

*This short story was written based off of a randomly-generated prompt:*

“A mysterious queen sets fire to a rusty pocket knife with a monster from under the bed.”



That grizzly rogue knew not of what viles his clandestine love were stewing upon his fate that Tuesday’s dusk. But notice he did the staircase like a corkscrew made secret by all sorts of manicured foliage to her quarters seemed a hair steeper in that gloom. Were it an augury? He hadn’t the loins or the eyes to act on such a thought, such does the heart yearn.

The vagrant man sampled a glance down at his right hand’s pocketknife he’d wrested away from the suffocating orbit of his treasonous father; not a glimpse of moonlight did it catch. Aye, many a tale could those two tell before the queen had but an hour ago requested he proffer it into her possession, without so much as a waft of lust in her pen. So beget his last of nights.

Flayed with unease, he thought—as he were wont to—back to the knowing glances in gallivanting parades down the thoroughfares he’d shared with her; how gazes brought remarks brought locked lips brought carnal desire brought encounters too manifold in their bodily decadence to mention here. These were the finest days of his life, though they be tales he shan’t deign to tell his children of tomorrow’s betrothed till they of age.

Yet how little he could tell his kin of his queen! What a curiosity it were that she asked so much of he and his travails as they lay abreast in the nude, yet offered few as none of hers? The predicament had scarcely occurred to the brigand, who since birth had toiled day and night in the forests and fields of her kingdom for the dust of ducats and scraps of bread while she studied scriptures, propriety of behavior, and learned to play with elegance the harp and piano. He’d heard many a whisper of her unusual turn from drifter to regent, but never paid them much heed; they seemed little more than the tall tales of impious bards and garrulous jesters.

Such thoughts ceased not their stewing when at the jamb of the hidden door behind that most vernal of courtyard bonsai he stood, just the same as he’d done many a time prior. But on that night, his hearing piqued and memory aroused, a forlorn reminiscence locked beneath the cellar doors of his mind unearthed itself; for that night, just as he’d heard the first occasion he endeavored to the recesses

of this bulwarked castle to fornicate with his beloved, his ear caught wind of a low, most sonorous snarling growl emanating from just beyond the steel door frame. Where before this rogue had disregarded this sordid occurrence as a wayward conjuring of his most vivid of imaginations, no longer could he abide that shrill as mere mind pageantry.

But love his queen he did! Such a requited love were so rare in these times that brave the dank chamber passages and musty grottos scaffolding the castle he did. This lothario subterfuged his way 'round courtiers and hounds toward her chambers, just as he'd done nigh a hundred times before.

There atop her regal bedding sat she, this day clothed in a silken nightgown plain 'gainst times past.

“Bring you your departed patriarch’s blade, have ye?” In accordance with her peculiar and most romanceless of requests, he reached within the pit of his woolen slacks’ pocket and relinquished it to her gaze. As she eyed the contours of its bespined shank, he noted a small door which never had caught his notice, too ensnared had he been in coital throes to pay much heed to the particulars of her living space. Still, sure was this brigand that in nights previous a painting of her limitless grace had sat there unhung; how indecisive these adjudicators of men and enforcers of law can be of even the most trivial affairs!

But a place upon her wall had that painting found, leaving on the floor margins of dust, and on the wall revealing the presence of a small inlet. So utterly transfixed was his queen on that rusty dagger of his that notice not the vagrant man’s prowl she did, as he inched toward the tantalizing hatchway sized more for hobbits than men; certainly not were it fitting of a woman of the queen’s regal bravura!

Shakily tug upon the copper doorknob he did; but aye, how little he could anticipate of what he would find! It were some dungeon, with cobblestone walls and flagstone pavers contouring where lied the ashes of rotting cadavers, the os of men fair and avariced alike jutting out from what little remained of organs and sinew; and there behind glass upon ivory-white plinths were the diadems and scepters of kings and queens thought lost to time! Oh, all those mysterious years debating the whereabouts of royals from generations’ past solved today!

But tell not would he to scholars the world over such sought upon answers to mysteries!

“See all do I; and look too much do ye!” she shrieked, for as the brigand man, down to his all-fours like an infant, gazed upon these horrors of cupidity hidden from time and space, to his aft his queen did crawl through that very same passageway into that abyssal plain! In a manner so routine as if it were theater, she thrust his father’s steel of verdigris, piercing his skin as Dante braves the circles, leaving the brigand languorous upon death’s door. Then his queen, nay, his daemon returned to her chamber to enact one final decree.

“Beast of terrorous tales, hidden beneath the counterpane! Antediluvian creature of mire and magma, gnash, strike out, and do mine bidding as thy will!”

But not a fang nor talon did bare that creature with snake’s head, lion’s torso, cheetah’s hinds, and mare’s tail! Not a droplet of man’s blood or gods’ ichor coursed through its veins; nay, no water or nectar would quench its thirst! Burned long ago were this primordial terror’s secretions; and just as it had done to hamlets with nary a crumb to their estate and palaces bustling with gilded statuettes centuries ago, once again did this creature unleash upon this once good earth hell’s very own fires from its basilisk throat! Hotter than the dying man’s forbidden love were the flames, and every inch of his skin scalded with his love’s passion. What little of this brigand’s garments remained to his person after years of peasantry withered into something more fundamental than the elements; and it was then that the conflagration were sated by a plating of cobblestone and glass.

But a hollow victory it was. For the beast had impatiently emanated its firey innards before entering that museum of os and heraldry once hidden behind the queen’s painting, and so it was that the very lath beneath her soles and the upholstery adorning her lavish bedchambers appeared as if Gomorrah itself! So quickly did this situation escalate that no officer of the castle nor knights gallant would celebrate his own valiance along the very same thoroughfares the queen had once paraded down, immolated as they were. Thwarted was every attempt at enacting an escape from this cloister like Tartarus’ lavas. And the ways of kingdomhood were desecrated by the fires of destruction, they which gave way for a dim smattering of hope from the embers of creation.