

THE TERRIBLE AND BIZARRE DOCUMENT
OF MISS BLANCHETTE AND MR LOOPY

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The intricate wild wood was unusually quiet that midsummer morning. Normally boisterous birds seemed to be cowering under the leaves, waiting for the onslaught of heat that had been so disturbing for the past week.

Miss Blanchette was making her way to her grandmother's cottage who had disappeared rather mysteriously about a year back and as none of her relatives wanted to live in the depths of 'some *manky* old wood', the girl was allowed to make the dilapidated cottage her home.

A dark shadow spread over her.

'Miss Blanchette? Let us hope today's heat will not wilt these wretched woodland creatures. They are much in my thoughts today.'

'Mr Wolfe? I've heard of you from my dear old Granny. And how you like to creep up on people. That is not nice.'

'I don't do nice!' he laughed. 'How is the dear lady keeping? Oh, I recollect, she is lost to this world.'

'She disappeared! People think...'

'People think I'm a ne'er-do-well.'

At that moment, a group of village girls came running by, cheekily blowing kisses to Mr Wolfe.

One of the group poked a stick at the girl. 'Little Miss Blanchy, is it?' She thrust a large insect into the poor girl's hair. 'See how you like our creepy, woody things. If you're going to become a bosky bitch, know our beasties and crawlies.'

A willowy girl called Geraldine sprang forward and asked with a sneer: 'Are you living all lonely and lonesome? Shall I tell... about all those bad men who gather after dark?'

She pushed Miss Blanchette to the ground and spat in her face. ‘That’s the first thing they do to you... like I just done, a whole load of spit and gob and before you know it, they turn you wild and yearning.’

‘Yearning, yearning...’ the girls collectively sighed. ‘Yearning is our life!’

‘Now, girls,’ said Mr Wolfe, politely, ‘enough fun for the moment.’

The girls made way for them, smirking all the while.

When they had gone some distance in silence, Mr Wolfe said quietly: ‘Those idiotic girls are called: “The Primrose Gang” but they’re quite harmless. As you saw, they wear primrose dresses and very becoming they are too but I should warn you about a more serious bunch.’ His large hand rested gently on her shoulder: ‘Be very wary of the “Posse of Plumed Mums” who are older and nastier. They quote cooking recipes to passers-by in right old sexy voices... not many can resist. Now I keep well clear of the old dears but it is said they steal your soul then spit it out and if it looks nice they draw lots as to who should have it. The scarecrows hereabouts tell that some of these ladies have as much as twenty souls!’

‘Mr Wolfe, there is so much to learn. How pleased I am to meet somebody with your common sense.’

They arrived at the brook in front of her cottage. Miss Blanchette shook his hand, shyly. ‘I’m glad I took no notice of all the bad things I’ve heard about you. I like to make my own mind up on people.’

‘Please! Call me by my pet woody name: Loopy.’ He took out a handkerchief and wiped his brow. ‘Wondering if I might have some water or a cup of tea?’

The girl invited him in but said he would have to carry her into the cottage. He looked surprised and told him that she had witnessed a dreadful event as a child and that her old nurse said that if she ever met someone for the first time and really liked them, this was a sure fire way to avoid the same fate of her sister.

‘Delighted to do you a turn,’ he said, recovering his composure.

‘Are you ready for me?’ the girl asked, coquettishly and without more ado, jumped into his outstretched arms.

‘You’re so *damnation* light,’ he mumbled excitedly into her ear. One cool hand held the back of his neck and the other clung to the lapel of his fur coat.

‘Sit me down on the kitchen table!’ she requested.

He lowered her down gently. She seemed to want to cling to his neck and not let go.

‘Oh...’ the girl said softly, ‘I must do that again!’

He watched her swift and elegant movements as she laid out the china on a beautiful crisp white tablecloth.

‘You are honoured. You’re my first real guest and I’m laying out Granny’s best.’

‘You spoil me, my dear, but another warning: be very careful of...’

She burst out laughing. ‘Another girly gang? I’m beginning to think you might be having a bit of fun with me. Though I don’t mind admitting that I was very much, put out when that totally *demential* Geraldine spat on me. I’ll not forget her in a hurry.’

They sat quietly sipping tea. Miss Blanchette suddenly looked up and asked him why he wore his thick fur coat even in hot summer weather and he replied that in the coldest lands like Siberia they wear the same clothing all year round and never feel the cold or heat. ‘By the by, I passed by here the other day and smelt the most delicious roast...’

‘Granny left so much meat in the freezer... if you like, I can give you a leg of lamb?’