

"Want to dance?" He could hear the metallic tapping of her shoes on the wooden floor behind him, her limp made the sound slightly arrhythmic and it always made him a tad uncomfortable. He looked out through the dirty windows on to the street two stories down, a procession of plague doctors slowly made their way up the street from the docks. Their plague masks and black robes made them look like great birds, as if Thoth the ibis headed god was walking the streets passing judgement upon the dead.

"We've already danced here. Don't think we can dance any more." She stopped walking around behind him and he could hear her opening drawers and going through their contents. "I know. I meant, you know, actually dance." She turned around, the uneven taps sounded... agitated. "Like dance dance?" There was a hint of steel in her otherwise laconic voice. He turned around slowly, feeling a bit sheepish.

She stood leaning against the dresser, arms crossed and her grey eyes fixed on him, hard as shards of onyx. A strand of her long red hair fallen across her left eye. Damn she was beautiful. "Why the hell should we dance?" Yup, he'd definitely over stepped again. He straightened the gun on his back, suddenly aware of its weight. What the hell, too late to turn back now. He pressed a few buttons on his wrist pad and some old music began to play, Edith Piaff probably, he wasn't too good with old 1900s music. She raised an eyebrow, clearly not impressed.

"You know, I thought since we're done here we could get some r'n'r." He tried smiling, but it wasn't terribly convincing. "Really." She looked around the room at the bloated corpses of the family who had lived here. Black pustulent boils covered their naked bodies, the baby in its crib was purple and black and puffed up like a balloon. "Here, in this place, you want some r'n'r?"

He looked down, silent. He could hear Thoths procession enter the house next door, five ibis headed men passing judgement on their work. She walked up to him, the angry patter of tap shoes on wood. He looked up with what he knew was a stupid grin on his face. "Thought we might have som fun's all." She clearly wasn't having it. "Of course that's what you thought. Just dance a bit, then who knows right? Starts getting steamy, clothes come off." She pressed her hand against his crotch, feeling him through the coarse fabric of his khakis. "Then you fuck me on that bed over there, sweat pouring, my cunt milking you for all your worth." She squeezed his package hard and he winced at the pain. She let go of him. They looked over at the bed and the two rotting corpses filling it. "Yeah, that's not gonna happen." She started walking towards the door.

"I wasn't thinking we'd dance here. I thought maybe we'd go up to the palace. You know like in Antwerp." She stopped and turned around. "Antwerp was a one time thing. Stress relief." He could hear a slight hestiance in the last thing she said. "I know but.." "But nothing. Besides we have a whole fucking lot of work left." She stepped over the corpse in the doorway and made her way down the stairs. He followed the arrhythmic tapping down the stairs and out on to the street. It had started raining, water pooling in between the cobbles, hoards of black rats running through the puddles and gnawing on the corpses in the street. He was glad they couldn't smell the place, probably didn't smell all too pleasant to begin with, and now with all this death...

They walked down the street, the patter of her tapshoes on the cobbles broken only by an occasional grunt from him as he tried to walk off the pain in his balls. Suddleny she stopped and turned around. She looked at him, pondering something. "What the hell, fuck it." She walked up to him, pressed herself close to him and put her arms around him. He

swallowed hard. "Just one dance. Maybe two. Then dinner." She smiled up at him. "Ok." He didn't really know what else to say. She tapped the buttons on his wrist pad, the sound of a trumpet drifted through the air. "But none of this Edith Piaf shit. Fucking hate Edith Piaf." He put his hand on the small of her back as they began dancing down the street. "Ok." What else could he say. A raspy voice sang out from the speakers on his wrist "When your smiling..."

Another plague doctor walked past them, rain dripping from the point of his beak, bodies and rats reflected in the round sooted glass covering his eyes. Just like an ibis he thought, I hope he has judged us well.