

**Twisted Imaginings: Vol 1**

**Garry Charles**

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Please note that these tales contain writing of a sexual nature and are not intended for anyone under 18.

Mother Knows Best soon to be a short film from Kim Sonderholm as part of the anthology movie Sinister Visions

Dance of the Gypsy originally seen in Sein Und Werden: The Duende edition

**MOTHER KNOWS BEST**

Gerald was a mummy's boy, always had been, always would be.

Gerald's mother was a bitch, always had been, always would be... even after he staved her head in with the ivory elephant she'd always loved so much.

As he sat and remembered that night he smiled sadly for the freedom he'd so hoped for. The freedom he thought he'd wanted so badly, but had been forced to realise he could never have.

"Bitch." He threw the half empty glass of scotch onto the fire and the flames greedily ate the liquid fuel.

"Now, now Gerald." Her voice filled the room whenever she spoke. "That's no way to talk about your mother." Usually when he drank he didn't hear her.

"Piss Off," he yelled into the empty study.

She'd ruined everything once before. He wouldn't allow her to do so again. She wouldn't hurt him this time and he wouldn't let her anywhere near Leanne.

Leanne; his first love, his only love.

The special one.

But Mother hadn't thought so.

They'd first met at college when Gerald was eighteen. He was shy and hence always alone. He

wanted friends, but found it impossible to make them. The successes he did have were never to Mother's liking and so they never grew into real friendships.

That was until he saw her for the first time.

She wasn't beautiful, but to Gerald she was everything he wanted and a little bit more. Every time he saw her walk by his heart would skip a beat and then increase in speed until he was sure his chest would explode. He'd always avert his gaze as she neared, scared to start a conversation for fear of saying anything that would make him sound like a bigger fool than he was sure he already looked.

He thought about her every minute of every day, especially at night when Mother would visit his room and ask him for love. He would drift away from Mother's heavy handed fumbling, picturing himself with dear, sweet Leanne.

Some night's Mother would notice his lack of attention to her administrations and beatings would follow, leaving his chest and ribs bruised and sore for days afterwards.

"But you know that mummy loves you." Until the bruises faded she would pamper him like a spoilt pet and during these short spells he would feel more suffocated by her than ever.

"No wonder Father ran away," he would think to himself, filled with loss for having never known the man he should have been calling Dad.

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The happiest day of Gerald's life had been when the lecturer had paired him with Leanne for the computer studies project. He hadn't cared much for the lesson, but always looked forward to seeing her sat across the room, watching her from his place at the back of the class. Now he was filled with an all consuming dread. He'd have to speak to her.

"I've seen you around." She broke the ice and her voice was the sweetest thing he'd ever heard. "You never say hello." Her smile made her even more beautiful in his eyes.

"My name's Gerald." As the words passed his lips he cursed himself for sounding so dumb.

"I know," she giggled, resting a hand on his arm and he knew that it was love.

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Over the weeks that followed he worked on the project and Mother accepted the new friendship. Leanne looked like a good girl that worked hard and, more importantly, didn't seem to show any romantic interest in her little boy.

With each day Gerald fell more and more in love and he was sure that Leanne felt the same way. She would frequently touch his arm or his hand as they studied and one night she even kissed him good night. It was only the briefest peek on the cheek, but it left him on a cloud that looked down on number nine.

And that was the last time he was allowed to see her.

Mother had seen the act of more than just friends and she did not approve... Not one bit. She'd been wrong about the girl. She was no more than a hussy, only a cheap slut would be so forward with a young man like her Gerald.

"You're never to see that girl again." That night the beating came before the sexual advances and Gerald felt hot tears burn his cheeks as mother moaned in ecstasy above him.

The next day he didn't go to college. Instead he spend the day nursing his wounds and arranging a transfer to a college in the city. It was further to travel, but it made Mother happy.

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Over the years he tried to form relationships with other girls, but after meeting Mother he never heard from them again. They promised to call, but Mother was a powerful woman and she used that power to keep Gerald to herself.

She ruled his life in every way, organised it from day to day and he began to hate her for it.

In the end he hated her so much that he killed her. He'd to do it, at least that's what he told himself. It was the only way he'd ever have a life he could call his own.

When the time came she'd made it so easy for him. The argument had started over dinner and came as a shock to Gerald as he never argued with Mother.

It was a first and, as it turned out, a last.

It started because mother didn't like Jessica. She wasn't a girlfriend, just an acquaintance from work; work that Mother had arranged for him.

"I don't like her," she said, dabbing at the corner of her mouth with a neatly folded napkin. "She's no better than a whore." Gerald had heard it all before so many times.

"You don't like anyone, do you?" He shocked himself with the tone of his voice. "No wonder father left you."

"How dare you!" She flung her chair back, the plate of food in front of her launched directly at him. "You ungrateful little bastard." The plate smashed into his own and roasted vegetables erupted over his shirt.

"I wish he'd taken me with him." Gerald felt good, for the first time in his life he was standing up to the Matriarch. "Anything would be better than living with you." His face reddened with anger. "You bitter, twisted cow." Even in such a state of such heated emotion he couldn't bring himself to swear at mother.

"He couldn't have taken you anywhere." She stormed across the room and made to slap her son.

"Why's that?" he caught her by the wrist and squeezed, satisfied to see her flinch.

"Because I killed the bastard," she spat the words in his face with spite. "He was weak, just like you," she growled between clenched teeth that were yellow from years of nicotine abuse.

Gerald broke, decades of suppressed rage boiled forth and he slapped her hard, her head whipping to one side from the force of the blow. He released her wrist and she fell across the table, heavy breaths rasping from her chest.

“You little shit.” She came up unexpectedly, nailed fingers ready and lunged at Gerald.

And that was all it took. The elephant was within easy reach and without thinking he snatched it up and swung. It impacted with the side of her head with a sickening crack and she fell at his feet.

She was still breathing, but the breaths were shallow and blood seeped from her nose and ears. One eye had swollen in the socket, the white now a deep crimson that bulged obscenely.

“Gerald,” she said his name, feeling around blindly with one hand.

“Fuck you.” Before she could locate him he brought the elephant down on her face again and again, smashing bone and pulping tissue. “Fuck you.” He continued raining the blows down on her eradicated face long after she was dead.

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After that things were better; for a while anyway.

But it started to turn sour not long after Gerald and Jessica became more than friends. He invited her around to his house for dinner, hoping for more. The freedom from Mother finally allowed him to have hope and hope made him happy. The meal was a success, Jessica smiling throughout the main course and complimenting him on his skills as a chef.

“Mother taught me,” he said with a smile.

“Where is she? I’d love to meet her.”

“She’s gone away for a while,” he said it without guilt. “She’s visiting her sister in Wales.”

“That’s a shame, but it has its advantages.” Her smile was cheeky and the glint in her eye excited Gerald.

That night he got to make love to a woman that wasn’t his Mother.

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When he awoke the next morning the bed was empty and there was no sign of Jessica, no note, no nothing.

It saddened Gerald and after bathing, brushing his teeth and combing his hair he moped around the house in a bad mood.

“She wasn’t good enough for my boy.” Mother’s stern voice shook him to the core. “You deserve so much better.” Gerald stood frozen, his eyes wide and his jaw slack.

“You’re not real.” With much effort he got his mouth to work, aiming for defiance, but failing.

“You didn’t think you’d be rid of me that easily.” She teased him, her tone that of talking to a baby.

“She was nice.” He went to the drinks cabinet and poured vodka into a tall glass.

“She was a tramp,” she hissed with distaste. “And didn’t I always say that Mother knows best?”

He continued to drink until her nagging voice was no more than a whisper. It was then that the idea came to him.

“You want a tramp?” Slamming down the glass he marched into the hallway. “I’ll show you a tramp.” He snatched the car keys from the hook on the wall and flung open the front door.

“I’ll show you a fucking tramp,” he screamed at the empty house and banged the door shut behind him.

“Mother knows best.” He heard her laugh from somewhere inside the house.

“Bitch.” No way would she get the last word, not any more.

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He knew where to find prostitutes, his colleagues at work were always bragging about their use of the ladies services. Not that Gerald saw the point in bragging. He was only doing it to prove a point. He’d show Mother's memory that if he wanted a real whore then he’d have one.

It was cold outside the car, but they lined the side of the street en masse, short tops and shorter skirts giving no protection from the weather. At the sight of them Gerald felt himself suddenly aroused, a burning heat that spread throughout his loins in anticipation of what he was about to do.

The women he knew at work would never dress in such a way and if they did he doubted they would do the things that some of these girls were willing to do. He drove passed them three times, carefully eyeing them. He may have only been looking for a tramp, but he was still picky.

She was wearing a pink top, cut high to show her belly button piercing and cut low to reveal her impressive cleavage. Her nipples strained at the tin fabric and the darker area of her areola was clearly visible behind the pink. The skirt was short enough to give a flash of white panties and this excited Gerald. As did the black boots that held tightly to her legs, ending mid-thigh and allowing a good view of the tattoo that highlighted the paleness of her skin.

He pulled the car over slowly and rolled the window down as he came to stop in front of her.

“Hello.” Awkward as always, he smiled.

“Hi Handsome.” He blushed at her reply; no one had ever called him handsome.

“You look cold.” He couldn’t take his eyes off her breasts.

“Yeah, it’s fucking freezing,” she spoke and her breath misted on the air.

“You fancy coming back to mine?” His smile broadened, but remained friendly.

“It’ll cost you extra.” He told her that money wasn’t a problem and she jumped in.

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Back home mother had decided to shut up which pleased Gerald as he was looking forward to his paid date more than he’d realised.

“Drink?” he asked, pouring himself a vodka.

“Gin and tonic.” No please or thank you, the lack of manners turned him on yet he couldn’t explain why.

“Mother wouldn’t approve,” he thought to himself.

She guzzled the drink greedily and looked around the room. “Nice place.” She moved towards the fire and warmed herself.

“It was Mother’s.” He stared at the bottom of his glass.

“Very nice.” To be honest she didn’t care where she was as long as it got her out of the cold.

“So, where do you want me?” She got down to business.

“Here.” He needed to be naughty, needed to know that Mother would be maddened by the act.

“How long can you stay?”

“All night if the money’s right.” She pulled off her top, exposing milky white breasts that hung large and heavy.

“Money’s no problem.” He stepped forward and kissed her neck as his hands found her bosoms.

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The following morning he awoke to an empty house, his wallet open and empty, her white panties left on the floor next to his head as a reminder.

“I didn’t even ask her name.” He said outload with a grin, picking up the knickers and inhaling the odour of her sex. “See Mother. Now, that was a whore.” He ran his tongue over the gusset, tasting her with a sigh.

“Dirty boy,” Mother scolded him and he dropped the offending briefs guiltily. “You won’t be seeing that trollop again,” she screamed at him in disgust.

“I’ll see her if I want,” he answered back, no longer afraid of her in death as he was in life.

“We’ll see.” Her voice dropped, but the tone remained harsh. “Mother knows best.”

He tried to ignore her as he went through his morning ablutions, but she was incessant, constantly picking at his self esteem. Once again a day of drinking deadened her moaning until he could hardly hear it.

“I’ll show you who knows best.” He may not have known her name, but he went out in search for his lady of the night.

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And just as Mother had predicated he didn’t find her. He did, however, find another. Not as pretty, but she had a dirty image and a dirtier mouth that was sure to annoy mother and in turn that would arouse Gerald.

He took her home.

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Just like the morning before the house was empty when Gerald awoke from a settled nights sleep, but this one hadn't even bothered to leave him a keepsake on the vacated pillow.

"My poor baby." Mother was there to comfort him. "Did she leave you without saying goodbye?"

"Yes." He felt more alone than he'd ever done in his life and began to cry, great big howling sobs that racked his upper body.

"You simpering fool." Having lulled him into a false sense of security she was ready to begin tearing into him. "No better than your father."

"Don't you dare mention my father." He threw back the bed sheets and gagged.

"Look at you," she spoke down to him. "She let you rut her like a filthy beast." Dirty brown stains covered his manhood and the thought of the act brought fresh bile to his throat.

"You are a dirty little boy," she screamed after him as he ran to the bathroom.

After washing twice he dressed for work, checking himself in the mirror before leaving.

"I'm just glad we won't be seeing that harlot again." Mother hadn't once let up with her badgering the whole morning.

"I'm off to work." At least he could escape her, even if only for eight hours.

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Leaving the house was a relief, but he knew he'd have to return at the end of the day and the thought filled with an empty sadness that bordered on depression. He wanted to pay her back; if he had to listen to her in a morning then he'd make her suffer on a night. To this end he designed a game plan.

During the course of the following month he played out his idea just as he'd seen it in his head. Each day after work he didn't go straight home, instead he'd stop at one of the many bars and drink. Once he thought he'd enough to dull the sound of mother's infernal wittering he'd chose a woman... any woman.

It didn't matter if he had to pay for their services or not, so long as they were willing he'd take them home. And they were always gone the next morning, so what did it matter to Gerald?

It was a month of battling with mother, a battle where neither of them gained any ground

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And then she walked back into his life and the status quo of living with Mother's memory was shattered.

Leanne... Older, but still as beautiful as he remembered.

Her presence filled with hope. Hope that he could finally beat mother and have the happiness that he deserved.

“I didn’t like her back then.” Mother harassed him over the office phone. “And I don’t like her now.”

“I don’t care what you think.” He kept his voice near the mouth piece and whispered. “I lost her once because of you but I won’t lose her again.” He slammed the phone down and took a deep breath.

Leanne.

He’d never expected to see her again, especially at his work. But there she’d been, smiling in recognition of her old friend.

“It’s only temp work, but I’ll be here for six months.” When she spoke he felt all the old feelings surface.

“Maybe we could get together and catch up.” He was rushing it, but he didn’t care. “Dinner at my place?” He’d ruined it.

“What about your mother?” The smile had left her face.

“She’s gone away.” He got the smile to return and sighed with relief. “She’s staying with her sister for a few months.” Her smile grew wider and she nodded.

“OK then, tomorrow night?” She sounded eager to see him privately.

“Can I pick you up?” His smile was bigger than hers.

“No, Its alright.” She touched his arm like she had all those years ago. “I still know where it is.”

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“I wont have that hussy in my house.” The news had annoyed Mother and she'd screamed until his ears hurt.

“Its not your house anymore,” he'd retorted as he'd attempt to shave the day old stubble from his chin.

“Don't you dare take that tone with me, young man.” Mother knew how to make him feel small. “You should show some respect for your elders.”

“Respect!” he screamed back, throwing the razor in the sink. “For fucks sake, woman. You're dead.”

“That may be the case, but I'm still your mother.” He shook his head.

He needed a drink and he needed it bad.

As he headed down the stairs he buttoned up his shirt, no need for a tie tonight. He felt like being casual.

In the living room he poured his first Vodka of the night and downed it in one.

“Drink is a weak man’s escape.” She was insistent when she wanted to be.

In response he poured a scotch and drank it neat, the liquid burning his throat and rousing a



cough.

“Not man enough?” She laughed.

“Bitch.” He tossed the half empty glass on the fire and the flames ate greedily at the amber fuel.

“Now, now Gerald that’s no way to talk to mother.” The drinking wasn’t dulling her voice as it usually did.

“Piss off.” She’d ruined everything once before. He wouldn’t allow her to do so again.

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Leanne was more than a little bit nervous, stood at the end of the drive and considering whether she should go up to the door or just turn around and walk away.

She had fond memories of Gerald, but he’d looked strange when she’d met him the other day. The years hadn’t been overly kind to him and he’d lost the freshness he’d had as a teenager. His hair was thin and wiry and his eyes were big black bags under bloodshot orbs.

She’d said yes to the date out of politeness, but now she had the feeling she’d made a terrible mistake. She shouldn’t have come; she should’ve stayed at home. With that in mind she walked up the drive, paused at the door and then knocked three times.

She saw his silhouette on the other side of the frosted glass and she felt the need to turn and run.

“Don’t be stupid,” she told herself. “Its only a few hours, catch up on old times and then get a taxi home.”

How hard could it be?

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He opened the door and she was shocked to discover that he looked even worse than he had at work. Sweat beaded on his brow and his cheeks were flushed a dark, unhealthy red.

“Please come in,” he said, holding the door wide and greeting her with a smile that she found more menacing than welcoming.

“Thank you.” Before she was in the door he was pulling at her coat.

“I can’t believe you’re here.” The sweat was flowing down his forehead and running into his eyes.

“It’s wonderful to see you again,” she said, but her thoughts agreed with Gerald’s last statement.

“Dinner’s nearly ready.” She followed him through to the kitchen. At least the smell of the cooking meal was inviting.

As soon as they entered the room he busied himself with the finishing touches. He wanted it to be a perfect night for his Leanne and nothing would spoil it this time.

“Just look at her Gerald.” He tried to ignore Mother, glancing at Leanne, relieved she couldn’t hear. “She’s a slut... Only here for one thing.”

Gerald wanted to tell Mother to shut up; wanted to scream at her, but he couldn’t. If he did Leanne would think he'd gone insane. Worse than that, she'd leave.

Probably forever.

“Slut.” Mother continued with a litany of descriptions for the interloper.

“Whore.”

“Hussy.”

“Tart.”

“Slag.”

“Cunt.”

“Prick teaser.” Between each word she laughed quietly.

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“Are you alright?” Leanne rested a hand on Gerald’s arm.

He’d turned very pale and sickly looking and she was growing worried at the jittery way he was glancing around the room.

“Headache,” he snapped. “Sorry, I’ll be back in a mo.” He slammed the knife down on the chopping board and turned to leave the room. “Need an aspirin, help yourself to wine.” His smile was abnormal and ugly.

“Where’s the wine?” In truth she needed a drink. No, in truth she needed to make excuses to go home.

“Pantry.” She heard his footsteps retreat upstairs.

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“I must be stupid,” Leanne mumbled to herself as she searched for the wine. “What did I expect?” She was pretty certain she’d made a mistake; fond memories or not, Gerald wasn’t the guy she'd once known.

She soon found the wine rack and was just wrapping her fingers around the neck of a bottle of white when she heard the noise, a panicked scratching from somewhere near the back of the huge pantry.

“If he’s got rats I’m gone.” Despite her fear of vermin she ducked down and peered under the shelves at the rear of the room.

“Oh my God.”

What she saw was worse than any rat.

Far worse.

Eight bloodied fingers stuck up between the edge cellar entrance and the floor. They wriggled

frantically, nails broken back to the quick, flesh stripped to the bone in vicious gashes. Blood stained the wood around the lip of the hatch and Leanne froze.

“Mmmmm.” It was muffled, but it was a plea that Leanne couldn’t ignore no matter how much she wanted to.

She knew she should leave now and go straight to the police, but she couldn’t leave whoever Gerald had left down there.

But what if he came back down stairs? She didn’t want to end up a prisoner below the hatch with his other captive.

“I’ll be back, I promise.” She took the bottle of wine and headed upstairs to find Gerald.

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“Gerald?” She stopped at the top of the stairs and called his name. “Are you OK?”

“I’ll be down in a minute,” he replied, the voice coming from the open door at the end of the narrow landing.

She moved quietly, wishing she’d paused to remove her shoes. As she neared the door she could hear him talking, fast and angry as if arguing. She edged closer, the neck of the bottle gripped tightly in her fist.

“You won’t stop me mother.” She stopped.

Was his mother here after all?

“I love her and we will be happy.” A pause. “No she’s not like the others, they were whores.” Another pause. “Yes mother, you were right about them.”

Two more steps and Leanne was at the door and looking at Gerald. He was sat on the toilet, head in his hands and rambling to himself.

She didn’t wait, didn’t ask him to explain. She swung the bottle. It didn’t break, but hit his head with a solid thunk. He slumped from the seat without making a sound. On the way down his head smashed into the sink and he fell to the floor in a limp pile, blood pooling around him

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She dropped the makeshift weapon and ran, hoping he was dead, but doubting it. If he came around before she was done she knew he’d kill her.

She had to move fast.

She took the stairs two at a time and hit the hallway at a sprint.

“I’m coming.” The fingers wriggled a thank you and the muffled plea was repeated.

The hatch was held shut by a wooden peg, which Leanne had to wiggle from side to side, gradually working it loose.

“Come on you bastard,” she yelled and the threat worked, the peg coming free with a final tug.

She pulled the flap open with both hands and the stench hit her harder than any blow could have. She covered her nose and mouth with a shaking hand and tried to take in the scene laid out below her.

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It was a woman, naked and covered cuts and bruises. The state of her body was bad, but it was nothing when compared to what had been to her face. Leanne could only stand and stare in horror at what Gerald had done.

The face was black, grime encrusted and stained with dried blood. Her mouth had been roughly sewn shut with a fine wire and her eyelids top and bottom had been pulled wide and stapled to her face.

The horror didn't stop there. Below her the basement was filled with twenty or more other bodies. Some were still alive and squirming around on the floor. Others were long dead, limp and rotting in small piles.

"Oh my God." Leanne breathed through her mouth as her mind tried to comprehend what it was seeing.

In the centre of the room there was bed, floral sheets laid out neatly and propped up on the pillows was a wizened body dressed in a pastel pink nightie.

"I see you've met Mother." Leanne heard his voice just before the blow connected with the back of her head.

She didn't lose consciousness straight away, but fell forward, her arms waving as the scream tried to escape from her throat. She collided with the tortured woman on the stairs and together they toppled to the bottom.

As they hit the concrete base, Leanne on the bottom, it went black.

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Her body hurt from head to toe, especially the head. It throbbed and her eyes struggled to open, stuck together with blood that had run from the wound. She forced them to part, the lashes tearing from the lids as the red glue parted. Everything was blurry, but as the scene swam into focus she saw Gerald.

He was huddled on the bed next to the leathery body of Mother and sucking his thumb as tears rolled down his cheeks.

Mother ran her bone like fingers through his hair and told him to hush. "I told you dear." The voice was slurred by the shattered jaw and decaying vocal chords. "Mother knows best."

Leanne tried to scream, but the wire holding her mouth shut held it in her throat.

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## DANCE OF THE GYPSY

*They watch the woman and her man caress each other, eager hands on bare skin. They are excited by the dark colour of her breasts and the even darker shade of her erect nipples. They stifle their gasping breaths as the touching becomes lovemaking, each of them wishing they were alone to witness the event.*

*The evening air is cool, but as she moves up and down astride her lover the sweat beads on her shoulders and runs down her arched back. Her moans grow in strength from low whimpers of joy to shouts of ecstasy. With a final cry of satisfaction she collapses onto the man she has taken pleasure from.*

*"I love you, Lorca." Her voice is exotic and thrills the young men that watch her.*

*"I love you too, Martina," he replies, kissing her softly on the lips.*

*With the act of love over the couple hastily dress and their secret audience leave in silence. All, that is, except one. He remains hidden; stroking the handle of the knife nestled in his pocket.*

*"I want you, Martina." And he is prepared to do whatever it takes.*

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"Forgive me father for I have sinned." Father Thomas listened silently to the confession. "I've had relations with a woman who isn't my wife." The man paused and coughed nervously before continuing. "In truth the woman is my wife's mother."

Father Thomas smiled to himself at the irony of it all. People came to him, confessing their sins in anonymity, not realising that he recognised each and every one of them. He knew it was Roger Foreman sat in the cubicle, head in his hands as he hoped for forgiveness.

Mrs Foreman was on the church committee; Father Thomas knew her well, would have gone as far as classing her as a friend. But, like her husband, she held onto her own secrets. These too had been whispered to Father Thomas. He had sat in the confession box, fingering his rosary as he listened patiently as she cleared her mind of sin. When she was finished, crying softly, he'd handed out her penance and sent her on her way. For a while she'd be happy she was clean of sin, but he knew that before long she'd be back to confess again.

They all came back sooner or later. Both Mr and Mrs Foreman visited the church on a regular basis and they always carried with them the same weight on their shoulders. He with his untamed passions and she with her passionate love affair with the bottle.

He didn't feel sorry for them, not one of the sinners deserved his pity. They didn't learn from their mistakes; to them confession was just an easy escape from their burdens. It would do them good to be more like him, to carry the load like a mill stone around their neck, to use their pain and suffering to make themselves stronger.

He had never confessed to his truest sin and he never would, that wasn't why he'd joined the church. A life in the service of God had been chosen to escape the things he'd seen and done. No, not escape, it was more than that.

He'd used the church to protect himself.

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Father Thomas was old... old enough to remember a time when he'd leave the church doors unlocked during the night for those that sought solace. It saddened him that he now lived in an age where scoundrels would just as soon steal from the church as they would an unlocked car.

It was with a heavy sigh that he prepared to lock up for the night, fumbling with the padlock. Old fingers struggling with the rusted steel

"Am I too late, Father?" The question was unexpected and Father Thomas jumped, dropping the lock to the stonework floor.

"It is late, my son," Father Thomas replied. "What is it you need?" He tried to hide the stab of fear he felt in his stomach.

"I need to confess." The stranger remained in the shadows. "I must shed the shadow of guilt that envelopes me before it consumes my soul completely." The statement was filled with an emotion that intrigued the Father.

"Who am I to refuse the faithful when in need?" He pulled the latch back and swung the door inwards. "Just give me a moment."

"Of course, Father." The figure made no effort to move into the light, remaining shrouded in darkness until Father Thomas had left to prepare himself.

Only then did he step into the arched doorway and let the dim light of the church interior touch his pale, grey skin.

"I'm far from faithful, Father." He gazed at the huge cross that held a bleeding Jesus and sneered. "And if the truth be known, Father, so are you."

With steps that made no sound he crossed the floor, pulled back the curtain and took his place within the confession box before drawing the fabric back across the doorway.

"Forgive us Father for we have sinned." The stranger didn't cross himself.

"You can only confess for yourself, my son." Father Thomas frowned. For the first time since finding sanctuary within the church he was scared.

"Tonight Father we shall both confess."

"Who are you?" Father Thomas wanted to leave, but something held him in place.

"That is why we're here," the stranger replied. "So that you remember.

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*He waits until his friends are gone, though he realises they aren't real friends. They see him*

*as a safety net against bullies. They use him and he lets them, but he knows they see him as a bad apple. Not that it bothers him; he doesn't need anyone to tell him he's bad. He also knows that some things are best done alone.*

*He moves forward quietly, watching the couple embrace tightly in a fond farewell. He has seen her in the town recently, but he's sure that soon she will be moving on. Her kind never stays in one place too long, always moved on by disgruntled villagers.*

*But before she leaves he must have her. He doesn't understand the yearning that draws him towards her, but she has filled his every waking thought and teased him through endless dreams. He needs to touch her skin, needs to see her body up close and now he must punish her for loving another.*

*The knife feels good in his hand, the blade sharp enough to slice his thumb as he absent mindedly rubs it along the honed edge. He feels a power surge through him like nothing he has ever experienced; his eyes fixed on the prize soon to be his.*

*He is close enough to smell the musky odour of her sweat and it floods him with wave after wave of indescribable arousal. It's as if she pulsates with a magic that draws him in.*

*Closer still now, he's within touching distance and they have yet to notice him, too involved with the sharing of tongues and the heat of their intimate kiss.*

*"Mind if I cut in?" As he asks the knife is already at her lover's neck.*

*She pulls back in horror, but a flame of excitement burns in her eyes.*

*"Lorca?" Tears quickly quench the fire and concern for her love takes over.*

*"Just tell the pretty lady to do as I ask and all will be fine." He pushes the tip of the knife into soft flesh, a fine point of blood rising where steel meets skin.*

*"What do you want?" Just the sweet sound of her voice makes him hard.*

*"Dance for me," he makes the order with a grin from over Lorca's shoulder.*

*With tears now running down her cheeks she begins to sway to a beat that only she can hear, a beat that matches the pulsing of the blood in his veins as he watches.*

\*\*\*\*

*"Why are you doing this?" Father Thomas chokes back the fear in his throat.*

*"You will find out soon enough, Father," the stranger replies. "But first I must finish, I must unburden myself."*

*Father Thomas falls silent, the Lord's Prayer running through his mind in an endless loop.*

\*\*\*\*

*He can almost hear the music as her gyrations intensify; her hips sway from side to side as her arms swirl around her body.*

*So engrossed by the sight of her he lets the knife arm drop away. It is only for an instant, but*

*Lorca sees his chance.*

*He runs.*

*He has no wish to die for the woman he has spent the afternoon professing his love to. After all, she is his brother's wife, his wife's sister. At least this way she may never tell the others of their forbidden love.*

*LORCA!" he hears her cry and ignores it, hating himself for such weakness, but glad to be alive.*

*She tries to run, but the knife plunges deep into her gut, the steel burning as it passes easily through flesh and organs. She slumps into her tormentors arms and he looks down at her with a smile that hurts deeper than the fatal wound.*

*In his mind he knows he should leave her to die, get as far away as he possibly can, but the sight of her blood as he withdraws the knife works a new magic on him. He can see her breast rise and fall with each shallow breath and his earlier feelings of need grow tenfold.*

*He uses the blood stained blade to cut away her clothes, the blade tearing fabric and peeling skin without prejudice. The more he sees of her the more he wants, the knife a frenzy of movement as he strips her down to bare muscle.*

*He strokes her moist, truly naked, being with one hand and throws the knife aside so that he can stroke himself with the other. No longer able to hold back he spreads her out on the leaf littered ground and takes her.*

\*\*\*\*

"Our Father," Father Thomas had begun to pray out loud, attempting to block out the words of the stranger.

"Shut up you pious fraud," the stranger snapped. "Your God can't hear you."

"Who art in Heaven."

"One more word and I'll tear your fucking tongue out." The stranger beat against the dividing wall with his fist. "Now, let me finish."

\*\*\*\*

*He slides in easily, she is wet from her earlier activities and the blood that now seeps from her naked torso. Her dying breath is a gargle like sigh, but it does not stop him.*

*With increasing vigour he pounds into her motionless, warm corpse, a climax of epic proportions building within his groin. As he reaches his peak he screams in pleasure, his body racked by sensual spasm. As the seed leaves his member and enters her body the once dead eyes snap open and her hands are at his neck.*

*He thrashes at her in a vain attempt to free himself, but the knife is out of reach. She grabs him around the throat and pulls him towards her mouth.*



*“Kiss,” she utters the single word before their lips touch and the pressure on his windpipe tightens.*

\*\*\*\*

“I’ve served her ever since.” The stranger finished his confession and stared at Father Thomas’s outline through the tiny meshed window that separated them. “But I’ve finally found you and she will now allow me to die.”

Father Thomas sat frozen to the spot as he listened to the stranger. His heart beat like a hammer in his chest at the sound of footsteps and the smell of her drifted in under the heavy red curtain.

“He is here Martina.” The stranger made no attempt to get up. “Now let me go. I’ve suffered enough for my crime against you.”

“As you wish.” Her voice held the silken tone of an angel and only hinted at the beauty that both men remembered.

In the adjoining cubicle the stranger exhaled a long breath, a sigh of relief and he slumped forward as if in prayer.

“I have searched so long,” she sang as Father Thomas watched her fingers hook around the edge of the curtain. “My darling Lorca, how I have missed you.” She pulled the drape back swiftly and he stared up at her.

“M-my name is Thomas,” he tried to deny the truth, but she stepped into the vestibule and kissed his forehead below his greying hairline.

“I thought that you loved me Lorca.” She pushed him back, shedding the cloak from her shoulders and standing before him naked. “I loved you.” She began to dance just as he'd pictured her so many times over the years, her body shimmering like a mirage.

“You let him do this to me,” she sung the words as she stripped away the beauty she'd worn like a mask, pulling at the skin, peeling it away in long strips that she dropped at her feet.

Father Thomas – Lorca - stared at her and vomit rose in his throat as, under the façade she slowly revealed the decayed flesh and aged bone.

“You left me.” The ravaged corpse continued to dance, once again moving closer to the confession booth and its living occupant.

She stood before him, running her withered hands over her once stunning body.

“But I forgive you.” As she clasped her bony fingers around his wrinkled throat she lowered her shrivelled lips to his and kissed him one final time.

He stopped praying; if there was a God he was no longer listening.