"FEAR OF THE DARK"
Part One of Three
by
Andy Diggle

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Recap

When Jack Boniface was bound to the Shadow Loa – a powerful, angry voodoo spirit – he became the latest inheritor of the Shadowman legacy. For years, he struggled to control the loa’s violent urges – a struggle he ultimately lost.

Alyssa Myles was an Abettor, raised and trained to help the Shadowman fight the forces of evil. But Jack turned his back on her and disappeared into the Deadside – the twisted nether-realm of the dead.

That was five years ago.

Since then, Alyssa has been left to battle horrors from the Deadside – and help the people of New Orleans – all alone...
PAGE 1

1) Small, very close. A voodoo GRIS-GRIS (leather-bound charm pendant) is hung around a black woman's neck. It's ALYSSA MYLES, though we're too close in on the pendant to see her face, as she ties the leather string behind her neck.

LETEEERING NOTE: These captions are SHADOWMAN'S internal monologue, though readers might think them Alyssa's. Shadowman's captions - and dialogue - are always distinctive WHITE TEXT ON BLACK.

CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
Every day is a struggle.

2) Small, very close. Alyssa cocks the slide of an M1911 COLT .45 automatic. Again, we're too close to see who's doing this; our focus is on the gun. It's a simple tool of black metal, wood grip, well worn by age and use.

CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
Every step forward, a fight.

FX
CHK-CHAK

3) Small, very close. She thumbs cartridges into a spare clip. The bullets have voodoo VÈVES (ritual patterns) carved into the tips. Magic bullets.

CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
But I take that step. And the next.

4) Small, very close. She tucks the gun into a tactical holster on the back of her jeans.

CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
'Cause it's that, or look back.

5) Small, very close. POV from behind Alyssa as she shrugs on a black leather jacket. The twin-snake VÈVÈ of DAMBALLAH painted/embroidered on the back. We do not see her face.

CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
And what's behind me...

6) Small, very close. Her hand reaches for CAR KEYS on a side table. A candle burns beside a FRAMED PHOTO of ALYSSA, DOX and JACK BONIFACE. The photo is from five years ago, soon after they first met. They're happy, laughing and smiling, holding beer bottles, leaning back against Dox's old '57 Plymouth Fury in the sunshine.

CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
I can't stand to look it in the eye.
1) BIG! NIGHT. Hero shot of ALYSSA MYLES striding down the front porch steps toward us. This is our first proper look at her. She's five years older than we last saw her. Five years tougher, harder, more experienced; a veteran. No longer the wide-eyed apprentice, she is now a tough, no-nonsense, supernatural ass-kicker. She's leaving Dox's old safehouse at 363 Rampart Street, New Orleans. Vertical iron bars over the ground-floor windows; slatted wooden shutters on the inside. The door is reinforced steel with a peep-hole.

   CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
   I told myself I could start over. Go back to a normal life.

   CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
   Walk away from the guilt and pain.

2) Full width. Over-the-shoulder as she strides towards a beat-up old Jeep Wrangler. A practical off-road vehicle with bull-bars.

   CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
   But the ghosts of the past, they're always with me.

   CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
   Buried inside of me...

3) Full width. High, wide aerial landscape shot looking down on the Jeep as it weaves along a single-lane track towards/through the Louisiana bayou. The headlights cut through the darkness ahead, but all around is DEEP BLACK SHADOW.

   CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
   Way down deep in the dark.
1) Wide. Alyssa steps out of the Jeep, background panel right. Foreground panel left, a dirt-poor, gray-bearded old black guy named ISIAH turns to her. He sits shelling crawfish on a crude wooden JETTY beside a rough-looking SHACK HOUSE, deep in the swamp. Not important in this panel, but there's a small boat with an outboard motor docked at the jetty. The scene is lit by moonlight and paraffin lamps.

    ISIAH
    That a gris-gris I see roun' your neck,
    pretty lady?

    ALYSSA
    Figure I need all the help I can get.

2) Isiah straightens as Alyssa walks up to him. Alyssa shrugs, not making a big deal of her reputation.

    ISIAH
    Heard all 'bout you. You that mambo priestess...
    (link)
    Alyssa Myles.

    ALYSSA
    I know a little craft. Enough to get by,
    help people out.
    (link)
    That's why I'm here. I need a guide, take
    me deep into the bayou.

3) Isiah grins, showing missing teeth, but his eyes are cold and beady.
    Slightly sinister.

    ISIAH
    You been playing with fire, girl.
    (link)
    Dangerous thing they say, a little
    knowledge, yes it is...

4) Alyssa stands her ground, hands on hips, no bullshit, giving us a salty look.

    ALYSSA
    You want my money or we done talking?

5) Isiah hobbles away toward the boat on the jetty. Alyssa follows.

    ISIAH
    Ease up, I'll take you. Ain't nobody
    knows these waters like ol' Isiah...
    (link)
    Best damn guide in the Big Easy, that's
    me!

6) Close on Alyssa, scowling, tough. Hers is a hard-bitten life.
ALYSSA
New Orleans may be big...
(link)
But it ain't never been easy.
1) WIDE. Deep NIGHT. Small in the panel, the little boat now chugs through the dark, still waters of the swamp. Alyssa sits up front with a heavy-duty flashlight. Isiah sits at the rear, manning the outboard. In the background, black trees hung with vines. Moonlight on the water. Creepy...

    ISIAH
    (from boat)
    So what brings a city girl way out here
    in the dead of night with a map she drew
    herself...?


    ALYSSA
    You heard of cartomancy? Map magic.
    (link)
    See, there's something in the water. Been
    making kids sick, act crazy. State, water
    company won't do a damn thing...

3) Serious, Alyssa lowers the map and looks out across the water. Black woods beyond. She's fully aware that she's heading into danger. But she's doing it anyway, because it's the right thing to do.

    ALYSSA
    So I looked into it. Drew a vèvè, asked
    the right questions.
    (link)
    Turns out, the water's cursed. And the
    source - it's out here in the bayou.

4) Alyssa turns to look back at Isiah grinning his creepy grin.

    ISIAH
    There was another mambo used to live out
    this way. White girl, crazy hair. But she
    long gone now...

    ALYSSA
    You mean that English punk? She weren't
    no mambo. More like a bokor...
    (link)
    A sorceress.

5) Alyssa faces front again with a stern, disapproving look on her face.

    ALYSSA
    A true mambo respects the mysteries.
    Serves them.
    (link)
    Not the other way round.
1) The boat has pulled up at a patch of semi-dry land, deep in the swamp. Isiah is out, tying up the boat to a gnarled tree. Gingerly, Alyssa steps out with her flashlight in hand, wary of the boggy ground. Tendrils of low-lying mist creep in...

   **ISIAH**
   We gotta walk from here.
   (link)
   Watch your step now - or the swamp, it'll pull you right down!

   **ALYSSA**
   Terrific.

2) **POV** from behind Alyssa as she follows Isiah into the THICKENING FOG, which her flashlight barely penetrates. He's now little more than a vague gray silhouette on panel right...

   **ALYSSA**
   Fog's coming up. We good...?

   **ISIAH**
   I know the path, yes I do. Long as you stay close to ol' Isiah, ain't nothin' to fear...
   (link)
   Heh heh!

3) Wide on Alyssa as she stops, looking around in alarm, aiming the flashlight beam into the now-impenetrable fog. There is no sign of Isiah. No background. JUST FOG. Alyssa's body language is tense, alert, dynamic --

   **ALYSSA**
   Easy for you to say when--
   (link)
   Isiah...?

4) Small. Close on Alyssa, scowling. Realizing she's been suckered, ditched.

   **ALYSSA**
   Isiah!
   (link)
   Son of a...

5) Small. Close on the flashlight as the bulb EXPLODES!

   **FX**
   **KESSHH**

   **ALYSSA**
   (off-panel above)
   Aah-!
1) Full-width. Close on Alyssa as she slowly turns, EYES WIDE, at the sound of a voice from behind her. Her hand begins to glow with faint, fiery MAGICAL ENERGY as she prepares to cast a spell...

    ZIWANDA
    (ragged; no tail)
    He is a good and faithful servant.
    (link)
    He has brought me many offerings...

2) Full width. POV from behind a HUGE DARK SHAPE LOOMING over Alyssa! The ZIWANDA is a huge, dark, hulking MONSTER, maybe 15 feet tall; squat and powerful as a gorilla, with a RHINO SKULL for a head and bare tree branches for antlers. Alyssa has dropped the broken flashlight; she takes a step back, drawing her gun with one hand, inscribing a glowing voodoo VEVE with the other --

    ZIWANDA
    (ragged)
    You shall not be the last.

3) BIG! POV from behind Alyssa as the Ziwanda LOOMS over her. Tiny points of light glitter in its empty eye sockets. A dread beast dredged up from African myth. Alyssa holds out her glowing vèvè like a circular MAGIC SHIELD, maybe 3 feet in diameter --

    ALYSSA
    What-- What are you...?

    ZIWANDA
    Your vèvè will not shield you.
    (link)
    Your gris-gris will not protect you.
    (link)
    I am the grinder of bones. He who stops the waters. And you, little offering...
1) The monster SWATS Alyssa aside! Her shield vèvè SHATTERS --

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ZIWANDA
    (ragged)
    You are mine!

FX

THWAKK

ALYSSA

UNNGH-!
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2) Close. Sprawled on her side in the mud, Alyssa FIRES her Colt 45! Aiming
   two-handed, professional. Scowling --

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ALYSSA
    So it's like that.

FX

BDAM BDAM BDAM BDAM
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3) Low angle. Alyssa scrambles to her feet, still FIRING! The monster
   ADVANCES on her, raising a mighty fist, about to strike! Her bullets don't
   even slow it down --

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ZIWANDA
    (ragged)
    Your puny spears are as the bite of
    insects!

FX

BDAM BDAM BDAM BDAM
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4) Alyssa DODGES aside just in the nick of time as the monster's fist SLAMS
   into the ground beside her, throwing up an impact crater of mud and moss --

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FX

WHUNNCH

ALYSSA

Whoa-!
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1) Alyssa RUNS blindly through the fog! She’s in trouble and she knows it!

    CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
    Feels like _forever_ I been running.

    CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
    Trying to get away from the things I did.
    The things I _should_ have done.

    ALYSSA
    Hell with _this_-!

2) She suddenly SPLASHES into a sinkhole of muddy swamp-water, sinking up to her waist --

    CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
    Trying to get back to the _light_.

    CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
    But I _can't_. I'm _trapped_ --

    ALYSSA
     Gahh-!
     (link)
     Smart, girl. Real smart-!

3) Snarling, focused and intense, she draws the glowing VÊVÊ of PAPA LEGBA (a stylized crossroads - check refs!) in the air --

    CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
    Lost in the dark.

    CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
    The darkness is a _part_ of me now.

    ALYSSA
    _Papa Legba_, master of the crossroads,
    guardian of doors and pathways...
    (link)
    Show me the way!

4) POV from behind Alyssa as she clambers out of the mud-hole. She looks up in surprise at a SWIRLING DEADSIDE PORTAL that begins to materialize in the air ahead of her. One arm of the crossroads vêvê has formed into an ARROW, pointing towards the portal --

    CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
    And if there's one thing I learned...

    CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
    One thing I _know_ --

    ALYSSA
    What the _hell_...?
FULL-PAGE SPLASH! Dynamic action hero shot as MAGPIE leaps out of the Deadside portal! He’s battered and bruised, but angry and defiant. His costume ripped and torn to shreds, as if he’s spent months battling for his life. GHOSTLY SKELETAL ARMS reach and claw at him from the portal – hungry souls still trapped in the Deadside --

IMPORTANT! In this scene ONLY, Jack Boniface is wearing the tattered remains of his MAGPIE outfit (check with editorial for visual ref). He does NOT wield Shadowman’s Scythe.

CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
... You can't run from your own shadow!
1) Magpie crouches in the close foreground, PULLING OFF HIS MAGPIE MASK/HELMET to reveal JACK BONIFACE! Hunched, head bowed, exhausted; steadying himself with one hand on the ground. His hair in ragged twists, a little rougher than we’ve seen before; stubble on his jaw. He’s been through hell. Alyssa GOGGLES at him from the background. This is the first time she’s seen him in years!

    ALYSSA
    (small text)
    Oh my God...
    (link; normal text)
    Jack-?! 

2) Jack rises, disoriented, EXHAUSTED. Checking his surroundings. He’s still wearing the ragged remains of the Magpie outfit, now minus the mask/helmet --

    JACK
    Alyssa! Where--
    (link)
    How did you...?

3) BIG! Jack and Alyssa TURN to see the MONSTER charging out of the fog, about to attack them both-!

    ALYSSA
    Talk later! We got problems-!

4) Close on Jack as he transforms into SHADOWMAN! The iconic white skull-paint magically appears on his face, but otherwise he still wears the remains of the Magpie outfit. He SNARLS, steeling himself for one last fight --

    SHADOWMAN
    No.
    (link)
    No more...
1) BIG! Putting everything he has left into it, Shadowman leaps and PUNCHES the monster hard across the jaw, staggering it; the superhuman force of the blow knocking its head sideways --

SHADOWMAN
(jagged)

No more monsters!

FX

WHUD

ZIWANDA
(jagged)

RAAARH-!

2) Extreme close. The monster SCOWLS with suppressed, gathering fury....

ZIWANDA
(ragged)

You are weak, little shadow.

3) Close. Shadowman crouched, ready - but weak, and worried. It's not over, and he's used up the last of his energy. He's close to collapse.

SHADOWMAN

... Damn.

4) The monster SWATS Shadowman aside with a mighty backhand blow, sending him FLYING --

ZIWANDA
(ragged)

I am strong!

FX

THWOOK

SHADOWMAN
(jagged)

UNNGH-!
1) SM SLAMS back into the trunk of a tree, BREAKING it --

FX
KRAK

2) Snarling, Alyssa BEGINS to draw another vèvè in the air --

ALYSSA
Gotta do every thing my damn self...

3) BIG! POV from behind Alyssa, defending the unconscious SM. Her magic vèvè casts a BLAZING LIGHT! DAZZLED, the monster RECOILS, throwing its arms up to cover its eyes --

ALYSSA
You wanna hide in the fog, big guy? Let's see how you like a little light!

ZIWANDA
(ragged)
GRAAAAH-!
1) Wide. Alyssa helps JACK (human now) sit up, weak and groggy; he's close to passing out. In the background, the monster retreats into the fog.

   ALYSSA
   It's backed off - for now! But it'll be back. I think we riled it.
   (link)
   C'mon, we gotta find the boat!

   JACK
   It-- It's really you...
   (link)
   Not another... trick of the shadows...

2) Alyssa helps Jack stagger to his feet, supporting his weight. He's weak...

   ALYSSA
   You look like shit. What the hell happened to you, Jack? Where you been?

   JACK
   I'm okay... I can walk...
   (link)
   Just get me... get me...

3) CLOSE. Jack's eyes flutter closed as he FAINTS, slipping out of Alyssa's grasp --

   JACK
   (ragged)
   ... Home.

4) Full-width panel. Low angle. Hands on hips, peeved, Alyssa stands looking down at Jack, who lies slumped unconscious in the mud at her feet...

   ALYSSA
   Oh, you gotta be kidding me.
1) CLOSE. JACK suddenly sits BOLT UPRIGHT in bed, staring at us, wide-eyed in fear. Startled awake from a nightmare. Bare-chested, still unshaven --

   JACK
   AAH-!

2) BIG. Widen out to reveal the scene. Jack sits up on the side of the bed, naked, the sheet pulled around his waist. He's in a spare room at Alyssa's old colonial-style safehouse in New Orleans. The room is cluttered with boxes, packing crates and old junk; it's used for storage. Dimly lit by thin slivers of sunlight slanting in through louvered balcony shutters...

   CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
   Bad dream. Just a bad dream.

   CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
   I made it. Back to the world...

3) BIG. Exterior. It's a beautiful day in New Orleans. Jack has opened the shutters and stands BASKING in the warmth of the morning SUNLIGHT on his face. This is the first time he's seen natural daylight in years. The single sheet wrapped around his waist.

   CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
   Back to the light.

4) Small, close. Jack turns at the sound of a voice from behind him.

   ALYSSA
   (off-panel)
   Finally, he rises.
   (link)
   Three days you been out.
1) ALYSSA leans in the doorway of Jack's room, arms crossed, weighing us with a guarded, measuring look. Different clothes from when we last saw her.

   ALYSSA
   Your old clothes and shit are in those boxes. I meant to toss 'em, but...
   (link)
   Well. Anyway.

2) Jack smiles broadly as he moves over to her, reaching out tenderly to touch her cheek - but Alyssa holds up her hand to pause him.

   JACK
   Alyssa, you don't know how good it is to see you--

   ALYSSA
   Ease up, Romeo. You getting ahead of yourself. 
   (link)
   Get some clothes on and we'll talk.

3) Big, for dialogue. Jack follows Alyssa; he looks pleading. Alyssa has turned from him, peeved, and is walking towards us, deeper into the house.

   JACK
   What's wrong...?

   ALYSSA
   You pop out the Deadside five years after walking out on me is what. 
   (link)
   New Orleans been gone to Hell. We got Samedi cultists on the rise, all kinds of creepy shit crawling out the woodwork...

4) Jack's POV. Alyssa stops and rounds on us. She's strong, simmering, but in control of her shit. Let's be careful not to slide into the shouty "Angry Black Woman" stereotype.

   ALYSSA
   And me to deal with it all. Just me. 
   (link)
   I had to drag your sorry ass out a swamp, and you got the nerve to ask me what's wrong?
   (link)
   I'd say you the one got some explaining to do!

5) Close. Jack can't believe what he just heard.

   JACK
   Five--
   (link)
   Five years...?!
1) Later. Wide on the lounge/living room. Shelves of old books, arcane antiques. Jack is now dressed (check with editorial for clothing ref). He sits forward on the sofa. Alyssa sits curled in a comfortable armchair with a steaming mug of coffee. Between them, a low coffee table with a jug of coffee and Jack's full mug, untouched. The emotional atmosphere is calm now; it almost feels like an intervention, a psych session... or a confession.

**NOTE:** There are vertical bars over the ground-floor windows, so the morning sunlight casts prison-cell shadows across the scene.

**JACK**

I'm *sorry.*

(link)

Walking away from you was the hardest thing I ever did. And the *dumbest.*


**JACK**

Ever since the *shadow loa* bound itself to me, all I could think about was getting *free* of it.

(link)

It made me so *angry.* Just filled me up with its crazy, stupid *rage*...

3) FLASHBACK. Shadowman (2012 costume) kneels in the Deadside dust; guilty, hopeless and heartbroken. (He has just murdered his own father, but we don't see the body). NICODEMO DARQUE stands over him, powerful, gloating; a different version of the final pages of SHADOWMAN: END TIMES issue 3.

**CAPTION**

"I made mistakes. *Bad* ones. Got *blood* on my hands."

**CAPTION**

"I lost hope. Lost *myself.*"

**CAPTION**

"And Nicodemo Darque *exploited* that."
1) FLASHBACK! MAGPIE stands amid the burning RUINS of an ancient, otherworldly city, grasping a smoldering, fire-blasted skeleton by the neck. The rubble is strewn with human bones. Magpie stands there, dominant, an unstoppable force of destruction, the cause of all this horror. He’s the goddamn Terminator.

    CAPTION
    “Darque turned me into his puppet --

    CAPTION
    “The Magpie. A weapon to terrorize the Deadside.

2) FLASHBACK! Magpie atop a jagged peak of black rock, deep in the shadowy nether-world of the Deadside, BATTLING an overwhelming horde of glowing, murderous GHOSTS. They swarm up the rock like ants.

    CAPTION
    “When I finally got free, all I could think about was getting back to you. Back to the only good thing I ever knew in this life.

    CAPTION
    “But everything changed. The border was sealed - and I was trapped in the Deadside.”
1) Jack, haunted, remembering.

   JACK
   For months now I've been fighting for my
   life. Fighting the dead. Fighting things
   I can't even name.
   (link)
   Until your vèvè pierced the dark. That
   connection - our connection...
   (link)
   It led me home. Led me to you.

2) Alyssa, grim, unsettled by what she's hearing.

   ALYSSA
   So you a killer now.

3) Two-shot. Jack looks at Alyssa, his eyes pleading, brimming with emotion. A man tortured by his own demons, wrestling for his very soul.

   JACK
   That's not who I am. Not who I am.
   (link)
   I-- I got a lot to atone for, I know. But
   I gotta make things right.
   (link)
   I gotta.

4) Alyssa.

   ALYSSA
   But you still the Shadowman, right? You
   got the power inside of you.
   (link)
   A power like no-one else...

5) Jack jumps to his feet in a sudden burst of frustrated anger --

   JACK
   But I can't control it! All it wants is
   to fight and kill--!
   (link)
   Don't you see? I'm not a hero, I'm a
   cage!
1) BIG. Jack has his hands to the wall on either side of the window, leaning into it. Heavily burdened, head bowed. The barred window casts prison-cell shadows across him.

    JACK
    I'm so tired, Alyssa. So tired of fighting this thing inside of me...
    (link)
    And it wants out.

2) Alyssa pulls a heavy old leather-bound book from the shelf. The cover is embossed with the Shadowman symbol.

    ALYSSA
    Then we got our work cut out.
    (link)
    My whole life, I been trained to help the Shadowman. The ones came before you, they fought the shadow too. And lost.
    (link)
    All that history. All that legacy. And we still don't know near enough about what your loa really is.

3) Alyssa leafs through the old tome. A page shows the different VÊVES of the major voodoo loa (use real-world ref).

    ALYSSA
    We know it was exiled by the Voodoo Pantheon a long, long time ago...
    (link)
    But we don't know why.

4) Another angle on the book, showing an old tintype photograph of Union soldier MARIUS BONIFACE in 1865 (refs!).

    ALYSSA
    We know it was bound to your ancestor's bloodline in 1865...
    (link)
    But we don't know how.
1) Wide. Jack turns to her from the window, grim. Alyssa looks up from the book, taken aback.

   ALYSSA
   We know you're the sixth Shadowman--

   JACK
   The last Shadowman.

   ALYSSA
   ... What?


   JACK
   I won't ever be a father. I won't hand this curse to an innocent child.
   (link)
   When I die, the loa dies with me.

3) Alyssa slams the book shut, frowning.

   ALYSSA
   ... Maybe.
   (link)
   Or maybe it cuts loose and runs wild - without a human conscience to keep it in check.

4) Alyssa marches out of the room, toward us. Jack follows.

   ALYSSA
   Either way, we need answers.
   (link)
   And I know right where to start.
1) Full-width shot. Angle over Jack's shoulder as he looks down at various items laid out on the KITCHEN worktop: an open carton of white eggs; a pound bag of plain flour; a plastic jug of milk.

   JACK
   Pancakes? We're starting with...
   pancakes?

2) Widen to reveal the kitchen scene. Alyssa is taking a bag of rice from a high cupboard. Jack looks bemused.

   ALYSSA
   (link)
   White food for Damballah.

   JACK
   You mean like... white people food?

3) Jack's POV. Alyssa turns to throw us a look of disdain.

   ALYSSA
   Jesus, Jack.
   (link)
   For a guy bound to a loa, you don't know one whole hell of a lot about voodoo.

4) Now Alyssa is in the hallway, crouching to rummage in a cupboard under the stairs. Jack follows, confused.

   ALYSSA
   You know music, at least...?

   JACK
   I played sax as a kid, but I haven't--

   ALYSSA
   Whatever. That'll work.

5) Alyssa's POV. She holds out an African DRUM to Jack, who now looks even more baffled.

   ALYSSA
   Just gimme four-four time on this.
   (link)
   Damballah likes it orderly.
1) BIG. Wide. Alyssa (carrying the tray of white food items) leads Jack (carrying the drum) up the stairs into the attic, which is now an ornately decorated VOODOO TEMPLE (or hounfour). Unlit candles, ornate rugs, colorful cloth drapes; heavy West African influence. Tribal masks of the Voodoo Pantheon arrayed around the walls. In the middle of the open floor, a THICK WOODEN POLE, inscribed with VEVES, reaches from floor to ceiling - the sacred center of the ritual space.

    JACK
    You turned the attic into a temple...
    (link)
    So you a mambo now?

2) Alyssa kneels, carefully placing the tray before the pole. She turns to look back at us over her shoulder, with just the hint of a smile.

    ALYSSA
    The hell you think I been doing the last five years? Waiting on you?

Three-panel tier:

3) Small, close. Alyssa lights a cluster of candles.

4) Small, close. A shallow wooden BOWL heaped with white FLOUR, atop which sits a white EGG. Alyssa places it before the pole; an offering. Already there are clusters of lit candles, a bowl of cooked rice, a bowl of milk beside an earthenware jug, and WHITE FLOWERS.

5) Small, close. Jack's hands pat out a beat on the drum.

    FX
    [ musical notes, 4/4 time ]
NOTE: Each panel on this page has straight-on, symmetrical composition; Damballah is an orderly loa. Then things will get decidedly disorderly...

1) Full-width slot. Alyssa kneels on the floor with her back to the pole and the offerings. She draws the VÉVE of Damballah in the air before her with magical fire...

   ALYSSA
   Damballah Wedo, oldest and wisest of all
   the loa, keeper of the cosmic balance...
   (link)
   Hear me now! Heed your faithful servant!

2) Full-width slot. EXTREME CLOSE on Alyssa GASPING as her EYES turn WHITE!

   DAMBALLAH
   (ragged; no tail)
   What iss thiss... (link)
   ... Sssacrilege?

3) BIG! Alyssa kneels in a white-eyed trance. A HUGE WHITE SNAKE - the loa DAMBALLAH - has coiled around her! A vèvè pattern along its spine, glowing like hot embers. Its head coils up over Alyssa's shoulder, looking straight at the reader, eyeing us suspiciously...

   DAMBALLAH
   (ragged)
   You dare ssssummon me in the presssence of thisss...
   (link)
   ... Outcassst?
1) Side shot. JACK steps forward, alarmed. The giant snake REARS UP at him, ready to strike! Alyssa remains in a ritual trance...

   JACK
   Alyssa, you okay-?

   DAMBALLAH
   (ragged)
   Do not ssspeak!
   (link)
   You defile thisss sssanctuary...

2) Jack's POV on the great serpent, staring at us --

   DAMBALLAH
   (ragged)
   Unruly shadow. You are taboo!
   (link)
   You have never ssserved the Pantheon. You
   show usss no ressspect...
   (link)
   We will not ssspeak your name.

3) On Jack, tense, cautious --

   JACK
   My-- My name...?

4) Extreme close on the snake, its slit-pupil eye drilling into us --

   DAMBALLAH
   (ragged)
   Hasss it been ssso long that you do not
   remember? Perhapsss...
   (link)
   Ssso much the better!
1) Alyssa SLUMPS FORWARD to the floor! Jack rushes forward to help her, alarmed. The snake has vanished.

      ALYSSA
         Ungh...
      JACK
         Alyssa-

2) POV looking down over Jack's shoulder. Alyssa kneels, slumped forward, weak and groggy, HER FACE HIDDEN. Jack crouches over her, concerned, putting a reassuring hand to her shoulder...

      JACK
         It-- It didn't work. I'm sorry. The Pantheon, they...
             (link)
         I think they're pissed at me.

3) BIG! SAME ANGLE. Jack instinctively FLINCHES BACK as Alyssa suddenly LOOKS UP AT US! Except she isn't Alyssa any more - she's BARON SAMEDI! A skeleton with a shadowed partial eclipse on his skull face; a crooked top hat sat at a jaunty angle; bare ribs exposed beneath his rotting black coat-tail jacket; a handful of cigars in his breast pocket. He carries a black cane topped with a silver skull. He GRINS with malevolent glee --

LETTERING NOTE: See past issues for Samedi's distinctive lettering style.

      BARON SAMEDI
         Oh, you don't know the half of it, Jack!
      JACK
         AAH-!
1) Jack SNARLS, fists clenched, ready to fight --

   JACK
   Baron Samedi-1
   (link)
   I'll say this once --

2) BIG! Baron Samedi rises to his feet in the foreground, his back to us. Facing him, Jack transforms into SHADOWMAN!

   NOTE: From this point forward, Shadowman wears whatever Jack was wearing. The white skull face-paint magically appears, plus maybe also the Shadowman logo (check with editorial).

   SHADOWMAN
   Leave her alone!

   BARON SAMEDI
   Why's that, Jack? You want the lady all to yourself?
   (link)
   Can't say I blame you! Heh heh...
1) Samedi GRINS - he's always grinning, he's a skeleton - as he SNIFFS the bunch of white flowers. His manner is cocky, playful, gleefully malevolent.

BARON SAMEDI
Figured I'd take her for a ride myself.
After all, you ain't got what it takes no more to please no mambo.
(link)
Been a while for you, hmm...?

2) Shadowman raises his fist, snarling, angry, ready to strike. Samedi has raised his cane and GENTLY touches the tip to Shadowman's chest...

SHADOWMAN
Why you filthy--

BARON SAMEDI
Easy now.
(link)
You gonna have to check that temper.

3) BIG! Shadowman FLIES BACKWARDS as if struck by a mighty blow. But Samedi just stands there casually, cane held out in one bony hand. It wasn't a blow; Shadowman is hurled by the telekinetic power of Samedi's magic --

4) Shadowman is SMASHED through the wooden wall into the attic hallway!

FX

WHUNNCH
1) On Samedi, sinister. The bunch of white flowers WITHERS in his bony hand, dead petals falling...

BARON SAMEDI
You listen up now.
(link)
Deadside is my province. Ain't no playground to come and go as you please.
(link)
And the Pantheon do love their rules and regulations, yes they do...

2) Shadowman clammers back in through the splintered wall, snarling --

SHADOWMAN
You don't want me in the Deadside, why'd you trap me there?!

3) Samedi lights a CIGAR from the skull-top of his cane, which has burst into flame --

BARON SAMEDI
To teach you a lesson.
(link)
And there's plenty more lessons to come. You'll see.

4) Samedi eyes us, sinister, blowing cigar smoke...

BARON SAMEDI
You need to toughen up, son. War is coming.
(link)
You best be ready.
1) Angle on the cane in Samedi's hand - except it isn't a cane any more! It has transformed into Shadowman's articulated SCYTHE!

   BARON SAMEDI
   'Course, you gonna find it a little tricky without this...

2) Shadowman - crouched like boxer, ready to fight - moves towards Samedi --

   SHADOWMAN
   My Shadow Scythe-

   BARON SAMEDI
   Seems somebody lost it in the Deadside.
   And you know what they say...
   (link)
   Finders keepers!

3) Angle over Samedi's shoulder. FURIOUS, Shadowman GRABS Samedi by the lapel! Shadowman's other fist raised, about to punch him! Samedi grins, unafraid --

   SHADOWMAN
   Thief!
   (link; jagged)
   I'll kill you!

   BARON SAMEDI
   I did warn you about that temper, son.
   Might be there's consequences.
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FULL PAGE SPLASH! Reverse angle, so we're now looking over Shadowman's shoulder. Samedi has transformed back into ALYSSA! Her eyes wide in fear; her hands coming up to protect her from the imminent blow. Shadowman still has her grabbed by the lapel; his fist raised, about to PUNCH her! He's so blind with rage, he might kill her --

ALYSSA
(jagged)

Jack, no-

TO BE CONTINUED