

Wicked

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE WICKED WITCH OF THE WEST

by Gregory Maguire

The dragon rested again but draped a wing over another archway, which lit up the puppet husband, wandering out in the night. Along came a puppet widow, with sprigged hair and high color, dragging along a protesting, flinty-toothed daughter. The widow kissed the puppet husband, and pulled off his leather trousers. He was equipped with two full sets of male goods, one in the front and another hanging off the base of his spine. The widow positioned her daughter on the abbreviated prong in the front, and herself took advantage of the more menacing arrangement in the rear. The three puppets bucked and rocked, emitting squeals of glee. When the puppet widow and her daughter were through, they dismounted and kissed the adulterous puppet husband.

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He was sitting on a stool, and around him in the stall sat, almost preternaturally near, a man in a black masque, and Asp he hadn't

noticed before, the Tiger whose breath ran hot and meaty on his neck, a beautiful schoolgirl, or was that the bride on her honeymoon?...Anyway, they leaned together toward the central dais, an altar of veils and sacrifices. Boq loosened his collar and then his belt, felt the gingery appetite between heart and stomach and the resulting stiffening apparatus below that...The dwarf, in a darker hood now, appeared on the stage. He could see from his vantage point into all the stalls but the revelers in separate stalls couldn't see one another...He encouraged from one stall the figure of a woman, from another man (was it Tibbett?), and from the stall where Boq sat he gestured to the Tiger. Boq felt only faintly sorry not to be chosen himself as he watched the dwarf pass a smoking vial beneath the nostrils of the three acolytes, and help them to remove their clothes...The Tiger was pacing on all fours and growling softly, tossing his head back and forth in distress or excitement. Tibbett-for it was he, though nearly out of consciousness- was made to lie on his back on the floor of the stage. The Tiger strode over him and stood still while the dwarf and his

assistants lifted Tibbett and tied his wrists together, around the Tiger's chest, and his ankles around the tiger's pelvis, so Tibbett hung beneath the Tiger's belly, like a trussed pig, his face lost in the Tiger's chest hair. The woman was set on a sloping stool, almost like a huge tilting bowl, and the dwarf tucked something aromatic and runny up in the shadowy regions. Then the dwarf pointed to Tibbett, who was beginning to twist and moan into the Tiger's chest...The dwarf then slapped the tiger on his flank with a riding crop, and the Tiger strained forward, positioning his head between the woman's legs... As he laced the woman into the half-shell, stroking her nipples with a glowing salve, he handed her a riding crop with which she could lash at the Tiger's flanks and face...The crowd drew nearer, almost participants themselves, and the musky sense of adventure made them tear at their own buttons and nibble their own lips, leaning in, in, in.

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