

Lady of the Night

by

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EXT. COBBLED STREET - NIGHT

Gas-lit steam glows as it rises from the cobbled streets, except where it is obscured by a lone SILHOUETTE that walks menacingly toward the next gaslight.

A frightened rat scurries toward the safety of wall-cracks.

The Silhouette hits the next circle of gaslight and it transforms into MARY, a thirty-ish year old who scowls at her surroundings, a knife in her hand. And if Mary's bodice were cut any lower she'd surely be arrested.

She pulls her cape a bit tighter around herself, leaving her knife hand free. She spots the rat as it scrabbles along the side of the building. She wrinkles her face.

MARY

Bloody disgustin' rat! Scared the
'ell out a me, you did. I'll slice
you up to 'ave for me supper,
that's what I'll do.

Mary lunges, knife forward just as the rat disappears into the shadows behind an old crate on the side of the road.

Then the screaming starts, a shrill noise that would pierce an eardrum if it were in close proximity.

Mary stops. She backs away nervously, her knife held high.

A young girl, SARAH, pops up from the behind the crate. Still piercing eardrums, she runs to Mary and grabs her tight.

Mary pushes Sarah away roughly. She shoves the knife toward Sarah face. It stops inches away.

MARY

'ere now. Stop your bawlin'...

Shocked into silence and teary-eyed Sarah looks up at Mary. Mary stops for a moment to assess Sarah.

Sarah is around twelve years of age and not at all threatening. She's a bit dirty but underneath she's dressed too expensively for a ragamuffin.

Mary raises an eyebrow. A change of plan. She apologetically puts the knife into her cape pocket.

MARY

A girl can't be too careful -- You
lost darlin'? Did that nasty rat
give you a fright?

Sarah nods in a noncommittal way, wiping tears from her eyes.

MARY

And so far from 'ome by the looks of you. What's your name buttercup?

SARAH

Sarah.

MARY

Well pleased to meet you, Sarah so far from 'ome. Me name's Mary. Auntie Mary.

A small smile from Sarah and Mary returns it with the biggest fake smile she can muster.

MARY

Now that's more what a li'l girl should be. I've an idea. Why not tell Auntie Mary where it is you live so she can take you there?

Sarah shakes her head vigorously.

MARY

No?! But I bet your old man's pining away for you. You don't want to disappoint 'im. 'e's out there right now, lookin' for 'is buttercup, willin' to do most anythin' to get his dear li'l girl back.

More vigorous head shakes from Sarah. Mary loses her temper.

MARY

'ow in the 'ell can I get you 'ome if you don't tell me...

SARAH

I don't need to go home!

MARY

You don't need...?

Mary suddenly realizes.

MARY

Ah! You're not lost. You're run away like one of Pan's little boys.

Mary cups Sarah's chin with her hand.

MARY

Well, I got news for you buttercup, this ain't Never Never Land. You grow up real fast here, believe me. Wouldn't you rather be in your posh li'l bed listenin' to sweet and charmin' fairie stories?

Sarah pulls away.

SARAH

I can take care of myself, thank you.

MARY

You're fiesty 'nuff, I'll give you that. But even you're no match for the Manchester Monster.

SARAH

Another fairie story?

Mary squats down to Sarah's size.

MARY

The Manchester Monster ain't no fairie story. It's true, it is. Me friend Prue 'ad a friend Becca who was et by the monster.

She makes a hand claw and gnashes at Sarah. Sarah retreats.

MARY

'e's got sharp teeth and beedy little eyes. Like that rat who scared you only bigger, and much uglier. You'd be no match for 'im, no indeed.

SARAH

You're trying to frighten me. Well don't bother. I don't believe in fairies. Or monsters.

MARY

Just warnin' you, is all. A li'l girl like you should be safe and warm at 'ome 'avin' 'er rich supper with trimmings. I'm 'ungry; aren't you 'ungry, buttercup?

Sarah nods.

MARY

Then why not let me take you 'ome darlin'?

SARAH

So you can collect a big fat reward from my "old man"?

MARY

S'what if I do? Buy me supper for ages, that would. Better than 'unting rats for me food.

Mary pulls the knife from her cape then uses it to accentuate.

MARY

Or tender li'l girls.

Sarah backs away then runs off down the street.

MARY

Bloody 'ell! Come back 'ere you li'l -- you li'l gutter rat!

Mary follows Sarah onto

ANOTHER COBBLED STREET

Dark, gloomy, and foggy like the last. No sign of Sarah. Mary raises an eyebrow. Her knife glints in the gaslight.

MARY

Sarah?

No answer except a dull echo.

MARY

Where the 'ell'd she go?

A shadow flits across the gas lights. Mary's head turns toward it. She calls out to Sarah again.

A girlish sob and snuffle. Mary glances in the direction of the sound. The shadow of a small girl hurries into an alley.

With determination, she stalks toward the

ALLEY

A place to gather night soil. It's dark but some gas light spills in from the street. It lights the walls with many odd-shaped reflections.

Miscellaneous garbage lines the sides, perfect places for a little girl to hide behind. Mary shudders. She calls out to Sarah. This time she gets a giggle in return.

MARY

Oh, it's a laugh, is it? Me
prancin' around stinkin' back lanes
in the dark.

Something unseen scurries off to the side. Mary lets out a small yelp and jumps away. Louder giggling. The shadow of a small girl appears on one of the brighter patches of wall toward the back of the alley.

MARY

It ain't funny, missy. Come out to
Auntie Mary or I'll...

Mary brandishes the knife.

SARAH

Or you'll what? Slice me up to
have for your supper? I think not.

More giggles as the shadow switches to another part of the wall. Mary adjusts her stance to confront it. She's nervous now, the knife quivers in her hand. She pleads.

MARY

Please darlin', let me take you
'ome!

SARAH

I don't need to go home, Auntie
Mary. I am home.

All of the brighter patches of wall seem to have Sarah's shadow now. Mary seems confused and frightened. Her whole body trembles as she tries to fend them all off with one knife.

The shadows on the wall transform, their noses grow longer, their bodies plumper, their ears bigger and rounder. Sarah's voice grows deeper and multiplies.

SARAH

And am I ever hungry.

EXT. ALLEY WAY

Screams followed by the slobbering sound of eating can be heard from the mouth of the alley.

Then quiet.

A rat scurries from the alleyway and into the cobbled street. It glances toward us, almost smugly, then it rushes off into the shadows.