

# Temptation

By

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“What would you say, if I told you I was the Devil?” I ask, offhandedly. The young girl flashes me a puzzling look, and erupts into laughter. I smile viciously and chuckle with her.

“Oh, my mama told me to watch out for guys like you.”

“Sounds like good advice.” I say, still smiling, then mutter under my breath, “Too bad you’re not going to follow it.”

I lay back and spread my arms across the bleacher bench behind me, tilting my head back to let the sun wash across my face. Creation truly is a wondrous thing. I almost saddens me the simple things these simple minds take for granted. How often do these sheep, as they so adequately dub themselves, take the time to marvel at the glorious and magnificent wonder of all that surround them? But, then again, they’ve always been this way, haven’t they.

My hat starts to ride uncomfortably, forcing me to sit back up. I run my fingers around the brim, checking for any bends or wrinkles. It is a Stetson after all, an eloquently designed, soft black, felt headpiece. Shaped to absolute perfection, steamed and brushed daily. While I’m at it, I decide to brush the lingering dust from the rest of my attire. My shirt, a slick, black, satin, Italian number (the only piece of designer clothing I own that seems to be accepted in these rustic parts.) Jeans, black of course, pressed and starched to a cardboard stiffness. Last, but definitely not least, I give my polished Justin ropers a quick shoeshine buff.

The young girl sitting next to me is Amanda. It’s important to note that she hasn’t told me her name yet. Nor has she told me that she is really fifteen, even though her driver’s license says she’s eighteen. She is originally from Georgia, and has taken great lengths to rid herself of the state’s telltale accent. Her father committed suicide thirteen months ago and her mother will bed anything that wears a gold buckle and a set of spurs. She has dreams of someday becoming a singer. She is secretly terrified of men. Her first sexual experience was at the tender age of five when she watched her cousin Michael masturbate to ejaculation. I know these things about her because she knows these things about her. To me, the human mind is a book to be read at leisure.

“Why do you keep staring at me?” She asks me in her best ‘tough girl’ voice.

*Because I want to suck out your eyeballs and eat your tongue.*

“Because you’re the only thing worth looking at around here.” It’s hard to describe the voice I use in words that will make any sense to you. But, try to imagine the slow rhythmic hum that some machinery emits. That mesmerizing buzz that, if listened to long enough, will leave you almost hypnotized. That really doesn’t explain it very well, but it gives you an idea of what I’m talking about. Regardless, the effect it has on

the human mind is remarkable. I can take the most rigid of consciences and turn them into warm putty, just by the sound of my voice. The girl slides close enough for me to notice the blush on her cheeks, the pounding of her heart, and the scent of her womanhood.

“So, do you rodeo?” She asks, gesturing with a nod towards the arena.

“Absolutely not.” I answer with laughter. “I detest this ignorant sport.” My response seems to sting her pride a little.

“So....then, why are you here?”

“Well, my dear, I have to go where my business takes me.”

“I see.” She says, nodding, taking a moment to process the information then, “So what kind of business are you in Mr. ....?”

“Accusator. Nefastus Accuastor, but you can call me Lucy.” I reply, extending my hand. She accepts the handshake with an inebriated chuckle.

“My, my, you are a strange one.”

“You’re not from around here are you, Amanda?”

“No, I...how did you know that?”

“Your voice has a certain, oh I don’t know, sing to it. Not like the flat, droning, dialect of these mid-western hicks.” This causes her to blush and smile at me. But, soon a look of confusion returns to her face.

“How did you know my name?”

“You told it to me when I first sat down here.” Her head nods doubtfully, and her perplexity increases. I know what’s going through her head right now. She can’t even remember me sitting down next to her. “It’s like he was just there.”, is the way she will explain it later. But, for now, with her frail mind softening under my voice, she simply shrugs the thing away.

“So, what is it that you do, Lucy?” She asks, regaining her focus.

“Well, it’s kind of complicated.” I keep meaning to get business cards made up for these situations. Something humorous and catchy, like:

## **LUCIFER PRINCE OF DARKNESS**

**BRINGER OF PAIN, DEATH AND DESTRUCTION**

*If you have hope, I can crush it*

Well, you get the general idea anyway.

“Oh, c’mon, tell me.”

“Well, I guess the simplest way to describe it is that, I deal in suffering.” I say, dreamily staring at the arena.

“Say, what?” She says that just a little louder than I think she should. Startled, I look over and realize the little trance I put on her is all but gone. She shakes her head, casting off the remaining fussiness, and looking very pissed off at me. Looking around nervously and confused about the past five minutes, she stands up to walk away with

shaking legs, hoping, pleading, praying that she can put some distance from myself and her before it's too late.

"Wait!" I grab her arm forcefully, painfully constricting the meat and bone beneath the skin. She spins around to glare venomously at me, "Let me try to explain." Now, I know what you're thinking. Why does the Devil find it necessary to keep talking to this stupid girl? Well, to be honest, very few people (male or female) have been able to free themselves from my charms. Whenever it happens, I treat these people with the utmost fascination.

"Who the hell are you?" She hisses through clenched teeth.

"Do you remember what I asked you when I first spoke to you? No, you probably don't." I wet my lips and try to regain my composure. I can't let her get away. "What would you say if I told you I was the devil?"

At first, she just stands there like a frightened deer. Shaking, sweating, on the verge of tears. But, then the most amazing thing happens. She closes her eyes, straightens her back, and regains her strength with three deep breaths, like a Buddhist finding his Chi. Her face softens into a sly smile. I haven't been this excited in years.

"I would ask you to prove it." She says coyly, taking back her arm.

"I think I already have." She sits down again, though not nearly as close to me as before.

"So, if you're really who you say you are, what are you doing here?"

"Like I said before, I have to go where my business takes me."

"Right. The business of suffering." There seems to be a hint of sarcasm in her voice, "You're going to have to explain it a little better than that."

I direct her attention to the arena.

"The bull riding is about to start."

"So?"

"So, that is what I am here to see." She stares at me as if I have just said the stupidest thing she has ever heard.

"Bull riding? The master of evil is interested in BULL RIDING?" I have to admit, when she says it like that, it does sound kind of stupid.

"Not necessarily the event itself, but rather one of the two gentlemen dressed in ridiculous clothing, standing in front of the chutes."

"Oh, the rodeo clowns, of course! 'Cause nothin' says suffrin' like a man wearing face paint! This is the biggest load of shit I've ever heard." She rolls her eyes and gets up to leave.

"Wait, Seriously, let me finish explaining everything to you." She throws her hands up and plops down.

"Ok, shoot."

"Do you know those two men down there?"

"Sure, that's Johnny and Danny TwoKnives. Johnny's the tall Indian in the top hat and Danny's the shorter white guy in the cowboy hat. They're brothers, although Danny was adopted, or something like that. I've heard different stories. But, big deal, I mean, everybody knows them."

"And, why does everybody know them?"

"Are you kidding? They're awesome. Danny's probably the best bullfighter I've ever seen; he's become sort of a hero around here."

“And what is it about dear Danny that makes him such a fantastic bullfighter?”  
“Look, I still don’t know what any of this has to do with you....being the Devil and all.”

“Patience, my sweet, patience. Now answer the question. What is it about Danny that makes him such a fantastic bullfighter?”

“I don’t know. Maybe ‘cause he’s so damn fast?”

“Would you say he’s unnaturally fast?”

“Sure, he’s *unnaturally* fast. What’s the flipping point?”

“How old would you say he is?”

“Oh, for fuck sake! I don’t know!”

“HOW OLD?” Special or not, this little bitch is starting to test my patience.

“Twenty-five, I don’t know.”

“Well, to tell you the truth, he’s almost as old as I am, and his real name is definitely not Danny TwoKnives. I’m not going to tell you his real name, or where he comes from, or how I even know him. That would take far too long. I will tell you this though; he is as ignorant of his true identity as you are. I have hunted him time and again for centuries, and today he is finally going to die.”

She stares at me with an uncomprehending, stunned expression. At least she’s calmed down a little. I look at the arena chutes. The stock hands are filing the bulls in one at a time. There’s my beauty, the bull in chute number three, my weapon. It has taken me almost ten years to put this situation together. Directing people through influence and payoffs, setting up events and circumstances, not to mention trying to convince one of my associates to inhabit the body of a bovine for an undisclosed period of time.

“Notice how your Danny keeps looking at the bull in chute number three.”

“Yeah.”

“Doesn’t he seem a bit nervous.”

“Yeah, not that you mention it, he does.” We both sit in silence and watch the first two bull riders test their mettle against their animal counterparts. The bullfighter performs his duties, though far below his capabilities. Amanda and I are not the only ones who notice this; the bullfighter’s Apache brother seems to be expressing his concern this very moment.

“So, what’s so special about this bull?” She asks, her curiosity is rising.

“Well, he was originally one of your Danny’s kind, but over the centuries, he’s become sort of a pet project of mine. I’ve used him before, and usually, he performs quite well. But, even he has failed against this enemy.”

“What makes you think this time is going to be any different?”

“Good question. To be honest with you, I probably have as much chance in succeeding this time as any other time. I guess, you could say, I have a good feeling about this one.” She scoots a little closer to me and stretches her back.

“Care to make a bet?” She says, flirtatiously, and I am unable to keep the smile from my face.

“She dares to deal with the devil. I though your ‘mama’ warned you about guys like me.”

“I don’t think Mama ever met a guy like you.”

“Very well then, name your terms.”

“Ok, if your bull kills Danny, I will become your slave, you can do to me whatever your dark heart desires. But, if Danny survives, you have to give me whatever I want, and if you are who you say you are, you’ll be able to do that.”

This day could not have been any better. I haven’t had this much fun for so long, I have forgotten how it feels. I will accept her ridiculous wager. I might even hold up my end of it should she win.

“My dear, you have a bet.” We shake hands graciously, and direct our attention to the rodeo. The bull rider mounts his animal, tension manifests into the air, making it heavy and uncomfortable. The clowns are both bouncing on their toes, readying themselves for the upcoming conflict. My prey is shaking his head, trying to clear his mind of the confusing thought bombarding him. The rider is seated, ready, and poised for action. He gives a quick nod of his head, and shouts, “Outside!” The gateman pulls his rope, the gate hitch releases. The world goes silent save for the subtle clink of the gate opening. Violently, the world explodes into a blur of motion and sound. I sneak a glance at Amanda. She is smiling a smile that so closely resembles my own.

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