

LITTLE DELL RIDING HOOD

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“You’re sure you want to go through with this, Jackie?”

“Sure, I’m sure. Why wouldn’ I be?” she stretches out on the old iron bed. “An’ don’ give me tha’ look.”

“Sorry. Just I seem to recall when I did this to you on the monorail, you slapped me when I brought you back.”

“An’ as I recall, I’ve been askin’ ye to do it again. Anyway, tha’ was different. Dell’s not as violent as I am.”

Paul arches an eyebrow, “You’re sure about that?”

“‘Course I’m sure. I’m not Sam, y’ know. I don’t spend my time dreamin’ up ways to make Dell suffer.”

“That I know. I think she likes you.”

Jackie’s green eyes narrow, “An’ jus’ what does tha’ mean?”

“Nothing. Just Dell likes you. Why? What did you think I meant?” a pillow hits him in the face.

“Let’s get on wi’ it.”

Dell feels her heart start up again as she emerges from the floor, blinking in what appears to be the inside of an old-fashioned cottage, complete with a thatched roof. “Jesus, how many rooms does this thing have?”

“More’n enough, Dell.”

Dell looks up at the old-fashioned iron bed, where Jackie reclines in a green nightdress that just manages to be decent. She smiles, “Hey, Jacks. What you got planned for me today?”

“Somethin’ special.”

“Oooh, so mysterious, aren’t you? Is this a secret or somethin’? I don’t see anyone else around.”

“Don’ worry. The boss’ll sort the whole thing out, an’ the other’s aren’ interested.”

“They’re not? I’m losing my box office draw already? Say it ain’t so.”

“They don’ wanna participate, why should I let ‘em enjoy the show?”

“Oooh. Must be kinky if you’ve scared everyone else off.”

“Hah. No more’n my usual.”

“Honestly, Jackie. I swear you’re a corrupting influence on the poor, innocent girl.”

Dell turns, “So, Boss, what’s the fairy tale cottage all in aid of?”

“I’m sure you’ll figure it out when you’re in costume.”

“Costume?” she looks at Jackie, “Jeez, you’re going all out for this one, aren’t you?”

“Figured it would do you good.”

Paul swirls his cloak around Dell, “HEY!” and when he pulls it away, her t-shirt and jeans have been replaced by a white blouse and flaring ruffled skirt, a red cloak draped over her shoulders, falling to the floor, the hood folded back, a wicker hand basket over her arm. Dell looks down, “You had better put me back when this is all over, Boss. There’s no way I’ll be wearing this stuff regularly.” She gets no reaction, “So, I’m dressed as Little Red Riding Hood because...”

“Ye’ll see.” Jackie grins as she scoots under the covers.

Paul pulls them back, to reveal the negligee transformed into a thick shawl wrapped around her shoulders over a cardigan and white nightdress and bloomers, her hair in a thick net, a pair of reading glasses perched on her nose.

“Oh, no, don’t tell me you’re my Grandma? And you’re going to play big bad Wolf.”

“Wait ‘n’ see.”

“Not you, too.” Dell mutters as Paul throws the covers over Jackie again and pulls them back from a woman covered in tiger-patterned fur, her large triangular ears twitching through the cap. A long tail curls out from under her, her smile revealing long fangs. “Hi again, Jacks. Aren’t you supposed to be a wolf?”

Jackie chuffs and laughs, “Aye, but we’re not exactly bein’ faithful to the original.”

Dell approaches the bed, “What big ears you’ve got, Grandma.”

“All th’ better t’ hear ye with.”

“And what big eyes you’ve got.”

“All th’ better t’ see ye with.”

Dell reaches the bed, “And what big teeth you’ve got, Grandma Jackie.”

Jackie smiles, “All th’ better for eatin’ disrespectful grandkids with.” She grabs Dell, pulling her onto the bed.

“Hey! You’re not really going to...” Dell’s voice vanishes into Jackie’s mouth as she gobbles her up.

“Maybe we should have told her we were doing the original tale?”

“Mebbe. Oooh, she’s a squirmy one.” Jackie smiles, hugging herself, the red cloak draped over her, “It is sooo much better this way roun’ than the other. No’ that I minded the monorail tha’ much. So, can we do this in the show, d’ y’ think?”

“Sure, I’ve got a copy of Sam the Sham around somewhere. We just need to hide it with the cloak. Oh, and persuade one of the others.”

“Oh, never mind then.”

“Ready to let her out?”

“Do I have ta? I’d like t’ keep her in for a wee bit longer. All that wriggling feels soooo good.”

“Well, I suppose I could, but if she’s squirming that much, I doubt she’s having a good time.”

“Yeah, I know.” She lies back on the bed, stretching out, “Go on an’ get her out then.”

Paul pulls out a Bowie knife, putting on a Davey Crockett hat, “I’m the Woodsman.” He replies to Jackie’s questioning look. “Sure you’re ready?” he asks, the tip of the knife poised on her breastbone.

“Ge’ on wi’ it.” She hisses as the knife pushes into her body. Paul pulls it down as smoothly as if her stomach was made of butter, stopping as he reaches her waist. She shivers as Paul reaches into the bloodless gash splitting her stomach and starts to pull, the sides of the cut pushing back as Dell emerges from inside her. Dell backs away, her long tiger tail swaying, her whiskers twitching.

“What the hell was that??? You &*\$£ing ate me!! Jesus, I thought you were different from the others! I thought I could actually trust you! What a &*\$£ing idiot I was!”

“Dell...”

“Shut up! Just shut up! I thought you were my friend, Jackie! And then you do this!!!”

“Dell, I didn’t want to hurt you by doing this, I...”

“Well, how the %£\$& did you think I’d react???!! You ate me! Do you have any idea how that...”

“Well, yeah, as a matter o’ fact I do.”

“What?”

“The Boss ate me at the monorail show we did when we started workin’ fer your da’. So I know it’s scary, but ye must ha’ known I wouldn’ hurt ye.”

“Well, yeah, I suppose, but, still, you ate me! And...”

“An’ it was the best roller-coaster ye’ve been on. Was fer me, fer sure.”

Dell slowly smiles, “Yeah, I suppose it was a fun ride, maybe. But you could have warned me!”

“Sorry. Anythin’ I can do t’ make it up t’ ye?”

Dell looks at Paul, “I don’t suppose you’ll let me eat her, will you?”

He shakes his head. “Sorry. You don’t get to play during your punishment.” He pulls a three-foot wide ball of yarn out from under the bed, and sets it rolling, two pairs of emerald feline eyes following it hypnotically. “I’ll just let you two play for a bit, shall I?”

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