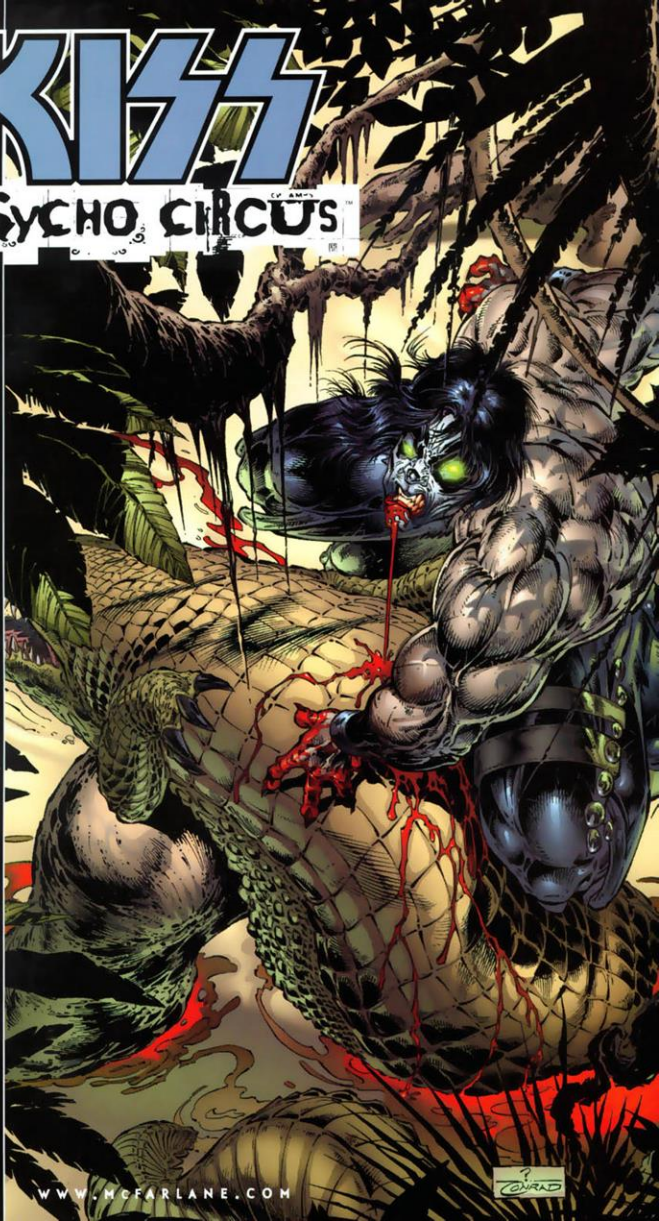


KISS

PSYCHO CIRCUS



26

\$2.95 US
\$3.60 Can

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Step right up,
LAD'S AND LADIES!
WELCOME TO THE
SHOW!

WELCOME

FRIEND! IN YOU GO!
DON'T BE SHY NOW.

See **SIGHTS** AND
AMUSEMENTS
BEYOND DESCRIPTION.
IMPOSSIBLE FEATS and
FANTASTICAL REVELATIONS.

Dreams BY THE
AND **NIGHTMARES**
BY THE POUND, YOUR
Heart's Desire.
ALL FOR A *Song!*

CHRISTINE HART REMEMBERS NEVER
LIKING THE CIRCUS WHEN SHE WAS A
CHILD. HER MOTHER TOOK HER ONCE,
OR MAYBE TWICE, AND THE THINGS
TERRIFIED HER.



ALL THAT NOISE AND COLOR AND
STRANGENESS. IT'S SILLY, NOW
THAT SHE THINKS OF IT, THE THINGS
CHILDREN ARE AFRAID OF...



SHE CAN'T EXPLAIN WHAT DREW
HER TO THE CARNIVAL TODAY, BUT
SHE'S GLAD SHE CAME.

TO STEP OUT OF YOURSELF, JUST
FOR A FEW HOURS, TO SEE THE
WORLD TURNED ON ITS HEAD.
THERE REALLY IS SOMETHING
MAGICAL ABOUT IT.

STEP
DOWN,
SHANDI.
THERE'S
A GOOD
GIRL.





SO MUCH TO DO, SO MUCH TO SEE. YOU'D HARDLY KNOW WHERE TO START.

STEP RIGHT UP. TRY YER LUCK.

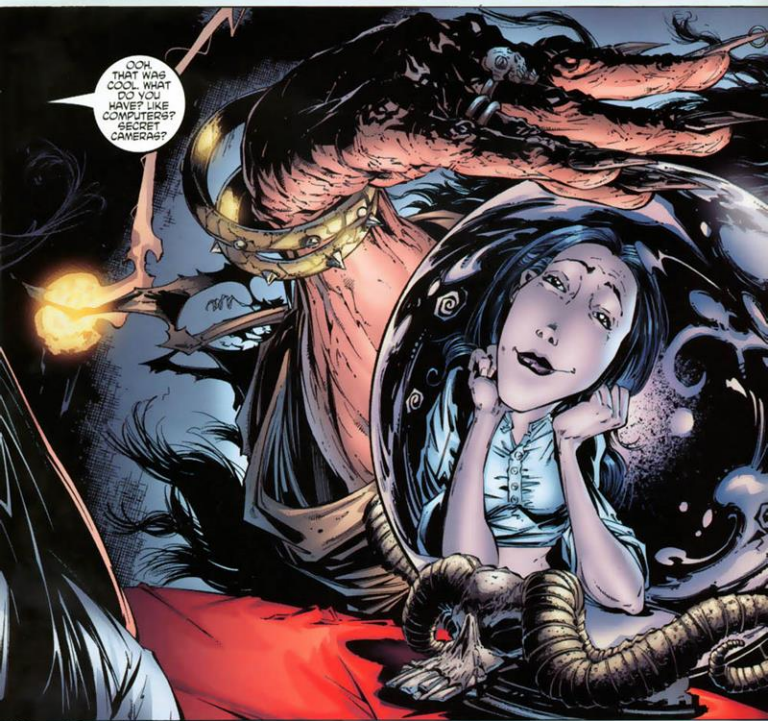
ANCIENT MYSTERIES FROM THE FABLED ORIENT...

TEST YOUR STRENGTH, GIRL! ARE YOU A MAN OR A MOUSE?



COME IN, CHRISTINE...

I HAVE BEEN EXPECTING YOU.



OOH,
THAT WAS
COOL. WHAT
DO YOU
HAVE? LIKE
COMPUTERS?
SECRET
CAMERAS?



HO-KAY,
NOT MUCH TO TELL.
I LIKE TO SING, I
LIKE TO WRITE, I LIKE
TO READ. I'M A
TERRIBLE COOK,
BUT THAT DOESN'T
STOP ME FROM
TRYING...

TOSH,
MADAM RAVEN
IS NO FOOL, YOU
KNOW. THAT IS NOT
WHAT BROUGHT YOU
HERE, TELL ME
ABOUT YOUR
DREAMS



SIT DOWN,
CHRISTINE HART.
TELL US WHAT
HAUNTS YOU.
REVEAL THE
SECRETS THAT
YOU KEEP
INSIDE.



MY
DREAMS? YOU
MEAN LIKE "WHAT
DO I WANT
TO BE WHEN I
GROW UP?"
THAT KIND OF
THING?



NO. YOUR
DREAMS. THE
DREAMS THAT
HAUNT YOU.
THAT IS WHY
YOU CAME
HERE.



WAIT. HOW
DID YOU KNOW?
I NEVER TOLD
ANYONE --

CLOSE
YOUR EYES.
TAKE A DEEP
BREATH... AND
TELL ME.



THIS IS WEIRD. I
CAN'T BELIEVE
I'M DOING THIS.
I GUESS THEY
STARTED WHEN
I WAS ABOUT
SIXTEEN.

MY FATHER DIED
BEFORE I WAS
BORN. MY MOTHER
NEVER LIKED TO
TALK ABOUT IT.

I FOUND OUT
WHEN I WAS A
LITTLE OLDER
THAT HER FATHER
DIED JUST BEFORE
SHE WAS BORN.

AND MY
GRANDMOTHER,
WHO TOLD ME
THIS, WOULD HAVE
DEALT WITH HER
FATHER.

"ANYTHING YOU TRULY LOVE
WILL BE TAKEN FROM YOU.
BUT IS THAT REASON
ENOUGH NOT TO LOVE?"
SHE USED TO TELL ME.

SEEMED LIKE A PRETTY
DAMN GOOD REASON TO ME.
BUT ANYWAY, WHEN I WAS
ABOUT SIXTEEN, I STARTED
HAVING THESE DREAMS.

I MEAN, I
KNOW ALL
GIRLS DREAM
ABOUT "PRINCE
CHARMING"
COMING IN
ON A WHITE
HORSE, BUT
THESE WERE
SO REAL.



WHENEVER I HAD THEM -- TWO OR THREE TIMES A MONTH -- IT WAS LIKE I WAS VISITING THIS OTHER WORLD.




AND THAT THE WORLD I WOKE UP TO, THE WORLD OF MATH TESTS AND BEER BLASTS AND BAD SITCOMS, THAT WAS THE FAKE WORLD.




WHEN I DREAMED THESE DREAMS, IT ALWAYS FELT LIKE I WAS PASSING THROUGH SOME KIND OF THRESHOLD.





A LOT OF THE DETAILS CHANGE,
BUT IT ALWAYS BEGAN AT A BALL,
A MASKED BALL, LIKE OUT OF
A FAIRY TALE.


ALL THESE STRANGE
LORDS AND LADIES
IN WILD COSTUMES,
EVERYONE MASKED.



I CAN HEAR THEM LAUGHING,
AND MURMURING AND GOSSIPING,
EXCEPT EVERYONE WAS SPEAKING
A DIFFERENT LANGUAGE.



AND I DON'T JUST MEAN LIKE
FRENCH OR LATIN. SOME
CHIRPED LIKE BIRDS OR
GROWLED LIKE LIONS.



I TRY TO ASK PEOPLE
FOR HELP, BUT NO ONE
CAN UNDERSTAND ME,
BUT I KNOW HE'S HERE,
THE ONE I'M LOOKING FOR.

SOMEWHERE BEHIND
THIS SEA OF MASKS, HE
WAS WAITING FOR ME...





The Prince of Hearts.

IF I COULD FIND HIM
AND MAKE HIM FALL
IN LOVE WITH ME,
THE "FAMILY CURSE"
WOULD BE LIFTED, AND --
OH, I DON'T KNOW,
HAPPILY EVER AFTER,
OR SOMETHING LIKE
THAT, I GUESS.

COME HITHER,
SWEET CHILD,
WELCOME TO THE
MASQUERADE.

THANK
YOU, MY
LORD.



MAY I HAVE
THE PLEASURE OF
THIS DANCE, SWEET
GIRL?

I'M... I'M
AFRAID, MY
LORD.



WHY AFRAID,
SWEET GIRL? I
WOULD DO YOU
NO HARM.

YOU ARE
THE PRINCE OF
HEARTS, ARE
YOU NOT? ALL WHO
DANCE WITH YOU
WILL BE HURT BY
AND BY.



PERHAPS THAT IS TRUE. I CANNOT SAY, BUT EVEN SO, IS THAT ANY REASON TO SIT IN A CORNER AND MISS OUT ON THE REVELS?

I'M SURE YOU SPEAK WISELY, MY LORD, BUT STILL, I AM AFRAID.



THEN THAT IS A PITY AND I AM SORRY FOR YOU.

MAY I ASK A FAVOR?

OF COURSE.




MAY I SEE YOUR FACE? YOUR TRUE FACE.



AS YOU WISH...

RIGHT AWAY, I KNOW I ASKED THE WRONG THING.



THE NEXT PART OF THE DREAM,
I'M STANDING AT A GRAVE,
WEEPING FOR MY ONE TRUE
LOVE. I LOOK FOR A NAME ON
THE HEAD STONE, BUT I CAN'T
MAKE IT OUT.




AND I LOOK UP ON A HILL
AT THE EDGE OF THE
GRAVE YARD, AND I SEE
THE STAR-FACED PRINCE.

BUT HE IS
NOT ALONE.



THE PRIEST IS
TELLING ME TO
HURRY UP. HE
HAS A LOT OF
PEOPLE TO BURY
THIS DAY.




THERE ARE OTHERS. FOUR
STRANGE BROTHERS, LOOKING
DOWN AT ME. I CAN TELL HE'S
TRYING TO WHISPER SOMETHING
TO ME. TO TELL ME SOMETHING
IMPORTANT. BUT I CAN'T HEAR HIM.



THUNDER CRACKS IN THE
SKY AND I CAN'T HEAR
WHAT HE'S SAYING.



AND THEN EVERYTHING IS
WASHED OUT BY THE ROSE
GLOW OF SUNRISE...



AND THEN I WAKE UP.
IT'S BEEN THE SAME
DREAM FOR YEARS.



WHAT
DO YOU
THINK IT IS
TELLING
YOU?

"CONSIDER
THERAPY"?
I DON'T
KNOW.



MADAM
RAVEN
WILL HELP
YOU OUT,
DEARIE.

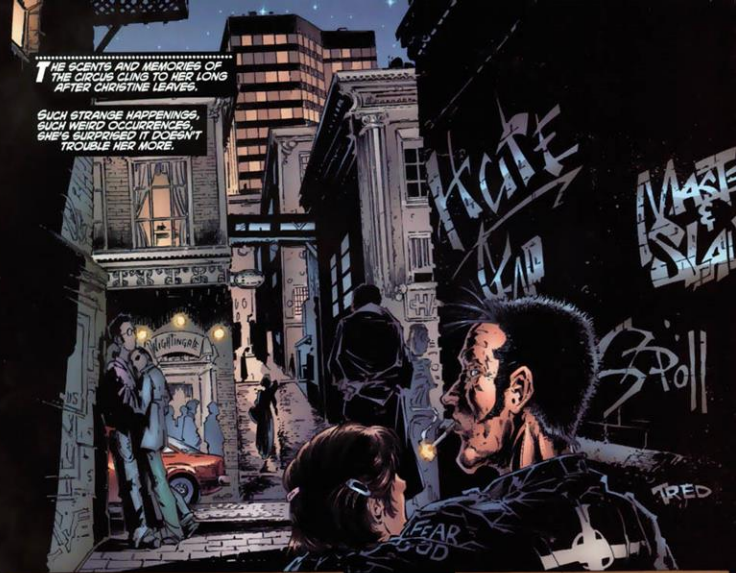


YOU ARE
A SWEET GIRL.
AND I WILL HELP
YOU FIND YOUR
WAY, BUT ONLY SO
FAR. THE REST
YOU MUST DO
ON YOUR
OWN.



THE SCENTS AND MEMORIES OF THE CIRCUS CLING TO HER LONG AFTER CHRISTINE LEAVES.

SUCH STRANGE HAPPENINGS, SUCH WEIRD OCCURRENCES, SHE'S SURPRISED IT DOESN'T TROUBLE HER MORE.



BUT SOMEHOW IT SEEMS LIKE THE MOST NATURAL THING IN THE WORLD.



HEY! THERE'S OUR STAR. SO WHAT DID YOU DO WITH YOUR DAY?


WENT TO THE CIRCUS.

NO, SERIOUSLY. SERIOUSLY.






I GUESS
IT'S KINDA FUNNY,
'BOUT THE WAY THAT
THINGS WORKED OUT
AND I'M SORRY TO
BRING THIS UP
AGAIN...
BUT YOUR
TOUCH HAS LEFT
A TRACE IN THE
CANDLE LIGHT'S
EMBRACE, AND
I COUNT MYSELF
THE LOSER IN
THE END...




HER SOUL LEAPING AND
DIVING IN WILD ABANDON.
SHE'S NEVER FELT THIS
BEFORE. AND SOMETHING
IN HER CHANGES.



HER VOICE IS NO LONGER
HER OWN. WORDS FLOW
FROM HER MOUTH SHE
NEVER HEARD BEFORE.



TALES OF LOST
KINGDOMS AND
DOOMED LOVE.



SHE SWOONS AND
SPIRALS IN A SKY
OF SONG.



STAR-CROSSED
MAIDENS AND
NOBLE PRINCES.



ABOUT LOCKED TOWERS,
FABLED RICHES AND FADED
GLORY. SHE IS NOT PLAYING
THIS SONG. THE SONG IS
PLAYING HER.

THE MELODY BUILDS AND TWISTS AND
GROWS, INCREASINGLY COMPLEX, AND
INCREASINGLY BEAUTIFUL.



A WILD, BEAUTEUS THING
WITH WINGS, STRUGGLING
TO BREAK FREE FROM ITS
EARTHLY CAGE.



AS THE LAST STRAINS
OF MELODY HANGS IN
THE AIR, FADING GENTLY
LIKE EMBERS...

THE AUDIENCE IS
STUNNED. NONE HAVE
EVER HEARD MUSIC
LIKE THIS.



CHRISTINE HART IS
COMPLETELY AN
UTTERLY SPENT.



UH...
EXCUSE ME.
I GOTTA
GO.





I DON'T KNOW. SOMETIMES I GET THE FEELING THAT THERE ARE THINGS THAT ARE JUST *BIGGER* THAN US. TOO MUCH TO TAKE IN.

I MEAN THEY'RE RIGHT THERE IN FRONT OF OUR FACE ALL THE TIME, BUT WE REALLY DON'T SEE THEM.

BUT IF WE *DID* SEE THEM, THEY WOULD BE SO. I DON'T KNOW, *OVERPOWERING*, WE COULDN'T TAKE IT.

I THINK I GOT A GLIMPSE OF SOMETHING I REALLY SHOULDN'T HAVE.

HONEY, DON'T YOU THINK THIS IS ALL A LITTLE TOO PHILOSOPHICAL FOR A TUESDAY NIGHT?



YEAH I'M SORRY. I KNOW I'M NOT MAKING ANY SENSE.

MAYBE YOU SHOULD GO HOME. CALL IT A NIGHT. I'LL EXPLAIN TO MORRIS. TELL HIM YOU'RE ON YOUR PERIOD OR SOMETHING. MEN ALWAYS FALL FOR THAT.



YEAH, I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT. THANKS.





IN THE DEEP OF THE NIGHT,
CHRISTINE HART WAKES TO
THE SCENT OF ROSE PETALS...



AND THE DISTANT,
SUBTLE STRAINS
OF MUSIC.



I
HEARD YOU
SINGING, SWEET
GIRL. I JUST HAD
TO COME AND
SEE YOU.

TO BE CONTINUED...