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# The DARKNESS



LANSANG  
LLAMAS  
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OBI

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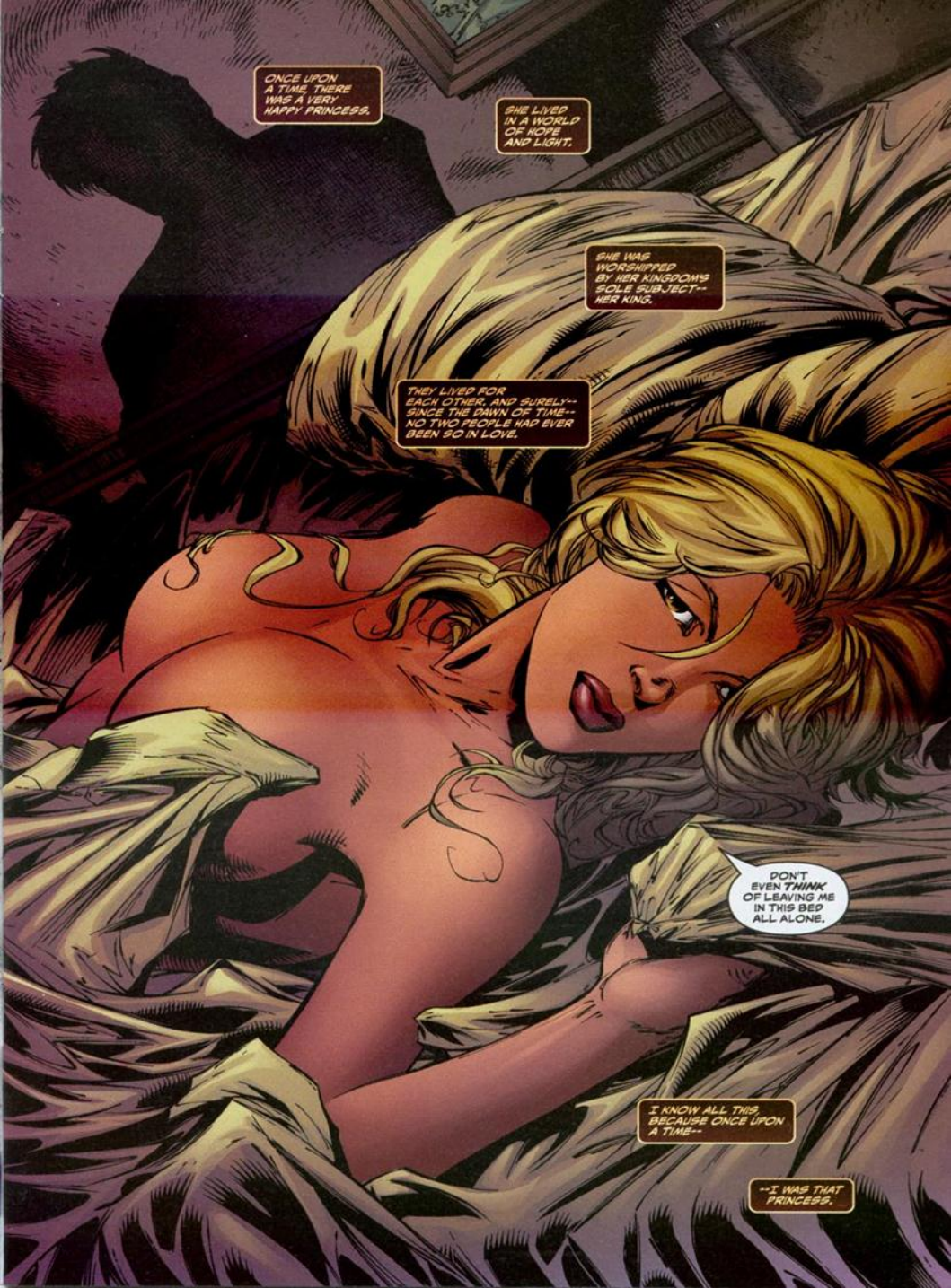


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ONCE UPON  
A TIME THERE  
WAS A VERY  
HAPPY PRINCESS.

SHE LIVED  
IN A WORLD  
OF HOPE  
AND LIGHT.

SHE WAS  
WORSHIPPED  
BY HER KINGDOM'S  
SOLE SUBJECT--  
HER KING.

THEY LIVED FOR  
EACH OTHER, AND SURELY--  
SINCE THE DAWN OF TIME--  
NO TWO PEOPLE HAD EVER  
BEEN SO IN LOVE.

DON'T  
EVEN THINK  
OF LEAVING ME  
IN THIS BED  
ALL ALONE.

I KNOW ALL THIS,  
BECAUSE ONCE UPON  
A TIME--

--I WAS THAT  
PRINCESS.

GRANTED, OFFICIALLY  
I WAS A SPECIAL AGENT FOR  
THE FEDERAL BUREAU OF  
INVESTIGATION AT THE TIME—  
A HOUSLY RECOGNIZED  
SPECIAL AGENT AT THAT.

BUT TONY ALWAYS  
MADE ME FEEL LIKE  
A PRINCESS.

HE HAD FROM THE MOMENT  
WE MET IN A RED PIT ON THE  
FIRE TOWNING GROUNDS, AT  
QUANTICO VIRGINIA.

I WENT ON TO  
SPECIALIZE IN  
INTERNATIONAL  
TERRORISM.

TONY CABARELLO  
WAS AN AMERICAN AND  
UNDERCOVER WORK IN  
THE FEDERAL  
CRIME DIVISION.

CARLA,  
PLEASE!

DON'T  
MAKE THIS  
ANY HARDER  
THAN IT  
ALREADY IS.

WHILE I'M  
ON SPECIAL  
ASSIGNMENT,  
WE SHOULDN'T  
EVEN BE SEEING  
EACH OTHER HERE  
IN THIS DIVE. IF THE  
DIRECTOR KNEW  
WE WERE FLOUTING  
THE RULES, HE'D  
HAVE OUR  
HEADS.

SO LET HIM  
THEY'RE NOT  
NECESSARY BODY  
PARTS FOR  
ROUND TWO.

OKAY CARLA—  
THIS IS ABOUT MY  
ENGAGEMENT TO  
LORIANA.  
RIGHT?

MY FIANCEE  
IS ENGAGED TO  
SOMEONE ELSE.  
WHY SHOULD  
THAT BOTHER  
ME?

I'M NOT  
ENGAGED—  
MY CHARACTER  
IS, WE'RE GOING  
TO MOVE ON  
MARCHIANNI  
LONG BEFORE—

I KNOW,  
I KNOW—I'M  
JUST BEING  
A GIRL.

THE GIRL  
I LOVE,  
ALWAYS.

DON'T  
YOU FORGET  
THAT.

SO I'LL  
SEE YOU  
TONIGHT?

PLEASE!

CARLA.

I WAS  
KIDDING—  
KIDDING!

CARLA  
LOUISE DENTON  
SOON TO BE  
CABARELLO, WHAT  
AM I GOING TO  
DO WITH YOU?

I  
HAVE A  
LIST!

AND WE'LL  
HABE EIGHT YEARS  
OF WEDDED BLISS  
TO WORK THROUGH THAT  
LIST—SO SOON AS THIS  
ASSIGNMENT IS  
OVER.





I WAS IN THE  
SHOWER AT  
THE TIME.

ISN'T  
THAT  
OBSCENET



OH  
GOD!



THE LIGHT OF  
MY LIFE WAS ABOUT  
TO BE EXTINGUISHED--

--WHILE I WAS QUIETLY  
CURSING THE HOTEL  
MANAGEMENT FOR PUTTING  
THE BAR OF SOAP ON THE  
COUNTER INSTEAD OF  
THE SHOWER STALL WHERE  
IT BELONGED.

NO!



K  
R  
R  
U  
N  
N  
C  
H!

OH MY  
GOD!  
MY LEGS!

AAAA  
TTHH



I REMEMBER SMILING  
AT THE THOUGHT OF  
EVERYTHING WE HAD  
DONE THAT NIGHT.

ALL THE WHISPERED  
PROMISES YOU MAKE IN  
THE MIST OF ECSTASY  
THAT YOU THINK ABOUT  
LATER IN THE LIGHT OF DAY.





LIVING IN NEW YORK CITY,  
YOU'RE USED TO HEARING  
SIRENS.

LIKE BREATHING  
IT ISN'T SOMETHING  
YOU PAY ANY ATTENTION  
TO AT ALL.

MY MIND WAS ON  
THE WEDDING, NOT THE  
DETAILS--THE CATERER,  
THE BAND--BUT ON  
THE AFTERMATH.

WE WERE GOING  
TO TRANSFER TO A QUIETER  
ASSIGNMENT, SOMEWHERE AS  
FAR AWAY FROM TERRORISTS  
AND RACKETEERS AS WE  
COULD GET.

WE HAD BOTH SACRIFICED  
ENOUGH TO THE BUREAU OVER  
OUR CAREERS, THAT IT WAS  
TIME TO ASK FOR  
SOMETHING BACK.

OUR  
LIVES.

AS IT WAS,  
THE BUREAU HAD  
DEMANDED ONE  
LAST SACRIFICE.

I FELT MY BLOOD  
TURN TO ICE, SOMEWHERE  
AT THE BASE OF MY SKULL.

I HAD REALIZED THE CROWD--  
THE COPS, THE AMBULANCE--  
WERE GATHERED IN THE AREA  
WHERE HE HAD PARKED HIS CAR.

IF ONLY I HAD DIED  
BEFORE I REACHED  
THE ALLEY.





CASKETS ARE  
SO SMALL REALLY.

WHEN YOU  
CONSIDER  
THEY'RE FILLED  
WITH MUCH MORE  
THAN THE  
PERSON BEING  
BURIED.

THESE  
STEEL  
OR WOODEN  
BOXES ARE  
FILLED WITH  
ENTIRE  
LIVES...

LIVES  
THAT WERE...  
ENTIRE LIVES  
THAT WILL  
NEVER  
BE.



I  
COULDN'T  
MOVE.

I TRIED--  
I JUST  
COULDN'T.

COULDN'T DO  
ANYTHING  
REALLY.

COULDN'T  
EAT.

COULDN'T  
SLEEP.

COULDN'T  
DREAM.

I COULD ONLY  
LIE THERE IN  
SWEAT AND  
URINE AND  
THE SHATTERED  
SHARDS OF  
MY LOVE.

HAVE  
YOU EVER  
RUN OUT  
OF TEARS?







WE WERE ALL SORRY TO HEAR ABOUT TODD. HE WAS A GREAT MAN AND AN EXEMPLARY AGENT.

IF THERE'S ANYTHING MARGARET AND I CAN DO FOR--

ON THE PHONE YOU SAID YOU HAD A LEAD, EARNST. TELL ME THAT WASN'T A LINE OF CRAP JUST TO GET ME OUT OF THE HOUSE.

RIGHT, SORRY.

TONY "WINE GLASS" MARCHIANNI.

UNTIL LAST WEEK HIS GANG WAS ONE OF THE MOST FEARED FAMILIES ON THE EAST COAST.

TODD WAS WORKING SO FAR UNDERCOVER THAT HE WAS ENGAGED TO MARCHIANNI'S DAUGHTER.

EARNST, YOU HAD ME FLY ALL THE WAY DOWN HERE FOR YESTERDAY'S NEWS?







...IS ONE  
JACKIE  
ESTACADO.

ADOPTIVE  
NEPHEW--IF THERE  
IS SUCH A THING--  
ESTACADO IS FRANCHETTI'S  
RIGHT HAND GUY AND A CRUEL  
AND HEARTLESS BASTARD  
IN HIS OWN RIGHT.

AN ORPHAN  
FROM THE MOMENT  
HE WAS BORN, ESTACADO  
HAS A RECORD ONLY  
SLIGHTLY THICKER THAN  
THE NEW YORK  
YELLOW PAGES.

JUST TURNED  
TWENTY-ONE TWO  
WEEKS AGO, AND THE  
KID IS ALREADY ONE  
OF THE MOST FEARED  
AND HATED OUSTERS  
IN THE BUSINESS.

I WASN'T LISTENING  
TO THE DETAILS ANY LONGER.

THEY'D BE THERE  
IN DETAIL IN THE FOLDER  
GLECKMAN WAS SNEAKING  
TO ME.

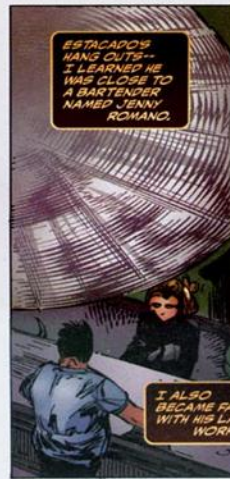
BUT I WANTED TO SAUOR  
THE MOMENT WHEN I COULD  
PUT A NAME AND FACE TO  
THE SHADOWED FIGURE FROM  
THE NIGHTMARE THAT HAD  
BECOME MY LIFE.

THE MAN WHO  
EXTINGUISHED ALL  
THAT WAS GOOD  
IN MY LIFE, PLUNGING  
ME FOREVER INTO  
A WORLD OF  
DARKNESS.

JACKIE  
ESTACADO.

A MAN WHO DIED  
THE MOMENT HE  
MURDERED TODD--

"EVEN IF HE DIDN'T  
REALIZE IT YET."



DARKNESS,

IT WAS A SINGLE  
WORD CLUE LEFT  
BEHIND TO BRAG...!

TAUNT?

LURE?

AFTER A FEW ZILLION  
'WORD SEARCHES' AND  
A THOUSAND MORE  
DEAD ENDS--

"I FOUND MYSELF  
IN INDIA.

INTERNATIONAL  
INTELLIGENCE POINTED  
ME IN THE DIRECTION OF  
AN ANCIENT MAN NAMED,  
APPROPRIATELY,  
THE NAMELESS ONE.

A STRETCH

A WILD  
GOOSE  
CHASE?

MAYBE BUT I SAID  
I'D TRAVEL TO THE FOUR  
CORNERS OF THE EARTH  
TO MAKE TODD'S  
MURDERER PAY.

I  
MEANT  
IT.

YOU HAVE  
TRAVELLED FAR,  
YOUNG ONE.

YOU'VE COME  
TO LEARN A TERRIBLE  
TRUTH ABOUT POWERS  
THAT HAVE SOUGHT TO  
CONTROL THE PEOPLE OF  
THIS EARTH ALMOST  
FROM THE MOMENT  
OF ALL LIFE.

THE DARKNESS,  
THE ANGELUS AND THE  
WITCHBLADE FORM THE  
THREE SIDES OF THE ETERNAL  
TRIARCHY--EACH OF THE THREE  
SIDES PREPARED TO DO ANY-  
THING IN ORDER TO  
DESTROY THE  
OTHER TWO.

THE DARKNESS--  
THE AGENT OF CHAOS--  
IS THE ONE YOU  
SEEK.

IN HIS  
CURRENT  
INCARNATION  
HE IS KNOWN  
AS JACKIE  
ESTACADO.

I HAD NEVER  
MENTIONED MY  
PREY BY NAME.

CLEARLY  
THIS GUY WAS  
THE REALINE  
ARTICLE.



HOW DO I KILL HIM?

HOW DO I KILL THIS DARKNESS?



YOU DO NOT.

VERY LIKELY, YOU CAN NOT.

I DOUBT ANY HUMAN COULD.

THIS IS A STRUGGLE THAT HAS GONE ON FOR CENTURIES. A STRUGGLE HUMANS DARE NOT INVOLVE THEMSELVES IN.



BUT...?

BUT THERE ARE OTHERS.

THERE ARE...THE **NECROBI**.

THEY ARE A RACE OF SHADOW DWELLERS WHO LIVE OFF THE SEXUAL ENERGIES OF HUMANS.

THEY BECOME STRONGER WITH EACH ENCOUNTER OF THE FLESH--THE **NECROBI**'S DEPENDENCE ON SEX MAKES THEM THE ANTITHESIS OF THE DARKNESS.

THEY ARE NATURAL ENEMIES.

WHERE HE IS ONE, THEY ARE A LEGION.

WILL THEY HELP ME?

PRAY THAT THEY DO NOT.



FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR ETERNAL SOUL, PRAY THAT THEY DO NOT.





THREE WEEKS  
LATER, I WAS  
PREPARED.



I SAID  
GOODBYE  
TO THE LIFE  
I KNEW.



HELLO  
TO THE DEAD  
WOMAN IN  
THE MIRROR.



I HAD LEARNED  
OF THE EXISTENCE  
OF ONE OF THEM.



HE WAS A PRISONER  
OF A SYSTEM IN WHICH  
A FEDERAL AGENT HAD  
CERTAIN AUTHORITY.



HIS NAME WAS  
WALTER CULLOWSKI.



I DISPATCHED  
THE GUARDS.



HONESTLY?  
I KILLED THEM.

CULL AGREED  
TO HELP ME.



FOR A  
PRICE.



WAS IT  
WORTH IT?

I'LL  
KNOW  
SOON.



ONE WEEK  
FROM NOW  
JACKIE ESTACADO  
WILL BE DEAD.



TOPP CABARELLO  
WILL BE AVENGER.

AND  
ME...?



TELL ME THE  
PRINCESS WHO  
SLAVED THE  
DARKNESS

AND ALL  
IT COST  
WAS EVERYTHING

END

What's

more

evil

than

the

government?

WE'LL GIVE YOU ONE GUESS.

# THE DARKNESS<sup>®</sup>

## #27

LOBDELL / LANSANG

*In stores the week of Sept. 27*



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