

Susan Wildes, The Strong Lady

Your story really starts when you were twelve years old. Before that, you were a normal child, growing up in Bangor, Maine. Your father worked in a sawmill and your mother stayed home raising you and your younger brother.

Your life was perfectly normal until that fateful summer night. You had just turned twelve. Your parents had left home for the evening and your brother was out playing with friends. You were home alone. There was a full moon out that night and you were a little spooked.

For some reason you could not quite place, you found yourself working your way upstairs. You stopped in the middle of the hallway and looked up. There was a string, way above your head. A trapdoor? In the ceiling? Why hadn't you noticed it before?

Curious, you pulled over a chair and climbed up and tugged on the string. You practically had to hang on the string to open it, this was before you got your strength after all. But you got the trap door open and a bunch of stairs, nearly a ladder, fell down. Your house had an attic? How could you miss that?

You climbed the stairs and took a look around. Gee, it was dusty! And there were cobwebs everywhere. But it was quiet, and the full moon was shining in the window providing ample light. You took a careful step forward, arms covered in goosebumps. Nobody had been in this room for years.

You crept carefully forward, looking around carefully. There were some closed boxes and crates, a few trunks, and some scattered papers. Mostly, they weren't that interesting, but there was an old, old chest in the corner. It looked like it used to be locked, but the lock had broken from years of decay. You opened the old chest carefully, the hinges screaming like they had seen a ghost.

Inside was an old, worn book. It looked hand bound and printed by hand as well. You couldn't read a word of it; it was in some sort of eerie foreign language you had never seen before. Under the book were some glass vials, three or four of them. All of them were empty except for one. You held it up to examine in the pale moonlight.

The vial contained some sort of red liquid. It was thick and sort of clung to the glass. You still aren't certain to this day what possessed you to remove the cork from the vial. Even pure curiosity has its limits. The fluid had no smell, odd for something that was probably hundreds of years old. Time slowed for you; it felt like you were in a dream. A shadow

passed in front of the moon, dimming the whole room.

Before you knew what was happening, you had drunk the whole thing.

You have no clear memories of the rest of that night. You must have left the attic at some time. You awoke the next morning in your bed, none the worse for wear. You got up and looked at the ceiling at the top of the stairs. The door in the ceiling was **still there**, but it was closed, and the inviting cord was completely gone.

Puzzled, you washed up and came downstairs from breakfast. You must have still been groggy, because you tripped over the last stair. You flailed out and grabbed onto the banister to steady yourself. You were fine, but your parents, sitting in the dining room already, were looking at you strangely.

You followed their gaze to your right hand, still clutching the banister. Only you seemed to have damaged it, crushed it somehow. You had, with one hand, nearly crushed through a solid piece of wood. You did what any normal twelve year old would do in your situation. You fainted.

You awoke in your mother arms. She was crying and nearly hysterical. Your father did his best to calm her down, and through the two of them you got the garbled remnants of the rest of the story.

You father's grandmother (great-grandmother? Some ancestor) was hanged as a witch in Salem. Unlike most of the other witches, however, she actually did practice the craft and that trunk was removed from her house when her son and daughter (also accused) escaped from the jail.

The trunk had been passed down, unopened, from father to son for generations and it finally came to rest in your attic. And it remained unopened until last night. Your parent came home and found you passed out in the attic next to the open trunk. Praying that you didn't drink anything, they took you downstairs and put you to bed.

You explained tearfully that you did drink the red liquid in the vial. You felt fine, but you weren't sure about the banister. Your hand didn't hurt, even after nearly breaking the railing. Your mother looking into your eyes and said that everything would be just fine, then she threw her arms around you and gave you a big hug, and you hugged her back.

And broke her arm.

You left home two years later. You still hadn't managed to get your amazing strength under control.

Your parents had searched through the chest for a cure, but to no avail. There were a few broken vials and the book... Neither of your parents could read it either. They went to school teachers, even to professors at the local college, but they couldn't read it either.

You were sad to have to leave, but it was necessary. The house was a mess and you kept hurting people. You were tremendously strong, but so clumsy. You never got used to being so strong. Taking the book, you left to find a cure. You ended up at the circus.

You've been working in circuses four about four years now. You weren't very happy with the first circus; the owner was cruel and many of the other showpeople were drunk and abusive. And you were a young woman, just out of being a child. If it wasn't for your strength... You don't want to think what might have happened.

You joined Colonel Rawhide's circus about three years ago, just after Binky the Clown joined. You like Binky, he always makes you laugh and you forget how lonely this life can be. Sure, the circus is like a surrogate family, and you've been training to better understand your strength so you don't hurt people as much. But to the outside world, you're a freak, a small eighteen year old girl who can lift thousand pound weights.

You've made a few friends here, but since you are so strong, and sometimes clumsy, even they keep their distance. One of your closer friends is the older gypsy fortuneteller, Señora Mysterioso. (She says that her real name is Jane Doe, but you don't believe that).

Señora Mysterioso can see into the future. She says that there will be a time in the future when women will be equal to men. She says that the world is just about to undergo an "industrial revolution," and machines will be commonplace, with electrical candles shining in the dark, and horseless carriages driving everyone around, like trains without tracks.

She has said that your own personal future was cloudy, but she did know that you came from Bangor. She seems to be on the up and up. She *knows* things. And with your own unusual background, how can you really doubt that magic exists? You did try to show her your book, and while she showed some interest, she couldn't read it, either.

But the thing that most interests you is the idea that women will be equal to men. You're stronger than any of the men here at the circus, but you cannot even vote because you are a woman. You find that ridiculous. Señora Mysterioso has proclaimed herself to be something called a "suffragette." You have joined in the cause and become a suffragette, too.

Señora Mysterioso says that there is one man in Washington DC that you have to convince: Senator Hiram Bungling. As moves Bungling, so moves the country. She says that if Bungling isn't convinced to give women the right to vote, the cause will be pushed back thirty years or more.

You're not sure what you can do to help, but Señora Mysterioso has a plan. The best way for a pair of circus performers to get to the most influential man in Washington DC, is by his sons. Senator Bungling's sons, Jack and John, own the Bungling Brothers Circus. Of late, the Bungling Brothers have been trying to buy Colonel Rawhide's Circus.

Señora Mysterioso believes that between the two of you, you can convince John to convince his father to vote for votes for women. If only Jack is available, things might be a bit tougher. Jack is a hard sell, but even he can be convinced in time.

Señora Mysterioso also wants to get the other women in the circus in on this plan. You think this is a good idea, but you aren't sure who would support you. You know, for example, that Colonel Rawhide's fiancée, Daisy Belle, is a traditional woman and even if she supports votes for women, she may not wish to work with circus folk. You don't know quite why she doesn't like you, but she just doesn't.

Some of the other females might be more amenable. You think Lydia the tattooed lady might be persuaded to join your cause. Lydia is nice. Occasionally, Rudolph Townshed, one of the Siamese Twins, will give you notes to pass to her, only he made you promise not to tell her where they came from. You think that he might be in love with her, but is too shy to tell her so. How sweet.

You aren't so certain if those who joined the circus while in the most recent European tour, such as Zelda the Clown, would be interested in getting the vote for women; they might not even be American citizens. You can ask, but you don't have much hope.

The European tour was a disaster. Colonel Rawhide was doing so well in the United States that he decided to take the circus to Europe. You started in England, toured across the continent and ended in France. Along the way, you picked up some new acts, such as the Masked Rider, and the Knife Thrower.

However, while in France, strange accidents started happening. First Uma the Unicyclist fell off her high unicycle and nearly broke her leg. She had to stay in France, under a doctor's care. This is a shame, not only because she was a friend, but also because she was interested in the cause of woman's rights. Uma had just joined in Señora Mysterioso's plan when she had her accident.

Of course there are those who say that it wasn't an accident at all, but sabotage. Could it be someone who was trying to frighten off the suffragettes? Might you be the next target? You are tough to hurt, but Señora Mysterioso is an old woman. You may want to warn her.

Hm, politics can sometimes be more dangerous than they seem.

ROLEPLAYING HINT

You are an incredibly strong eighteen year old girl. You are still trying to cope with your great strength and you are getting swept up in something big. You know you can hold your own if you have to, but sometimes deep down inside, you are scared.

ITEMS

An old book. It's written in a language nobody seems to know.

Several heavy weights. For you to lift, of course.

THE OTHER CHARACTERS:

Colonel Sebastian T. Rawhide: The owner of the circus. He is a good soul and really does want what is best for his employees. You are glad to be working for him. Of late, he is worried because the circus is not doing well financially.

Daisy Belle: Colonel Rawhide's fiancée. She seems like sweet person, but she does not care for the circus very much. You aren't sure why.

Jack Bungling: The older of the two Bungling Brothers. You've never met them, but you know them by reputation. They have a large circus which they built by buying out smaller circuses. Jack's father is Senator Hiram Bungling. You want to convince Jack to convince his father to support the cause of woman's suffrage.

The Flying Credenza Brothers: They keep to themselves a great deal. They have their own private wagon, and they don't let anyone else in.

Herman Binkowicz, "Binky" the Clown: He is so very funny. You always have a good laugh when he is around. You wonder if he can ever be serious.

Franklin Winters, The Lion Tamer: He is quite the drinker, although you have never seen him drunk during his act. He keeps good care of the animals and gets along well with them.

Rupert and Rudolph Townshed: They have been with the circus since the very beginning, but lately they've become argumentative and aren't even speaking to each other. This has really hurt their act since they are Siamese twins. You deliver messages for Rudolph sometimes; don't forget to ask him if he needs any messages delivered.

Helena Ferez: The bearded lady. She also was one of the originals of the circus. You wonder if she would be interested in helping out with votes for women. You should ask her.

Peter Wainwright, the Fire Eater/Sword Swallow: His act is a bit flashy, but he seems nice. You once saw him drop burning oil on his hand and he wasn't hurt at all. You wonder if he is special like you.

Bobo, the Dog Faced Boy: Bobo helps Franklin with the animals and they are good friends. You'd figure him to be no older than 8 or 9, younger than you were when you left home.

Zelda the Clown: Zelda joined the circus in Europe. She doesn't speak, ever. She avoids you as if she's scared of you, but whenever you actually do get to talk to her, she's always polite, even if she cannot answer you. You think she might be interested in with votes for women.

Señora Mysterioso: She's old, maybe fifty or older, but she can see into the future. She's like a surrogate mother to you. She has recently gotten you interested in the woman's suffrage movement. She claims that her real name is Jane Doe, but you think she's making that up.

The Masked Rider: The Masked Rider is a very solitary individual, staying aloof since joining up in Europe. [Note: the Masked Rider may be a male or female character, depending on the player. If the Masked Rider is female, consider asking her to join the woman's suffrage movement.]

The Knife Thrower: The Knife Thrower also joined the circus in Europe. The Knife Thrower also isn't a very forthcoming individual. [Note: the Knife Thrower may be a male or female character, depending on the player. If the Knife Thrower is female, consider asking her to join the woman's suffrage movement.]

Lydia the Tattooed Lady: Lydia joined the circus just before you all left for Europe. She seems very nice. You want to talk to her about joining you and Señora Mysterioso. Sometimes you deliver her notes from Rudolph Townshed, but he made you promise not to tell him who they were from.

Zimmie the Clown: Zimmie is odd. He gives you the creeps a little. He isn't very friendly, either.

The Great Zamboni: He arrived today asking for a job. Colonel Rawhide decided to give him a chance. He seems nice enough.

WELL KNOWN CHARACTERS NOT IN GAME:

Senator Hiram Bungling: He is the father of the Bungling Brothers who are trying to buy out the circus. He is a powerful and influential man in Washington DC. Where Bungling goes, so goes the

nation. You want to convince his sons to convince him to support woman's suffrage.

John Bungling: The younger of the Bungling Brothers. Jack is the public persona and John runs things behind the scenes. John would be far easier to talk into something like votes for women, but he isn't around.

Uma the Unicyclist: Uma used to ride a large unicycle while juggling or across a high wire. However, while in France, she fell and severely twisted her ankle. She has stayed on in France in the care of a Doctor. This was just after she had joined you and Señora Mysterioso in your suffrage activities.

Preston the Prestidigitator: His act also was ruined while in France. While he was sawing a woman in half, a panel swung open revealing the illusion. He was booed out of the tent and Colonel Rawhide had to fire him. You haven't seen him since.

ABILITIES

Combat: 11 cards.

Feats of Great Strength: You are as strong as ten strong men. You can perform feats of great strength. See a Roustabout to do so.

Lucky Punch: Play this in combat if your opponent plays Wa-Hoo! You do not have to play a combat card, and your opponent can only play BAM or CRASH on this card. You can do this once per combat.

Binky the Clown: You find Binky so hilarious that after a few minutes of talking with him (or interacting with him in any way), you must burst into laughter, no matter what the topic of conversation is. You cannot stop laughing until he leaves, and afterwards, you cannot clearly recall what you were talking about (or doing), but – my – that Binky sure is funny.