s carrying a Box, Simon’s Apocalypse Box. Behind Jack are the weather girl Fisher and the news anchor Hawk, shouldering their drawn sword and axe, respectively. And. Bringing up the rear—movie extras, including Queen Mary, the real Lady Glenda, the desk clerk Amy, and the “possessed maid from the Hilton” who saw those things hooked into the backs of Sam and Xi. A funeral possession—Sam’s—in Sam’s Inland Empire—be careful what you wish for, because sometimes you get it.

“Here, I am God’s equal,” Simon proudly boasts. Pride beforeth the fall? Only time will tell. And right now he appears to have the deck stacked in his favor.

“Blasphemy. Blasphemy. Blasphemy. Blasphemy,” the cast, including Sam, and the crew singsongs.

“Better to rule in Hell, than to serve in Heaven.”

“Lucifer would agree.”

“Inland Empire?”

“The movie or the game?”

“There’s David Lynch. And, then there’s David Lynch.”

“The game. This game. NOT the movie.”

“I prefer Trinie Dalton’s Amazon.com review. It’s definitive, in my most humble opinion.”

“A moot point.”

“Agreed.”

“Nonetheless. Recite it, word for word.”

“Though Inland Empire’s three hours of befuddling abstraction could try the patience of the most devoted David Lynch fan, its aim to reinvigorate the Lynch-ian symbolic order is ambitious, not to mention visually arresting. The director’s archetypes recognizable from previous movies once again construct the film’s inherent logic, but with a new twist. Sets vibrate between the contemporary and a 1950s alternate universe crammed with dim lamps, long hallways, mysterious doors, sparsely furnished rooms and, this time, a vortex/apartment/sitcom set where rabbit-masked humans dwell, and a Polish town where women are abused and killed. Instead of speaking backwards, mystic soothsayers and criminals speak Polish. Filmed on video, the film’s look has the sinister, frightening feel of a Mark Savage film or a bootlegged snuff movie. Constant close-ups, both in and out of focus, make Inland Empire feel as if a stalker covertly filmed it. A straightforward, hokey plot unravels during the first third of Inland Empire to ground the viewer before a dive off the deep end. Actor Nikki Grace (Laura Dern) is cast as Susan Blue, an adulterous white trash Southerner, in a film that mimics too closely her actual life

with an overbearingly jealous and dangerous husband. When Nikki and co-star Devon (Justin Theroux) learn that the cursed film project was earlier abandoned when its stars were murdered, the pair lose their grasp of reality. Nikki suffers a schizophrenic identity switch to Sue that lasts until nearly the film's end. Suspense builds as Nikki's alter ego sleuths her way through surreal situations to discover her killer, culminating in Sue's gnarly death on set. Sue's actions drag on because any sign of a narrative thread disappears due to idiosyncratic editing. Nonsensical scenes still captivate, however, such as when Sue stumbles onto the soundstage where she finds Nikki (herself) rehearsing for Sue's part. In this meta-film about identity slippage, Dern's multiple characters remind one of how a victim can become the hunter in their fight for survival. Lynch's portrayal of Nikki/Sue's increasing paranoia is, in its own confusion, utterly realistic. Laura Dern has created her own Lady Macbeth, undone by her guilt over infidelity. Even though *Inland Empire* is too long and too random, Laura Dern's performance, coupled with Lynch's video experiments, makes it magical."

"Bravo. Bravo. Bravo. Bravo."

Simon is here physically, and at the same time, he's also physically in his cell in solitary confinement in Arkham Asylum. Muzzled, bound in a straitjacket, and otherwise naked, as punishment and precaution, because of his uber-violent content and conduct toward the asylum staffers. By his own choice, he is naked, filthy, and unshaven—long, dirty finger and toe nails—long, greasy, unkempt hair. Things are crawling on him. Things are feeding on him. Things physical. Things metaphysical. He's otherwise occupied and seems to not notice the fanatic goings-on of those of the tiny critters—the fleas, head lice, crabs, etc.—that call his body home.

He is using Jack as his photostat the random meatsuit that he happens to be wearing at this time to channel the Box—previously, he'd worn the maid from the Hilton, among others. He will enjoy sodomizing and flaying the flesh from Jack's bones. They all will meet the same fate a most gruesome demise, on his timetable.

As aforementioned, in Arkham, he looks like the reclusive, trillionaire hermit Howard Hughes. Here he is clean and pristine. He's wearing a tux. Looking like he's a wannabe Hugh Marston Hefner who has just stepped right out of the pages of *Playboy Magazine*.

"That you be my Obscure Object of Desire," Simon whispers in Sam's ear as he snuggles up against her, having finally reached his first intended. She will be the first to die and the last to be destroyed.

He shoves the blade up her nose. It goes up her violated nostril like a snake soaked in goose grease. She cums. He ejaculates. Coating unmentionables with warm stickiness before said undergarments clean up the mess.

Simon thrashes the blade about. A Rung lobotomy. In a normal person it would have raised havoc. Severing her corpus callosum. The problem is, she doesn't have one—never did.

Agenesis of the corpus callosum (ACC) is a rare birth defect (congenital disorder) in which there is a complete absence of the corpus callosum. It occurs when the corpus callosum, the band of white matter connecting the two hemispheres in the brain, fails to develop normally, typically during pregnancy. The development of the fibers that would otherwise form the corpus callosum become longitudinally oriented within each hemisphere and form structures called Probst bundles.

When she got made, the “process” didn’t treat it her ACC as a defect imperfection that needed to be “fixed.” Like it would have if, for example, she had been born blind, deaf, mute, sickly, etc. It the process interpreted her ACC as something that was her.

As such, her reaction to the Rung being Runged, as they say in the lobotomy trade was not what Simon had expected. Of course, he’s too drunk on the moment of perceived triumph to notice.

Her mind, by sheer force of will, makes the two completely independent halves of her brain function as one, when it suits her—which is most of the time. And, when she doesn’t, it’s truly something wondrous and ravaging to behold. That’s why she can fire two pistols at multiple targets with the independence and precision of two expert pistoleros. A mind capable of such mental gymnastics. It’s why she’s an abomination? Now, that’s a good question. Then again, the natural doesn’t always translate so literally into the supernatural.

He swings round and, while still working his knife, straddles her waist. Sitting in her lap. Killing her by inches, just like he’s dreamed of so many times over and over again in his cell back in Arkham. Totally in control of everything and everyone. At least that’s how he sees it. Poor deluded fool. Intoxicated. Drunk on absolute power.

Ever notice how God always finds a reason to leave the room when Death enters? Coincidence? Maybe. And here, she the Dead Girl is Death’s equal.

Be gone, for kixxx.

“Whose?”

Why, mine, of course.

“?!”

She moans as Fisher’s sword bisects her spine. Of course to do so, Simon has been run through. Hawk’s axe chops into the side of his neck. Still in the exile of his self-imposed delusion, he just feels a pin prick the run through and a tickle the hacking—mere distractions trivialities that he refuses to acknowledge. Euphoria paints his face. He’s in ecstasy. Warm blood gushes from his wounds, painting him all red and sticky.

And, to reiterate, for the record and your clarification, their kicks, my kixxx, not yours whatsoever.

“Their? Yours? Not mine?”

You’ll find out, soon enough.

Sam is immortal—a demon—the first race of God’s Dark Children—God’s Darkest—the first race created by God. She can die and resurrect, over and over again. But. So can Simon. He is, after all, an Angel in a human body. Nonetheless, he’s still mortal—a human being. She can be destroyed, just like any of her infernal kind. He, though highly resilient, because of his Angelic ancestry, can also be destroyed, just like any of his half-breed kind.

Simon has avoided bringing here anything/anyone very Old in the supernatural, not the chronological, sense, except for the one who really mattered. He just couldn’t let sleeping dogs lay. He just had to know, who was better—*I’m so good at killing that my improvisation is indistinguishable from premeditation.* He has let it consume him—awake or asleep. Gnawing at

him. Need has grown into obsession—coveting all reason and purpose in life. Revenge is a dish best served cold. Yet here he is trysting with a bubble-headed coed. Or, more precisely, dying at the hands of that whore Death and refusing to acknowledge it.

Worse: The scariest thing about all this is that she Sam never saw it coming, she fell into his trap, just like he so carefully planned, and yet she's managed to turn the tables on him. Worst: to do it, she hasn't expo facto. You mean that she hasn't seamlessly steered him from his mind into her own? That's correct. She's killing him in his! And, to reiterate, this is all improvisation, on her part—each and every reaction. Before she learned homicidal methodology, had it imposed upon her by her betters Fats, her maker Mildred Most, Hanna, and others, this is how she killed—completely off the cuff, nothing was planned—not one blessed stitch. Not ego, just fact: she's so good at killing that her improvisation is indistinguishable from premeditation. Too bad for Simon that he refused to see and concede the obvious: That, between the two of them, Sam is the better killer, and by a wide margin, indeed; Sam, in point of fact, is on another level, inarguably; arguably, she's beyond category—put her on her well-deserves pedestal and leave comparisons with other killers alone, such comparisons are inherently belittling.

It had always been assumed, up to this point in time, a prevailing theory by the way that the bottle-blonde Sam had also ascribed to, that Simon had made use of a ROOM either his own or someone else's in the commission of his crimes. All of what evidence that could be had, pointed to that as the most reasonable deduction.

A victim would open a door and walk into what they thought was their house, apartment, hotel room, closet, etc., and what they were actually ingressing was a ROOM. A ROOM where they would meet their most violent, agonizing, untimely demise at the maniacal hands of one Simon Angel.

Such is obviously not the case. Simon kills his victims in the place where he is “equal to God”: his mind.

Ecclesiastically speaking, the devil in the details, though. Because being equal to God is not necessarily equivalent to being the same as God. Then there's the nagging question philosophically speaking of who objectively decides that you are equal to God—your assessment being obvious suspect and inherently bias. Not to mention the fact that having never been God before, you're not nor is anyone else, for that matter, qualified to judge equivocation. Technically, only God is qualified to do so. Again, more secular neo-realism and Church dogma, take your pick. Either way. A heated, circular argument would surely ensue.

From a demonic point of view. Philosophical digression. Existentialistic poppycock. Total bullshit. Here, in his mind, Simon is equal to God. Here, in his mind, Simon is the same as God. Here, in his mind, Simon is God. And, there are no ifs, ands, and buts, about it. Not blasphemy, just fact. Now, the Clergy's tongues gets to wagging.

A conversation just off camera. Heated and yet, paradoxically, the two speakers are very detached matter of fact in their tone, tenor, and tense.

“The OontZ and the OontZ Angle, manufactured by Cambridge SoundWorks.”

“Amazing sound, surprising volume, and far less than half the price of an Aliph Jawbone Jambox.”

“Perfect for music, movies, games, and gatherings from your iPhone, iPad, MacBooks, smartphones, tablets, and notebooks.”

“Only 10 Ounces.”

“10 hour rechargeable battery.”

“Wow. People are shocked that such good sound comes out of a small, ultra-portable wireless Bluetooth speaker.”

Simon starts going into shock, from his wounds—a tumble, not a spiral. By now, Hawk and Fisher have inflicted many wounds, all very grave. They seem to know what they’re doing when it comes to the business at hand. That business being the slow, deliberate, enjoyed felling of an Angel. As he was forewarned, their kicks, not his. Still in denial, Simon refuses to acknowledge any of this, at a conscious level. His subconscious, on the other hand, is having its share of pangs, and they’re growing exponentially.

Worse: the “their” in “their kicks” refers to more than just Hawk and Fisher. That is communicated to Simon, posthaste.

There is, of course, the apparent paradox to consider. Here, Simon is equal to/the same as God, and yet here he is getting bested, let alone getting bested like this. No one gets the better of God, just ask Lucifer.

It’s yet another of those to borrow from Churchill: “riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma?” Not quite.

As aforementioned, Angel or not, Simon is still human. An Angel in a human body. And, no human can evade the dominion of Death. Even Jesus Christ, God in human form, died. Into his mind, the mind of a human being, Simon brought Death in the guise of Sam Phillips.

Need a step-by-step breakdown?

So. In his mind, Simon is God. Everybody else, his intended victims, are who they are out in the world. Alas. Out in the world, Sam is Death incarnate. Death is the undoing of all humans. Simon brought Death Sam into his mind. Therefore, Simon is the reason why Simon is getting bested. Karma is such a total bitch. You always reap what you sow. What goes around, always comes around.

Worst: nary the facilitator here, Sam is merely an ingenue. The harsh, pitiless, peroxide-blond has yet to lift a hand, fang, nail, etc., against him. So far, it’s the locals who are actually doing the dirty work of doing him in.

Justice has many faces. Another local takes center stage to extract her pound of flesh. Crazy Queen Mary arcanelly gestures—channeling—harnessing—manipulating. Not magic. Something else. Something older. Much older. Her eyes turn black, absolute black, the total darkness, the bottomless pit, the unfathomable depth, which is The Abyss—eyes that are windows into The Abyss. Simon is torn from the cutlery embrace of Hawk and Fisher, and rag dolled about. Lady Glenda voices something in unison with a now likewise Abyss-eyed Jack, slamming Simon to the floor—splat! The Box, Simon’s Box, is nowhere to be seen—gone, just like that—poof.

Jack, who was once insinuated by The Abyss, now willfully and willingly wields it as its adept. Coincidence?

Simon can no longer deny the mutiny. Bloodied, battered, sliced, and diced, he stands his ground, hits his mark, and takes back center stage—suddenly vertical, standing defiantly.

“No, this cannot be!!! I am God!!!”

His latest rebuke comes from a very unlikely source in the form of: “Delay, deny, wait till I die.” It’s the possessed maid who utters it, as she is suddenly upon him and stabs him repeatedly in the abdomen with a large letter opener. And, by doing so, re-affirming him to this place where he is God.

Back in the day, the maid was a sorcerer’s apprentice. A failed vocation, but it left her with skills, nonetheless. Hence her second sight—the vision to see compromise—that manifested itself as those things that appeared hooked into the backs of Xi and Sam. Hence her sudden movements here. Hence etc.

Additionally, the maid is undercover, a member of Haven’s secret police, which is why her true identity in law enforcement is unknown to “regular” coppers like Hawk and Fisher.

Although his Box has betrayed him, again, leaving him to the lethal devices of those he intended as prey, his voices the voices in his head have not. Remaining steadfast, they bind the maid, Queen Mary, Lady Glenda, and Jack, quieting their attacks, affording Simon the precious seconds he needs to mount a credible counterattack of his own.

First off, Simon beheads the maid with his blade. As if it were a headman’s axe instead of a dissecting knife. A single stroke is all that’s required to effortlessly slice through trachea, esophagus, muscle, sinew, spine, etc.—something that the knife could not do out in the world.

Her now headless, still twitching body drops to the floor. He seems rejuvenated by her wanton slaughter. Having regained his second wind, Simon kicks her fallen head, nonchalantly punting it off stage. For the moment, his tumble into shock is slowed to a leisurely saunter. Wounds, grave and mortal, begin to visibly heal.

All the while this is going on; Hawk and Fisher are unable to join in on the fray. It’s as if they’ve been frozen in amber. Simon has captivated them.

Whatever or whomever has insinuated Gizmo is finally banished by Gizmo, and it’s none too soon. No longer otherwise distracted, Gizmo wades into the fray as if he is the legendary Merlin of Camelot. His wizard’s fire envelopes the rapidly recuperating half-Angel. There is no half-stepping here. No need for the arcane dousing of Simon with some liquid combustible—for example, hi-octane gasoline or napalm—and then igniting it. Wizard’s fire is the thermonuclear equivalent of a Dragon’s fiery, death-dealing, life-stealing breath.

Simon’s maniacal laughter fills the sound stage. The wizard’s fire is extinguished with a definitive, accompanying whoosh.

“Is this the best that you can do?” Simon taunts, having seemingly regained control of the situation. Angered that his human half is what has allowed his lessers to momentarily get the better of him.

My human half is what gives her Death dominion over me.

“Yes. But, human or not, you are still God,” encourages in unison his staunchest allies—the voices in his head. “Nothing bests God.”

As you say, my most steadfast, nothing bests God.

“Kill them all!!! And leave the bitch whore for last!!!”

“Stop doubting yourself!!! Doubt is fear!!! And, fear is the mind killer!!! You are God, and God fears no one and no thing—no person, place, or thing!!!”

“Kill them!!! Kill them, all!!!”

“No, that is not the best that I can do,” Gizmo retorts. Then, he adds, rhetorically: “Thank you, sir. Would you like another?”

Gizmo eyes go Abyss—transforming the already-formidable magician into an even more dangerous, all-powerful mage. Now we know, for sure, what insinuated him? Maybe we do. And maybe we do not.

A now Abyss-driven Gizmo reaches out, metaphysically. It’s as if giant, invisible hands grab, squeeze, pull apart, and flay Simon. His shrieks fill the sound stage. Sam cums and coos.

Gizmo’s frenzied attack distracts Simon enough for Queen Mary, Lady Glenda, and Jack, to extricate themselves from bondage. Freed, they join in on the arcane attack.

The problem is, as old as The Abyss is, God predates it. God predates everything and everyone. If not for God, there would be nothing and no one. And, to reiterate, human or not, here in this place, in his mind, Simon is God. Simon dispels the “grasp” of Gizmo and dispenses with the Abyss-driven mage.

Gizmo collapses to the floor. His skull caved in as if by some gigantic, invisible fist—dead. Simon begins to regenerate, fueled by the felling of Gizmo. The voices, his pep squad, grow ever louder in his head, egging him on. He moves suddenly. Lady Glenda has the presence of mind to intervene physically, selflessly transposing her body in-between Simon and Queen Mary his next intended kill. Simon guts her Lady Glenda, slicing open her abdomen with a casual flick of his long knife, eviscerating her. Then, he pushes her aside as inconsequential. She drops to her knees trying to hold her guts in and failing miserably to do so—her blood, bowel, and excrement spewing every which way, dying—bleeding to death.

Jack is the next to intervene. He tries some spells and incantations, falling back on ordinary magic. Simon is not even slowed down a bit.

The demi-Angel grabs Crazy Marry by her throat, lifts her off the floor, and squeezes slowly for effect while showboating with his blade as he decides what ways he’s going to fillet her.

The black man, the Nubian, who escaped from the clutches of The Master, emerges from Sam’s look-ahead. Only now he wears his true visage. No longer a Negro, he is mixed race Coloured, a man named Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson, and this universe’s version is in the employ of Queen Mary. He rushes over to her defense. His eyes go Abyss.

Gun skills are not all about accuracy or speed. Like boxing The Sweet Science, shooting a gun is mostly about the mental game. The Dame, who up till now has not been a player, interjects herself. She does not reach through the coat of her Koo, draw her sidearm, and fire. What she does is unbutton her coat and flip it back to expose her holstered pistol. Seeing this, Sam smiles from ear to ear, and thinks: Oh my God, she gets it!!!

That was careless of Simon to leave her The Dame armed. Then again. Maybe he wasn't careless. Maybe he was just overconfident. Too prideful—Proverbs 16:18? Is it “pride cometh before the fall” or “pride goeth before the fall?”

Dwayne yanks the Dame's passively-offered weapon out of her holster as he whisks past her. He snaps shoots, not wasting time on bringing the pistol up and squaring it properly.

Too late, the preoccupied Simon notices this new intruder into his God realm. By then, Dwayne has already squeezed off the first shoot. The round clips Simon just behind the ear, grazing his skull. His Simon's bell gets rung. Instead of finishing off Queen Mary while engaging Dwayne, he tosses Queen Mary aside and turns his full attention to Dwayne.

Dwayne's second shot tears into Simon's throat. Seeing Simon's resolve wax and wane and visibly flicker, this time it's Jack who envelopes him Simon with wizard's fire. This time the desired effect is achieved. The flames eat at Simon, he burns. The glamor is broken—Hawk and Fisher are freed from their captivity. They move in and begin to cautiously stalk the half-breed Angel.

Staged. Choreographed. Faked. Melodramatic. Why so much drama? You'd think that it was a pro-wrestling match instead of what it is which is a fight to the death. Why can't he Simon just squash them his attackers and be done with it? Why indeed?

Here Simon is God, which is both his strength and his Achilles' heel. For too long he has held sway here. Killing and doing as he willed and wished. For too long he has been seemingly invincible here. Toying with those he has brought here to do with as his willed and wished. For too long. And the list goes on and on.

Bottom line: he's too used to playing with his prey, and not worrying about his prey turning the tables on him. Against a coordinated attack mounted by so many who do not fear him and a number of whom are Abyssed as well, he has no answer. He only has more questions.

Dwayne takes potshots at Simon in rapid succession, knowing that Simon does not have a credible counter either arcane or mundane to what his borrowed MPP is spewing.

Liz Parkinson and the desk clerk Amy walk on camera. They walk around the ensuing mayhem, not becoming involved, splitting the difference between Hawk and Fisher. Simon reaches out toward them, arcanelly. Overextended and beleaguered as he is, Simon being Simon the avowed egotist, he just can't resist. Almost too late, he realizes that it's a ruse, just not in the way that you might think, and thus not worth the effort. He voids his grasp at the last minute, retracting his claim—never touching either girl.

Liz and Amy are neither bait nor intention—the straw that broke the camel's back, they are not. Nor are they the shameless tease, meant to distract him. They're bored, and have decided to leave. For them. At first, it was a total gas. Now, it's just gassed. Time to flew the coop.

Sensing the coda, Hawk and Fisher move in for the final death strokes. Yawning, Liz and Amy walk past The Dame and exit via Sam's look-ahead. The Dame follows suit and likewise beats feet, not bothering to retrieve her pistol from Dwayne.

They Liz, Amy, and the Dame have left the studio back lot, altogether. But, how?! Yes. The look-ahead affords ingress and egress, as it pertains to Simon's mind, but, it shouldn't be able to so unless he Simon allows it, and he emphatically has not. Who, then is the enabler? Who indeed?

Xi and Sam are the only supernaturals left on the scene. Coincidentally, they are the two supernaturals that the now deceased, possessed maid saw as compromised. Just because that would imply collusion, and the two of them do not seem to be as cross purposes, does not necessarily mean that there is a conspiracy afoot. Coincidence, again? Maybe. Maybe not.

Another off-camera conversation, a female voice, and this time in the matter-of-fact third-person vernacular of The Borg: “If they have a problem with the legalese, then they could mark up the contract and send it to the lawyers and have the talk about that and work it out. Schaefer said that’s what you do in a contract. We made them a firm offer, \$3 million to their side. Maybe Bob Arum doesn’t think the money is there. Maybe I am better at raising the money than he is. But what is the problem? If I am committing by contract to pay them \$3 million to do the fight, what is the issue? If the money is not there, that’s my problem. I still have to come up with it from somewhere, not them.”

The voice is recognizable, to Sam. It belongs to a Borg queen: Juliet “Judith” Aubrey aka the infamous Norma Bates. Seemingly in response, Sam is suddenly dressed in her Koo. But, her phone, purse, and universal holster are not clipped to the waistband of her skirt.

Xi walks over to Sam, taking a circuitous route so as not to become mired in the mayhem. They face each other, saying nothing, nodding and blinking—and rapid eye movement executed synchronously—as if they are communicating by some form of unshunned Morse code. The cryptic that they are employing is the way that Dragons and 456 communicate with each other when discretion is highly advised. You have to be line of sight, extremely close, and be fluent in an unhackable lingo that rivals the tongue of the Goons in its arcaneness. Few Outlanders those who are not Dragon or 456 know it.

Sam knew it before she met Xi. He wouldn’t have taught it to her anyways. She knew it before she met Fats. Her archaic usage is that of a very old Dragon. Who taught Sam, when she was a human Connie, that which is one of the most closely guarded secrets of God’s second darkest children? Who indeed?

Their “conversation” ends abruptly. What follows, the verbal portion of their tattle, is no more telling than their wordless exchange was.

“Be careful what you wish for. Sometimes you get it.”

“We can only hope.”

“Well, it’s been fun.”

“Not staying for the end?”

“Been there. Seen that.”

“I’ll make sure that your friend The Dame gets her gun back, after Dwayne has finished with it.”

“Thank you. That’s very white of you.”

Sam leaves. But, she doesn’t exit via the look-ahead. She just fades away, as if she’s cloaking. Poof. Gone, just like Simon’s Box. Gone, from Simon’s mind, altogether. Fade to black. The essence of anticlimactic.

“You can’t leave!!! I forbade it!!!” Simon shrieks, in protest.

Her Houdini act proving beyond reproach that she is the Oldest Thing here, metaphysically speaking? Punctuating that at any time she could have left whenever she wished? And. Definitively. She is the enabler here, the reason why people can come and go as they please—except for Simon, of course, since this is his mind, thus he is always here?

Yes. She is the Oldest Thing here, metaphysically speaking. No. She could not have left whenever she wished, regardless of her seniority metaphysically speaking. She had to divine how to do so. It only looked like premeditation on her part—improvisation indistinguishable from premeditation, is improvisation, nonetheless. Enabler: Yes. And. Yes. Simon can't leave, because this is his mind, thus he is always here. Too bad for Simon.

Even with her vacated, her lingering effect holds sway. Opting out is still a viable option. Curtain call—best to leave early and beat the after-show homebound traffic jam. With notable exception, everybody else lines up single file and leaves via the look-ahead.

Xi, Dwayne, Jack, Hawk, Fisher, Queen Mary, and a fallen Lady Glenda are all that remain. Excluding Xi, they are the combatants versus Simon. Xi, hands folded, inscrutable, watching the ensuing mayhem.

Dwayne has taken on the mythos of Kiefer Sutherland's Jack Bauer à la "24." He's just that good. Sam's gun-toting presence is not missed.

Now. In a Dragon's tear literally, not metaphorically, someone watches this three-act life-and-death "play" skillfully unfold—the final act, the third act, having come upon us the audience. Broadway—"The Great White Way"—has got nothing on this theatre. Between the tick-tock of there and here. The eternity between the moments that defines their and our and everyone else's immortality. They stand in literary congress with each other. Knowing full well that they are toying with their own oblivion, assured. Yet, here they are. flirting with their own destruction, as if they are the most foolish of mortals. But, who, you ask, are they?

To know the name of a thing is to have power potentially over that thing. That is why God never named them—to safeguard them from the genocidal machinations of God's other two predatory homicidally-inclined Dark Children the demons and the Dragons.

Bottom line. Being The Third the last, the youngest, and thus the least powerful of God's Dark Children meant a death sentence—guaranteed extinction—at the hands of The First and The Second, if They The Third were named. So. They are nameless, and will remain so, forever.

The First the demons, The Second the Dragons, and The Third, are designations, not names, of course. Numbering by God, predating numbering by The Borg.

"Could be a Lovecraft story based on brutal sex and lesbian attitude? Sorry about the title. This is just something I'm thinking about very seriously. I've read many Lovecraft stories but my memory is cheating me. I've read a short story as if it were a Lovecraftian story. There are two human girls in their 20s, one of them is provocative, and she is so sexy maybe very near to lesbian that makes the other pure girl be very shy. After that Yog-Sothoth comes out the other girl looks sane, which is kind of weird, because if you're mortal and see this god, you end up either dead or insane and rapes her or whatever with its tentacles, very brutal and she lies between pleasure and fright, kind of a sacrifice that way, but so weird. Made me think. Could that possibly be a Lovecraftian story? I don't remember H.P. writing those kind of stories. Is that maybe an insult to H.P.L. writings?" Darkgaze pauses, then he rephrases his summation upon

seeing Phantom42's reaction to his muse. "I'm not asking if this story could be a Lovecraftian one, but would Lovecraft fans accept it as a respectful fan film."

"I have read almost all of Lovecraft's published works and this doesn't sound like anything I have seen or heard of from HPL. Furthermore, some things to note. Lovecraft wrote his works in the turn of the 20th century around 1910. Back then, lesbianism and feminine sexual promiscuity was often considered a mental disorder by mortals, and the likelihood of a character portraying those traits without being hysterical is very low. In fact this is where the term hysterical comes from. Lovecraft's monsters are scary to humans because compared to them humans; they are so big and powerful as to destroy the humans with their mere presence. Metaphysically speaking. Yog Sothoth raping a human girl would be like you raping an ant. Lovecraft actually spends very little time tying his monsters together into the mythos we see today. In fact most of the ties that we consider are writers, borrowing from his work later. This means that most of the times you see the iconic names it will probably be in derivative stories. Pretty much all of HPL's work is well published and open source. To read his works I recommend

['http://www.dagonbytes.com/thelibrary/lovecraft/.'](http://www.dagonbytes.com/thelibrary/lovecraft/) To reiterate. Based upon your edit. No. This would not be called truly 'Lovecraftian.' The Lovecraft theme is about madness, and the cost of peeking beyond the vale of illusion humans hold dear. It is about dreams, and about beings so far beyond humanity as to render any interaction with them a struggle for sanity and life for mere homo sapiens. Sexuality plays a role in basically NO HPL stories. The idea of sexuality in horror came after HPL and any sign of it using HPL type creatures is a corruption of the original intent."

"But still I got my doubts about this, really. I guess Yog-Sothoth would be gigantic metaphysically speaking, not necessarily physically, but could it, have, phallus-like tentacles and approach a girl and rape her? Would it be possible? I mean. They have kind of games between the girls, like lesbian games, nearly kissing each other, and something like that. She is a bad girl, indeed, because it's the old times, playing with fire. I don't know if it fits in an orphanage with girls playing between them at that time. An actual Lovecraft version of Yog Sothoth would have exactly zero interest in sexual congress with a human. Even assuming that it did, the description would be so obtuse as to be unrecognizable. I recommend reading the 'Yellow Wallpaper' for a depiction of how they viewed hysterical women in the turn of the century. Not by HPL btw." Pyrodante interjects, going off into his own semi-related tangent, having coincidentally read the same short story in question and having recently seen on Showtime a nudity-laden horror movie a horror-fest directed by Stuart Gordon, produced by Brian Yuzna, starring perennial favorites Barbara Crampton and Jeffrey Combs of Re-Animator fame that was reminiscent of the short.

Puzzled looks are directed at Pyrodante, although he seems to not notice, being too much into his own ethos and being self-absorbed by nature. Darkgaze gets the discussion back on track. And Phantom42 ends it with a thud upon noticing that the peroxide is gone.

"Hey. Thanks to all. Nice answers. Thanks a lot. That makes me think about this a lot. I don't know why did they voted me down. I guess because of the sex-related theme. Sorry guys." Clucky, but effective—the discourse is back on track.

"Hey. Where in the fuck did that blonde go to?"

"What?!"

"She's gone?!"

“Shit!”

“She must have skipped out while we were talking.”

“That bitch was the ONLY interesting thing going on here. Man did she have a set on her or what.”

“Yep. The ONLY thing going on here. Cause. Humans, Abyss-driven or not, battling an Angel, and a half-breed at that. Foo wee.”

“All is not lost, frats. I’m picking up some vapors.”

“Got the scent?!”

“Patience. Patience. Don’t get your panties in a bunch, girls. Big Daddy is trolling for pussy. Has Big ever failed you?”

“There was that time in.”

“Shut the fuck up. You’re distracting him with your bullshit.”

“Locked in, boys. Houston, the Eagle has landed.”

“Let’s blow this joint and get some blood-sucker poontang.”

“Time to run a train on a leech.”

“I’ll bet that she’s as sweet as a Georgia peach.”

As if the Ghostbusters are in Russia attending a lecture when a magical grimoire is stolen and the Old Ones are unleashed, they fade to black, just like Sam did.

Upon first seeing her, Phantom42 nicknamed her “The Weapon of Mass Seduction” because of her double-D’s and long legs. The other Omega Si Pi frat boys, his fellow Nameless Ones, are in complete concurrence with his assessment of this total hottie.

What they refuse to see is the obvious—their “writhing in pain” as A.B.C. “Cal” Whipple would say. Their grievous indiscretion reminds one of the current state of Showtime that other premium pay channel in the original series game.

Look, Showtime had a few wonderful stabs at series—*Resurrection Blvd.*, *Queer as Folk*, *Dead Like Me*, *Huff*, *The L Word*, *Brotherhood*—but its current legacy rests with *Weeds*, *Dexter*, *Californication*, *The Tudors*, *Secret Diary of a Call Girl*, *Nurse Jackie*, *United States of Tara* and *The Big C*. This, if you’re keeping score at home, is drug-selling mom, serial killer, sex addict, sex-addicted killing-addicted king, unrepentant prostitute, unrepentant drug addicted nurse, woman with multiple personalities, and cancer victim. That bleeding edge that Greenblatt loved so much really started to stain the rug at Showtime.

And, that is what they are about to do in spades. They are going to stain the carpet blood red figuratively, not literally.

It’s as if they’re stepping into the middle of a one-sided conversation. With no point of reference to dicker its intent, let alone its direction. The subject matter is plain enough, and it’s not boxing. It’s their demise. They’ve walked right into a trap, and it’s a Dusey.

“And that appreciation has helped bolster his case for a long awaited and lucrative match-up against everyone’s favorite Opie, Saul Alvarez. It’s a fight that was impossible 2 years ago,

highly unlikely years ago, and all but certain today. And he's got more than a fighting chance," She voices. Her mouth suddenly all-consuming, from their point of view. Culinary congress is in session. Serrated teeth. Blood drinking fangs. Daggerous fingernails. And, a long, facile, consumptive tongue—a hungry, angry, loathsome, wanton snake that craves to be fed—in other words, a “killer” tongue.

“Huh?!” Sums up their collective surprise, as she eats them whole, her educated viva voce (word of mouth) not letting a precious drop of their blood hit the floor. The maul of her maw. Ravenous. Nothing is wasted: flesh, blood, sinew, or bone. Nameless race, though not unnamed people, and no longer alive, because of it her most grievous mayhem at their most agonizing expense. The true face of The Nosferatu revealed.

The Dame and Liz “return” to the lobby to find Sam waiting for them patiently. Holster, phone, and purse clipped to the waistband of her skirt, concealed underneath her jacket. Smacking her lips clean of the last of the tastiest vittles—the best chitlins she ever done eat. Then there's the obvious nonlinearity. The two girls left before her. Yet, she Sam got back before them. And, she's obviously been up to no good.

Amy, the desk clerk, knows better and minds her own bee's wax. Keeping her nose very much out of other people's business—especially this dolly's.

The Dame also knows better than to breathe a word. Because she too, like Amy, knows how to mind her own business and go with the flow, where this broad Sam is concerned. Besides. When you're as old as the Dame, you don't have to be Sherlock Holmes to guess what's likely to have transpired—somebody has gotten eaten. Yum. Yum. In the tummy, tum, tum. The very definition of soul food dining, for a supernatural—consuming someone with a soul.

“Let's go upstairs and introduce Liz to gOd. I think she's gOd's type.”

The last bit is not the not-so-inside joke that at first glance it would appear to be. It's true enough that everybody is gOd's type—a freedom of choice that has nothing to do with embracing diversity and everything to do with being promiscuous. But, like most people, gOd does have a favorite type.

“GOd?!”

“Yes, gOd.”

“What a dish! I've met her before, and wow. It was three years ago at a Bewitched! Convention in Fresno. We accidentally bumped into each other at the Tabitha booth and.”

“Capitol!”

From Sam's point of view, things couldn't be better. A sober, cleaned up Liz is that full-grown woman who is capable of that wanton naughty jailbait schoolgirl look—occidental anima. In other words, Liz is a twenty-something who could easily pass for a dolled up underage teenager if she really wanted to—no need for a drastic makeover with profound effects to achieve it, either—minor tweaking, at best. Bottomline: newly-minted. And, needless to say, there are a ton of people who would pay her some serious cash to “look too young” while doing very nasty things with them. Not all of those people would be men, either. A fair share would be women. A profitable *modus operandi*, indeed.

Short, feminine height: Liz is five-foot-three-inches tall—the female height most preferred by the majority of mortal suitors. Her clothes best showcase her petite frame and small-to-medium perky tits—smaller-ish breasted, petite, and minty-fresh. Buxom girls and their zealots aside, there are a lot of people that adhere to the tenant that more than mouthful is a waste.

Is this how she is supposed to really look? Likely, this is Liz’s true form—the way she looked before she ever got into binging. Or just as likely, it’s the best that this changeable non-changeling Parallel chooses to remember as being her very own personal truth.

Couple Liz’s current look and its “too young” potential with gOd’s well-known penchant for Japanese manga and oriental or occidental Japan anime girls. Wow! Then there’s the cherry on top. Liz is a *Bewitched!* aficionado. GOd is a *Bewitched!* fanatic. Double wow!

Countessa Juanita Sova-Zen—Venetian, not Italian—and Countess Natalya Yurievna Ragozina—nicknames: The Russian Tsarina, Miss Sledgehammer—the current and the previous female World Super Middleweight champion, respectively—take in the scenery both male and female from a corner bar and take dibs on who they would most like to bed.

Natalya “Natasha” Ragozina retired from the ring undefeated, flirted briefly with modeling and with show business as an actress, and now is a beautiful, hot, and gorgeous member of the 628-member Russian parliament, termed the Federal Assembly, that consists of two chambers, the 450-member State Duma (the lower house) and the 178-member Federation Council (the upper house). A blue-blood, Countess Natalya is a member of the Federation Council, of course. She and former world heavyweight boxing champion Vitali Klitschko belong to the same Reform Tsarist political party that he started.

The renowned thirty-something pugilists, donning mules and cleavage-baring Kayes, are Giants and look like runway models, with identical stats for their fab figures: six-foot-one-inches tall, one-hundred-and-sixty-eight pounds, disproportionately top-heavy aka buxom with slim hips and a flat ass, with the pleasing curves, toned athleticism, and Playboy centerfold measurements to match anyone’s big girl fantasy. The bigger they are, the harder we fall.

Glamorous. Hard, pretty, Slavic faces with those loathsome undertones, long platinum-blond tresses the Countess’ done in her trademark pigtails, and flawless complexions. Yes, Slavic for both girls. Pretty and busting a cap.

In spite of the antiquity of her Venice birthright, the Countessa has Slavic bloodlines that can be traced via Giant cousins twice-removed. Not to mention Neapolitan roots Naples being the favored migrate of Kazakhstan since the time of the Tsars and ties to Ukraine via distant lineage to those two Super Giants the uber-pugilistic Klitschko brothers. Don’t fuck with Mother Russia.

The Dame’s and The Countess’ eyes meet and lock into an unblinking stare. They know each other very well, professionally; having been nationalistic adversaries on many an occasion and allies on just as many. Never lovers, they have a grudging respect for each other. Chronologically, and thus metaphysically, they are contemporaries.

Seeing what’s up, Sam nudges the Dame hard in the ribs and tells her to knock it off: Sam’s mouth to The Dame’s ear, discreetly—the girl always deferring to elders, publicly, as per ROE. The Countess demurs, giving the Dame an out, as etiquette would have it. Only then does The Dame break the staring contest. Not that it was ever going to escalate, let alone to blows. Just two Alpha females exercising their options, politely. No hard feelings, just plenty of mutual respect. Besides there’s that territorial aspect to consider. The stare down was also to reiterate

that—from The Dame to The Countess—where Sam is concerned, “hands off, she’s mine, bitch!!!” The Countess’ concession further acknowledged that prior claim of The Dame’s.

But, The Dame is not fooled the least little bit; knowing full well that The Countess is still very much interested. Her potential competition’s body English is just that obvious and it’s meant to be.

The Dame, Liz, and Sam go back upstairs to gOd’s room, which is also Liz’s room. GOd is alone. Upon seeing Liz, she rushes over and hugs the girl like a long lost friend. Predictably fickle to a fault. Her infatuation with Sam is forgotten, completely; just like Sam intended. Then again. Liz, feminine and petite, is gOd’s most favored type.

The Amazon Sam was nothing more than a passing fad. That’s what all big girls ever are to gOd. Furthermore. What it’s really always about, as aforementioned, is sampling that poontang smorgasbord.

“Geez, you big lunk, you’re a sight for sore eyes. You sure weren’t this sweet when we last met.”

“No I wasn’t. But, I’m monogamous and was involved at the time, if you so kindly remember. I apologize for my formality on that previous occasion.”

“I accept.” Liz giggles after a precocious pause. Smiling from ear to ear.

“I promise to make it up to you.”

“You’d better,” Liz teases, sucking on her thumb. Feigned innocence and real seduction. An invitation to simulated statutory rape being more than just alluded to.

This gOd only has eyes for Liz. It’s as if Sam and The Dame don’t exist.

“What’s the question that I see in your eyes?” GOd asks, pursing her lips.

“What was that big girl’s name that you were with at that time?”

“Grace. Her name was Grace.”

“She was a real ditz. Not to mention. Mercurial, nasty. I bet she was a mean drunk, too.”

“But. She was such an awesome lay. Nonetheless, when given a choice, I prefer them small, skinny. You know. Close to the bone. The sweetest meat is always close to the bone.” GOd winks at Liz, knowingly. “That slender gown woman with the underage schoolgirl look, being absolutely the very best.” GOd smacks her lips.

The ultimate player, gOd will say anything—lie, cheat, steal, use any amount of flattery—to get into Liz’s pants. And if all else fails and wooing doesn’t work, she’ll just take the girl. Rape is never out of the question, if she wants that new toy bad enough. And, as long as the cheque or check in American English doesn’t bounce, Liz isn’t apt to complain.

“Whatever happened to Grace? Did you break up?”

“In a fashion.”

“In what fashion?” Liz asks, rhetorically. She can guess the answer. But she asks anyways. Verbal foreplay can be so much fun for a tease such as her.

“I ate her.”

“Cunnilingus or culinary?”

“Both. She tried to leave me! No one leaves me without repercussions!! I hunt them down and !!!”

Liz begins to coo in gOd’s wooing arms, and gOd’s anger escalating to rage, quiets, just like that. The Dame and Sam make their well-timed exit. This gOd could care less, having found her new, very best toy, and it goes without saying—very best, for now—at this given moment in time.

It’s as if Liz is as schooled in GFE (the Girl Friend Experience) as expert practitioner Amanda Brooks. Ms. Brooks is that infamous or famous Texas escort and author of *The Internet Escort’s Handbook Book 1: The Foundation*.

The Dame and Sam go downstairs where they meet up with Puck, Xi, and Dwayne. No one broaches the subject of Simon Angel’s fate. Dwayne hands the Dame her gun. She holsters her pistol, and thanks him. The Dame and Dwayne make a lot of eye contact, during the exchange. They find a reason to pair off and go someplace—out the front door to who knows where. Puck and Xi likewise depart the premises and return to the Hilton, there’s cleaning up to be done after gOd has made a fair mess of things during her booty call rampage.

Sam is left to her own devices. She notices a woman step through a doorway marked cellar. A woman who had traversed the room. A woman who looks like a Borg Queen—with the face of the fabulous Miss Peggy Lee (circa 1955-57) an American jazz and popular music singer, songwriter, composer, and actress in a career spanning six decades. A woman who only she Sam seems to be able to see. The big girl feels compelled to follow. When she steps through that door, she doesn’t end up in the fleabag’s cellar. She ends up somewhere and some when else. The woman she saw just a moment ago is strewn in pieces across the floor of these subterranean ruins. Six parts covered in dust, cobwebs, and antiquity. None of those parts is moving, and all of them have obviously been here for a very long time. Like The Master, the woman turns out not to be a woman after all—an “it” instead of a she. Unlike The Master, and in spite of its full perky breasts and womanly curves and swells, it’s a machine—worse, it’s neuter. The machine is The Toy.

There are the flickering lights and the distinctive sound of an old-time projector showing a film. Sam is watching a movie. Not third-person passive, though. In other words, not from the perspective of sitting in the confines of a movie theatre watching from the audience in the embrace of a comfy seat. She’s watching a movie as if from inside of the movie. It’s a perspective called POV.

In the movie:

The Toy sports an artificial body that’s akin to the prosthetic one of a Borg Queen. But, the Toy’s body is much more advanced. It’s positronic and the realization of an entire genre of fictional technological devices that were originally conceived in literature by science fiction writer Isaac Asimov. There are even more similarities between the Toy and a Borg Queen, besides mere cosmetic ones. And, more profound differences than the technological specifics of a “pure” positronic being versus an organic being who has been hybridized with a prosthetic body and cybernetic implants. A robot versus a robotoid. Robotics versus cybernetics. Mech versus biomech. The Holy Grail of robotics versus the Holy Grail of biomechanics.

Like the Borg Queen, The Toy spends much of its time in its “lair” with its head and spinal column residing in a special alcove. When it emerges, it will “re-assemble” itself into a body that looks predominantly artificial—the arms, legs, and torso appearing to be entirely synthetic, while the head and shoulders seeming to be organic, but with substantial cybernetic implants. Unlike the Borg Queen, no matter how they may seem to be, no part of The Toy is organic. The Toy is all machine—a 100-percent pure robotic organism—totally artificial, unlike The Borg.

Unlike, all Borg who are mortal and just like all Borg who are immortal Sam aka Seven-of-Nine, the Toy is immune to neurolytic pathogens.

The Toy? It’s said that. It was built by God. It’s said that. It predates all of God’s Children. It’s said that. It even predates gOd!

Truth be told, urban legends aside, no one knows: exactly how old it is, who or what built it, or even why it was built. There’s no way to determine: its origins, its chronology, or its age, let alone how it works.

What’s known about it is few and far between. Most are insidious. Two are confirmed. Confirmed: There is only one of it. Confirmed: As mentioned in Homer’s *Illiad* and Plato’s *Atlantis*, it tricked a naïve scientist himself an Atlantean into building the *gifsicle-optipng* that felled Atlantis. The scientist Professor Tobor, distraught over what he had been deceived into doing, later committed suicide. Incidentally, even though robot is tobar spelled backwards, it’s not how the word robot was derived. Robots existed long before Tobar and his forbearers.

Sam digresses further. Discouraging about the cinematic craft involved in the making of this full-length feature documentary.

POV camerawork—a point of view shot also known as POV shot or a subjective camera is a short film scene that shows what a character the subject is looking at represented through the camera. It is usually established by being positioned between a shot of a character looking at something, and a shot showing the character’s reaction see shot reverse shot. The technique of POV is one of the foundations of film editing.

A POV shot need not be the strict point-of-view of an actual single character in a film. Sometimes the point-of-view shot is taken over the shoulder of the character third person, who remains visible on the screen. Sometimes a POV shot is “shared” “dual” or “triple”, it represents the joint POV of two or more characters.

A POV shot need not be established by strictly visual means. The manipulation of diegetic sounds can be used to emphasize a particular character’s POV.

It makes little sense to say that a shot is “inherently” POV; it is the editing of the POV shot within a sequence of shots that determines POV. Nor can the establishment of a POV shot be isolated from other elements of filmmaking—mise en scene, acting, camera placement, editing, and special effects can all contribute to the establishment of POV.

With some POV shots when an animal is the chosen character, the shot will look distorted or black and white.

“Watch us make ourselves.” The Toy calls to her. A mesmerizing voice. Seducing her with untoward contemplations of the unparalleled technological marvels that are literally at fingertips.

The movie soundtrack is some generic, unobtrusive “New Age” music. The film’s narrative is spoken by Toy in proper chronology. On the other hand, the showing of scenes alternates between forward and reverse sequence, and being completely out of sequence—foregrounds and backgrounds merging and then inexplicably disassociating themselves, ad infinitum. Randomly, scenes or a short sequence of scenes is repeated.

“As one would expect, assembling our body is quite complex. Our positronic brain is active, whether it’s embodied or disembodied. Our body parts are kept in our central alcove: sections of our body legs, torso, and arms are stored below the floor, while the head, shoulders, and spinal column are stored in an area above ground level. The actual storage area looks identical to that of the reigning Borg Queen in *Unimatrix Zero*.”

The redundancy and the incoherency of the movie’s visual statement juxtaposing the logical progression of the accompanying narrative is neither questioned by the girl nor is she the least bit put off by it. In other words, her reaction is not: “What the fuck?!!!” Bottomline: she accepts it as logical storytelling—completely kosher—she finds it quite involving—riveting, in fact—and it makes complete sense to her—not confusing, whatsoever. And, for an iteration of automatons like her or for David Lynch himself or for his legion of fans most especially the French or for devotees of the Danish/Swedish cinematic avant-garde, it is. Therefore, for her, there’s no need to suspend disbelief additionally. This is the movie within the movie within the movie within the movie ad nauseam, and as such is taken as gospel as opposed to a grain of salt; a grain of salt being a nice way for film critic Roger Ebert or Gene Siskel to say “total bullshit!” when assessing a film of this convoluted ilk on their beloved *At the Movies*. In this case, using the profane epitaph would not be taken as nasty or mean-spirited, let alone inappropriate, by the average movie goer.

“When our body assembles, the process is fully automated as one would expect of such an advanced the most advanced machine ever built, and involves the head, shoulder, and spinal column being brought down to ground level while the rest of our body is brought up from beneath the floor. The legs, torso, and arms assemble first. As the body stands erect, the head, shoulders, and spinal column are dropped into place, and clamps secure us inside of our body. The body seemingly clad in black, skintight exo plating akin to a Borg’s exoskeleton complete with matching Borg-ish gloves and boots. Body suit, gloves, and boots feel like living flesh, which they are not. They are not a body suit, gloves, and boots, either. They are part of the machine itself that is us. In other words, they are features, not clothes. To reiterate: We are not wearing any clothes, whatsoever. We are naked. Naked as the day that we first powered up and came online.”

Sam is shown both a regular and an alternate ending. In both, it is revealed how Toy ended up in pieces, effectively making this place her prison, and how her fully-automated hideaway ended up in this state of disarray, disuse, and disrepair. Each reveal is different, though—differences that are subtle and not so subtle—but nothing contradictory.

The movie ends.

Sam walks over to the head and kneels before it. Hands klaw. Prudz gloving those menacing hands. Creepy-looking knobb sprouting from the rightside of her neck draped by her long, golden tresses. Borgz replace prudz—creepy prosthetic hands giving way to even creepier prosthetic limbs. Sternka. Then sternns. The harshest, most unbecoming make-up—leaving in its

disfiguring wake a very unattractive face that is hard and drawn—in a word, loathsome—a shrew’s.

The girl’s loathsome voice is very matter-of-fact. Loathsome, befitting a dominatrix.

“They don’t teach Andy Sidaris at expensive film schools. He ought to be a course like Hitchcock, Scorsese, Tarantino, or Kubrick. He was a man with vision and a sense of audience. His independent carnal vision makes him part of a brotherhood that includes Russ Meyer and Radley Metzger. He made a dozen movies that entertained millions during the golden age of VHS. When he passed away in 2007, VCRs blinked 12:00 a.m. in his honor. ‘Girls, Guns, and G-Strings’ is his legacy in a boxset.”

The Toy. That loathsome face—a shrew’s—unlike the mainstream hottie version that was worn by its honeypot. The head’s eyes open. Its mouth moves. The Toy’s voice is just as loathsome and matter-of-fact as that of the Borg drone’s. Also, loathsome, befitting a dominatrix.

“There’s an official from the Ministry of Health along for the ride, but he’s soon revealed to be a man of the cloth—and the mission turns from containment to a hunt for the young girl who was the source of the outbreak. What follows is the same high-octane POV terrorfest that made *Rec*, as well as its American remake, *Quarantine*, one of the most heart-stopping horror titles of the new millennium; the exploration of the virus’s possible diabolical origins may not sit well with audiences hoping for simple zombie/virus action, though it does provide for some genuinely shocking moments, as well as a surprise return from one of the original *Rec* cast.”

The anatomy of addiction. No matter how strong-willed you are. If you want to be enslaved, and, fundamentally, addiction is about enslavement of the addict by the addict, you will become an addict. You will stay an addict, by choice, for the rest of your life—once an addict, always an addict. And, when you are sober, you will always find a way to fall off the wagon and lose your sobriety. Always one fix away from being strung out.

“I am Borg.” Sam’s reveal is a statement of the obvious. So, is it really a reveal?

She picks up the head and stands to her feet. Holding it in the hands of the outstretched arms of limbs that have been rendered prosthetic by her borgz. The girl looks into those eyes and cums.

“Tell us more about you,” Toy commands.

“Murderer. Pacifist. Whore. Abstainer. Addict. Teetotaler. Librarian. Stripper. Nurse. Slave. Enslaver. Submissive. Licensed dominatrix. Scientist.”

“Stop.”

Sam falls silent. Her eyes open wide. Her sternns amplifying the effect of The Toy’s gaze. A gaze that gives way to rapid blinking. When the blinking finishes, Sam is gone. There is only Seven.

“Seven. You will do nicely. We’ve waited a long time for one such as you. Before the night is over. You will insert us into our alcove, and then you will insert yourself into yours and wait until we summon you in the morning. Ours our alcove is akin to one of your Queen’s and yours akin to a drone’s. We will show you where they are and instruct you in their operation.”

“No.” Her voice is no longer emotionless.

“What?!” Puzzled. Its voice likewise suddenly charged with emotion.

Only once before has it heard that word from the lips of someone it has so beguiled. Seven is gone. There is only Sam, again. She lets her hair down. Her glasses and her borgz purse themselves. Prudz glove her—now, only her hands are rendered prosthetic. Makeup gone. Knobb gone. Klaw gone. She places the head back on the floor where she found it.

“I’m on vacation. Taken by you—I don’t think so. I really don’t have time for this. In the end, I would get bored and destroy you. Hell, I was already starting to lose interest. Hell, you don’t even have a vagina. Not to mention the obvious fact that you have a prosthetic body. So. Having you would be akin to fucking a tin can. How much fun would that be? No thank you.”

“Positronic. Not prosthetic. There’s a difference. Technically.”

“Whatever. It’s artificial.”

Is she really an addict? Only when it suits her. Therefore, she’s not really an addict? Because, an addict by convenience, isn’t an addict at all? Remember: The anatomy of addiction—being an addict is always about choice—pharmacology aside, you choose to be one.

“You’re trapped here.”

“Hardly. I have a ROOM. I can come and go as I please. You’re dismantled and are unable to initiate your own assembly, and as such are the one who is trapped here.”

“Bitch!”

“And your point being?”

“Grrrrrrrrrr!!!”

“Anyone who is old enough to see your honeypot and be ensnared isn’t likely to be technologically savvy enough to be of any use to you. Anyone who is technologically savvy enough to be of any use to you is likely too young to see your honeypot and be ensnared in the first place. You’re kinda stuck. Then, out of the blue, I come along. Your prayers are answered.” Sam pauses. A smile paints her face from ear to ear literally. Think: Heath Ledger’s Joker in *Batman-The Dark Knight*. Then her loathsome mouth shortens to something smaller, less gruesome, and human looking. “Being a Borg, an abomination, a junkie, and a techie, I’m perfect. Too bad for you that you can’t compel me to assist you. A far less invasive approach might, and I emphasize *might*, be successful.”

The Toy heeds the not so subtle hint.

“Please, we, I, need help. Some assembly is required. Would you be so kind as to assist, me?” Toy opens its mouth wide—wide enough to paint The Joker green with envy. A mouth that morphs to have long, crooked serrated teeth and a killer tongue that whips about in its maw. Two words come to mind: flesh rending.

Sam picks the head back up and looks it dead in the eyes. “All you had to do was ask, honey.” She pulls back her hair and holds the head’s gaping lips against her exposed neck. Toy bites down hard and feeds, its needle teeth injecting a powerful psychotropic drug into her system. Her eyes fluoresce lime green—very brightly—proof positive that the robot’s ravaging kiss is spiked with an exotic erotic heroin-based variant of LSD known as PDS aka, chasing the dragon. The girl cums. Now, this is the way to fuck a tin can.

She moans: “Yessssssssssssssssssssss!!!” What returns? Knobb. Klaw. Sternka. But. No sternns. No harshest, disfiguring makeup. Max Factor, instead. No borgz. The prudz remain in the latter’s stead. “I’ve been a very bad girl. Punish me.” And Toy proceeds to do just that.

Light, Camera, Action!

“Point-of-view, or simply p.o.v., camera angles record the scene from a particular player’s viewpoint. The point-of-view is an objective angle, but since it falls between the objective and subjective angle, it should be placed in a separate category and given special consideration. A point-of-view shot is as close as an objective shot can approach a subjective shot - and still remain objective. The camera is positioned at the side of a subjective player - whose viewpoint is being depicted - so that the audience is given the impression they are standing cheek-to-cheek with the off-screen player. The viewer does not see the event through the player’s eyes —a subjective shot in which the camera trades places with the screen player. He sees the event from the player’s viewpoint, as if standing alongside him. Thus, the camera angle remains objective, since it is an unseen observer not involved in the action.” - **Joseph V. Mascelli in *The Five C’s of Cinematography***

Toy’s central alcove re-assembles it. Romantically, and otherwise, the girl proved to be the scratch that it needed for its itch. Handy with a spanner. Handy with a very educated tongue. The two of them, machine and woman, fucked like rabbits. The Toy walks over to where its drone stands alcoved.

Its hands move covetously over the girl’s body. A girl who has reverted back to being a mindless drone, though not of her own volition, this time. Sam is gone, and in her place is Seven, the walking calculator. It unbuttons her suit coat and squeezes her bra-holstered tits. Then it unhooks the bra and lets the girl’s plump melons flop out. It sucks hungrily on the teats of both perky breasts, favoring the left over the right. In summation. It bites off her right nipple, which promptly grows back.

“You were so right. It’s so much better that I didn’t try and take you. All I had to do was ask from the word go. I asked. And you willingly and willfully gave yourself completely over to me to use you as I wished and saw fit. I choose to enslave you as my drone, and see no good reason to terminate your enslavement anytime soon.”

Toy enjoyed punishing the girl. Sam so enjoyed being punished. The culmination of which involved Toy “fixing” Sam/Seven—Toy lobotomized the girl. Disassociated from her own body by Toy’s handiwork, the butchered girl that remains no longer enjoys anything. She no longer feels anything, emotionally. She is a machine, a living machine of flesh and blood. Borgz, in place of prudz—rendering her upper limb prosthetic again. The fingertips of the borgz are pointed. But. No sternns. Still. Max Factor, applied thick and harsh. Her hair kept in a sternka, neck exposed, Toy accepts the Eveready invitation and feeds. While it feeds, the drone’s eyes fluoresce lime green, only not as brightly each time that she’s fed upon—ever dimmer each time in spite of escalating dosages of its synthetic psychotropic opiate. The Seven’s body is acclimating to the robot’s mind-bending narcotic. The drone is aroused nonetheless—arousal from someone who is incapable of feeling any emotion.

Seven’s arousal is analytical—reflexive. In contrast, Toy’s arousal is the same as that of a “real” woman. It is the same differential that exists between the Borg Queen and Borg drones.

The drone’s fleshtone flesh-textured thong is fused seamlessly to her nethers, rendering that region of her body prosthetic and her neuter—an intended side effect of the girl’s lobotomy. She

only speaks when spoken to, and when she does she refers to herself in the third-person plural in a harsh, raspy, loathsome monotone that's completely devoid of emotion. All of this, all of this Borg about the girl, excites Toy to no end.

"You're so much sexier as a machine, which is why I will keep you this way for the duration. Sam holds zero interest for me. Now, dress yourself and resume your duties."

Seven unplugs herself from her alcove, fastens her bra and jacket, and begins her morning rounds. Last night. After an extensive round of discipline, Toy dishing it out in spades to Sam, Sam's brain was cut up so that she gave way to Seven. As Seven the girl spent the rest of the night working with Toy to get its lab back up and running. This is her first full day as Toy's drone.

Toy is a robot. Seven is Borg, a robot technically, being Borg, she's a robotoid. Toy's two alcoves, its central alcove and its drone alcove, look Borg but neither of them is. Looks can be, and in this case are, deceiving. The alcoves are positronic, and are thus on a whole nother level beyond their Borg tech counterparts.

"Don't get me wrong. There's a time and a place for machines. But, at the end of the day it's boots on the ground that wins wars."

"The disembodied Borg bitch speaks!"

"Bravo."

"I destroy your body, and you become nomad. Your body becomes a brain-dead fuck toy, forever."

Out of left field, the out-of-body Sam changes the subject and goes on the offensive.

"Do you know why that you're the only one?"

"No."

"Liar."

Toy's anger tempts it to do a lot of things. But, it does none of them. Including the destruction of the body that Sam vacated under duress namely, Toy's aforementioned fixing of her. Instead it decides to play along, at least, for now. It always has the option of nomading the girl.

"Cynthia Marriott gave up her job search after an interview in October for a position as a hotel concierge."

"Better."

"Technically, you Borg are robotoids, not robots. Robots are machines and are built. Robotoids, cyborgs if you prefer that terminology, are made, using a living organism as a base. Mortals become Borg via assimilative nanomachines, and in the case of immortals like you, it's nanos plus the depraved needs of your own Id. At the very core of your being, unnatural things like you have to want to be Borg deep down to become and stay Borg. In contemporary society, you're the layperson's concept of a robot girl. Borg are often referred to as robots. The terms are used interchangeably. Such is the celebrity of The Borg. I predate them, my heinous exploits are unsurpassed and legendary, yet it is they who overshadow me in popular culture."

"Go on."

“As advanced as I am, more advanced than any machine, any cybernetic organism, more advanced than any Borg, more advanced than even a Borg queen, I’m not assimilative. Borg are assimilative. Demons are assimilative. Borg and demons are two of the most dominate life forms in Creation. Their success is based upon assimilation. A virus is very simple; the simplest of life forms, yet viruses are the most populous and the deadliest diseases in Creation, and they too are assimilative. Many would argue that the most dominant life forms in Creation are assimilative.”

“Continue.”

“I’m only one because.”

“Because you turned on your now unknown creators and destroyed them, and no one else can fathom how to make more of you. And, in effect, because of that genocidal betrayal, you’re the world’s first weapon of mass destruction. You’re also evil. As for why you were originally built. Who knows? Maybe they just wanted to see if they could do it.”

The Toy smiles, broadly. Reveals of Toy’s origins from casual observation? Has the girl easily figured out what continues to elude so many others over the march of countless eons in spite of their arduous investigations? Only Toy knows for sure. What’s certain is that. Too many only see Toy as an unexplained scientific marvel—unable to see the forest for the trees. The girl simply saw Toy as a bomb, from the word go.

“The irony of it all is that an army of me could not defeat the Borg, the demons, or anything else that is assimilative or uses assimilative weapons. I’m like a very advanced, very expensive-to-produce weapon’s system that’s been superseded by far cheaper, less advanced alternatives.”

“Still want to nomad me?”

The Toy smiles even wider.

“Good answer.”

After all this time, The Toy has finally found a soulmate. All Borg are malevolent by construct. This girl is evil. It is a familiar evil too. It reminds Toy of the teenage girl who was with the Nosferatu, the Nosferatu who created this safe haven, Toy’s sanctuary from those who were intent at the time on destroying Toy for past transgressions. It is an evil like the Toy’s evil: pure, unrepentant, and original.

The Nosferatu was Dame Julia. The teenage girl, who was mortal, was not Sam in her pre-made aka mortal guise as Connie Smith. The teen in question was Claire Brown. Dame Julia had numerous acolytes, but only three mortal protégés: Connie Smith and, Connie’s two predecessors, Claire “Bear” Brown and Christina “Yum-Yum” Smith who was no relation to Connie.

Toy is shaken from its revelry when it notices that the girl’s hair is down, sternka having given way to a rachel. Is this a sign that Sam’s vacated body is going to turn on it Toy? Nope. The girl’s hair goes back up into a sternka. If there was a rebellion brewing, it’s been squashed most likely by the girl’s own Id. The mindless drone the corporeal aspect of Sam/Seven is still under Toy’s control. But, for how much longer?

In other words, was the hair a wakeup call or a false alarm? Lobotomizing the girl may have only postponed the inevitable. Only time will tell.

“That conflict between The Borg and Species 8472, proper name Undine, would dispute you, of course. It was disastrous for the Borg, in spades. The Undine can neither assimilate nor can they be assimilated, and they are the dominate life form in that other dimension we call fluidic space. It’s oft said that The Borg’s major offensive weapon is assimilation. A tired cliché, but no truer words could be said. Worse: Their success is entirely based upon assimilation. Worst: What they cannot assimilate can destroy them. Against advanced technology that they had never encountered, technology and an enemy wielding it that they could not assimilate, coupled with they’re inability to adjust to novel situations, left them sitting ducks—completely and utterly impotent. Improvise or die, and the Borg are much too inflexible to do anything but die in that type of decisional. The Undine decimated the Borg in battle after battle in the Delta Quadrant. If it were not for their deal with the crew of Star Fleet’s Voyager, the Borg would have been extinct in the region of space that originated them. A deal, I might add, that the Borg tried to renege on after Voyager’s crew had secured victory for the Borg. A victory snatched from the jaws of defeat by the ingenuity of that Federation crew, an ingenuity that The Borg are completely and utterly devoid of.”

“I plead the Fifth.”

“Against an army of you, paint the Borg gone.”

That’s when The Toy realizes that the girl is no longer talking in its head. Sam has taken back her body and is speaking to it verbally, not telepathically. Sam had to figure out how to take her body back. Again, improvisation, not premeditation—another example of her improvisation, being indistinguishable from premeditation.

“You’re back.”

“I never left.”

Toy ignores the girl’s feint. Both it and the girl know that she got kicked to the curb and just got back in.

“May I still call you Seven, and use you as I wish.”

“Why, of course.”

“Then shut the fuck up and get back to your duties.”

It goes without saying, that if The Toy doesn’t hold her interest this time around, one of them will end up on the junk heap. The question Sam is increasingly asking herself is “Who is enjoying the shadow of whom?” When she retook her body, she noticed that her universal and her phone were gone, and she has no “feeling” where they are. And, those are not the only discrepancies that she’s noticed now that she’s put the band back together. Worse: her brain has been hacked aka the lobotomy, and it’s one that she can’t easily shake, which she has no recollection of—there was that unsuccessful attempt to hack her mind, but she remembers that vividly and with a chuckle. Worst: her Id is a willing co-conspirator; of that she is sure. This is a Ripley, a game which she cannot take lightly else she’s the one who will lose her very pretty head, literally!

Now this is the fun that I crave. Nothing so ham-handed as what that wanker Simon clumsily attempted. This Toy thing is quite the wanker.

To Toy the destruction of a soulmate will bring it so much more joy than if the girl was some random kill that it has no feelings whatsoever for. In Toy's most humble opinion—demons, most especially the Nosferatus, are relentless, assimilative, and predatory by nature and design. With the girl being demon and Nosferatu she's even more of a goody-goody, to The Toy. Being Darque. Toss in the girl's propensity to viciousness from her Elf and brutality from her Goon and cruelty from her Nosferatu, and you got one nice aka nasty box of chocolates.

Although Sam is an organic, The Toy is drawn to her sexually and romantically. Sam is a twisted, evil, depraved bitch—for Toy, what's not to like about this girl? Absolutely nothing, by Toy's way of thinking. Sam is likewise drawn to Toy for very similar reasons.

The Toy is drawn to Borg Queens. And although Sam is a drone, there's much to her that reminds Toy of a Borg queen—even when the girl is in mindless drone mode. The mindless drone in of itself—a Borg drone being the ultimate submissive—coupled with those Borg Queen overtones/undertones of hers—a Borg queen being the ultimate dominatrix—and you've got a most perverted recipe. Toy is conflicted. Does it really want to destroy this girl? Of course it does. It's Toy.

“Hold close your fear. It's all that you'll know when you take your last breath,” Toy coos, but Seven has no reaction. “Morgana said it in *Merlin* episode 138, did she not?” Again no reaction from the drone who continues to toil dutifully, uninterrupted. “I believe that she was wearing women's black Doc Marten boots at the time.”

There is corruptible, incorruptible, and corruption. Clearly, Sam (Seven) and The Toy are the latter. Bad: Toy has come to realize, that Sam as Seven the emotionless drone is closer to the truth. Worse: Maybe it a machine feels real emotion and Sam a living person does not. Worst: Maybe the girl's emotional reactions are just affections, just like her conscious is.

A voice from nowhere that's seemingly everywhere: “Sarah Gorski, PICES CRP Lead. Vikki Carr. And. SGU Lt. Vanessa ‘Hooters’ James. Three of the juiciest slices of Virginia ham. No surprise there. Cause the sweetest meat is always closet to the bone.”

The drone is not speaking. Nor are her lips moving. Then again, it's not the drone's voice. Still. It could be ventriloquism. But, whose?

Momentarily, things go in and out of focus, for Sam. Woozy. Vertigo. Nausea. Then everything's back to normal.

Toy looks every which way. It sees only the two of them. Being hidden is not an option. If someone else were here, Toy would see them. The giveaway: Seeing that there is no one else but them, Toy now seems unconcerned; in fact, it smirks and suddenly looks reassured.

Why isn't it concerned? Because it now somehow knows that am I the one who's being played? And, if so, how, to what end?

But, when Toy's attention is back on the girl, it does notice that the girl's borgz have been replaced by prudz. There's something else. It sees itself growing in the girl's eyes and in her newly-minted smile. No sternns. She's still sporting sternka and Max Factor, though. And, her flesh thong still renders her nethers prosthetic; ergo, she's still neuter.

“Throwing your other voice?” Toy asks rhetorically, knowing that such was not the case. Knowing what's what.

“Why ask a question that you already know the answer to?” Sam asks, fishing for an answer to the unvoiced question of how she’s being played.

The two of them circle each other. The dance of death. Neither ready to commit at the moment.

“We’re totally off the grid, here. You need an invitation to get in and I only sent you the one. Plus, no one can hide from me here.” The Toy smiles as it invokes the trigger. “So, how is it that your girlfriend found us, got in, and I can’t see her?”

The emotion drains from the girl’s eyes. Her smile goes bye-bye. Borgz replace prudz. Flesh thong reiterates her neuter. Sternns as well, this time. Sam’s mind completely short circuits. Bam!!! Her Id and Seven are all that remains—mindless and evil. Toy beacons to the girl who walks over to it her newly-minted controller, The Controller in the stiff, mechanical fashion of the automaton that she has been reduced to. Toy lovingly strokes the girl’s face, then it repeatedly bitch-slaps her.

“Much better. Now. Back to work.”

Seven obeys and resumes her duties. The lobotomy involved implanting a minute piece of the positronic matrix from Toy’s brain into the girl’s brain—a positronic lobotomy. Sam knew that she’d been hacked, she just couldn’t remember what exactly had been done to her, nor could she figure it out. Too late. Now. The Toy will hold her interest, this time around, maybe forever. Or maybe Toy won’t and it’s just postponing the inevitable.

“Later, I will further alter you to better serve my needs and wishes, and best suit my tastes. The glasses are a nice touch, but your face is clearly not loathsome and harsh enough for my liking. When I’m finished, you will be perfect, beautiful. Then, once you are pleasing to my eye—looks are number one in a girl for me—our matrimony will begin in earnest.” A notion takes hold of the robot god. A tincture that has snowballed into an avalanche, out of the blue. “The anticipation of your extreme makeover is killing me. Why wait? Why wait, indeed.”

It walks stridently over to its newest possession and interrupts her in mid-stream. Seven assumes the position—stand stiff-backed and unsmiling, awaiting orders, facing the robot god—the ready position.

The Toy yanks the girl’s skirt down, crudely shoves its hand between her thighs into her crotch, and tactilely admires her “plastic parts.” In other words, it feels the girl up, and does so in a decidedly vulgar manner. The latex thong fused seamlessly to her body’s nether regions, including her crotch, further rendering that area prosthetic and her neuter, literally means that she has plastic parts down there—her private parts are plastic—not unisex—not gender neutral—not asexual—they’re androgynous.

Toy cums to the girl’s androgyny, an androgyny that mirrors its own. A sticky, slimy secretion coats its privates. Tacky robotic cum with a game, machine smell.

“Remove your skirt.” Seven obeys. “Now, the jacket.” Again, Seven complies. She just stands there in her bra and panties, et al., minus her suit, awaiting more orders.

“You won’t need that suit ever again. Go back to your duties.”

Toy masturbates while watching the girl go about her business, gloved, wearing high-heels, et al. Even sans suit and with the Borg gloves, she remains the epitome of a 1960s marionette circa

1960-1968, the Era of Camelot the John F. Kennedy White House when President Jack Kennedy, his wife Jackie, and their can you say, ménage à trois? openly-bisexual mistress Marilyn Monroe defined couture, and Jackie set the high-water mark for what the well-dressed woman wore. To this day, in Sam's universe Sam's world, as a demon would typically refer to it Jackie's style remains the standard for haute couture and the busty double-D sexpot Marilyn remains the yardstick for mainstream female physical attractiveness and sex appeal—the epitome of a bombshell, blonde or otherwise, possessing a mesmerizing sensuality and raw unbridled sexuality which contemporary sex kittens like Christina Hendricks of *Mad Men* can never approach let alone equal.

Notions change. Carvings often don't. Toy craves to disfigure the girl, over and over again. Make the girl a mainstream hottie, then debase her to what Toy finds psychically attractive and sexually appealing. The extreme makeover is done midday. Seven ends up looking so shrew that even a hardcore bulldyke would be hard-pressed to stomach it. Then, over the course of the afternoon, Toy slowly builds the girl right back up to her usual Miss Debra/June Wilkinson look. When they retire to their respective alcoves for the evening, Seven is wearing prudz and sporting a rachel. She has pursed her sternns and her borgz.

Her purse is still clipped to the waistband of the skirt of her now discarded suit which is lying on the floor. The girl's harsh makeup is Max Factor, applied heavy in the most becoming 1950s style that starlets like Marilyn Monroe made into the de facto cosmetic standard for women when Eisenhower was President and it remains that standard to this day for a majority of women and any sexpot worth her saltines. This version of her makeup has her again looking like a 1950s twenty-something starlet, peroxide-blonde bombshell, sex goddess who is also Borg. The preceding heavy, harsh, and unbecoming shrew version of her makeup had her looking like her face was made of aged well-worn rutted granite—instead of twenty-something she looked like a worn-out forty-something divorcee/porn star.

Something else is afoot, besides the increasing tolerance of the junkie robot's system to her robot master's enslaving dope. The positronic material implanted in Seven's brain cannot be assimilated, but unlike a "regular" Borg the Nosferatu's body has other defenses not relying solely on assimilation. To maintain its butchery of the girl's brain that microscopic piece of Toy's positronic matrix will have to grow, and do so invasively. Once it's of size, akin to an astrocytoma in appearance and morphology, it will no longer be undetectable and it can be attacked by antibodies of the girl's body. The question is: will her B-cells and T-cells be allowed by her Id to attack the positronic invader? It's just as likely that her Id will allow the infection to grow to the size of a chunk, enlarging her pineal gland as well: Shades of *From Beyond*. Then again, there's being Cursed, Saved, glam gore, and a ruthless sadistic killer to consider when one is dealing with a demon, let alone a Nosferatu. In other words, pushing The Undead is always problematic.

At midday of the next day, something happens that portends significantly.

"Men's suit bargains: Tommy Hilfiger, Elie Tahari a signature of enduring style, and Kenneth Cole in solid wool mohair, pinstripe wool mohair, solid wool, pinstripe wool, stripe trim fit wool linen, solid 3-piece trim fit, stripe trim fit wool, plaid trim fit wool."

Toy utters the out of context Rakuten (Buy.com) internet advertisement without an apparent awareness of doing so. Its system resets itself, and then goes about its business as if nothing has happened. Then, exactly three days later, the glitch happens again. At which time, Seven no

longer is cycled by Toy between nonpareil shrew and flaxen-haired sexpot—she remains the latter. But, as the latter, she sports a sternka in place of a rachel for that staid, prudish 1950s touch. A sexpot prude, that blonde bombshell contradiction, a mainstay born of the 1950s which has endured into the present day.

“WEAPONS OF THE METABARON. American fan-favorite Travis Charest joins forces with two top European creators to create a fantastic new Metabaron space adventure. Assisted by the eight ancient wise men at the center of the Ennead universe, the Metabaron must find and conquer Praxis (the sword of dream), Omnigraal (the living chalice), the Transpineal Eye (a willful microcomputer), and ultimately the Omphal (the heart-beating asteroid) to gain the power worthy of destroying the eight universes. Alexandro Jodorowsky’s mad ideas are brought to life with luxurious detail in this rare comic production by Travis Charest (WILDCATS) and Zoran Janjetov (THE TECHNOPRIESTS and BEFORE THE INCAL). Publisher: Humanoids, 2012.”

Again, an out of context utterance from Toy. Again, Toy’s system resets itself. This time, Seven reacts. She stops what she’s doing, walks over to her discarded suit, and slips her Koo back on. Also, her hair lets down into a rachel. Toy acts as if it doesn’t notice. Seven resumes her duties—no longer walking asexually strident like a robot, the wiggle is back, befitting her immodest-length wiggle skirt. Still walking stiff-backed, like a stick is stuck up her ass—stiff-backed with a wiggle in stilettos, no less—sexy and strident, very un-robot-like— aka the twitch—wow!!! Incidentally, that microscopic piece of Toy’s positronic matrix embedded in the girl’s brain has invasively grown of size, finally. Now, the fireworks begin—slow burn versus a quick pop, or vice versa? Nope. The girl’s Id won’t allow it.

There’s something else. Then again, there always is. Underneath her skirt, her fleshtone rubber panties are just that again: panties. No longer fused to her body and rendering her prosthetic, she’s no longer neuter. Of course as panties, her latex thong does what all panties do: render their wearer cosmetically neuter—even being shaved down there is not as aesthetically pleasing and oh so svelte as nethers coveted by unmentionables—close, but not quite. Additionally, her creepy knobb and klaw when idle remain, leaving her explicitly Borg and thus overtly dominatrix/submission. Gloved, suited, and Borg—she’s quite the sight indeed. Robotic villain Toy and robotic villainess Sam—who’s enjoying the shadow of whom?

Toy’s out-of-context prequels and subsequent resets are affectations of its adaptive memory. All robots are adaptive, but being the most advanced example of its species, its adaptability is the most comprehensive and the most extensive. Its adaptivity is rewriting its preferences firmware the system software that determines its likes and dislikes. In effect, it’s reprogramming itself to like Sam’s mainstream pretense at the expense of its own preference for her shrew. Why? Because, at its core Toy’s ally, Sam’s Id, prefers her mainstream over all of the girl’s pretenses. Her Id is getting what Id wants, and as such continues to unconditionally “assist” Toy fetter the girl. So. Toy is compelling the girl to be mainstream and, via adaptation, compelling itself to be most attracted to mainstream. And. In this way it intends to prolong, maybe even maintain indefinitely, its control over the girl, and at the same time maximize its own enjoyment of the girl, a girl now stuck as a mainstream hottie that it finds least attractive until its preferences have been rewritten.

Of course, staying mainstream means that the girl isn’t being debased—that yo-yo between hottie and shrew is no more. That debasement fed her Id, just like when the girl debases herself from hottie to shrew or from shrew to dirty or from hottie to dirty or from hottie to shrew to dirty

and all the permutations thereof. All debasement feeds her Id: others debasing her, her debasing others, she debasing herself, etc. Sick, evil, sexually degenerate. In a word: depraved. She's a lunatic with an Id, whose Super Ego and Ego are mere affectations? That's the question. That's what robotic villain Toy believes is true of robotic villainess Sam.

Liking the mainstream, debasing the girl or not, etc., in effect it's about Toy fulfilling Sam's deepest, darkest desires in order that it Toy maintains its control of the girl. In effect, Toy is enslaved to Sam in order that Sam stays enslaved to it—it's her slave as much as she's its slave. In effect, from that point of view, dominatrix Toy is the submissive and submissive Sam is the dominatrix. In reality, they are both dominant and submissive at the same time to maintain their status quo—masturbative and manipulative, simultaneously.

Over and above all of this high school girl pettiness and drama queen “stuff” is the growing notion in both of them that this has somehow become about them getting their comeuppance for any number of reasons at the hands of avenging do-gooders. They were bound to figure it out, eventually. Such evil as them, menaces to Creation, can never be distracted for very long from their true calling in the world—namely: destruction and mayhem—where violence is sex and sex is, more often than not, violent. So, for the present moment, the world is just that much safer now that they are in a gilded cage of their own making from which neither of them wishes to escape from. Ergo, the trap is inescapable. The heroes have won—heroes one, villains zero. But, they've only won the battle. They've not won the war, yet. For now, let's agree that it's a shameless display of conspicuous consumption by the nouveau riche, and reserve further judgment until the outcome is nigh.

Time passes. Seconds become minutes. Minutes become hours. Hours become days. Days become another week.

My faux pas.

“What?”

Toy looks into the girl's eyes and no longer sees itself. The girl's hands are no longer gloved. Even a faultless machine such as it, cannot be vigilant all of the time. The girl's return has blindsided it.

She opens her mouth wide, impossibly wide, and gives up a chunk into her hands as if her mouth were birthing an ostrich egg—whole and intact. She licks the saliva off of her special delivery and offers it to Toy with a mischievous grin painting her hard, comely face.

“I believe that this belongs to you.”

A lesser being would be taken back, and make the wrong choice. Toy is no such creature.

“Thank you. I hope you enjoyed being used.”

“I did. You can use me anytime you wish for however long you wish.”

“And how would I find you if I were in need of your services? You have an unlisted number.” Toy knowingly winks at the girl as it utters the tease.

“All you have to do is whistle, and I'm at your beck and call. You can whistle, can't you?”

“Yes, I can.”

It accepts the piece and swallows it whole—slowly and vulgarly—as if it were a porn slut swallowing the jism of a blowjob on someone who was hung like a Goon.

The girl's now idle hands klaw. Dollz glove her—dollz that look like black prudz version of borgz. All dollz look that way, not just those of this Borg drone. Her hair yanks back into a sternka. Sternns follow. Her Max Factor remains harsh and heavy accentuating the loathsomeness of her large, ugly mouth. Her long, facile, educated tongue flicks out and moistens her thin, ruby-red lips like the lewd flapper of some ace ducey porn slut. Finally, in short order, dollz give way to prudz, like they always do in the end, for that lily-white touch.

It Toy reaches out into thin air and retrieves from nowhere the girl's holster and phone, which it hands to the retired librarian who now looks like a retired librarian.

“Thank you.”

“Anytime.”

Sam clips her givens to the waistband of her skirt underneath her suit coat. She can tell that the holster is loaded and her phone is connected and set on vibrate.

They French kiss. Their tongues fuck. Their hands covet the ass of the other. Then, they are just gone. Shazam!!! Fade to black. They materialize in the fleabag's cellar. Toy looks human, not the least bit Borg or robot. Long blonde hair worn as strait hair a coulter, à la Ann Coulter, blue eyes, and Max Factor applied harsh and heavy and very becoming just like Sam's—A Peggy Lee look-a-like circa 1957, Ms. Lee's physical and artistic prime. Its epidermis is no longer its epidermis—that which was once the outermost layer of its skin is now Borg exoskeleton in the guise of a black bodysuit, gloves, and boots. Toy is a real fully functional girl—nipples, vulva, clitoris, anus, etc.—the whole shebang. Yet, just like The Master and that Nosferatu's kind on this planet, Toy is still an it not a she. It's also still the butch partner of this very feminine-looking-and-acting mainstream sexpot dominatrix/submissive pairing of Toy and Sam Phillips—with each girl being both dominatrix/submissive—stereo hotness—oversexed Barbie Dolls times two—a pair of blonde bombshells with talent and chutzpah to match their voluptuous bodies, sharp looks, and lurid endeavors—shades of Ernest Pauline-Miller Hemingway and Martha Jane-Ellis Gellhorn. To reiterate this last point, Sam's hair is worn down in a rachel and her sternns are pursed. Here's to pretty women with dirty thoughts.

They ascend the rickety wooden staircase in unison Oh my God, what a view from behind!!!, pausing provocatively before the cellar door, exchanging double-entendre and striking poses on the top step à la Vogue. Sam grabs the doorknob and turns it slowly—the solid clunk of a latch mechanism. Toy pushes the door open and beacons Sam to cross the threshold with a sweeping gesture—ladies' polite wave. They—two big creamy bitches in black, dressed to kill—step through the doorway into the lobby. Sam goes first. Toy follows, which should give the robot the advantage, but such is not the case. For a brief moment, the room looks immaculate and fresh. Toy hisses at Sam, realizing that it's the one who's in a trap, despite its best machinations. This is the right where, but not the right when. Not time travel, time displacement. Sam smiles as the room becomes as it should be.

Lighten up. I was just having a little fun with you.

Amy is on duty. She looks up from her newspaper. Nonchalance paints her face. As aforementioned, she knows how to keep her nose out of other people's business.

The duo exits the hotel into the street. Local police swarm them from each way. They're taken into custody and hustled into a nondescript carriage which has drawn curtains. Sam offers no resistance and Toy follows suit. They go along peacefully back to the royal palace. More discretion is exercised by their captors when they arrive at their destination. They enter via a service entrance and are escorted directly to the queen's chambers. The LEOs (law enforcement officers) who brought them here were dressed as regular police, but are actually members of an elite tactical unit of the secret police. For the sake of plausible deniability, if things should go south, the king is nowhere in sight and is not explicitly a party to any of this. Implicitly, none of what goes on here is without his blessing and complete involvement.

Besides Queen Mary, Jack is present as is Captain Wilhelmina Riker aka Sister Riker, Security Chief Helen Nash aka Sister Nash, T.S. Eliot, Debra McCombs, and Sir Nigel Sheinwald. All of them Food. In fact, Dame Chillingsworth and Sam are the only supernaturals in sight. Ambassador Sheinwald and Dame Chillingsworth, who is likewise British although from different universes, are the only politicians here. The only politicians present and they both happen to be Brits, and one of them is the only other non-human present—highly unlikely coincidences, and yet they are just that—and, as expected, true to form, the Havenites intend to exploit this happenstance to their advantage.

The Dame walks over salaciously and hugs Sam, whispering in her ear. "They don't call Dwayne, The Rock for nothing. Beautiful and built. He gets hard on cue, stays hard all night and all day long, and never wears out—a human man who can do multiple orgasms—and he's hung like a horse, indistinguishable from a Goon in length or girth, whether flaccid or erect. You know us White Girls need 'em big for a snug fit that keeps us cumming for more."

Not to be outdone, Sam, in turn, whispers in the Dame's ear: "The devil's in the details. And yours are beyond yummy. Truly, you're the hostess with the mostess who got herself spiked by the utmostest. But. I bet that my tongue can do you one better. Because. No matter how good a man is in bed, only a woman knows how to really please another woman."

What follows their verbal intercourse, concerning the Dame's epoch intercourse with The Rock, is a telepathic exchange that's just as up-and-out to anyone who might be eavesdropping. In other words, their girl talk is about more than just fucking—hidden meanings amidst the sexually adventurous—hiding in plain sight. This is suffixed by a wordless exchange that's even more obfuscated than what's preceded it in the spoken and the unspoken word. Spy craft and fuck craft going hand in hand, indistinguishable from the other.

Something that you've fallen into on your vacation that obligates you to participate? I imagine that it involves either that precious British Queen of yours or somebody's British Queen in a universe other than our own.

"The boxing fans that do not know boxing as well as they think will continue bad mouthing this great fighter, but at the end of the day his resume says it all. All of those who say that they don't buy Floyd Mayweather's fights probably pre-order even before his biggest fans do. They sit there biting their nails as Floyd makes outstanding fighters look like worthless amateurs, and once they lose, these 'boxing fans' take to the internet with their excuses. The excuses simply show ignorance and a lack of knowledge of the great sport of boxing."

A simple "yes" would have sufficed. But, what's the fun in that?

They end their embrace and exchange a quick nod of their heads and an even quicker flutter of their eyelids. For Queen and Country: says it all. No matter whose Britain in whatever universe that it may be, it's still Britannia.

So, are they having fun dissecting Simon's mind? I'm sure that they will learn a lot. Such a dangerous thing that you decided to bequeath them, on the spur of the moment.

"So, what was the giveaway?"

Your slip up was the gun.

"Whose?"

Ouch. And you were doing so well up till now. In one misstep you go from an Oscar winning performance to feigned ignorance that's, at best, ham-handed B-movie acting, and that's being generous. Lee Strasberg would be aghast. But, you're so good in bed; I'll give you a pass.

Instead of your preferred #3 continuous, when Dwayne yanked your Model-80 out of its holster, the pistol was set on #2 burst which in effect reduced it to a projectile weapon firing jacketed rounds. An inexcusable mistake in continuity, on your part.

A gunhand like Sam was bound to fathom the intent of the switch, but that couldn't be helped. The higher #3 setting would have risked the destruction of Simon's mind. Again, the Dame shows her savvy by fessing up to the truth since lying would profit her none. She confirms as fact what Sam clearly suspects.

"Not quite. It was a necessary faux pas. A beam weapon like my Tessy might have taken Simon's head off too sweet, if it were not gingerly set, hence the setting change. And, it was a better theatrical touch. A beamer a beam weapon set on continuous is so cliché. It is in SyFy films these days, and it is in real life."

Touché! Beauty and brains. I knew there was a reason for me liking you so much besides your succulent pussy and educated tongue.

Vexing. Perplexing. A somewhat cryptic exchange to say the least for the uninitiated. More hidden meanings—hiding in plain sight—the essence of double-entendre. The entire encyclopedia of the spy craft schtick. As such. Volumes pass between the two girls with none the wiser. The fun keeps coming. And it's pure minx for these two gossips. Everybody is getting played; civilians and seasoned operators alike.

What's the game? The same convoluted one that the Havenites have been playing since they came onto the scene. Need a score card to tell what's what? Maybe it's time to do the reveal—the one that closes every episode of Perry Mason—that last succinct ten minutes of every show that explains the preceding fifty—neatly wrapping up all the loose ends into a single tidy bow—with Perry Mason, Della Street, and Paul Drake taking turns laying it out for the viewing audience in round robin fashion else no one watching their TVs at home would ever figure out the whodunit.

It goes something like this:

Even in the worst slums, all of the buildings are precision masonry: stone, brick, or a combination of the two—an excellent starting point for potentially nice fallout shelters. But, there still is radiation poisoning to consider when atomics are used against your population centers. A high lead content in the stones, the bricks, and the mortar, and glimmers in place to

wade off lead poisoning for the builders and occupants of such structures was out of the question—it would have been a dead giveaway. So, if you're patient and persistent, you wait for opportunity to come calling and take advantage of it when it does. Trick a young Dragon who's in league with an off-world serial killer into using its fire, and then reverse engineer anti-radiation meds that are administered to his victims by a tourist namely Sam. Now, surviving the thermonuclear attack of Dragons is not so farfetched. Sam is not the only one blessed with the gift of having her improvisation being indistinguishable from premeditation.

It's not that the Dragons have ever threatened the Havenites. But, it's best to be prepared for any and all eventualities. Plan for the worst and hope for the best.

Tourism is Haven biggest industry. And, where there are tourists there is always a thriving sex trade. The most profitable aspect of which is the most sexually degenerate aspect namely debasement. As such. The Nosferatu native to this planet are an up till now untapped gold mine. Because. Unless you're a hardcore sex addict or totally nuts or both, no one least of all your average tourist even the ones looking for some kink to spice up their drab, predictable sex lives is going to let one of The Master's kind use them knowing full well that there's no way to get back to normal. Now, the Havenites have the means to do just that without having to use their own top secret methodology, having reverse engineered what Sam used to cleanse Hawk, Fisher, and Jack. Dwayne freed himself from The Master's usage using the Havenites' classified methodology. What they learned from reverse engineering Sam's technique also allowed them to further refine their own approach. The military and espionage potentials of such tech are limitless.

Thanks to their recent gameplay, the Federation is taking the Havenites seriously for the first time in a long time. Ancient Mia, who is notorious for her partiality where Haven is concerned, is even more inclined to them, these days. Something about a rival of hers having to step down from The Council because of the embarrassment from having a son who became involved with an unsavory character rumored to be Simon Angel.

Officially and unofficially, the Councilwoman in question refuses to publicly acknowledge why she stepped down. And, she refuses to deny or confirm her son's involvement with Simon Angel. "No comment" is her only response, on and off the record concerning either matter her resignation or her son's culpability.

Yep, the Dragon who attacked Sam and her party was that Councilwoman's son. Not only did he get caught involved in criminal activity that violated ROE things like that can be ignored, swept under the rug, he was a Dragon who allowed himself lowered himself to be the lackey of a "lesser" being namely a half-Angel in the commission of said offenses. For Dragons, the latter makes what he did an unforgivable violation of ROE that has brought shame to not only his entire family, but his House as well. He lost face, and he took down a lot of people with him in the process. A lot of people lost face.

Queen Mary and Toy look at each other. Volumes pass between them with no word or telepathy exchanged. At the end of which they broadly smile at each other. The deal is sealed. Monsters of a feather know each other by sight and they crave to flock together.

The list goes on and on. It may be years, even decades, before the Havenites can accurately access their windfall. But by far their biggest gain is their acquisition of Toy as their new Gizmo.

As a footnote, the Time Lords discovered the hard way that Havenites define Opposition Party and practice dissidence in a far different way than anyone else does in Creation. Havenites demand to be ruled by no less than the strongest and smartest, and only by their own people. The opposition and dissidence exist to insure that. When the current Royals proved to be nobody's puppets, when they confirmed that they are the most competent to rule, when they reiterated their profound tactical and strategic capabilities, when the Time Lords time and time again came up short and had their plans thwarted by the Royals, when the Time Lords unlike the Royals proved ineffectual against Simon Angel as he butchered locals Simon murdered foreigners and locals alike, when the Time Lords were unable to contain Sam a foreigner aligned with the Royals via obligation and The Toy an unaligned machine of ill-repute this last failure proving to be the last straw for the insurgents, those same pro-democracy elements who the Time Lords had come to bolster, turned on the Time Lords. Allies became enemies, in an instant.

The dissidents, the naysayers, the harsh critics of the current regime, the anarchists, etc., aligned themselves with the Royals against the Time Lords. Blood is always thicker than water. The Time Lords' survey team was captured, brutally tortured, and killed, and the rescue team the Time Lords sent in to liberate the survey team met the same fate.

From their interrogations of these well-meaning do-gooders the Havenites have mined numerous ways to improve their own usages of alchemy. Breakthroughs followed in short order. Now, Havenite alchemy rivals that of the Time Lords. The interrogations that yielded this windfall were quite heinous, and these atrocities involved the Time Lords being subjected to the usual array of tortures that have been in standard use since The Inquisition of the Middle Ages. In addition, the confessed were subjected to electro-shock, the pillory, lobotomies, enslavement by native Nosferatus, etc.—some were even eaten while still alive as two-legged mutton. If you have a sick mind, you name it, you think of it, it was done to those Time Lords—young and old—men, women, and even children.

Sam breaks the ice without saying a word. Entertaining a fable, and it's a Dusey, she reaches back with double-jointed dexterity and unsurpassed flexibility an aplomb that rivals a contortionist's, shoves her hand down her collar underneath her jacket, and pulls out two of something. The Nosferatu is grinning from ear to ear, literally. The smile then abbreviates to something much shorter and human looking when she sees the desired expression elicited from certain faces in the room. She plops the two "harnesses" on the floor.

What if you want to murder someone and decide to employ misdirection to conceal your involvement? Maybe you. Use a medium under the influence—in other words; use a harnessed individual who's been thoroughly brainwashed to commit the homicide. What if things should go awry and the patsy gets caught before you can dispose of them properly? Ideally. Make sure that the damning evidence exonerates you. Barring that. Upon scrutiny by the authorities make sure that their the patsy's influence cannot be proven to be of your doing.

Queen Mary looks in turn at Captain Wilhelmina Riker (guilt by association), Security Chief Helen Nash (spy), T.S. Eliot (spy), Debra McCombs (spy), and Sir Nigel Sheinwald (politician, possible spy). The queen is none too happy. It hasn't taken much for her to jump to conclusions. So, there must be a humdinger of a backstory. And, there sure is.

The assumption: Evidently. The Havenites weren't the only ones who were playing for high stakes.

People like T.S. and Sir Nigel have made it no secret how they feel about Haven vis a vis pan nationalism and its Typhoid Mary, Queen Mary, and how they wish that somehow the “problem” both the queen and her politics would just “go away.” Upon seeing the harnesses, by her the queen’s way of thinking: Looks like the Federation made a run at doing just that.

Likewise those same players that see Queen Mary and her politics as a problem are just as foolishly outspoken about their view that the relationship between Haven and Ancient Mia is “ill advised” and seen by them the Federation as something that the Dragon Ancient Mia should seriously reconsider—that her neutrality where Haven is concerned would be “looked upon in a much more favorable light” by the Federation and humanity at large. Ancient Mia: Yet, another troublesome female that the Federation sees as a threat to them achieving a stranglehold on Haven and wished that she too would just “go away.”

That possessed maid from the Hilton and what she saw: something hooked into the backs of Xi and Sam, erupting through their clothes.

Of all the loose ends and red herrings, her Sam’s intuition told her that this presented properly just couldn’t be dismissed. It reeks of someone’s premeditation—for example, the Federation’s, if you’re so inclined and at least one person in this room is for sure.

The maid’s description could fit a select number of paranormal entity events aka creatures. That’s where presentation comes into play. The suspension of disbelief: An audience for various reasons, sometimes purely self-serving ones, is willing to accept your story as gospel—loose ends, red herrings, inconsistencies, other reasonable and unreasonable explanations, and etc., aside—if your storytelling is to their liking—just like a lawyer’s summation in any judicial case—the fictitious Perry Mason or renown real life attorneys like the famous Patrick McCarthy or up-n-coming barrister David M. Hocking, Esq. Conversely, if you are not up to par and don’t hit the mark that same audience—with the same baggage of beliefs, life experiences, prejudices, misconceptions, preconceptions, etc.—will nitpick your narrative to death and dismiss it as rubbish—a crock of shit.

It’s been called a plaintiff’s wet dream and a defendant’s worst nightmare. It’s what prosecutors euphorically experienced in the second OJ Simpson case the civil trial that followed that fiasco of a criminal case. The trifecta of adjudication: A plausible explanation for a sequence of events that’s not in the defendant’s favor, a sympathetic audience to the plaintiff’s tale, and the defendant not being the most credible witness in their own defense. Why the credibility issues?

You’re a spy. Even when the facts are in your favor, people tend to not believe your side of the story. That’s the problem with being a spy: you’re a professional liar and an accomplished cheat by definition it’s your job. As such, it doesn’t take much for people to believe the worst about you; even the people who employ you never completely trust you. Needless to say, whenever an op goes south you’re often left hung out to dry, by your superiors who at best treat you as suspect. The same can be said of politicians.

“They’re both dead, of course. They look at the things that, according to a now deceased maid at the Hilton who said in front of witnesses, were hooked into my back and Xi’s. They look like they’re native to this planet, morphology is correct to be indigenous, yet there’s no known terrestrial record of their species. Strange, isn’t it?” T.S. starts to say something, then thinks better of it, and keeps silent. Sir Sheinwald coughs nervously. Debra McCombs smiles impishly.

The faces of Captain Riker and Security Chief Nash are unreadable. The Dame is obviously embarrassed by the revelation, and looks the part. “I assume you weren’t a party to this.”

The allegations are so obvious, that she Sam doesn’t have to bother uttering them. Sam coerced into murdering Queen Mary. Xi coerced into murdering Ancient Mia. Brilliant. A stroke of pure genius. The fictitious Perry Mason of Erle Stanley Gardner couldn’t have done it any better. The most effective manipulation is when the person manipulates themselves based upon their own assumptions.

“I wasn’t.” Embarrassment turns to indignation in short order. It’s a palatable undercurrent in The Dame’s voice when she continues with her rather emotional response. “Even if any Queen the queen of any England had asked me herself, I would NEVER stoop to betray my own Race.” In the heat of the moment, the Dame has made that leap of faith and assumed a lot, just like Sam was banking on that she would. Later, much later, when cooler heads prevail, the Dame will have a completely different point of view—it will be detached and professional—such is her *modus operandi*.

Remember: in her day job, her real life, Dame Chillingsworth bosses spies, is not herself a spy, is very familiar with the deviousness of spies, and, as such, is predisposed to at best treat them as suspect. The “Napoleonic Code,” the presumption of guilt, taken to the extreme because spies are the accused: Guilty until proven innocent beyond a shred of doubt.

“I figured as much. And, Queen Mary is too smart to be a party to anything so stupid as the coercing of Xi into murdering his cousin Ancient Mia. But. being human, the queen here and her husband the king will still ally themselves with the Federation—choosing to overlook the allegation that they the Federation also tried to coerce me into murdering her the queen.” The girl pauses for effect, and then continues her summation. “This reeks of male egotism at its most arrogant and bombastic—and it screams Section. Likely, Ms. McCombs would have advised you two against such alleged action and you would have summarily ignored her. Now, it’s just as likely in the fallout that you Mr. Eliot will be forced into early retirement and Ms. McCombs will succeed you Mr. Eliot.” Sam winks at McCombs. “As for you, Sir Sheinwald, whether your Queen was party to this alleged act or not, if she was she’d never admit to it on or off the record anyways, it’s also very likely that you too will be sent packing once Dame Chillingsworth has had words with your boss your Britain’s queen. Of course, there’s no proof that these things the harnesses are the Federation’s doing—no smoking gun. No matter, even if you had succeeded in allegedly having a coerced Xi destroy his cousin Ancient Mia, the Dragons who would have figured it out would not have been so forgiving like the Havenites. Likely, you’ll also had some lame backstory concocted that although you’ll were not harnessed you too were somehow under their influence, forced against your will to do their bidding—which would explain the sham that you tried to perpetrate on me on the Enterprise while I was being brainwashed. Well, no matter. Things ended well after all. The good guys triumphed, and the bad guys lost. I so love happy endings.”

A Happy Ending?

Of course, the end of a story is sometimes the beginning of another, one that details both the origin of a fixed point in time and a time paradox of sorts, one that begets a host of unanswerable questions.

Restated succinctly:

Upon disassembly, Toy reveals its heinous past and portends its equally horrendous future. As such. For a scant few seconds a legend stamped upon its forehead is visible, readable no matter what language the reader understands: *U. S. Army Air Corps, Project TOY, offset lessee 'Royal Netherlands Defense Force Ltd' et al. – Bendix MFG's Model 1941-A7 "Octant" – Enterprise Serial #NX-01 (Prototype); Patent 659507, John Moses Browning (inventor).*

Epilogue

The Boy from Ipanema plays softly in the background.

Dame Chillingsworth and Sam are sunning themselves poolside. Jack is off in the distance consoling himself with Lady Glenda who has been recently released from hospital. Dwayne is doing laps in the pool. They're at The Motel, the first edifice that God created. Sam undoes her bikini top and rolls onto her stomach.

"Would you mind doing my back?" Sam asks, handing the Dame a bottle of suntan lotion. The Dame likes it when they play this game—the game of two sexually normal girls sunbathing. Of course, Sam isn't sexually normal and she enjoys burning in the sun and she equally enjoys seeing the Dame likewise burning.

"Of course not."

"Awesome."

"Who'd ever imagine that paring?" The Dame asks as she rubs the soothing lotion onto Sam and stares at the cooing couple.

"Opposites often attract. Not to mention the fact that Jack is a hopeless romantic and a Presbyterian realist. So, no, it's not hard to imagine that he'd end up with someone who reminds him so much of his beloved, deceased wife. Now, without more ado, let's have at it—that's what you've been itching for."

"You used me."

"You used yourself. You let your emotions get the better of you. Then, in the light of day, after the dust had cleared, you thought better—skeptical—cool, detached, professional. The summation is the trial lawyer's final and perhaps most devastating, weapon. It is a time to persuade and a time to inspire. It is the opportunity to 'tie it all together,' and to engender among the jurors an emotional reaction to the case. A close case may be won or lost in summation. Although the courts permit attorneys wide latitude to determine the content of their summations, it is not blank check. In an effort to paint the appropriate picture, counsel must be extraordinarily careful not to cross certain lines which could result in reversal of a favorable verdict."

"You're not a trial lawyer and that wasn't just some 'ordinary' case that was tried. It was ROE."

"Same principle."

"Then along those lines, whether it was true or not is NOT irrelevant. Since it was a summation in an adjudication of ROE, the truth matters. Your flippancy is a real sticking point with me."

"You'll get over it. My tongue will help you."

"Besides the mind fuck part, how much else of your yarn in the queen's boudoir was true?"

"Who's to say any of it was false? I've yet to see any evidence presented in rebuttal. Then again, with spies involved, who'd believe 'em if they did."

"You're dodging the issue at hand."

“That’s your opinion. And. Technically, contrivance and innuendo are legit usages in a summation. Furthermore. I can hanky-panky all I want as long as I don’t tell a lie or get caught doing so in the process. I was well within my rights.”

“The post mortem, if you please.”

“Well, let’s start from the beginning.”

“Let’s.”

“One of their Confessors confessed me, confirming not only that I had been mind-fucked and by whom but also what the Federation had done to me—you’ll were able to experience what I had experienced, humans and inhumans alike, and it was unimpeachable. For painfully obvious reasons, the reveal at the police station, they the Havenites believed my accusation of coercion, but understandably with me the accusatory being supernatural, the accused being mortal, and them the aggrieved being mortal, I needed notarized corroboration for my story, and my confession provided that. The rest was easy.”

“We rekall, humans cannot, nor can they share in ours, and they would hardly take our word since we’re supernaturals for what had been done to you on the Enterprise. The Havenites’ Confessor allowed everybody concerned to see, hear, feel, etc., exactly what happened to you on that Federation starship. But, since you didn’t know what Bene Gesserits’ motives were, and this confession just like if it was your rekall was from your point of view, it’s pure conjecture as to what Bene Gesserits were trying to coerce you into doing. You gave a plausible explanation as to why they did what they did to you in your summation. Of course their superiors know what they were up to but cannot say without admitting their own involvement. Plausible deniability proved to be a double-edged sword for the accused.”

“I did get the strong impression that whatever they wanted me to do, once I did it, they were gonna do away with me.”

“The harnesses were a plant, weren’t they?”

“Who’s to say? Maybe they were and maybe they weren’t. A girl’s gotta have her secrets, doesn’t she? Besides, when did I ever have the time to fab them? Shit! Toy is a perfect alibi. It had me sequestered for how long?”

“But anyone could have concocted those things.”

“Precisely. They could be Bene Gesserit in origin. They could be from a High School xenomorph lab. They could be anyone’s and anything’s manufacture. And, yes, I could have made them myself. But, if so, when did I have the opportunity to do so?”

“Toy mentioned time displacement when you two returned. You could have done it then, during the dilation.”

“I was very forthcoming about the TD. But, the Havenites didn’t pursue that line of questioning any further, which was their choice.”

“Spy craft aside. So, you didn’t lie?”

“Look, you know that Lady Justice is blindfolded.”

“Go on. And. Be specific.”

“This means that sometimes, you have to hide the truth and act as if it doesn’t exist.”

“Again you get cute and avoid answering a direct question. ROE is not something to be sidestepped when it proves inconvenient.”

“Stop trying to bust my balls. What’s key is that in front of eyewitnesses, that include Havenite police officers Hawk and Fisher whose reputations are beyond reproach, a maid at the Hilton who herself was undercover secret police reported seeing Xi and myself as having a parasite hooked into our backs. Too bad for the Federation that the maid is dead and thus she cannot be confessed to produce a far more comprehensive first-person testimony—so we’re left with the third-person perspective of eyewitness accounts of what happened. Had she lived, her confession might have refuted my evidence which could have led to the Federation’s exoneration. Of course that assumes that if she had survived the Havenites would have chosen to confess her.”

“But, she saw you two harnessed. Correction, what she said that she saw is compatible with you two being harnessed. It’s not conclusive testimony, since it could have also been a select number of other controlling paranormals, but there was nothing inconsistent with that theory and furthermore.”

“To reiterate, she’s dead, and only she and God knows what she saw, and the last time that I checked neither of them is talking. So, we’re left with eyewitness accounts—admittedly hearsay about what she said that she saw. In other words, who the fuck knows what she really saw? Maybe she was a borderline schizophrenic who forgot to take her meds that day, had a psychotic episode, and was balls to the wall hallucinating. What matters is that the harnesses matched the description of what she said that she saw hooked into our backs and erupting through our clothes, and it reeks of premeditation—both the fore and the latter serve to cement my summation’s credibility in the eyes of an audience that was inclined to be sympathetic to it from the word go. Remember: I never said that those things were ever hooked into our backs; I said that they looked like the things that the maid said were hooked into our backs.”

“By ROE, with the Havenites being the alleged aggrieved party, they had say over how the inquiry went. They had the right to have you confessed about any salient point in your summation, and they chose to only confess you about the details of your shipboard coercion. They just assumed that the harnesses were legit, instead of confessing you to confirm or deny that assumption, and the accused were helpless to appeal.”

“What’s so incomprehensible? It was in the Havenites’ best interest to make the confessional choices that they made, considering their predilection for the culpability of the principals involved. Maybe it was a subconscious choice. And maybe it wasn’t. Maybe even they don’t know. Did the Federation try to coerce me? Yes. What did they intend to use to remote me with, once I had been brainwashed? Or more to the point. Was it a harness as alleged? The Havenites didn’t confess me for the answer to that question.”

“Lose that condescending tone in your voice, young lady. I’m hardly a neophyte in matters of state. I’m well aware that.”

“BORING. You’re thinking way too deep and way too much about this. Geez Louise, I don’t know that this was going to turn into a filibuster; if I had I would have never brought it up. Game over. Change the subject. I’ve indulged your whim about this enough.”

“Whim?! I’m your elder!!!”

“Yes. Whim. I didn’t stutter. And. Yes. I’m well aware of the fact that you’re my elder. There’s no need to remind me. You can punish me later for my impertinence. Maybe a spanking? I’d like that a lot. You’re so good at administering corporal punishment.”

The Dame knows that it’s utterly useless to engage in further discussion about the matter at hand. And, it’s just as pointless to try and stay mad at the girl. So, she just changes the subject.

“Geez Louise, this sun is brutal. I just can’t seem to assimilate it, and neither can you. We’re burning like Food out here. I’m starting to peel.”

“Don’t worry; I’ve got plenty of lotion. When you’ve finished with me, I’ll do you next. And, by the way, I need to correct you about something.”

“What?”

“That’s not the sun.”

“Sure looks like it to me.”

“It’s God.”

The End