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MOORE BASALDUA LEISTEN WENGLER

THE DARKNESS®

VAMPIRELLA®

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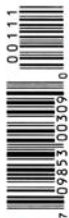


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MT. STAYNE MENTAL HEALTH
HOSPITAL, NEW YORK CITY.



I LIVE IN
CATATONICS.

THEY ARE LIKE EMPTY APARTMENTS--
CATATONICS. FOR ALMOST THREE
HUNDRED YEARS I HAVE HIDDEN
INSIDE THESE ZOMBIES, ENDURING
THEIR STENCH OF LIFE AND
WATCHING THE WORLD THROUGH THE
VELLUM OF THEIR LIFELESS EYES.

IT IS THE ONLY
PLACE SHE
CAN'T FIND ME.



LOOK AT THEM. THEY
CALL THEMSELVES
HUMAN BEINGS.


AS IF A TITLE WILL DISGUISE THE
FACT THAT THEY ARE MERELY THE
DUST OF GREATER THINGS-- A BY-
PRODUCT OF POWERS TOO BUSY TO
CLEAN UP AFTER THEMSELVES.



HUMAN
BEINGS
INDEED.




THEY ARE
BLIT WASTE.



OF ALL THE SONS OF CHAOS I
AM MOST CURSED BECAUSE
I HAVE BEEN FORCED TO
SURVIVE ON THE BLOOD OF
THESE FOUL CREATURES.


PATIENTLY I HAVE
WAITED FOR THE DAY
WHEN A SYMBIOTIC
HOST STRONGER
THAN MORTAL MAN
COULD BE FOUND. AT
LAST, THAT DAY HAS
COME.

THERE IS A MAN,
IN THIS CITY, WHO
CARRIES THE
DARKNESS OF
HELL WITHIN HIM.




I DO NOT YET KNOW HIS NAME, BUT
THE DARKNESS LIKES HIM AND
GROWS STRONGER WITH EACH
PASSING DAY. LIKE THE FERAL
BEFORE A STORM I CAN FEEL THE
WINDS OF DESPAIR STIRRING.

I MUST RUN. RUN TO THE
DARKNESS. RUN TO THE
COMING STORM AND CLAIM
THIS MAN AS MY OWN.




THE DARKNESS
WILL BE MINE!




I WON'T HAVE
MUCH TIME.

SHE WILL FEEL ME STIRRING. SHE
WILL HEAR THE SCREAMING OF MY
MEALS AND SHE WILL COME FOR ME.




HAVE TO RUN!



FIND THE DARKNESS
BEFORE SHE FINDS ME.

BLOOD AND OPEN FLESH,
THAT'S ALL THESE CREATURES
ARE TO ME. THEY ARE FOOD
AND I AM HUNGRY!



GOD, HOW I'VE
MISSED IT...

...THE HUMAN
FEAST!

LITTLE ITALY.

MY NAME IS JACKIE ESTACADO. I RUN THE FRANCHETTI OPERATION OUT OF NEW YORK BECAUSE EVERYBODY ELSE WHO EVER TRIED THE JOB IS DEAD.

MORE WINE JACKIE? BEST IN THE HOUSE. HOW'S THE MARINARA? I MADE IT MYSELF.

GOOD. LOT OF GARLIC THOUGH.

ENRICO'S BEHIND ON HIS PAYMENTS. NORMALLY I'D BE HARD ON THE GUY, BUT I WANNA KEEP ENRICO AROUND.

IT'S GOOD FOR YOU. KEEPS AWAY EVIL SPIRITS.

RIGHT.

HE'S A GOOD COOK.

I DON'T KNOW, MAYBE I'M GETTING SOFT, BUT DO MY JOB LONG ENOUGH AND AFTER AWHILE YOU KNOW MORE PEOPLE DEAD THAN ALIVE.

SO ONCE IN AWHILE YOU GIVE SOME POOR SLOB A BREAK AND TAKE THE PERKS OF THE GRATEFUL.

AND SOMETIMES IT HELPS...

...WITH THE LONELINESS, I MEAN.



C'MON, JACKIE, PLEASE.

NAW, ENRICO, REALLY...

SO I DIDN'T CALL IN ENRICO'S NOTE. NOW HE OWES ME AND THAT'S GOOD. BUILDS LOYALTY.



IF I WAS SMART I'D DO THE SAME WITH ALL THE GOOD BELLY SHACKS IN TOWN, BUT I'D JUST GET FAT. BESIDES...

...SOMEBODY'S GOTTA PAY THE BILLS.



HERE, DINNER.

BLESS YOU.

NO THANKS.



HUH. WHERE DID HE GO?

IN THE OLD DAYS I NEVER WOULD HAVE SPENT A FRIDAY NIGHT STUFFIN' MY FACE AT ENRICO'S. BACK THEN ALL I CARED ABOUT WAS STUFFIN' SOMETHING ELSE.

BUT TIMES CHANGE. I'VE CHANGED.

NOW IF I'M WITH A WOMAN I MIGHT AS WELL KISS A SHOTGUN. THE RESULTS WILL BE THE SAME.

NO WOMAN IS WORTH THE PRICE. THAT'S WHAT I TELL MYSELF--



...EVERY FRIDAY NIGHT.



HELLO,
GORGEOUS.
LOOKING FOR
ME?

MMPH!

I SAW YOU
WATCHING ME IN
THE RESTAURANT.
WANNA TELL ME WHY
YOU'RE FOLLOWING ME
OR SHOULD I JUST
ASSUME YOU'RE
CRAZY ABOUT
ME?



GRRGH!

OW!



WHOA!
THAT'S A NASTY
SNAKEBITE YOU'VE
GOT THERE,
ANGEL.

THE NAME'S
VAMPIRELLA.
LET GO OF
ME!



A VAMPIRE,
HUH?

SORRY,
BABE. YOUR
VOODOO DOESN'T
WORK ON ME. I'M
NOT THE VICTIM
TYPE.



LET GO!



DON'T FLATTER
YOURSELF--I
WOULDN'T DRINK
YOUR FOUL BLOOD
IF YOU HELD
A STAKE TO
MY HEART.

WHAT'S
THE MATTER
WITH MY
BLOOD?

YOU TASTE
LIKE HELL!




THAT'S WHY YOU'RE FOLLOWING ME... TO TELL ME I TASTE BAD?



BEST GUESS?



I'M HERE BECAUSE YOU'RE MY BEST GUESS.



A SYMBIOTIC VAMPIRE CAME OUT OF HIDING TODAY. HE NEEDS A NEW HOST STRONG ENOUGH TO HOLD HIM. I'M GUESSING YOU'RE IT.

WHY ME?

BECAUSE YOU HAVE THE DARKNESS. HE CAN USE THAT TO DEFEND HIMSELF WHEN SHE FINDS HIM.

SHE WHO?

THE MAGDALENA.

CAN I ASK YOU SOMETHING? AREN'T YOU COLD?

NO. DOES IT HURT?

WHAT?



THIS!

UGH!

WHAP



THE PHONE CALL WAS FROM JIMMY P. ZANARDI'S WORKED FOR ME FOR YEARS, BUT NOBODY'S SEEN OR HEARD FROM HIM IN SIX WEEKS.

SO I ASKED JIMMY TO KEEP AN EYE ON HIS PLACE. LET ME KNOW IF HE SAW ANYTHING SUSPICIOUS.

TAP TAP

WHAT'S UP?

IT'S A FREAKIN' WISE GUY CONVENTION IN THERE.

BIG MICKEY'S TAKEN OVER THE PLACE AND TURNED IT INTO A DRUG DEPOT. EVERY BUYER IN TOWN'S PAID HIM A VISIT IN THE LAST WEEK. IT'S LIKE A PHARMACEUTICAL GANGBANG.

AND ZANARDI?

NOTHIN' BOSS. PROBABLY IN THE HUDSON.

SO HE KILLS ONE OF MY GUYS, TAKES OVER THE HOUSE AND STARTS DOIN' BUSINESS ON MY TURF. WHERE'S THE RESPECT?

ALL RIGHT. C'MON. LET'S DO IT. I'M GOIN' TO THE FRONT DOOR. WHEN THEY ANSWER, CUT THE POWER TO THE BOX.

KILL ANYBODY WHO MAKES IT OUT THE BACK DOOR.

KINDA THOUGHT THAT'S WHAT YOU'D SAY.

I DON'T CARE HOW FAR UNDER THE RADAR YOU THINK YOU'RE FLYIN'...

...YOU DON'T DO BUSINESS ON SOMEBODY ELSE'S TURF WITHOUT ASKIN' PERMISSION. NOT UNLESS YOU'VE GOT A DEATH WISH. AND YOU KNOW THE SAYING...

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR.

KNOCK
KNOCK
KNOCK

NOT USED TO WORKIN' IN FRONT OF AN AUDIENCE. THAT GIRL'S LIKE A STRAY CAT. ONLY THIS ONE'S WRAPPED IN STRIPS OF RED SATIN. I BET THAT OUTFIT USED TO FIT HER...WHEN SHE WAS TEN.

WHO IS IT?

CANDYGRAM.

SNIP

MICK!
TROUBLE!

KNOCK,
KNOCK!

BAM
BAM BAM BAM
BAM



WE'LL
SAVE YOU,
MICK!

FOR
DESSERT!

SAVE
ME!



ELSEWHERE...

THE DARKNESS WAS HERE--THE
SMELL LINGERS LIKE COLOGNE.

THEN I
HEAR IT.

HA HA! HA!



THE SOUND OF HELL...LAUGHING.

THE
DARKNESS!

HA! HA!
HA! HA!





IMPRESSIVE.

YEAH?
YOU LIKE THINGS
THAT GO BOOM
IN THE NIGHT?

NOT
PARTICULARLY.



HE'S
COMING
FOR YOU,
JACKIE.



HE CAN HEAR THE
VOICES INSIDE
YOU. I CAN HEAR
THEM. YOU NEED
ME.

LIKE A
GUN IN MY
MOUTH.



GET LOST,
VAMPIRA.



I
CAN'T.



AFTER A SHOWER AND CHANGE OF CLOTHES, I HEAD OVER TO RICK'S SOUTHSIDE.

RICK'S DONE ALRIGHT FOR HIMSELF. PORN PAYS.

UNFORTUNATELY, RICK FINANCED HIS EMPIRE WITH FRANCHETTI MONEY.



AND NOW THAT HE'S IN THE BLACK, HE DOESN'T SEE THE NEED FOR A PARTNER ANYMORE.

I'M HERE TO SHOW RICK THE ERROR OF HIS WAYS. I TELL THE BARTENDER I'M HERE TO SEE HIS BOSS.



WHILE I'M WAITING I SPOT A GIRL I KNOW. HER FAMILY USED TO OWN A DELI ON 5TH STREET. SHE WORKED THE COUNTER, A GAWKY KID IN BRACES.




ONE NIGHT A CRACK ADDICT KILLED HER PARENTS FOR \$65 IN THE CASH REGISTER. THE GIRL WAS IN THE BATHROOM, HEARD THE WHOLE THING.

HER NAME IS JOLENE.




I CAN TELL BY HER EYES JOLENE HAS NO FRIKKIN' IDEA WHERE SHE IS. SHE'S BARELY EIGHTEEN AND TALKIN' TO ANGELS.

THE DARKNESS FINDS US ALL. SOME SOONER THAN OTHERS.




ONE OF RICK'S GOONS INFORMS ME HIS BOSS ISN'T AVAILABLE FOR A MEETING. BETTER LUCK NEXT TIME.

I SMILE THE WAY YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO AT THE MENTALLY IMPAIRED. THERE'S NO POINT IN TALKING TO THESE GUYS. I KNOW, I USED TO BE ONE.




I STICK A .45 INTO THE GOON'S BELLY AND SUDDENLY MY LUCK HAS CHANGED. THE MEETING'S BACK ON. IMAGINE THAT.

SO WE'RE OFF TO SEE THE WIZARD.




I'VE COME TO EXPECT A LOT OF THINGS FROM THE MEN I ENCOUNTER... INDIFFERENCE IS NOT ONE OF THEM.

BUT THERE WAS SOMETHING ELSE ABOUT JACKIE ESTACADO I DIDN'T EXPECT--SOMETHING IN HIS EYES LIKE AN ANGRY CRY FOR HELP.



BUT I LEARNED A LONG TIME AGO YOU CAN'T SAVE MEN LIKE JACKIE--THEY JUST WANT YOU TO THINK YOU CAN.

IT'S ALL VERY SSM WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT IT, SO I TRY NOT TO.




A CHILL MADE ME TURN AROUND.

THE VAMPIRE!

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a pink top and dark bottoms, is lying on a wooden floor in a crowded club. Several men are looking at her. One man in a suit is standing nearby.


HE'S MAKING HIS WAY
TOWARDS JACKIE. IN THIS
CROWD...IT'S A PERFECT
PLACE TO STRIKE.

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a pink top and dark bottoms, is lying on a wooden floor in a crowded club. Several men are looking at her. One man in a suit is standing nearby.


IT'S NOT JUST JACKIE
WHO'S IN DANGER NOW,
IT'S EVERYBODY IN THE
CLUB. I HAD TO DO
SOMETHING---QUICK!

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a pink top and dark bottoms, is lying on a wooden floor in a crowded club. Several men are looking at her. One man in a suit is standing nearby.

THE CROWD WAS TOO THICK, I'D
NEVER GET TO HIM IN TIME.

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a pink top and dark bottoms, is lying on a wooden floor in a crowded club. Several men are looking at her. One man in a suit is standing nearby.

I SUPPOSE A NUN WOULD HAVE COME
UP WITH ANOTHER WAY, BUT I JUMPED
ONTO THE RUNWAY WITHOUT THINKING.

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a pink top and dark bottoms, is lying on a wooden floor in a crowded club. Several men are looking at her. One man in a suit is standing nearby.

I DIDN'T WANT TO
GIVE MYSELF AWAY
SO I TRIED TO ACT
LIKE A DANCER, BUT
BELIEVE ME, NO
DANCER EVER
MOVED SO FAST.

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a pink top and dark bottoms, is lying on a wooden floor in a crowded club. Several men are looking at her. One man in a suit is standing nearby.

HE SAW ME
COMING
BUT HE DIDN'T
KNOW WHAT
TO MAKE OF
ME YET.

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a pink top and dark bottoms, is lying on a wooden floor in a crowded club. Several men are looking at her. One man in a suit is standing nearby.

I LOOKED
THE CREATURE
RIGHT IN THE
EYES AND
MADE LOVE
TO HIS EGO.







AARGH!

JACKIE!

WHAT'S
HAPPENING,
JACKIE?

WE
DON'T LIKE
THIS!



JACKIE,
GET UP!
JACKIE!

THEY'RE
IN HERE!
INVADERS!

SWARMS!

KILL
'EM!



KILL! KILL!
KILL!

SCREEEEIGH



SCREEEEIGH

KIIIIIIII!



WE GOT 'EM ON THE RUN!

ATTACK!

NO! UURGH!



YOO HOO! ANYBODY HOME?

COME OUT, COME OUT, WHEREVER YOU ARE!

HAA HAAAAA!

NOOOOO!



HERE HE IS, BOSS!

FOUND HIM!

TASTES LIKE CHICKEN!

SCREEEE

HA! HA! HA! HA!



I LET THE BOYS FEED. THEY EARNED IT--THEY SAVED MY LIFE. WITHIN SECONDS THERE'S NOTHING LEFT BUT A THICK YELLOW GOO THEY SOP UP LIKE GRAVY WITH BITS OF FLESH. YUMMY.

SHE TRIED TO WARN ME AND I DIDN'T LISTEN. HELL IS A BIG PLACE. EVERYBODY IS SOMEBODY'S PREY.

EVEN ME.

BY THE TIME THE SCREAMING DIED THE GIRL WAS LONG GONE.

I NEVER GOT TO TALK TO RICK, BUT I'M PRETTY SURE HE GOT THE POINT-- SCREW WITH ME AND BAD THINGS HAPPEN.

THE GIRL...
VAMPIRELLA...

SHE WENT TO A LOT OF TROUBLE TO WARN ME ABOUT THIS GUY. I NEVER THANKED HER.

I GUESS IT WOULDN'T KILL ME TO TELL HER THAT. SOMEDAY.

IT'S FUNNY WHAT YOU REMEMBER ABOUT PEOPLE.

SHE SMELLED NICE...LIKE FRESH FLOWERS.

I HUNG AROUND LONG ENOUGH TO SEE HIM COME OUT OF THE CLUB. HE LOOKED LIKE HE WAS WALKING OUT OF A FINE RESTAURANT AFTER A GREAT MEAL. NO BIG DEAL.

MEN.




I HAVE NO IDEA WHY
I PUT MY LIFE ON
THE LINE FOR JACKIE
ESTACADO.

BUT I KNEW THE
VAMPIRE WOULD RUN
FOR THE DARKNESS
AND I KNEW JACKIE
WOULD NEED HELP
OR AT LEAST SOME
KIND OF WARNING.

THE MAGDALENA WASN'T
HAPPY WITH ME.
SHE'D WAITED THREE
HUNDRED YEARS FOR
THIS VAMPIRE TO COME OUT
OF HIDING. SHE WANTED TO
TALK TO HIM BEFORE HE
WAS DESTROYED. FIND OUT
HOW HE DID IT, BUT SHE
GOT THERE TOO LATE.

BUT JACKIE...THERE
WAS SOMETHING
ABOUT HIM...IN HIS
EYES...LIKE A LOST
BOY TRAPPED INSIDE
A TERRIBLE
MACHINE.

OR MAYBE HE JUST
WANTED ME TO THINK
THAT. DOES HE WANT
TO BE SAVED OR IS IT
JUST A PREDATOR'S
TRICK TO LURE PREY?



IT'S ALL VERY
SSM WHEN YOU
THINK ABOUT IT.
SO I TRY NOT TO.

END