

***Ascension of the Blind Dead***  
***By David Zuzelo***

Silvia watched from her hiding place in the balcony of the rotting underground cathedral... the only spot that the light of the cold moon above could penetrate. Dr. Ari and his students had led her to this hidden temple of the Lorelei in Berzano, Spain without incident. The group, however, was now being flensed and pulped by a ghastly troupe of undead Knights in a blood soaked spectacle which both fascinated and repelled Silvia's gaze. As torchlight flickered around the huge chamber she could only make out shadows as her eyes sought to follow the screams and occasionally visible flailing limbs of the students. The blood of the intrepid group of explorers splashed on the dirt floor below ran thick; forging a gory reflective mirror for the images of pain the Knights inflicted with their silent precision. These mold covered dead men worked methodically and with an intensity that belied their rotted appearance. In all of Silvia's questing for knowledge and arcane power she had never encountered these legendary guardians before, although she knew exactly what and who they were.

The Knights Templar stood before her now, resplendent in their filthy ornate robes and torn flesh which appeared almost as if it were some inflexible rotted parchment. Matted beards covered what little flesh remained around their sharp teeth and gaping mouth holes. The blood that squirted from their victim's bodies dripped slowly down the front of their robes. These legendary warriors, known for avenging themselves on the living for sins brought down upon them by church masters, were also tied to the song of the Lorelei in several legends. The text by Gasset had claimed an idol, known as the Lorelei's Grasp, was the source of their unholy existence, but no proof was ever found of this of course. Treasure hunters had long sought out the hidden chambers of the Templar Order, though none had ever lived to claim success.

Silvia Perschy found herself in the unexpected position of perhaps validating the legend of these Knights, though that was not her original intent. She had only come for The Lorelei's Grasp and the small idol below was her intended target... a prize she would take, ravaging Templar Knights or not. The reverberation of the agonized howls from below would have instilled fear in one less obsessed than Silvia... but she had torn many of the same sounds out of other, more innocent, victims in the past.

Silvia was more than a mere explorer. She was cursed at birth with a second skin that lie beneath the one shown in the sunlight, a rampaging family "curse" which had become a means of survival. The blood of the Lycanthrope had become her greatest gift, a maniacal birthright of power.

Power and rage... all in her very own little beast.

The so called absurd and strange had become commonplace to her, once she could acceptance the advantages of her peculiar resources. She became interested in what were passed around the collective consciousness

as folktales and looked towards finding a way to take more control of her power by digging deeper into them. And if the legend of the Lycanthropes was as real as she knew it to be, what else could lurk beyond the veil of daily repetition... hiding in the dark corners of fiction?

She needed to know.

Legend spoke of Lycanthropes as being immortal unless they were killed under certain conditions, and Silvia had neither the intention of being bored or of dying a foolish death. Flirtations with crime and random violence lost their kick, pushing her to harder thrills; weird and esoteric dalliances that were best purchased with a rougher coin obsessed her. Now, at the end of this hunt for her treasure, she would have something to hold in her hands and claim her own... and more than a little sex and violence seemed to ensue along the way for her enjoyment.

The scent of burning skin mixed with the sound of a burbling wail barely escaping from the torn mouth of the previously cocky, and now relieved of manhood, Professor Ari to bring Silvia back to the current moment. She wasn't lost in fear or memory however, but clouded with a strange desire. The need to clutch tight the idol to which The Templars were presenting the finely shredded flesh of the victims now felt like the flushed moment before a hard gained orgasm.

The Lorelei's Grasp was said to contain the secret of that mythological siren's call and the proper master of the idol would gain the ability to control other creatures by seizing them at the basest level of pure lust. Lusts for power, sex or whatever strange vices they fell to were all revealed to the wielder of the artifact. Silvia's skin burned to claim that ability; however the practical matter of wresting it from the undead warriors still remained unsolved. The stone itself was a small and surprisingly simple affair, bearing the image of what appeared to be an eight-legged woman, her lower half so perversely ugly it could only hint at the terror masked by the beautiful visage represented upon the upper half. The ugly fringes of desire held the most power in Silvia's world, and this was a key to controlling the darkest portion of the human consciousness. And it sounded like fun as well...

While she couldn't have planned for the malefic fate that awaited the professor and his class, Silvia had kept the possibility of exploiting the group as a diversion open of course. The spilling and squirting blood over heaving breasts and screams passed the time as she now waited for the moon... the key to her release. It was moments away from sitting high enough above to charge her muscles and shred away all civilized thoughts. Her heart began to pound loud and fast as her blood flow intensified and multiplied, preparing the flesh for that ultimate bestial form. The Templar Knights continued flaying and shredding away the cooling flesh from the bones of their writhing sacrifices below, and Silvia had to admit she felt a bit of awe witnessing such skillful mutilation.

She looked closer...

Their tattered and symbol covered robes hung loose over time decimated bodies. Her trained eye clearly distinguished the marks of Asheron, Aeon and Aesmodeus as each was cleverly interwoven into a bizarre tapestry of cloth and armor. Silvia could only wonder what other secrets these creatures held in their ancient minds. When they had once been human, these warriors must have been so deeply angered at the betrayal of their masters that they remained animate to pursue vengeance, even at the cost of eternity rotting into a shambling pile of bones. Her own obsession paled in comparison.

Smiling at the feeling of her arms and legs engorging with the coming of the beast, she could only think to herself... *Now those are some pissed off dead people.*

None of that mattered any longer; Silvia's focus was all-important at this stage. She would take the Lorelei's Grasp and leave these creatures to whatever their purpose may be. She did not worry to leave them standing as proof of their existence if they chose to interfere however. Besides, when the beast took her flesh nothing but her chosen purpose mattered. Only the task at clawed hand mattered... and the desire of her animal would remain hot.

A final death croak pushed through the vocal cords being torn from the mouth of a pretty red haired girl named Bethany as the Templar in the most decorative robes yanked her heart free, shredding her breasts with her own cracked apart ribs. The creature then stuffed the pumping muscle into its rotted maw and began chewing with a lusty vigor that was shocking, even to Silvia. That same scene was looping en-masse as various clusters of Templars found their way past the hapless students' flesh and meat to their pumping prizes. As the creature's fervor increased Silvia heard voices. Long vowel movements with occasional hard consonant punctuation burst from the Templar Knights, though their mouths appeared to remain still on the bony hinges. A discordant noise at first, the drone gained focus and precision while building towards a strange homage to whatever these creatures called God. On the verge of screaming herself to drown the chanting out of her head, Silvia looked through the small hole in the ceiling and realized that the moon had cycled high enough to initiate the change. Another grin... *Showtime.* A rush of clarity came over Silvia as she gave way to her own body's evolution...though she was a bit upset at losing the opportunity to see the ritual below completed.

Her possession was the thing now, both of the beast to her body and the Grasp of the Lorelei to her collection. With a final effort she internalized her purpose one last time, sending it down the well of consciousness and into a dark base of animal instinct. Slowing her heart and breathing to the point of zero, Silvia had become comfortable charging her monster with any task... and the beast had never failed.

*---The artifact...the artifact...nothing must stop our hunt...freedom! ---*

With that thought the woman called Sylvia was gone. Her heart burst awake and beat away thought as blood exploded from the organ into muscles that begged for power like a slave for the fist of its master. Expansion into

something else, something more—

--- *HUNT. ARTIFACTish/STONEthing. HUNT HUNT HUNT HUNT...*  
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As the Werewolf -her curse and gift- battered Silvia's flesh with a final growth spasm, it bared claws and fangs wildly. Drooling with rage and exhilaration an unexpected thought overcame an instinct to pounce and destroy momentarily.

--- *SURPRISE me can you soldier/KNIGHTS/things?* ---

The Wolf stared down, longing for The Lorelei's Grasp with resolve burning hot and thrilled at the promise of conflict with the creatures. The scent of finely shredded flesh hung thick in the air, and nostrils flaring the Wolf admired those who wrought havoc below... and found more than a dozen rotted faces with empty eye sockets staring directly back! How could they know of the beast's presence without eyes?

--- *NO mind...No...thought...HUNT. THE STONE/thing MUST BE HUNTED!* ---

The Wolf's blood boiled over with violent rage and the claws could not be sheathed any longer. It leapt snarling into the midst of the Templars and their treasure with the intent to wrench it from them... and leave them torn and bent as well.

Landing on all fours in the center of the antechamber, an overload of sensation flooded wolfen senses. Blood-slicked stone floor, beautiful puddles of blood, the stench of flayed and cracked open corpses... this all drove the beast into a riot of lusty red chaos. Supremely confident, the Wolf rose to full height. Though unconcerned by the presence of the blood caked ghouls, it did notice that these things had become much livelier than *she* had warned of...

--- *NO MATTER we must HUNT HUNT!* ---

Roaring, the Wolf tore directly towards its target, the bizarre *stoneTHING* that the other shadow *she* had wanted so badly. The sense of superiority over the stinking creatures all around vanished quickly however, as only a split second after getting close to the Templar Knights the headcharge forward halted with a hard crack. Pain rendered it confused. Had the Wolf not twisted away, almost by accident really, it would have been slashed in two by a huge broadsword driven by one of the undead knight's skeletal arms.

--- *DANGER? FROM THESE! NO! THE HUNT NOTHING MUST stop...* ---

With that half formed thought the Wolf spun around, baring talons seeking moldering flesh in order to take retribution for this attack. This outrage! The

Knight who had come close would *pay!* The Wolf launched forward wildly, using both the full weight of its body as well as an incalculable rage to crash into the hulking warrior, plunging claws and arms directly *through* the Templar's chest. Locked together, the two figures tore and spun furiously in close combat, crashing past a small cadre of Knights. Though the Wolf's arms were stuck inside of the Templar's body, this didn't stop the Knight from trying to tear the Wolf's face apart. Forcing its death and dirt smeared fingers into the maw of the Wolf, the Templar's strength almost frightened her/it. Roaring out a bent cry of violent rage and biting down hard, The Wolf locked down at the wrist of the angry carcass, teeth sunk between bones, the Templar's arm quickly was rent from the shoulder socket. Arms still buried in the chill guts of the undead, the Wolf sank low on all fours while dragging the Templar Knight to the ground. Staring eye to rotted socket the Wolf wrenched the Templar apart, bisecting it with a fierce yank. Anticipating the joy of being drenched in the foe's blood, the Wolf could only shudder in disappointment when the proper and wet tribute of vital fluids was not paid.

Silvia's mind, though buried in the hindbrain of The Wolf, reacted somehow... stirring up an animal curiosity. Nothing could have prepared her/it for the sight of this torn opponent. While the moldered flesh had disintegrated under the massive trauma of the Wolf's attack, there was still sitting amidst the pile of dust a vile black heartshaped muscle that still pumped small plumes of dust into the air. The repugnant abomination, a parody of life, pounded on without missing a beat... a dark engine for an undying evil.

--- *WHAT KIND OF THING... I... MUST... ---*

Perplexed, The Wolf stood unprepared as the Templar chant again gashed the air, pouring from the Knights' rotted mouths. Pain came scraping at it's tympanic membrane as these battering words and tones unsettled the Wolf's ears and mind.

And that is when, for the first time it could remember, the Wolf actually felt *fear*. That stark terror sent lupine senses scurrying like a burning rat seeking water. And under the assault of a horde of sorcerous skeleton warriors Silvia's mind was jarred back from the comfort of unconscious experience and fully into The Wolf's body! Feeling *its/her* power under new control compelled her heart to pound louder and harder than she imagined it ever would. She immediately realized that it was time to fight or flee, whatever steps must be taken to simply survive were her only options. A mordant curiosity did run through Silvia, however. *Well...this is just great! Think later or die now though... time to get what I came for and get the fuck out of here.*

Senses darting, her werewolf body moving faster than anything else in the slippery unreality of the underground cathedral, Silvia pivoted her head to absorb all that was happening. This did not last long, as she found herself leaping towards the only clearing in an encroaching cluster of Templar Knights by instinct. Each of these creatures appeared ravenous to rip through her chest and make pulp of her engorged heart. The decomposed warriors looked stronger than before, as if energized by the blood they had gorged themselves on from the hearts of the hapless students. Leaping past

the cluster, Silvia narrowly avoided two blood encrusted swords which clashed together so violently that the report made her fear her ears had burst. Again she noticed the holes in the bearded visage of each Templar... holes which had obviously been eye sockets in a previous life. Now they were meatless gaping pockets for the maggots of the crypt they inhabited. Silvia had read of various sects of The Templar Knights being hunted down and blinded by Catholic Bishops who had hired them. In fear of their expansive knowledge of the dark arts the clergy believed the powerful order would turn against them someday, but they couldn't have imagined they would do it *after execution!*

Betrayed by human instruments of faith, the Templars began to worship the darkness they were damned to dwell in. It seemed a trivial, if not stupid "punishment." And it obviously didn't work. They found a new deity...but how were they fighting if they couldn't see. Sylvia's mind spun along...

--- *So they must be seeing the world through* ---

This rational new mind of Silvia's now within The Wolf worked against her; logic has no place in the mind of monsters. A ferocious cadre of Templars seized upon her, while she tried to apply reason to the situation, they pounced with skeleton fists and heavy sword hilts. Her engorged muscles and pounding adrenaline proved no match for the sheer force her captors bore down with, wrapping their cold arms all around her. Trapped, she could feel the mind of the beast stirring within her again.

--- *...release release release...* ---

Silvia's heart stopped beating for a full thirty seconds, and losing control of all muscular command she collapsed. The undead Knights grip released her rapidly contracting body, now beyond control. The unnatural cold of the sunken cathedral assaulted her nude body, the strength of the Wolf gone. Not only had the mind of her beast been beaten back by fear, now something else was taking the form of the monster from Silvia's flesh. Feeling raped by this betrayal of her gift, she slumped down into a pile of human offal... the remnants of the prey of the Blind Dead. The gut heap was warm and comforting somehow. And as that warmth washed over her she realized the beast, the Wolf, was truly dead.

Gone.

And that left her in a hidden chamber, lying in a sea of human pulp and at the mercy of a horde of creatures legendary for tormenting those they found guilty of unspoken crimes.

*Fucked.*

Silvia knew she had sinned against these Templar Knights in her attempt to take the Lorelei's Grasp, yet she still burned with the need to know what the artifact—

*I sang out across time and space for you... and you came!*

This sudden intrusion felt like her dead beast speaking from the hollows of her mind it had once inhabited. But this was not a voice of destruction. Slinky... seductive...nearly wet with desire, Silvia could taste her own lust on each word from this ethereal new presence inside of her. The cold left her body, and she was dripping with sweat and desire in the wake of the voice's caress. The words continued flowing and both comfort and a trembling lusty stroke came from each syllable.

*Girl, you have accepted such violence and blood thirst into your body. You have embraced a beast to live inside you... I have called your name now however... to join the beginning of a new crusade. Sin, virtue and violence will be your reality... and your reward shall be any desire that remains in you will be fulfilled upon your whim. For if you could contain such a wild beastling as the Lycan with ease, you will serve my purpose well...and be rewarded with a life beyond what remains for all other flesh. I do not question your acceptance; only stand ready to hear your plea for my love.*

The Templar Knights hauled Silvia up from the still slick abattoir floor with hardened bone hands drenched in blood. She could only bear witness to the dozens of rotted soldiers parting away... forming a path for her as several of the undead dragged her naked and numb towards the artifact. That which she had come here for now came for her in turn, a prize claiming it's seeker. The small stone that claimed to lure her here, as much as the mythical Lorelei had to so many fictional characters, filled her sight. Her eyes barely open, she could only hear that obscene chant begin again while blurrily looking into the dead faces of the creatures she had borne such vicious contempt towards. They seemed magnificent and unrelenting to her now however. Disgusting and beautiful husks of dread purpose.

As they approached the statue her heart pounded as it did when she would transform into the Wolf, but her flesh remained in rigor now. Rows of skeletal horses reared back, smashing thick bone hooves to the ground in anticipation of the violence they knew was to come. The blood of the slaughtered was sent splattering through the air as the creatures released a calamity of sound from their muzzled maws. It was as if even these animals wanted to smash into the flesh of the living to relieve the rage of the Blind Dead.

The Knights finally laid Silvia down before The Lorelei's Grasp. In her mind she heard the only words that could prompt her to say that which she knew was to be her final option... though the one time werewoman, a hunter of the esoteric, now doubted that any life experience could prepare her for what came next. Something beyond her experience was closing in upon her. She could barely wince in pain as her arms and legs were lashed down to a worn, blade-scored binding table; the effluvium of dried blood assaulted her nostrils as gathered flies resentfully left their meal. The voice spoke again.

*Knowledge, wisdom and understanding can be yours...all I ask is your body and mind set in firm resolve to control my soldiers. Forget the tiny dreams of your first life and become a queen... I believe in you Silvia Perschy. Can you*

*believe in yourself?*

The answer exploded from Silvia's lips as a taloned hand penetrated her chest. Tearing her heart free of its old, and now irrelevant, place in her body, the blank face of the Templar seemed to bend into a caustic smile. Eyes wide and watching the muscle pound out the remaining enclosed blood she shrieked her final human word to accept the offer of the Lorelei. The pain tore through her as she saw only one more blur... another clawed hand... descending from behind her head. Reaching around to swiftly shatter her eyeballs with a sound that she had heard before... when she had eaten the flesh of her father in a spite filled rage. As the pulpy meat was excavated out of her skull, the chant rang out again...

With a clarity she had never felt, not even watching through the eyes of her beautiful beast, Silvia could hear everything around her with blade fine intensity. The words of the Knight's chant became clear now, as did the meaning; a beautiful sound that promised the passion and power of the Lorelei and their joyful acceptance of her holy mission. It was to be a crusade of death for those who were blind to the truths they saw through darkened eyes.

Her hands and feet were unbound... she arose to feel waves of vile admiration flooding the chamber which imbued her with a sense of new power. She knew that the Templar Knight bearing her heart as an offering was named De Malay and that he loved her very much now, as did his followers. The Knights Templar... the Blind Dead... they had found her, and she in turn recieved them.

Silvia Perschy listened to her human heart in its final beating, spitting blood and air into her own ragged and sightless eye sockets. As she bit down hard and tasted the meat of her old life one last time, the howls of the Blind Dead rose in pitch again. Amongst the arcane rumbling she heard her own name and the call to battle against all infidels.

She had come to this place seeking knowledge and found a power waiting for her instead. She led the Blind Dead in song and felt embraced by the grasp of the Lorelei. The chant filled her ears and discharged from her mouth while blood poured down her torn face like tears of a riot red joy. Her voice joined in blind ecstasy with the Order of the Knights Templar...

*Per Obscure Nos Orior oriri ortus! Nostrum Regina Alive! Pectus pectoris nostri Hostilis Nostrum Rector! Adveho Kali! Moloch! Dagon! Yaotzin! EXSISTO EXISTO quod rector nostrum mucro! Exsisto... EXISTO!*

Silvia Perschy's first night among the undead indeed did fulfill all remaining worldly desires. As her body heat chilled beneath the icy talons of her new clan, and under the watchful gaze of The Lorelei, the creature that was Silvia became pregnant with a far darker lust than she had imagined possible during her first lifetime. Burning with a thirst to satisfy her new master she took hold of this legion of hate and rage fuelled monstrosities more powerful than any beast she had ever known before. These abominations, the spurned Templar

Knights, were prepared to charge on their appointed crusade of mutilation and destruction of all living flesh in order to create a fitting world of decay for the Blind Dead and their mistress.

And Silvia would enjoy her work.