

One out of three

Only in dreams is the lawless beast unleashed, at least for mere mortals. For the re-animated, there are no barriers. Cassandra's lethal punctures transformed all men into sleeping angels, their arms above their heads, hair under arms and on their chest. The site of pierced flesh sent her spirit soaring. Criminals particularly intrigued Cassandra. Like her, the Alpha male was a mixture of brutality and charm. She admired such men because they took what they wanted. While most women desperately telegraphed sexuality in skin-tight skirts and spiked heels, Cassandra needed only to enter the room. Her presence electrified the air with peacock blue eyes, strawberry blonde hair and a sculptured body. Few were immune to her irresistibility.

Business was brisk in the summer. With a corral of five women under her employ, the evening haul was rarely less than \$3,500. It was a natural progression for Cassandra to run a brothel. She understood uncontrollable hunger. Her girls were young. "Innocence is the ultimate aphrodisiac," Cassandra categorically stated to them. "Keep your make-up light and your attire childlike. They may regard you as a whore but they really want to screw their best friend's daughters. Men crave youth and vulnerability." Her brothel was situated in an affluent area. She lived below and converted the upper half of the duplex for clients. A long, straight, wood staircase led to the back entrance, concealed by oak trees. Her clients were able to enter and exit without drawing the attention of neighbors. Four bedrooms were in constant use. The living room was decorated with large throw pillows and multi-colored lighting. Cassandra encouraged her clients to remain

after each session to enjoy a smoke on the Egyptian shisha pipe. Liqueurs and music often resulted in a second session being purchased before departing. The money rolled in like the regularity of the sunset to sunrise, while the walls of the rooms quivered with the nightly aroma of sexualized scent.

Daniel was known in the city as The Man. His organization of drug running, money laundering and bookmaking quickly propelled him to the top of his game. He was a savagely cruel man. Women flocked to him like flies to feces. Despite years of drug abuse, he maintained robust looks. Daniel rang the doorbell to Cassandra's duplex. He peered inside the glass. She was coming out of the shower and wrapped her silk kimono around her svelte body. "Daniel. What a pleasant surprise to see you. I wasn't expecting you this evening." He was agitated, more so than usual. 'I thought we had an understanding, Cassie,' he announced forcefully. She smiled. Cassandra was a master manipulator and a keen observer of human behavior. She quickly deduced he was evading. "Our arrangement, Daniel, was your turning a blind-eye to my business in exchange for having my girls as a gratuity. I believe we agreed on one visit per week." Cassandra liked most about Daniel his muscled body. She was reminded of the first time her path crossed with him. She immediately felt a connection, an instinctual bubbling in her veins. Regardless of the amount of time between feedings, Cassandra developed a connoisseur's appetite. Not every man took her fancy. She gravitated to those with an aura, like the warriors of Centuries ago. In those days, men were bred to

conquer worlds, but in the Modern Age the closest equivalent is the street criminal. Cassandra collected thugs like trophies.

"You cut up Tracy last night, you crazy bastard. She was my best girl." Cassandra toyed with him. Her empathy for the loss of human life had long abandoned her. She would replace Tracy. After all, the world was an undulating river of women. Daniel stopped pacing and sat down. She handed him a fresh glass. "One neat Scotch, just the way you like it. Tell me what's bothering you. I sense something happened that has put you in a foul mood." Daniel looked away. He recognized a kindred spirit in Cassandra. She possessed the coldness for business and the power for dominating people, much like himself. Yet he hesitated to confide in her. As she turned, he caught her arm. 'You don't look so bad for an old broad of 40,' he admired. Cassandra silently added a second zero to her age. "I never rise before nightfall. That's my secret to beauty." She sat back down. The edge of her kimono opened, revealing a soft, pink nipple. Her breasts were curvaceous. Her skin resembled the essence of lilies. Daniel brushed her nipple with his nail, scratching it hard. Cassandra's eyes sparkled. "You know how to entice me. My girls tell me you're a jackhammer. A man with stamina stirs the blood in my veins. Are you fond of blood, Daniel?" Cassandra plunged her tongue into his mouth. She kissed him deeply, pulling his body closer.

Daniel raised his arm in a gesture to hit her, but she barely flinched. "Admittedly, I am drawn to violence," she said. Daniel attempted to mount Cassandra. Her arms had the strength of bulls. His eyes became unfocused

as he struggled to gain control. "You women are all alike. Throw praise or money at your feet and your legs spread like...". He was unable to finish his sentence before Cassandra bit the upper half of his lip, drawing blood. With her tongue, she tasted him. "Delicious, so sweet and sour." Cassandra pushed Daniel back into a sitting position. "Finish your drink, my pet. I have a special surprise for you." She exposed her breast and leaning forward to his mouth, inserted her nipple between his lips. Daniel sucked hard. "A little something to tide you over while waiting."

She went into her bedroom and dressed in a long, transparent gown. She opened her jewelry box and pulled out a black, leather necklace that held three small, ornate boxes. By the time Cassandra returned to the living room, Daniel was rubbing himself. "Don't. Leave that to me." She was naked under the gown. He saw her for the first time. 'You have no idea how many women I've had', he declared. 'I'm so bored. The only way I can get off now is to destroy the very thing I desire.' "How ironic, Daniel. You and I are more alike than you can possibly imagine." She returned to his side. Her hand caressed his thigh in slow concentric circles, leading to his groin. The other hand held up the necklace to his view.

Cassandra's fascination for living was sustained through the collection of wisdom in understanding human nature. She knew that fear of death and greed for power were the two most powerful elements in humanity. "Inside each box contains one written word; death, freedom or immortality. You've earned my respect and therefore I will grant you the power to choose your fate. Others have not been so lucky." Daniel let out a

ridiculous laugh. His incredulity at her arrogance revealed his contempt for Cassandra. 'You stupid bitch. I already gave the order before I arrived. My boys are going to do a number on your ass, while I videotape your very special date.' Daniel put his hands around Cassandra's neck, grabbing hold of her hair. 'We're turning you into an extreme sport and your business is mine.'

Cassandra moved deftly. She kissed Daniel and in rising, his entire body lifted off the sofa. His eyes widened in disbelief. "By that time, sweet Daniel, it may be too late for you." Her mouth opened to display canine teeth. Her venomous eyes changed to blood red in color. Cassandra held up Daniel with one arm above her head. "Regrettably, you forfeited your choice." He realized he had underestimated her. His words were choked as he tried to charm her. 'Cassie...wait a second, baby. I'm only joking. I got unsettling news from the doctor.' Cassandra closed her eyes. She visualized his face, his body dangling above her head. With her free hand, she pulled out one piece of paper and read aloud the word. "Death." Daniel looked in horror. Her grip was powerful. He could not fathom how a petite woman was able to restrain him.

Cassandra lowered Daniel to her mouth and sunk her teeth into his neck. The warmth of his blood filled her mouth and she fed greedily. Daniel's legs wriggled in a feeble attempt to break free. No sound escaped his lips. The breath of his life quickly evaporated. In large gulping gestures, the atmosphere of the room changed, permeated by death. His eyes now pale gray and his body limp. Cassandra lifted Daniel onto the sofa. She brushed

his hair away from his forehead and kissed him. Blood ran down his neck, onto his chest. She sighed with pleasure, the poetic scene complete, the distillation of his nature absorbed into her soul. She removed his shirt to gaze at his body. His arms were positioned above his head. As she pulled off his jeans, a folded piece of paper fell to the floor. Cassandra glanced at the words - HIV positive. She let out a roaring laugh. Death is beauty. Freedom is violence. Immortality is ironic. "Sweet eternal dreams, my sleeping angel."

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Patricia Kathleen McCarthy