

Joe Nobel

The Wife of Fustus Magus

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By Joe Nobel

Fustus Magus had two wives. One of dark eyes and chestnut hair; the other had eyes of severe blue framed by the fairest golden hair. Their names were Kala and Elysse. After spending each day in his laboratory in the highest spires of his castle, Fustus Magus took great delight in coming down to the smell of a roast cooking and the dotting attention of his wives as he sat by the fire.

He would talk at great length over dinner about his day: his successes, failures, and new discoveries. His wives understood little of science, but they listened politely anyway. He'd tell them about the progress of his latest work, a special biotron for his patron, Duke Gendymore, III, for his upcoming hundredth birthday celebration.

Fustus Magus would use his two wives in the unveiling presentation of any new biotron. He would dress them in tight-fitting black leather and have them stand on either side of the new creature. Their duty was to pull the veil back exposing his latest creation to the world. Once the royal audience finished their gasps and ooh's, Kala and Elysse would lead the newly born creature off stage and into its cage. Their part was then done. They would watch from the sidelines as Fustus Magus accepted the gracious congratulations from the Royals and Holies in attendance and gladly booked new commissions.

"Come," Fustus Magus called down from the drafty spires of his laboratory one cold autumn day. "The Duke's new bed toy is almost ready. Come, watch as I wake her."

Kala and Elysse looked at each other. Without saying a word, they dropped their knittings and ascended the stairs. They stood in the tank chamber on either side of a human-sized, glass cylinder filled with opaque, white liquid; stood as they were trained in an unveiling, one on either side.

From within, a stray index finger touched the side of the glass. Kala and Elysse could see a long finger belonging to a tender hand. Tendrils of hair danced along the inside wall of the cylinder.

“Red hair?” Kala asked with a raised eyebrow, for Fustus Magus often brought his two wives into submission by threatening to create a third, one with red hair.

“The Duke will surely enjoy her,” Fustus Magus said with glee from above the tank room in his glass-lined control booth. “You will see her beauty in but a moment. I shall now purge the growth bath and inject the awakener.”

Fustus Magus pulled a throw-switch on the wall, triggering the sound of an electric engine whirling to life. From below, Kala and Elysse saw a red liquid injected into the cylinder along a clear tube. These were the purging and awakening reagents. Shortly after, the chemicals started to mix and the liquid cleared. The body of the new biotron appeared as it floated in the liquid. Lithe, tall, fair of skin, with full, round breasts. The new creature began to stir.

Then it twitched and convulsed. It opened its eyes and looked out of the cylinder with the pain that only a creature born into pain could know. It pulled itself into a fetal ball, shaking and spasming. It died quickly. A hand broke loose and floated next to the body stirred by the currents in the tank.

Magus didn't know that the batch of reagents had been mislabeled. Some suspected Elysse, but that could never be proved. For moments later, even before the biotron's body could decay further, the errant chemicals reacted with what remained of the growth bath and exploded.

The explosion vaporized the dead biotron and broke through the cylinder. The

force sent Kala and Elysse against opposite walls of the laboratory. Shards of flying glass cut them to pieces. There was nothing but scattered body parts to pick up by the time Fustus Magus made his way down from the control booth.

“No!” he cried, as he sloshed through the still bubbling liquid, kicking knife-sized slivers of glass out of his way. He picked up the left arm of Elysse and part of Kala’s severed right foot. He dropped them both when he saw what remained of each.

Kala’s entire right side was gone, as was Elysse’s left. Magus called two flithe beasts to help pick up the body pieces. He cried as he put them all into a tank of preservative, not being able to bear the thought that both of his wives had died. He bade the flithes to scrub down the walls, mop the floor, and then to return to their cages. They grunted only once in a sign of acknowledgement.

Numbed with shock, Magus wheeled out the tank with bits of Kala and Elysse sloshing in formaldehyde. He took them to the lowest basement, into cold storage. Once the two bodies were sealed into a vault, he climbed back up, but not to the laboratory. Just as far as the living quarters where a roast still cooked over the fire. A kitchen zamma turned the spit dutifully even though it no doubt heard the explosion.

“You may go to your cage,” he instructed the biotron.

“Uh?” the creature asked, looking at the roast.

“It is not your concern. There will be no dinner served tonight,” Fustus said. Even as the creature limped off, Fustus Magus let his tears flow one more time.

He looked out one of the grand bay windows at the view from up upon his hill. The moon was rising over the distant moors.

He called upon the two trakels he’d built as servants for Kala and Elysse. He

supervised them in boxing up the wife's belongings and sealing them into air-tight containers. He personally put a photograph of each as the top item of their respective last boxes. After the trakels helped him carry the containers to storage, he shot them both with a vaporizer.

Fustus Magus slept a fitful sleep. The following day, he walked around the castle in a daze. The kitchen zamma hid from him. Its little mind knew the wives were no more and that their trakels were no more. And the roast had burnt to a char when master sent it away. Magus would surely do away with it next.

Late in the afternoon, Magus saddled up a lorse and rode down the hill, past the village, and into the moors. He lost himself in thought. The lorse barely spoke a word. It, too, knew about the wives and the trakels.

To the lorse's relief, master turned it around and ordered "home" as they were plodding along a narrow path in a gloomy swamp. "Now I know what I must do," he said as he kicked the lorse in the side sending it into a full gallop back to the castle.

Once in the castle courtyard, Fustus Magus jumped off the creature and ran in through the double doors to the front hall. He made his way down the spiraling marble steps like a madman without a moment to spare, down to cold storage, where pieces of Kala and Elysse lay. He wheeled their vat out from its alcove under the stairs. In the center of the crypt-like room, Magus donned a pair of arm-length rubber gloves. He reached in and pulled up the first small piece he grabbed. He laid the tattered segment of forearm onto a dissection table and studied it with a magnifying glass. He then applied electrical probes and watched it twitch. This was enough for a cursory exam. He nodded, pleased with the result.

He had a flithe wheel the tank up to the laboratory. Once there, Fustus Magus took the pieces out one by one. He handled each with tenderness and fidelity, a gentleness he hadn't exhibited since his time courting each of them. "Oh, how I have wronged you," he said, almost crying again. That was the last emotion he allowed himself; he could ill afford such luxury, now that he set himself to this task.

Magus cleaned the physical debris from the pieces. After that, he immersed each item into a vivificative infusion to stop any further decay. Once this critical step had been performed, Magus placed each piece on an examining table again and scanned them into his biotron simulator. Once all the pieces were thus entered, he returned them to individual vats or jars, depending on their sizes, and immersed them in the milky white biotron growth bath. Fustus then proceeded to work around the clock, using the biotron simulator to fit the pieces together in new configurations. All the while marching blindly down the path to the unthinkable.

"Master, eat?" he heard the kitchen zamma call. He turned to slap the creature for daring to distract him. He stopped his raised hand in mid-swing. The zamma looked up at him from table height with sad eyes. Although it shook with fear, it held out a plate with a few slices of roast and steamed red cabbage.

Fustus took the plate. He looked out the window – two moons were rising above the moor. "Finish your kitchen duties and you may rest in your cage," he told the creature.

"Ladies bringback you?" the zamma asked, not moving from its spot beside the workbench.

"Yes, I will try to bring back the ladies." Fustus Magus ate the meal but regretted

the lost time. Then he turned back to the body pieces floating around the ether of the simulator. His eyes were dry. He decided he could spare a few moments and put his head down to rest. He fell asleep moments later.

He woke to the sun glaring in through the eastern window. The simulator waited patiently for his next command. He noticed the blanket draped around his shoulder and the zamma sleeping on the floor by his feet. He covered the little biotron with the blanket and went off to wash the stale sleep out of his mouth.

He made coffee for himself. There had always been Kala or Elysse, one of their trakels, or the zamma for such menial tasks. He tried to understand how the equipment fit together and where to put the coffee and then the water.

Once refreshed and caffeinated, Fustus Magus returned to his task with redoubled vigor. Using the simulator, it was easy to meld pieces together, to shorten or lengthen bone segments. He spent most of the day proportioning each piece so the whole would not be unbalanced or ungainly. When it would come time to work in real life, he'd have to cut entire undamaged sections to make them fit. This is something he loathed to do but he recognized its necessity.

Around half past midnight (he worked through the day again) he had everything the way he wanted – in the simulator. He was well aware that the simulator is nothing like the sharp edge of a scalpel. He considered bringing in a young surgeon from the university as an assistant but abandoned the idea. Even the young and malleable ones would balk at such a procedure. No, he decided that the best course of action would be a good night's rest and to continue alone with a clear head.

He found a note left by one of the Duke's couriers the following morning. A knot

built in his stomach as he read. The Duke was inquiring about his secret birthday surprise. Fustus didn't have time for the Duke. Yet, if the Duke learned there was no bed toy for him, he would surely summon Magus for a dressing-down.

Magus considered starting a new biotron for the Duke and then expressing his apologies that it wouldn't quite be ready for the festivities. Then he thought about ordering a high-end biotron from an off-world catalog; a ploy that might fall apart if one of the courtiers happens to be well versed in the off-world market. Another option would be enlisting a local peasant girl and passing her off as a biotron. Stunts like that have been pulled off successfully before, with a little cosmetic surgery and training on the girl's part. Ultimately, Fustus Magus acted on none of these ideas. Instead, he forgot about the Duke as he immersed himself in bringing back Kala and Elysse, in whatever form they may come.

He worked day and night. This time it was no simulation, rather it was with the flesh and bones of his wives – with scalpel and stitchings. Despite his experience, he was lulled into a false sense of ease with the simulator. He had to improvise on more than one occasion. The brain took two and a half days by itself. Sewing arms and legs into place was a simple exercise in comparison.

Intestines, liver, gall bladder, kidney. Each had their own issues. Yet, he worked methodically through each of them. The final step before sewing up the torso was assembling a uterus and then a vagina. And, of course, she'd have a clitoris fully wired into the central nervous system – he'd have nothing less.

When the body was finished, he returned it to the growth bath and let it rejuvenate for a day. The next morning he stimulated the heart with an electrical jolt. Once



circulation was re-established, he applied low-current electricity to the nervous system. He then watched the readings on his monitors for signs of life.

“Yes,” he shouted, pounding his fist on the counter from up in the control booth. Looking down at the cylinder confirmed the readouts. The signals were full and robust, not merely echoes of life as with biotrons. Complex and vibrant patterns they were, competing and coalescing; the signs of a living system, and a lot more.

He threw the wall switch, injecting the awakener. Even though he'd double-checked the batch to insure the chemicals were true, a nervous feeling of anxiety raced through his veins. He dared not breathe, as the red liquid snaked its way along the clear hosing on its way to the vat. He watched as the red mixed with the white of the growth bath. The liquid cleared, revealing his creation to him.

She opened her eyes and looked out at the world. She looked up to the control room where Magus stood. She put both her hands against the walls of the cylinder.

Magus had but a few minutes now. Soon, she'd realize she needed to take her first breath. He'd have to get the tank cleared before that moment. Throwing another switch started to drain the tank. He then ran down to the laboratory proper. By the time he got there, the tank was three quarters empty. No longer buoyed, his creation slumped against the chamber walls. Fustus threw another switch, this one engaging an electrical winch lifting the walls of the cylindrical tank up to the ceiling. He caught her as she collapsed into him.

He put a blanket over her shoulders as he steadied her. She looked back at him. Her two eyes surveyed the room independently. But, soon, they both focused on him.

“Fustus,” she said, “*dear.*”

“Yes,” he answered, “yes, it’s me!”

She turned to survey the room. The turn of the head was severe and jerky, the muscles not yet coordinated with the brain. Then she snapped her head to look the other way. Or, perhaps the brains are in conflict with themselves.

She raised her right hand even while Fustus held her in his arms. Then she raised her left. She opened and closed each hand independently of the other. Her eyes focused on one, then the other, again independently. Her eyes then caught the reflection in a glass window looking over the darkened winter landscape.

“What have you done to me, Fustus. *Fustus what did you do?*” She reached the glass, first with her right hand, and then her left. “No, this cannot be. *I can’t believe it!*” Then she screamed. She covered her right eye and a moment later she covered the left with her other hand.

The beauty Fustus Magus beheld while he labored to put piece together evaporated that moment. In its place, he saw the grotesque features of two half faces sewn together. One olive and round, the other, pale and chiseled. They were lopsided and warped. Kala’s features, on the left, had one dark brown eye balefully looking out at him. Elysse, on the right, had most of the nose and her single blue eye. It could have killed him with its stare. Their hair, half blonde and half black, hung wet from the tank.

“Is this what you wanted of me? *Look what you have done!*” she, they, said. She, they, turned to him. Each one grabbed his throat with her hand. Then they began their constricting choke and he gasped for air. She lifted him off the ground with surprising strength and flung him across the laboratory. Fustus Magus fell against the far wall and passed out.

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“Oh, Fustus,” the wife looked down upon him, “what were you thinking. *You really messed up this time, Fustus.*” She reached for his throat again with her right hand. “No,” she said. “No?” she asked. “No,” she replied, “*it would be too good for him.*”

KalaElysse turned from him and lumbered out of the laboratory negotiating each step with one deliberate footfall after the other.

“*What has he done to me?*” she lamented in her thoughts. “Yes, what? We can’t live like this,” the other side of her brain answered. “*We must see that he never does anything like this again.* Yes, we owe ourselves that much.”

She, they, descended the spiral, marble, stairs – away from the laboratory. The zamma ran up to her as she stepped into the grand hall. The creature looked up at the lady and screamed. It stood quaking, frozen in fear, in front of her.

“*Come, come, it is me Elysse, Kala,*” she, they, said. “*Don’t be afraid. Don’t be frightened.*”

The zamma turned and ran to its cage in the pantry.

KalaElysse followed. “What will come of it? *What will happen to it now that I can’t take care of him?* Oh, who will look after him? *Look how it quakes;* how it shakes. *Fustus would be mean to it; he could never love it.*” The two hands reached in and pulled the cowering zamma out by the scruff of its neck and held it in out front of them. She, they, watched its feet dance as it tried to break free. “*You will have nothing to fear. It will be over quickly.*” The right and left hands worked in cooperation and snapped the creature’s neck. It was dead in an instant. They let the slumping body drop to the pantry floor. She, they, bent down to kiss it one final time. A tear pooled in one eye.

*“Come, we have much to do. Yes, much.”*

They found a flithe, a creature who was much too big to have its neck snapped. And there was no need since it wasn't a sensitive soul, like the zamma. When asked, the flithe led them down to cold storage and showed her where their clothes were stored.

*“He packed our things away rather quickly, Elysse. Yes, Kala, I noticed, too. Interesting.”* They rummaged through their belongings for something to wear. Nothing fit quite right. Elysse's clothes were too long and tight while Kala's were short and too loose. They found a floor length burgundy dress of crushed velvet belonging to Elysse, something that had never been quite right, but now fit perfectly.

Then they found a pair of Kala's shoes which matched the dress. Both of their feet below the ankles were Kala's because of how the explosion spread its damage. Then she, they, went upstairs and coiffed her hair. Their hands fought for a moment when deciding upon the rouge. They decided on one of Elysse's after trying several. Nothing could be done to cover up the patchwork scars making up their face, and they didn't try.

She, they, looked in a full length mirror. *“Look at us, we can now go out. But, where? Why, to the Duke's centennial birthday celebration, where else. Yes, his hundredth birthday. I wonder what we can bring as a present from the great biotron master?”* They laughed as they, she, left the castle to saddle up a lorse.

The lorses all whined as she plodded, one laborious step after another, into the stable. When they opened the stall to the selected lorse, it reared and tried to knock her down. She, they, brought the beast under control with a commanding hold on its halter. Then they saddled the reluctant creature.

KalaElysse rode off into the dark of the night. She rode down the hill, driving the

beast at a thundering gallop. Her dress flowed, whipping behind her in the wind. She rode into the full moon rising over the darkened landscape.

“Turn down this path,” Kala’s half said once they entered the village. “*Why? That’s not the way to the palace.*” Elysse’s half asked. But, she already knew the answer as common thoughts crossed their corpus callosum from one hemisphere to the other. “*Your lover;*” Elysse thought towards Kala. “Yes, my lover. I must say goodbye,” Kala shot back. “*I always suspected. You hate me for that. Why, because you never took a – I always remained loyal!*”

She, they, Kala, stopped the horse in front of a poor man’s tavern. She, they, went around the back to where the casks were kept and the guests’ animals were stabled.

“Himmel,” she, Kala, said. “Himmel, are you here?”

“Kala? Is it you?” A figure emerged from the shadows. “You sound so strange. Are you not well?”

“My dear, I must leave you.” She spoke while still buried in shadows from a lantern on the wall. He could not see her face. “Before I go, make love to me one last time. *You can’t be serious!* Yes, take me a final time, for something bad has happened and I shall never see you again.”

“What –” Himmel started to ask. But, he saw her face when they were but a handbreadth apart. “You’re not Kala! What are you!” He took a step back. Then another, as she, it, approached with open arms, eager to embrace him.

He tripped. As he landed on his back, she was already on her knees in front of him. Then faster than he thought possible, she was lying on top of him.

“Kiss me, Himmel,” she, Kala, said. “*Yes, do,*” Elysse said, chiding, mocking,

*“kiss me.”* She, they, pressed her lips to him.

As he turned away, Kala grabbed his head and forced his lips unto hers. When they touched and Kala let the sensation fill her with rapture, Elysse put her own hand on his head and snapped the young man’s neck.

*“Now he won’t long for his lost lover,”* Elysse said.

They stood up. Kala looked down at the warped body of Himmel.

*“You always hated me,”* Kala’s half said. *“Only the way a first wife can hate a second,”* Elysse answered. *“And, to think, I always looked up to you. I only hated you because I wanted to be like you.”*

They finished what they needed to do to the body now that he was dead. Then they turned back to the street where their horse nervously waited. They mounted the beast and rode off to the Duke’s palace, trying not to think any thoughts at each other.

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Fustus Magus woke to the sound of a horse’s clopping hooves across the drawbridge. Dizzy from the impact of his head against the wall, he made his way to the window in time to see his creation ride away. He staggered down the stairs and out to the stable. He saddled up a horse of his own and rode after her.

Once in village, he came across a gathering of peasants in front of a small tavern. Assorted body parts – arms, limbs, a headless torso – were passed along over their heads and thrown onto the cart for the dead. Those not working made signs warding off evil.

*“Have you seen a —”* he started to ask a stupefied villager standing off by himself on the corner.

The man pointed vaguely in the direction of the palace. His face was void of

expression. “I saw’d her,” he mumbled, “She looked at me – with her two separate eyes...”

Fustus Magus kicked his mount to a gallop and flew down the cobblestone streets out the other end of the village. He wondered how far ahead she was.

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KalaElyse entered the palace through the kitchen. To get there, she left a trail of guards with broken necks along the grounds. They did not bother her. The girl whose scarf she wore across her face bothered her. The maid screamed when they came upon her. KalaElyse had no choice but to silence her.

Once in the hall and mingling with the royal guests, she sought out the Duke’s majordomo. “Fustus Magus regrets to announce,” they said, trying to keep to one voice – of Elyse, “that due to a mishap in the laboratory, he cannot be present to unveil the Duke’s new biotron.”

“Elyse? Is that you?” Klum, the majordomo asked, looking at the woman, not quite sure what was wrong.

KalaElyse, with one eye showing from behind the veil wrapping her head and face, continued. “I shall present the biotron myself. Tell the Duke that Magus outdid himself; expect the avant-garde.”

“I, I hope Magus will be alright.”

“He will be. In fact, I’m sure he’ll be here later. Now, have someone escort us, me, to the waiting area behind the stage. The biotron needs to rest.”

The majordomo could have asked where the biotron was, or could have pressed the point of what was wrong with Elyse, but it so happened that a guard – not a palace

guard in pompous uniform, but one of the real kind in cavalry uniforms – hurried up to the majordomo and whispered something in his ear.

“I see,” Klum answered in a hush. Then turning to Elysse he said, “You must excuse me, an urgent matter has come up.” He snapped his fingers for a concierge to assist the lady, and then rushed away speaking urgently with the guard.

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Fustus Magus saw the scurry of activity as soon as he turned onto the poplar-lined boulevard. Even from half a kilometer away, the palace grounds looked like an ant hill perturbed by a child’s stick. Soldiers brandishing vaporizers, not ceremonial swords, ran around the palace grounds.

“What’s going on?” Magus asked an agitated guard at the gate.

“Lock down,” he snapped back. “No one enters or leaves. I’m afraid I’ll have to detain you, sir, until we get orders to stand down.”

“No, I have to get in! It’s of the utmost importance.”

“I need to see your travel documents, sir,” the guard spoke, not listening to Magus. “And, you’ll have to wait in the carriage house until we get the all-clear.”

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When KalaElysse unveiled her face after Klum’s introduction, gasps of horror spread through the hall. Ladies turned their heads, men choked back their revulsion. Someone shrieked. KalaElysse walked slowly towards the center of the ballroom, ignoring their reactions. The crowd parted for her as she made her way forward. She took slow and graceful steps that took full concentration of both her halves. She bowed slightly towards a royal who stared at her with a slack jaw. He instinctively bowed in



return. From then on, others bowed; bowed to her, like she was one of their peers. She walked forward with head high and allowed herself the hint of a smile.

The guests did not realize that they were in the middle of a lockdown. They had no idea that a trail of bodies leading across the grounds had been discovered. Beside the majordomo, only the Duke and his son the young captain knew; and they, only that there was some kind of security incident.

Duke Gendymore III broke free of his familial entourage and stepped forward to meet this grotesque yet curious toy, creation, person – whatever she was. He examined her closely with his monocled eye.

Lady Gendymore looked on from the safety of her children and other ladies of the court. “I don’t ‘get’ it,” she whispered to the lady beside her. “Is this what they call art nowadays?”

“Hideous,” her companion said.

“At least she’s not the little redheaded nymph I was expecting.”

KalaElysse raised her gloved hand, offering it to the Duke.

“Amazing,” Duke Gendymore said. He wasn’t sure if he liked what Magus had done, but it certainly was daring of him. Hesitantly, he took the offered hand and bent to kiss it.

“Dr. Magus congratulates you on your hundredth birthday and sincerely hopes this will be a night to remember,” she, they, said to the Duke loud enough to be heard throughout the hall.

As if on queue, the conductor struck up the band - playing a Tchaikovsky waltz.

Duke Gendymore took KalaElysse by the arms and held her against his body.

“No, I cannot dance,” she, they protested. But before she could pull away, he started waltzing her across the floor. And to her surprise, she followed.

“Dancing is easier than walking! *Don't think, just do.* Look at him, Elysse, he's not frightened of us. *No, Kala. Not even disturbed.* I think he likes us.” They looked into the Duke's eyes as he whirled them around with an increasing fury. “*Kala, you know he'll want to take his 'birthday present' to bed.* I know; I thought we'd have shocked him, yet he finds us arousing. *Yes, he does. Look how enamored he is of us.* Elysse, you are smitten with him, ha!”

The Duke bowed to her when the dance ended. “You are such an energetic dancer, my dear. I could hardly keep up.” He kept staring at her face, and then spoke again. “I must say, you are absolutely the most ghastly creation I have ever seen.”

Her heart sank. Their heart sank. For a moment she had actually thought...

“You will accompany me upstairs,” the Duke said with regal formality. He held out his arm for her to take.

“Here goes,” Kala thought. “*Be strong, like me.*” Elysse shot back. They hesitated a moment, then put her hand around it, holding back two sets of tears.

They marched past Lady Gendymore and the clutch of royal ladies. Lady Gendymore stared at them, daggers in her eyes. KalaElysse bowed ever so slightly when their eyes locked, but she didn't break the gaze, instead, she waited until the Duke's wife turned away.

Once in his private chambers, Elysse allowed Duke Gendymore III to enter her; enter her the way Kala wanted her clandestine lover just a few hours ago. Once he was on

her, she held him with her legs and turned the two of them over to be on top. She smiled.

The Duke smiled back, but it was a reserved smile for he saw evil in her mismatched eyes.

“Elysse, you and the Duke have been lovers. *Only for the betterment of Fustus’s career, Kala, dear.* Rubbish! You’re still fond of him. *I see my memories are open to you.* Yes, *we had a liaison.* What if I take him from you like you took mine from me?”

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The grand set of doors flew open and Fustus Magus stood in at the head of the hall. “Where is she!” he cried. “She has to be stopped.”

Lady Gendymore locked eyes with him. She pointed up the grand staircase. “In his private chambers,” she said with ice in her voice. “I wouldn’t allow it in our bedroom.”

Magus ran across the hall and up the stairs followed by Klum the majordomo and the Duke’s son brandishing his sword. Lady Gendymore followed them. They forced open the door to the Duke’s private room. They found the creature sitting at the top of the bed cradling the Duke’s head. The Duke didn’t stir to the sound of his door crashing open. His eyes looked unblinking towards the ceiling. His neck was bent unnaturally to one side. Blood pooled in his open mouth; streaks congealed down his face. The creature, with her patchwork face, smiled at them then laughed.

“Dear husband,” she said, “won’t you join us?” Her fingers were red as she idly played with the pool of blood in the Duke’s mouth.

Lady Gendymore screamed. Fustus Magus held his heart. The son charged into the creature with his sword.

KalaElysse jumped off the bed, but not in time to save herself. The sword impaled her chest where her two halves had been sewn together. It came out her back side. She collapsed silently to the floor.

The Duke's son, the handsome Captain, wiped the blood off his sword in the creature's crushed velvet dress. As he sheathed his sword, he looked down at the grotesque body now pooling crimson of its own mixed with a sickly white liquid – a most un-human sight. He then looked to the body of his father lying contorted on the bed. Thoughts of succession raced through his head. He realized Magus had just done him a huge favor. "Fustus Magus, I'll see you hang for this!" he cried.

He turned to his mother, Lady Gendymore, who took a step towards her dead husband on the bed. He held her in his arms and tried to console her grief. He told her not to look.

Lady Gendymore, buried her face in her son's chest. Not to cry, but to conceal the relief of the old bastard's demise. She'd never have to live through another of the annual embarrassment of her husband's birthday fetes and his biotron bed-toy presents.

She held onto her son, secretly making new plans for herself. Neither she nor Magus nor Krum noticed the creature stir, then get up, then glide across the floor to position itself behind her son. Lady Gendymore just felt her son lose his stance and fall through her arms. He collapsed to the floor by her feet. She saw that vial creation standing in his place. She was smiling, laughing, looking at her with those two unmatched eyes and holding up those two unmatched hands that had just snapped her son's neck. White fluid congealed round the wound on the creature's chest, whatever voodoo that biotron master used to make this creature was still coursing through her veins

and constantly rejuvenating her, making her invincible.

“Do you find me pretty?” KalaElysse said, locking eyes with Lady Gendymore once again.

Lady Gendymede screamed. The hands of Elysse and Kala circled her throat and broke her neck, too. Lady Gendymore stopped screaming and slumped to the floor with her eyes still holding that last look of horror.

KalaElysse stepped over the royal bodies on her way to the door. Before Fustus could reach his vaporizer or the majordomo his sword, she grabbed them each by the clothes on their chests and threw them aside then did the same to the captain of the guard two of his men when they pushed their way through the gathering crowd. As she walked out, that same crowd parted for her. KalaElysse descended the grand stairways, pushing any guard or courtier off the stairs who dared approach. They held her head high.

The creature was out the front door before anyone thought to sound the alarm. She was beyond the palace grounds before any of the guards had enough sense to stop the veiled lady walking past them so serenely.

She, they, KalaElysse disappeared into the night.

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Fustus Magus was hanged after a short but sensational trial. Royals and holies packed the courthouse to watch the entertainment. The peasantry jeered through the windows. No one had bothered to look for the monster, at least not where she was. While everyone was preoccupied with the fate of Fustus Magus, KalaElysse recovered the bodies of an inconsequential young man from the pauper’s morgue and Duke Gendymore, III, himself from the royal crypt.

The night after the hanging, the village folk paraded the corpse of Fustus Magus around on a wooden cart. Little children lit sparklers as his body passed. Fireworks were set into the sky from the palace. It was under these conditions that she easily slipped back into Magus's castle with enough body parts to make a lover worthy for even her.

The End

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