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The Goddess

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THE GODDESS

It was a dark and stormy night.” That’s how this is supposed to start, right? Well, it was dark, because it was nighttime, but it wasn’t stormy. There were some clouds, but it was by no means stormy.

Just the kind of night I was accustomed to, occasionally swiveling my chair around to look out the window and see the cars pass by my building. That was the usual excitement around here, nothing truly interesting. My cases were all mundane, consisting mostly of creepy guys trying to look up their high school girlfriends and parents trying to find indignant offspring. I have searched for missing persons, missing property and even missing pets. Not the kind of things I thought I’d be doing when I became a private eye. I always dreamed of solving real mysteries and taking cases filled with intrigue and strange characters. Instead, I’ve spent the years in a smoky office with a slow revolving ceiling fan and my face down on the desk with a cigarette in one hand, a glass of scotch in the other.

About this time I started thinking I should lock up and head home, but I was much too comfortable with my face buried in my folded arms. As I contemplated simply passing out in my chair I heard the clack of blinds being disturbed by the door opening. I thought that maybe if I didn’t move whoever this was would find some other chump to stalk his tenth grade sweetheart for him and leave me in my misery.

“Excuse me?”

The voice seeped into my ears like a pleasant symphony. It wasn’t the kind of voice I was expecting. It sounded warm and inviting, and I was more than willing to hear what it was ready to offer.

I lifted my head to see a tall woman wearing a long tan trench coat and a wide brimmed hat to match. I was intrigued.

“You are Jack Sands, right? That’s what it says on the door, but I just want to be sure.”

“Yeah, that’s me.”

“Thank goodness, you’re the only person who can help me.”

“Well what’s the problem, Miss...”

“Palm. Sally Palm.” And as she said this she reached out to shake my hand. I stood up and gave her mine. Her hand was soft and smooth and I wanted to just hold on to it. After the shake she didn’t pull her hand away. She just stared into my eyes with these brilliant green orbs. It was a brief moment but it was enough to make me want her to stay.

“Please sit down, Miss Palm.”

She nodded and removed her hat to reveal her face much clearer than before. The light in the room seemed to immediately jump onto her long, blonde hair. It shone brilliantly in the lamp light like a beacon for weary travelers, inviting them to welcome arms. She placed the hat on the end of the chair’s back and took off her coat. This revealing stunned me even more than the first. She wore a tight, blue dress that hugged every inch it covered, yet it still revealed much of her long legs. She sat down and crossed her legs, the dress creeping up just enough to show a peek of her stocking trim.

I hit the jackpot.

“So what’s your problem, Miss Palm?”

“It’s my brother, Christian. He’s disappeared.”

“When was the last time you saw him?”

“Two weeks ago at his fiancé’s funeral.”

“What happened to his fiancé?”

“Tragic car accident. They all say it was an accident, but I think there was some foul play involved.”

“What makes you say that?”

“Christian had fallen in with some bad guys.”

“Then what makes you think he hasn’t disappeared on his own? Maybe he doesn’t want to be found.”

“No, that’s not like him. He seemed pretty spooked at the funeral.”

“So, do you think he stole something from these guys, pissed them off, and now they’re after him?”

“I’m really worried about him, Mr. Sands. Is there anything you can do?”

This wasn’t the kind of case that I was accustomed to and I knew that this was going to be trouble as soon as I got a good look at her. But she looked so good, how could I say no?

I stood up and walked around the desk next to her chair and held my hand out. “I’ll take your case, Miss Palm.”

She jumped up, knocking her hat to the floor, and said “Oh, thank you so much, Mr. Sands!” She hugged me, pinning my hand between our bodies. As she pressed her warm body against mine, I couldn’t help but think of other places where our bodies could be pressed together. My hand was in a state of euphoria, trapped against her flat stomach. I wanted to move it so as not to be awkward, but then I really didn’t want to move anything at all.

She stepped back and grabbed her coat, draping it over her left arm. She looked for her hat, but didn’t find where she left it. I noticed it on the floor and knelt down to pick it up. As soon as it was in my hands I noticed her feet, and I stopped. My gaze slowly lifted from her black heels and followed her legs up as far as the eye could see. She was staring down on me with a knowing look. I jumped up quickly, handed her the hat, and moved to the door to show her out.

She put on her hat and coat, but left it unbuttoned, most likely to give me one last look at her features. She started to leave, but stopped in front of me. She turned and looked into my eyes once more. I felt I had to say something else to assure her of my abilities.

“I’ll find your brother, don’t you worry, Miss Palm.”

She flashed me a warm smile and put her hand on my chest. She traced a finger down my body while saying, “Thank you, Mr. Sands,” emphasizing my name with a caress of my most... eager region, and she walked away.

I closed the door and the blinds. I didn’t want some nostalgic yuppie to ruin this moment. I sat in the chair that she had sat in and soaked up the essence she left behind. I couldn’t help but think there was something strange about her. I didn’t want to think that, but everything seemed too good to be true. Regardless of my thoughts, it was time to get cracking on finding her lost brother.

I poured through the last few weeks of newspapers littering my desk, each in a neat stack and still feeling fresh from the printer. I hadn’t touched them. I was too busy drinking scotch and passing out at my desk to care about what was happening in the world. I searched for news of mob activity, shootings, drug busts, robberies, or new Italian restaurants. Anything that might give me a clue. The only thing of any note was a pair of thieves who got away with a big diamond heist three weeks ago, nothing that would help me learn anything about Sally’s missing brother and his dead fiancé.

Just when I was out of hope and thought I would have to go beyond my desk for answers, the phone rang.

“Jack Sands, private eye.”

“Listen to me, Jack. Forget about it. You hear me? She’s bad news. Stay out of business that doesn’t concern you.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Sally, jackass! She’s dangerous. You may not see it now, but you’ll be afraid soon enough.”

“Hey, the only thing I’m afraid of is her seeing me while I’m standing up next time.”

I probably shouldn't have said that out loud.

"She's got you fooled, eh? She did the hat thing, didn't she? I'll bet she was wearing that blue number too. I've seen her play this game a million times."

"Look, what do you know!? I want some answers!"

"You want answers, eh? Fine, meet me at the docks, pier 39. 3 am. Look for Mr. E. Come alone. Then you'll get your precious answers."

He quickly hung up after giving me my directions. All his call did was confuse me. What did he mean by "this game," and how did he know Sally? Could she really be duping me? I knew it was too good to be true, but is anything this guy saying true? Maybe he's just some jealous boyfriend? Still, I had reason now to be cautious. I grabbed my gun from the drawer, put on my coat, and left for the docks.

The docks were foggy, the haze made it seem like a dream. I couldn't see more than twenty feet in front of me. I strolled around until I found pier 39, and looked out at sea. There were no ships anywhere in sight and the undisturbed water seemed to be keeping quiet just for my own benefit. As I turned, I saw a figure standing under the street lamp at the other end of the pier. I couldn't make out anything about him, I just saw a silhouette swirled in mist.

"Who's there? Mr. E?"

"Yes. Come closer, Jack."

I walked closer and as I parted the fog, the man's face became clearer. He looked no older than the assholes that send me out to find their old prepubescent crushes. Instantly, I didn't like him.

"So what's the deal, Mr. E?"

"Sally isn't what she seems, Jack. There's so much more going on beneath the surface that you have no idea about."

"You're telling me."

Again, something I should've kept to myself.

"You joke now, Jack, but you'll be sorry if you go any deeper. You're not gonna find a brother or a dead fiancé, you're just gonna find a lot of trouble."

"Are you saying she lied to me? If she doesn't want me to find her brother, then what does she want from me?"

"I've said too much already. I have to..."

Just then, there was a gunshot from over in the shadows. I ducked down and drew my gun. The fog was so thick I couldn't see anything past the pool of light Mr. E and I had occupied. After a few seconds of scanning, I looked back at Mr. E to see him on the ground clutching his shoulder. I rushed over to him.

"Someone doesn't like you, mister."

"This is what I'm talking about, Jack. It's too late now. She's already won."

"Who's won!? I don't understand!"

"SALLY! I can't believe you still don't understand! Here! This should be enough."

He reached into his coat and handed me a small bag. I started to pull it open when I felt a presence behind me. It was instantly familiar, and I welcomed it. I quickly stuffed the bag into my coat as the presence moved right up against my back.

"Thank you so much, Mr. Sands. You've found my brother, and so quickly."

I turned around to see Sally, just as I remembered her, only now she had added a gun to her arsenal of deadly weapons.

"Sally, what's going on here?"

"Mr. Sands, please."

She seemed to ignore my question. She just rubbed her way past and proceeded to talk to my wounded friend. I didn't know what to do. I was in such a state of bewilderment. All I could do was just watch Sally interrogate this poor man.

"Where are they, Christian?"

"I don't have them, Sally. Fuck off!"

"After everything I've done for you, you would talk to me like that." Sally fired a shot into his other arm. He screamed in agony as she climbed on top of him and leaned in so that they were face to face. He was right, Sally was dangerous. She fooled me and did it well. Yet even watching this display of cruelty, I still wanted nothing more than to be in bed with her, having things done for me that she had done for him. She had me in her spell. I'm sure at one time she had him, too, and if this meant that I'd end up like him, I'm not so sure I'd have a problem with that.

"One more chance."

"I'm not telling you anything. You're not going to have your way with me again. I beat you to the punch Sally. You just can't stand that someone beat you at your own game. It burns you up so much that you just have to get revenge, don't you? You're not gonna get the satisfaction from me. This day is mine. Nothing you ever did made me feel as good as I do right now."

The guy had lost it.

"You're wrong, Christian. Right now, I'm going to give you even more ecstasy than you've ever imagined."

She stood directly above him and with the same knowing look she gave me, she shot him right in the

head, killing him instantly. His body went limp and she just stared down at her accomplishment. She seemed to admire it. Part of me was wishing that she had only asked me to find an old dog, part of me was kinda happy this guy was out of the way, and part of me wanted to jump into the water and swim as far as I could. None of those parts had any control, and the one that did wasn't about to let those other ones have any.

She turned around and her hair swung too, catching the light as it swept away from her and then nestling itself back again.

"He's not your brother, is he?"

"No. And Christian probably isn't his real name either."

"There was no funeral, there was no car accident; there is no dead fiancé, and there are no bad guys, are there?"

"No. I made all that up."

I felt my coat and remembered the bag that Mr. E handed me. I pulled it out of my pocket and held it in my palm out in front of me.

"This is what you're looking for."

"I knew you had it, Mr. Sands. I'm just so glad you're giving it to me."

She took the bag from me and shoved it in her coat. She didn't even look inside.

"You're not going to look inside?"

"I don't need to, I trust you."

She winked at me and started to walk away. I could feel her slipping away, and I couldn't let that happen without something more.

"Sally!"

I couldn't say much, and that was all I could get out. She turned around and walked up to me.

"Thank you, Jack."

Then she kissed me, and as she did everything around me melted away: the dock, the pier, the water, the fog, and the killing. It all disappeared and all that was left was me, Sally, and our kiss.

She broke away and walked out of my life. I would've stayed there forever with her body pressed against mine. I sat at the edge of the dock and stared out into the water again. This time the sound was deafening, but this time it didn't matter. I didn't need to hear anything else. I wasn't waiting for anything. At that moment, I didn't need anything.

On the long walk back to my office through the city streets I couldn't stop thinking about that kiss. Nothing else from the past few hours entered my head, not Mr. E's warnings over the phone, not his cold body on the cement, and not Sally delivering the killing blow.

The sun rose and I felt like I was walking the streets naked, just like a baby enters the world. I was exposed. I let myself become exposed. I let myself get too excited, and it bit me right in the ass. After everything is said and done, I'm not in any better of a place than when I started. I was tricked, I didn't get the girl, and I didn't even get paid. I've been thinking about taking payment up front, and this case settles it.

I walked into my office and opened the blinds, poured myself a fresh scotch, and lit a new cigarette. With my tools ready, I folded my arms and laid my head down on my desk, ready for another day of work.

I didn't take any notice when the clacking of the blinds disturbed the silence of the room; I decided it was better to remain just as I was.

"Excuse me?"

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