

Dark Dark Dark.

excerpt from a novella

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II — Superior, Montana USA

"Ain'tchoo one a dem hookers?"

An elderly and Stately man approached the Girl. He was equipped with a gun, visible in a hip holster and the metal glinted in the high sun. A gruff and portly dog that resembled a grizzly bear strode obediently by his side. He was a cowboy, no doubt.

"Hey Missy, I assed you a question!"

She did look like a hooker, and she somewhat was. But she did not know how to answer his demand.

"Not today," she whispered to the man, and pursed her dried lips.

He looked her over. Once, twice, and then a few more times. The Girl wore her leather boots, dirtier and more worn than in England, covered in a dusting of dirt and fine sediment. Her jean shorts, perhaps too short, revealed a tanned leg with a sharp line designating where the sun could not shine. Her T-shirt was loose and discolored, but clung attractively to her breasts and hips. That too, was covered in a dusting of dirt and fine sediment. Her hair hung wildly, frizzy and long, with streaks of grease from the peak of her sweatened forehead. She was a mess, covered in a dusting of dirt and fine sediment. The cowboy wanted to wash her clean.

The grizzly dog panted with the heat of the glare. The Cowboy placed his hands on his hips, his index finger twiddling the barrel of the gun.

"Shucks," the Cowboy said.

"Know any place a girl can get some pie?" She asked the Cowboy.

The Cowboy stared at the Girl. He looked her over again. Once, twice, and then a few more times. But this time it was different; he measured her. The silence of the mountains was only outmatched by the gentle hum of the summer heat that radiated in the valley.

"Best pie in the world."

The grizzly dog licked his snout, a dribble of saliva sloped to the dirt. The pup was off and began to trot down the road in the direction of a few shabby buildings. Parched hills peaked on either side of the slim strip of town, thickets of tall trees clouded the downward landscape. The intense heat took the life out of every green thing. The mountain range seemed to break to allow for the town of Superior to exist. As if a parting of the craggy hillside revealed a sliver of life, otherwise unknown to the world. It was a near mirage to see consumerism dotted in the back country mountains, and the promise of a good slice of pie made Superior heaven.

"After you, Missy." The Cowboy made a gentlemanly gesture and the Girl followed the trail of the grizzly dog.

They sat at the counter of a dingy diner. Next door was the only mechanic for fifty miles. This was a big town, considering. There were more mountain lions and grizzly bears than people. American flags hung proudly and still in every corner of the diner. The counter was greasy and smelled just as delicious.

"COFFEE?" The waitress shouted from the kitchen. She had few teeth and flashed them proudly.

"MAKE IT TWO," the Cowboy ordered.

"GOT YARSELF A GALFRIEND, I SEE."

"NOT TODAY," the Girl shouted toward the kitchen and winked at the Cowboy.

The waitress scooted down the counter way weaving under protruding pots and pans that hung in disarray. She produced two mismatched coffee mugs from her apron pockets and placed them delicately in front of the Cowboy and the Girl.

"Stuck wit me den hey darlin'." The Cowboy made a cold smirk. "Make'n honest woman outta me. Say Friday night?"

"You bet-chya."

The waitress winked at the Girl and filled her mug with steaming coffee. The waitress watched him eye the Girl and coffee overspilled.

"Oh Gosh-dern-it, by golly I swear my hands are more rattly than a snake."

"JESUS FUCKIN' CHRIST," the Cowboy barked.

The waitress took a dirty cloth, spotted with miscellaneous grime of fat, ketchup and coffee and leaned in close to the Girl.

"He's dangerous, but fun. Watch-yer self girlie."

"He's all yours. I'm just looking for some pie."

"That's whut dey all say. I kin 'andle him. I dunno if some city gal can."

The Girl looked at her with speculation. Maybe the waitress was right.

"Not a worry sweetheart."

But the Girl did worry.

"I like your gun," she told the Cowboy.

"It's a re-volv-er," he spat. "A Colt .45, me Gran-Pappy's. Shot a lot of men. If only this baby could tell stories."

"Oh Jesus."

"Jesus ain't got nuttin' to do wit it."

The Girl let out a slow sigh. She did not wish to engage in a conversation about faith, when she had no faith to speak of. Only in vain did Jesus exist. She sipped some of the gritty coffee from a mug endorsed with a rabbit humping a chicken with the word *WRONG* printed beneath the picture. She licked her teeth.

"You got some pretty teeth dere darling. Do real good here in Superior. Men folk like a gal with teeth."

The Girl looked at the Cowboy with dry eyes. She pursed her lips and continued to suck at the coffee grounds between her teeth. The Cowboy spread his legs wide underneath the counter and leaned back. His mug, half full, was decorated in a pattern of violets and lilies, cracked and streaked with old coffee.

"So whaddya say you give my dog a show. Take him for a walk, pet him, bathe him."

The Girl looked down at the dog that sat obediently at the Cowboy's side. The grizzly pup was hoarse but sweet. It panted too often, snouted inappropriately and was indeed was in need of a bath. The Girl was fond of the dog. She knew this was not the dog the Cowboy spoke of. His legs spread wider.

"No," the Girl said.

"No?"

"No."

"I'll make it worth yer while."

She paid the bill with the Cowboy unaware.

"Now who's the whore?" She said sweetly.

As she walked out, the Cowboy watched her leave. Her ass jiggled unattractively as she walked, but the Cowboy liked it. It drove him mad. He slammed the rest of his coffee and

picked up his gun. He aimed right at her and held his position. She did not look back, she never looked back. Thank god she did not look back.

The Cowboy bared a grin and caressed the trigger.

"Boom."

The Cowboy laughed, he spared her life. She would never know.