

Siren of the Shadows - Part 1

For EB18

By TheSpiralledEye

An ancient mask transforms a spineless cleaning man into a smooth talking, acrobatic cat burglar with sticky fingers and a talent for seduction.

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I pressed my fingers into the tempered glass case in wonder; the necklace inside was a work of art. The gems were carefully cut and placed into a pattern so intricate they seemed almost woven from threads of gold and silver. I'd read the research notes when the item arrived a few days ago. It had belonged to Elanor of Aquitaine once upon a time; she'd ordered it made out of the various gems her sons had given her over the years. It was the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen, and working at the auction house meant I'd seen plenty of beautiful things. Always behind the glass of course; just out of reach.

Eloquence and Antiquities was the sort of auction house that you needed a pedigree to even peruse; most of the clientele were museums or private collectors with a few very rich exceptions. Every day, I got to see the finery that passed through; everything from paintings to ancient vases and artefacts. I'd seen all manner of treasures but this necklace, it was something else.

"Get away from that!"

I jumped back as my boss entered the room with his trademark scowl.

"I was just cleaning the glass, Mr. Sutherland sir," I stammered, grabbing my spray bottle and rag to wipe my fingerprints off the glass.

"You'd better, I need that case looking perfect before Mr. Wiles arrives," Mr. Sutherland huffed, adjusting his lapels.

I schooled my features. Mr. Wiles and his wife Jennifer were two of the aforementioned exceptions. I wasn't entirely sure what it was Wiles did, but it earned him billions, and he spent a good portion of it on trinkets and artefacts at Eloquence and Antiquities.

"I thought this piece was going to the Museum of History," I said, and Mr. Sutherland narrowed his eyes. "I, uh, overheard you speaking to the curator the other night..."

"Well, Mr. Wiles put in a better offer, but of course, that offer being kept depends on him liking the piece when he sees it," Mr. Sutherland smiled. "Now, finish up here and go make sure the knick-knacks and other tiny items are ready for that open auction."

"Yes, sir," I nodded and kept my eyes down, turning to the cases by the edge of the showroom.

My Wiles didn't deserve a necklace as beautiful as that; he only cared about it because it was shiny. He didn't care about the history, or the intricacies of the design. It seemed utterly unfair that he would have it all to himself.

The 'knick-knacks,' as Mr. Sutherland called them, were hardly cheap. Most of them were still worth hundreds, if not thousands of dollars. But to somebody who could afford to spend the equivalent of my yearly salary on a suit, they probably looked like nothing more than ancient junk.

Despite my boss being a complete asshole, this job wasn't actually so bad, at least that's what I continually tried to convince myself. It was degrading with poor pay, but it was better than what I'd had before. Which was to say nothing at all. A pittance is still better than empty pockets; that's what my father used to say. Spoken like a true member of the poverty line. As soon as Mr. Sutherland left, I turned up the radio and tried to get lost in the repetitive motions of polishing glass.

"...In other news, a burglary at the City Mint was stopped last night by the mysterious vigilante known as The Shrouded Spectre. The thieves were found tied up with the Spectre's signature 'S' scrawled on the ground before them with plenty of evidence for the police to convict."

The news report continued, and I rolled my eyes.

"Shrouded Spectre... What a joke."

The figure had started popping up in the news the last few months, and I couldn't decide if it was all a police hoax or some idiot with delusions of grandeur. This wasn't a comic book where some random guy on the street could put on a mask and stop crimes, not for long

anyway. If this Spectre was real, he was probably some local crazy who'd get himself killed sooner rather than later.

'At least he'd go down in history for something though, even if it was just stopping a few petty crimes here and there...'

I shook the dark thoughts from my head; I'd find something. Some way to be remembered, one day. I gripped the rag tighter and pushed it into the glass with a little more pressure than was necessary.

"Hey there," I smiled down at the glass cabinet, taking in the selection of arrowheads, knives, and other everyday items that had become treasures just for surviving so long.

Mr. Sutherland may not appreciate them, but I did. It was part of why I put up with my asshole boss and the low pay; I could be a cleaner anywhere, but at least working here meant I got to see these little slices of history.

My fingers brushed over the glass atop my favourite piece; it had been found in a cave in Japan, next to the remnants of some long-eroded stone shrine. It was a mask made from wood that had been treated with some sort of white substance, leaving it preserved and pale. At the edges were the slightest flecks of red, hinting that perhaps it had been painted once. It had been carved into the likeness of a fox, and even though it was missing the bottom half of the face, somehow the way the eyes had been carved made me think it was smiling. It had been here for months; people got so distracted by the flashier items, so nobody seemed to notice it.

"Hey there, old friend," I smiled. "Maybe if nobody else takes a liking to you tomorrow, I could ask to take you home..."

It was a joke, of course. I could never afford to keep anything, not even the 'cheapest' items here. But still, it was nice to dream. I had just finished dusting all the cases when voices approached and the door to the showroom opened, and in walked none other than Mr. Wiles along with my boss.

"The necklace is just through here," Mr. Sutherland met my eyes harshly, and I quickly skittered to the corner of the room where I couldn't be seen.

My boss gave me a withering look, and I shrugged sheepishly; if Mr. Sutherland hadn't wanted me here, he should have told me to get out before showing in Wiles. The portly man walked in with his cheque book in hand and I hid my disdain; he probably just wanted to flash some of his wealth. He didn't care about the history of the antiques and artefacts he bought.

"Ah yes, very nice. It'll look wonderful with some dress my wife owns I am sure." He chortled happily and I bit my tongue.

"Yes, wonderful." Mr. Sutherland grinned and my hatred of him grew.

I don't know what it was that possessed me but before I could stop myself I was stepping forward.

"Um, actually, this necklace would be for display only. It's very old." I said timidly, "It would probably break if it got worn..."

"What?" Mr. Wiles' nose wrinkled in disdain. "What's the point of a necklace that can't be worn?"

"Well, it's actually got quite a bit of historical significance-"

"Bah, that doesn't matter, what matters is that I am an hour away from an anniversary dinner without a gift!" Wiles sneered. "Sutherland, find me something else, something that won't break."

"Of course." Mr. Sutherland said smoothly, gesturing to the door before hitting me with a look so cold it froze me in place. "Would you wait outside for a moment, sir?"

The moment Wiles was gone his anger turned red hot and he stormed towards me.

"That little comment just cost me thousands! Get out of here, you bumbling idiot!" Mr. Sutherland hissed. "And don't come back! You hear? You're fired!"

"B-but that's not fair, I only-"

"I don't care, you're replaceable, you hear! Mr. Wiles is not, so get out."

I looked around at the polished wooden panelling on the walls, dotted with paintings in gilded frames. Then I thought about my tiny, grey apartment with its bare walls and half-empty shelves. Why should Mr. Wiles and my boss live in luxury, surrounded by the beautiful objects I so adored when they didn't even appreciate them? My palms balled into fists; it just wasn't fair.

I felt my temper rising as I looked into Mr. Sutherland's smug face; the urge to put my fist into that face was strong, but instead, I shoved them in my pockets. I watched as my former boss' eyes dipped to the fists as I put them away.

"That's what I thought."

Mr. Sutherland's face quirked into a small smile of satisfaction, and I felt my bitterness grow. I wished I had the nerve to throw a punch, but of course, I chickened out. What was the point of getting an assault charge as well as losing my job?

"Oh, and if you want to be paid for today, you'll finish tidying this place up before you go."

With that, Mr. Sutherland turned on his heels and walked out of the room, knowing full well he'd just left my life in tatters. I couldn't believe the gall of the man, telling me to finish my shift then get out? I so badly wanted to leave, but as usual, I was at the other man's mercy. If I was going to get another job, I was going to need a good reference letter, and my former boss knew it.

My hands were still balled into fists, and I could feel the nails cutting into my palms. With a curse, I grabbed my glass spray and rag and began polishing the cases hard enough that they would have cracked were they not tempered.

I stared down at the fox mask; the mischievous, simple expression on its face seemed to call to me. What the hell, Mr. Sutherland probably wouldn't even miss it. I needed something, some small win today. Before I knew what I was doing, my fingers found the edge of the glass case and lifted it up just enough to slide a hand inside.

I placed the fox mask into the inner lining of my jacket, zipped it up, and turned to leave with a victorious smile on my face. Letter of recommendation be damned.

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By the time I reached my apartment, though, that joy had faded. What an idiot move that had been! I considered turning back a hundred times but always talked my way out of it. Mr. Sutherland would have me arrested anyway; what was the point? So I went back home to my sad little apartment and waited.

The police didn't show up the next day, or the day after that. The mask felt like a bomb, tucked away in my drawers, one that could explode at any second. After a week, I realised that nobody was coming, and the sensation faded; they really hadn't cared enough about that little mask to notice it was gone.

I started taking it out and slipping it into the inside pocket of my coat each day as I went out to drop off resumes. Sort of like a good luck charm; but it didn't seem to work. After a full month, I was down to my last dime and my last resume.

I handed it over to the owner of the newspaper stand with my most winning smile and received a grunt in return. My heart sank; I already knew there would be no call in my future.

"Looks like nobody wants either of us." I sighed, holding the mask between my fingers.

I glanced down at the stack of papers by the stand and grimaced; why'd I even bothered applying at a newspaper stand of all places? People didn't buy newspapers anymore. Even if the man running it had given me a shot I'd just be back here, ass on the sidewalk, in six months.

The man running the stall appeared and untied the stack without giving me so much as a glance; the front page was half covered in a photograph of the distinctive black double S that was the Spectres calling card. Yet another piece on whether or not the vigilante was good for the city or not. It made my blood boil; the Spectre had all the fame in the world, the adoration of the entire city and what did I have? A cold butt from sitting on this curb that's what.

Wiles and Sutherland had all the fortune, the Spectre had fame and let's face it, he probably had fortune too. Only a rich guy with more money than sense would be a vigilante. I looked back down to the mask in my hands and marvelled at it.

All that stood between me and it had been a pane of glass and once the realisation hit I couldn't stop thinking about it. At best the mask was only worth a few hundred dollars to the right buyer, not that I could sell it without raising questions. But what about other things, other things I *could* sell.

For a few minutes I let myself fantasise about robbing smug assholes like Sutherland for all they were worth but the smile soon faded from my face. That was easier said than

done, I'd only gotten the mask by chance, now that I didn't have a security ID or reason to be there there was no shot. Let alone robbing a place I didn't know like the back of my hand.

"Hey, can you go mope somewhere else?" The stall owner yelled, "you're scaring off my customers."

I sighed and got to my feet, mask still hanging between my fingers. I walked slowly back to the apartment feeling apathetic and tired. I couldn't stand up for myself, couldn't seem to do anything to get myself out of this hole and the one time I grew a spine it cost me the only job I had. I spent the day walking till the sun started to set; doing nothing but feel sorry for myself.

Why did I have to be me? Why couldn't I be somebody else, anybody else. Somebody who actually had the wit and bravery to stand up to people like Sutherland and tell Wiles what they were good for? My thoughts were so wrapped up in fantasies about sticking it to those dicks that I didn't even realise I was walking towards Eloquence and Antiquities till I was a block away.

I blinked in surprise, then froze in horror as I watched Mr Sutherland walking out of the business doors toward his car. I wouldn't put it past him to try and report me for showing up here, in a panic I turned, hurrying away with my jacket zipped up to the edges to try and hide my face. Without thinking, I placed the wooden mask over my eyes to hide them before realising what a stupid idea that was. I ducked into the alley and rolled my eyes at myself.

"Hiding from my boss using the mask I stole from him, brilliant move, Joshua..."

I reached up to remove it before pausing; how was it still on my face? The mask was just made of wood, it didn't have a strip or any sort of clips to hold it in place, it should have fallen off the second I put it on but it hadn't. In fact it had stayed on while I ran in here.

I reached up again and watched my hands appear in front of my face. Only they weren't my hands. They were long and thin with nails that had been manicured to points that looked almost dangerously sharp.

"What?"

My voice! That...that wasn't my voice it was so...sensual and throaty; and *feminine*. a voice like whiskey and cigarettes, rough around the edges but intoxicating all the same

I felt something shifting across my skin and I looked down to see my clothing moving as if it were alive! Stitches melted and appeared in new places as the heavy coat and pants I

was wearing changed shape. I could feel the mask changing too, reshaping itself into something sleeker and form fitting across my features. What was even stranger, I could feel it shaping my body along with it!

“Oh Gods, what the fuck??”

My baggy pants became tight, the black fabric turning to a pair of stretchy black tights that hugged my skin. No wait, they weren't tights, they were melding with my coat and shirt to become a body suit of soft black fabric. Fabric so tight that I could easily see my body changing shape beneath it, taking on a much more curvaceous shape.

I could only look down in shock and watch what was happening and panic flowed through every pore as they changed. My heart was beating wildly in my chest; and there was certainly a lot more chest than usual to beat against. It may have been a while since I'd gotten laid, but I knew a pair of tits when I saw them. All round and bouncy, filling the cups in my new body suit as they swelled.

I could feel my ass going through a similar change. New, hefty round cheeks that were perfectly supported by the body suit. I tried in vain to turn to see it; my butt felt so heavy now I wanted to see just how big it had gotten but it was no use. Every time I turned a wall of long, dark red hair floated in front of my eyes.

“Wait, is that coming from my head?”

It was a stupid how long it took me to realise those red tresses were mine but to be fair, I'd been a short haired brunette a minute ago! Not to mention a man! And speaking of manhood, it was slowly shrinking.

“Ohhhh...Ohhhh no what??”

I could feel my cock being pushed up into my body by the body suit getting tighter and tighter until finally there was nothing left, just a featureless mound.

Then came the sensations.

So many sensations, it was as if the amount of nerves between my legs had doubled. I couldn't help but moan as I felt folds forming between my legs. On some level, I knew I was growing a pussy but it was just so shocking I couldn't fully accept it. At least not until I felt a tiny clit grow and brush against the soft inner lining of my new costume.

I stumbled forward with the intensity and shock of the new feeling and realised I was now in a pair of dark red heeled boots. The colour spread, winding up my body suit in whorls and beautiful patterns that reminded me of vines to pattern the outfit. The swirls curled around my thighs and cupped my breasts. Not that they needed anything extra to draw the eye with their size.

My sharp nails were coated in gloves, but the tips of each finger hosted a metal point that gave them a dangerous edge, almost like claws. And a silver utility belt was slung low on my hips and jangled; making me wonder what treasures were hidden away in the pockets.

The entire transformation passed by in less than a minute but it left me breathless. Just what had happened? One minute I am a normal, slightly messy guy and the next I'm a hot redhead in heels wearing a fox mask? The sun had fully set now and I just had the light of the moon to study my new form by. I was still trying to get a good look at my ass when I heard footsteps. I couldn't let somebody see me like this!

Without thinking I grabbed for the fire escape and with acrobatic skill I did not know I possessed, I pulled myself up the side, jumping and flipping from the side of the building until I found myself on the roof.

"...How did I do that?" I breathed, "and why did it feel so good?"

I stretched experimentally, feeling my long legs burn pleasantly as I did; despite being all curves this body also felt like it was made for moving. I jumped a few times, marvelling at my ability to balance perfectly in heels; this felt great!

I turned and realised I was now on the rooftop next to Eloquence and Antiquities. The wind blew my red hair gently against my neck and I shivered. There was something else, the mask had bought something with it, more than a physical change. I felt emotions and ideas that weren't quite my own and they whispered in my ears. About how easy it would be to jump to the next roof over and cut through the glass with my newly sharpened nails.

A grin formed on my full lips and I felt the slight sting of fangs where two of my canines had lengthened slightly. It seemed I was growing a spine once more; only this time I had the skills to actually do something useful with it. Using my new found grace and agility I easily jumped the gap between the buildings, digging my metal nails into the brickwork to hold myself in place with ease. I used my free hand to claw a small hole in the glass and flick off the security switch before unlocking the window from the inside and sliding into the room silent as a shadow.

“Hello again my pretties...” I cooed, looking at the room full of treasures I was so used to cleaning around.

My sharp eyes immediately caught the infrared sensors in the corners and smiled. My hands moved subconsciously to my new utility belt; it was almost like I was a passenger in my own body; it just seemed to know things, like how to break into buildings apparently. I let the new instincts take over and produced a small can of aerosol. With a few sprays the red laser lines were revealed and I smirked.

“Child’s play.”

With that same playful smile on my face I lowered myself to the floor, ignoring the slight pain as my breasts crushed against the polished wood. The body suit was so thin I could feel the tiny cracks between each wooden panel as I slid beneath the first set of lights before slowly bringing myself up onto a low crawl.

It was surprising really; you would have thought my new curves would make moving between the lasers more difficult but if anything they made the movements more easy. My centre of gravity was lower and I had no issues bending my body around the lasers like a gymnast. I bent over backwards, arching my new tits to the ceiling; if it weren’t for the tightness of the body suit my tits would have been falling over my face but thankfully the tight fabric kept them supported.

Finally, I flipped back to the tips of my toes and ended up before the glass cabinet housing the necklace. It really was far too pretty to be sitting here, unadmired. With a flick of my wrist my new clawed hands made a perfect circle in the glass and I reached in to pluck the treasure and place it in the empty pocket of my belt.

The moment I lifted it there was a quiet click and I cursed under my breath; a pressure weight, I should have seen that coming. I pressed a hand back onto the velvet cushion but it was too late, the door was opening and there was the night watchman; a brute of a man capable of snapping my new spine in two if he really wanted.

“Stop right there!”

The sight of him should have sent a chill down my spine but instead I felt a coy smile forming on my face even as he raised his pistol up.

“I mean it!”

“Come now, you don’t want to use that on me, darling.” I purred; my words dripped with honey and venom, a dangerous cocktail that left a sweet taste in my mouth and sent a shiver down my spine.

It was that feeling again, that new set of instincts the masks had given me. I fell into them, somehow knowing that it would keep me safe. My eyes dipped to the name badge pinned to his chest.

“Hank is it?” I continued, walking around the case to face him, feeling my hips move even more sensually as I walked toward him.

A sense of certainty and control settled over me; he may have a gun pointed toward me but my instincts told me he would never fire it. I was in control here; even if he didn't realise it. A thrill went through me as I let the new persona take more and more control and as I did so another revelation washed over me.

These new instincts weren't gearing up for violence but instead, seduction. It turns out when caught there were more options than just fight, flight or freeze; in fact there was an entirely different F word I intended to use.