

In The Eyes of Men

Beautiful. Lilith peered intensely into the mirror, making sure to blend out the light pink just under her cheekbones. Without looking away, she reached to her right and picked up a gold tube. With a pop, the lid clattered on the dresser, and she began to paint a deep red across her lips. She loved the colour but hated the feeling of it. Thick. Sticky. Like it was one layer too much. She contemplated just wiping it off completely, but the sound of the Director's voice caught her attention. She was up next. She stood up and brushed herself down, straightening out her black satin dress. The Lilith in the mirror peered at her. *Smile.* She flashed a wide grin. *Too much teeth.* Her expression softened, closing her lips into a subtle curve. *Better.* It was time to go.

"And now, our next gorgeous performer of the night. She's got the voice of an angel and the tongue of the devil." A low rumble of laughter crawled under the curtain. Lilith brought her legs a little closer together as she adjusted herself on the chaise lounge. "For your pleasure, I give you our sweet Lilith!" The thick curtains were dragged open, and the spotlight fell on her figure. It was silent. A hundred eyes were on her, scattered across tables in the dim candlelight. Curious. Eager. The band began, and the first notes of the Jazz number drifted through the room. She began as she always did, singing her song draped across the chair, allowing the audience to soak in her beauty before gracefully making her way down the steps of the stage, slipping between tables and singing to guests. She could hear murmurs of approval among them as she stopped by a table of 4 men. Leaning on her hand, she continued her song.

"She's a pretty one, isn't she?" The taller one laughed at his friends, reaching out and brushing a finger against her wrist and over her bracelet. "Wrists like these deserve some *real* diamonds." As the tips of his fingers touched the glass beads, they began to crack and crumble onto the table. She pulled her hand back, and the men laughed amongst themselves as if nothing had happened. Lilith stepped back, composed herself and headed towards a different table. As she made her way through the crowd, she felt a firm hand grab her free wrist.

"Come on Lily, how's about you give *me* a little serenade now?" A slight panic surged through her as he turned to face the large man, lazily sipping on his martini. She forced a sly smile and continued to sing, but he did not let go. With one swift jerk, he pulled her onto his lap.

"Now darling, that's much better, isn't it?" The man put an arm around her waist and held her close. She glanced at the Director anxiously. He simply grinned and gestured for her to go along with it. Her voice faltered slightly as a wandering hand found its way onto her inner thigh. As his hand slid across her dress, it began to fray and fall apart. Lilith looked at it in a panic as the fabric fell away under his fingers. She scrambled to her feet, watching as the men knocked back their drinks and spat out increasingly filthy things.

"Hey, it's my turn with her!" The other man at the table knocked his drink over as he reached to grab her. She stepped back, but he managed to snag another piece of her dress. The chunk fell away as if there was nothing holding it together. The sound of laughter and filth grew louder as she stumbled away; men grabbed at her as she hurried back towards the stage, taking piece

after piece from her dress until she froze. The threads of her undergarments loosened and fluttered to the floor. She was completely naked.

Lilith turned to the audience in horror. She was met with hungry eyes, fierce and feral. Shouts turned to disgusting roars that stunk of alcohol, and the men scrambled from their seats. She bolted towards the stage, desperately trying to cover herself, but a sweaty hand gripped her arm. As she yanked herself forward, the skin under his fingers melted away, slipping off onto the floor. She screamed. Hands burst out from every angle, gripping her and pulling away chunks of skin and flesh. Their wide smiles didn't seem at all bothered by the gory scene in front of them. Her skin was melting and dripping to the floor like wax. It didn't stop at hands. She felt burning lips and violating tongues slide across her exposed muscles. *Sweet Lilith*. She coughed and choked as the men clawed at her, with blood covering their chins and glistening on their arms. Tendons and veins undid themselves, tangling around fingers and falling away like loose threads as the sound of the band grew to a crescendo.

Suddenly, the room fell silent, and the hands dropped like flies. She took her chance and scrambled onto the stage, stopping abruptly when she finally noticed her appearance. There was nothing left of her but bones. A skeleton, pale white, under the glare of the spotlight. The men weren't shouting anymore. The hunger had disappeared from their eyes. Instead, they looked at her in disgust. Murmurs of repulsion and judgment seeped into the room. In a moment, her bones lost their structure, clattering to a pile on the floor. But she remained standing. Without a body. Without a form. Unseen in the eyes of men. She let out a breath.

"Well, well. Wasn't that exciting? If you loved that performance, then we've got a real *treat* for you coming up next. For your pleasure, I give you-