The Dark Castle

by Poetry

Summary

“We’re making the Dark Castle a much better place to play,” one of the dominatrixes said.
“And it’s all thanks to you. We want you to see what we’ve done with the place.”

"We'll come," Parker said.

Notes

Thanks to codeswitch for speedily beta reading this pinch hit, and for the Writers Anonymous discord for sending me links to strange dildos.

Tingles flowed up and down Parker’s body, as if she were free-climbing on gargoyles, or lying under Hardison and a weighted blanket. Parker wriggled inside her black catsuit, just for a moment, even though the person she was right now wouldn’t do that. She had to let out the tingles somehow, though, because she had Eliot on a leash.

Well, technically, Parker didn’t have Eliot on a leash – Rachael had Cooper on a leash. But as soon as she tied the knot in the rope around Eliot’s neck, too loose for him to feel but enough to mean something, she knew it was something Parker would do, not just Rachael. She didn’t know if having a leash around his neck was an Eliot thing or just a Cooper thing, though.
Rachael and Cooper definitely blended in here, though. Lots of people were tying each other up in square frames and holding each other on leashes. The space was dimly lit enough that she couldn’t see everything that was going on, though, and there was a smoke machine somewhere blowing cool oily fog through the beams of the lights.

“Mark’s at your eleven,” Hardison said over comms. “You caught his eye. Take it to the X-frame across from him.”

Parker watched the mark, Rook, out of the corner of her eye. He owned the Dark Castle, Portland’s fanciest BDSM dungeon. He let people get away with all kinds of creepy stuff in the club, turning a blind eye to people who broke what were supposed to be the house rules. And he invited people to teach and perform at his big kink events and “forgot” to pay them after – like the three dominatrixes who were their clients for this job. He wore a black kilt, a harness that would never hold him up if he tried to climb a building, and had his graying hair back in a ponytail. He leaned against a wall, arms folded, eyes traveling along the rope from Eliot’s neck to Parker’s hand.

She angled herself to block his view of Eliot’s neck. She was the one who had Eliot – or maybe Cooper – on a leash. Not him.

“I don’t like it,” Eliot subvocalized into his comm, his neck muscles standing out with stress. “What if he tries something and I need to bash his face in?”

“I’m going to work an emergency release into the tie,” Parker murmured back. “One pull on that rope is all I’ll need to make the whole thing unravel. Trust me.”

Eliot’s neck relaxed again. Parker stroked his neck, just to be sure, and pressed his wrists up against the upper arms of a tall wooden X-frame. “Hold,” she said in his ear. “Wait for our cues.”

The tight leather pants and fishnet T-shirt were Cooper, but the way he relaxed into that fight stance where he waited, loose-limbed, for his opponent’s next move was all Eliot. She untied the leash from his neck, stuffed it in her gym bag, and took out her real rope. Parker had never tied anyone up before the way the people in the Dark Castle were doing it, for fun. But she’d tied safety harnesses for herself, and tied people to chairs who’d tried to hurt her. She would do this the first way, for Cooper. To keep him safe. Cooper wasn’t Eliot, but he needed to be safe, too.

She tied his wrists firmly to the X frame. She was about to tie them again around his biceps, but Hardison said, “Why don’t you show him off a little? Do a criss-cross around his arm. Make all those muscles stand out.”

Parker made diamonds down Eliot’s arms with the rope, like a net made just for him, and tied him to the X again just below the elbows. She wrapped the ropes around his torso a few times, holding him to the frame like a hug that didn’t stop. She wanted him to feel that, that she was holding onto him. She leaned into his ear again and said, “The emergency release rope goes down your back. I can pull on it when you need it.”

Eliot took a deep breath, not as deep as it usually was, because of her ropes around his middle. “Thank you.”

“Damn, you look fine, Eliot,” Hardison said. “I still can’t believe you picked out this outfit without my help – the fishnet – the way the ropes make your chest stand out – oh, here he comes!”

If Hardison hadn’t warned her, Parker would have leapt a foot in the air when Rook suddenly tapped on her shoulder from behind. She turned from Eliot, but kept a hand on her tie around his left biceps. “Rook,” she said. “You run Dark Fantasy Con, right?”
Rook smiled. “That’s me, sister.”

“Ooh, I saw the most amazing pictures from last year’s con!” Rachael said. Pictures Rook hadn’t paid the photographer for like he’d promised. “It looks like a great event.” She held out a hand. “Hi, I’m Mistress Rachael.” Hardison had a website up with a picture of Parker in black leather and lots of tied-up people. It was getting lots of hits from something called Fetlife, according to Hardison.

“It’s a great time,” Rook said, shaking her hand. “And it’ll be even greater if I can get you to teach some advanced rope classes.”

Rachael strung him along for a while, though both she and Parker thought it was rude that Rook never asked what Cooper’s name was. He just talked as if Parker had tied together a pulley instead of a person. (“I can’t wait to take down this creepazoid,” Hardison said. “What is Eliot, chopped liver?”) When he was gone, with a promise from Rachael that she’d work for him at the upcoming con, Parker ran her hands up and down his arms and chest, feeling the contrast between the smooth nylon of the ropes, the catch of the fishnet, and the drag of his skin. “You’re holding it well.”

“S easy,” Eliot said. “You’re holding me up.”

His cheeks and chest were flushed pink. Parker ran her fingertips along his cheekbone; she didn’t want to trap his circulation. “Are you okay? Any numbness? Prickles?” When she’d tied up bad people before, she’d wanted their hands to go numb, but this was Eliot.

“No, it’s just – everyone’s looking at us,” Eliot said.

Parker looked around. He was right. Lots of people were looking at her and Eliot. Some of them looked like they wanted Eliot for themselves. No, not Eliot. Cooper. None of these people knew Eliot. “You don’t like people seeing you tied up?” Parker said quietly, looking down at the free ends of the rope trailing along the floor. She could understand that. Sometimes Parker hated being looked at.

“You and Hardison, it’s fine,” Eliot said. “It’s just – this ain’t for any of them.” Parker knew what he meant by this. This new thing between the three of them, awkward and sweet like the fledgling Eliot had moved from the middle of a busy road yesterday, cupped in his big hands.

“It’s not for them,” Parker said. “They don’t know I can let you loose.”

“No reason to stay,” Hardison said. “The mark is hooked. Now let’s see what we can do with the rival dungeon across town.”

Parker untied Eliot, letting him go, undoing it knot by knot so nobody would know she could have unraveled it all in a single, sharp pull.

When the job was over, and the Dark Castle transferred to the hands of the three hard-working dominatrixes Rook had stiffed for years, they invited Parker, Hardison, and Eliot to their debut party, PerVersion 2.0. “We’re making the Dark Castle a much better place to play,” one of the dominatrixes, Sassy, said. “Fair pay for the staff, privacy screens, safer sex supplies, and monitors to check on people and make sure they’re actually following the rules. And it’s all thanks to you. We want you to see what we’ve done with the place.”

“And play, too, if you wanna,” said Sassy’s girlfriend Em. “I saw your rope work at Dark Fantasy Con, Parker. You’re amazing!”
“We’ll come,” Parker said. She said nothing about the play, because she needed to talk to Hardison and Eliot first.

In the car home, Parker went through Hardison’s bags. Most of them were filled with toys he’d bought at Dark Fantasy Con, and the rest were free samples the vendors had given Rook that Parker had decided he didn’t deserve. In the mix of toys Hardison bought, she found three lengths of hemp rope in different shades of red. They rubbed her hands bright and sharp, like pop rocks between her teeth.

Hardison saw her holding them. “Uh. Yeah. Those. I saw you and Eliot in the club and – I know you were doing it for the job and all, but you – you programmed Eliot into that shape with your ropes, and it was so cool, and I thought those shades of red would look good on us. The darker reds for Eliot and the bright one for me. Only if you want to! You never have to see those ropes again if you don’t – ”

“The ropes weren’t just a Rachael thing,” Parker said. “They’re a Parker thing too.”

“You’re good with them,” Eliot said from the driver’s seat. “They bring out the part of you that’s absolutely sure what she’s doing.”

Parker said, “I liked that the ropes were touching you even when I couldn’t.” She couldn’t always touch them, even when she wanted to. Sometimes touch was too much. But the ropes could do it for her. “So do you want to try it again at Sassy, Em, and Xandra’s party?”

“Any way you can do the ropes where I could still get into action if I had to?” Eliot said.

“You don’t gotta get into any action, I’mma check their security measures before the party,” Hardison said.

“It’s not about you, Hardison,” Parker said, looking at Eliot for a sign that she was right. “It’s about us. How we like to sit facing the exits.” Eliot nodded. Parker continued, “Yes. I can tie you so it feels like a hug, but you can still move your arms and legs freely.”


Parker smiled. It could be.

The Dark Castle really was different now. There were more women, and safety monitors with yellow glow bracelets, and the suspension frames were in better repair – you could probably hang a whole duffel bag of gold from one without any buckling. But Parker didn’t need any frames. She just led Hardison and Eliot to an open area of the play floor, took a moment to look around and see that everyone else in the club was doing things right, and told Eliot and Hardison to take their clothes off. Parker unwound the bright pinkish-red rope, and giggled when Eliot glared at Hardison and folded up his crumpled up clothes for him.

Eliot looked as steady and direct as he always did, standing naked in the middle of a club where people were whipping each other. Hardison fidgeted, looking around at the pink lights overhead, the medical exam table where someone was doing a nurse exam, except probably fake because it was a sex club. He was nervous. Parker wanted to settle him if she could.

Hardison had magnificent hands with long fingers, twitching and flexing by his sides. She took the bright pinkish-red rope, like he’d said, and started binding his hands behind his back.
“Oh,” he said. “We’re doing this now? We’re doing this now. Cool, cool.”

Parker tied off the rope, came around to Hardison’s front, and grabbed onto his upper arms to bring him down to a kiss. She could feel in the flex of his arms how he wanted to reach up and tuck his hand against her neck. But he couldn’t, because she was holding his wrists behind his back – not with her hands, with her ropes.

There was warmth and closeness at her back. “Wanna see him put his mouth on you like this,” Eliot murmured in her ear. “Can’t hold onto your legs. Just has to make do with wherever you put him.”

“Maybe later,” Parker said. “First I want to tie you.” She circled around behind Eliot, and told Hardison over his shoulder, “You can kiss him as long as you don’t get in my way.”

Parker anchored her ropes at the center of his back, wrapping him in a web of dark red rope. She pulled the ropes between his legs and around his upper thighs, too. Hardison laid his mouth wherever he could, kisses on Eliot’s closed eyes, on his heaving chest, biting at the ropes, leaving teeth marks around the knots. He bent down to lick Eliot’s nipple, and overbalanced, tipping against him. Eliot snickered and grabbed his shoulders to balance him again.

“You try macking on someone without any hands,” Hardison muttered.

Eliot raised an eyebrow. “I’d have you on the floor begging without any hands. Might not even need my legs.”

Hardison cursed and ducked his head, his cock twitching against his thigh. Parker tied off the ropes, and just as Hardison was leaning in to kiss Eliot again, she grabbed onto the handles she’d made on Eliot’s back and pulled him away. Hardison stumbled a little, following Eliot forward, and Parker laughed as he crashed his mouth clumsily into Eliot’s.

Parker hooked her chin over Eliot’s shoulder from behind and said, “I want to watch you do stuff without your hands, Hardison, but we should do it upstairs.” Upstairs there were nooks and cubbies, soft corners, much less open than the play floor but with no doors. There were a lot of people watching, here. Parker had done a good job, really showing off with Eliot: wraps around his torso pinching in his waist, a spiderweb radiating from between his shoulder blades, a triangle of ropes framing his cock, all in slashes of dark red. People noticed, and that was okay. But she didn’t want anyone thinking about Eliot like furniture, the way Rook had.

Hardison seemed to notice the room again, and for a moment Parker was sorry she’d said anything. He pulled himself in, spooked like he’d been before playing the Scheherazade in concert. Hardison was a little like Sophie that way: he liked attention when it was on his online handles, or on the mask he was wearing for a con, but he didn’t do so well when it was him on stage. Parker slung her duffel bag of toys over her shoulder and tapped Hardison on the shoulder. “Come on,” she said. “I have that thing you bought from Xandra’s booth.”

“What thing – oh, that thing!” Hardison half-staggered after her.


“Just focus on me,” Eliot said, moving him toward the stairs. “I think you look good, and everyone else either thinks so too or don’t have any opinion worth considering.”
Upstairs, there were couples playing in purple-lit cubbies and corners, even another trio, three men stroking each other on a big bed. They all seemed to be having a good time. Parker went to a booth that just had a bunch of nice blankets folded up on the floor, and some metal rings in the wall. She could hear a high-pitched voice laughing breathily somewhere, and saw another woman walk by with a man on a leash, like she’d done with Eliot last week, but no one was looking at them. She kissed Hardison and felt his face soft and relaxed against hers. “Report,” she said, like she did over comms on a job she masterminded.

“Smooth sailing over here, baby,” Hardison said, smiling.

“All clear,” Eliot said. “What’s the thing you got at Xandra’s booth?”

Parker put down the duffel bag, opened it, and got out the harness Hardison got at Xandra’s booth. Not a climbing harness, a harness for dildos. With her other hand she took out three dildos she stole from Rook’s free samples, and waved them around. “Who wants me to use these on you?”

“Me,” Eliot said immediately. “Don’t want all three of them, though.”

Parker laughed. “Which one?” There was a glittery glow-in-the-dark unicorn horn, a short and wide one swirled orange and red, and one that looked like a lightsaber.

Hardison bounced a little on the balls of his feet. “Ooh! Do the lightsaber!”

“You can get pegged with a lightsaber next time,” Eliot said. “I’m the one taking it, so I pick.” He took the harness and the thick lava-colored dildo, fitted the dildo through the ring, and passed it back to Parker. She pulled the straps tight over her leggings and held the dildo in her hand. Eliot eyed her. “Ain’t you gonna get naked before you put that on?”

“Nah. My skin is feeling enough things right now,” Parker said. “Besides…” She reached into the bag, got a bullet vibrator out of a box, pushed it into a slot at the base of the dildo, and turned it on. She leaned back against the wall, thrusting her hips at nothing. “I can feel it through my clothes.” Eliot stepped forward and stroked down the dildo, pushing the vibrator into her. She sighed and relaxed into the wall a little more. “Yeah. Like that.” She pointed to the metal rings in the wall. “Hold those.”

Eliot held them, standing up straight. Parker turned off the vibrator so it wouldn’t distract her for now, grabbed the ropes around Eliot’s upper thighs, and pulled his legs back, so he was angled toward the wall, held there by his hands at the rings. Parker bit his shoulder blade fondly, then set a folded blanket behind his legs. She took Hardison by the waist and hauled him down to his knees on the blanket. Waving the dildo in his face, she said, “It’s pretty big. You’re gonna have to lick him open.”

Hardison looked at the dildo, then put his mouth on it, taking in the head. His lips stretched. He pulled back and said, “Oh yeah. It’s a lot to take in.”

“I want her to peg me good and proper,” Eliot growled.

“I will,” Parker said cheerfully. “But don’t you want Hardison’s mouth first?” Eliot just bared his teeth and opened his legs in answer.

It wasn’t easy for Hardison to get between Eliot’s cheeks without his hands, even with his legs helpfully spread. He had to shake his head side to side to nose in deeper. He couldn’t get a clear breath – the sounds he made kept changing between wet licks and gasps as he stopped to fill his lungs. Eliot leaned his forehead against the wall, sweating and flushing as Hardison ate him out.
Parker lubed up her dildo, turned the vibrator on, and stroked it as she watched them. She came over to Hardison and rubbed the stubble on the back of his head. Then she grabbed Eliot’s hair and turned his face to the side for a kiss, pressing the humming base of the dildo into herself as he moaned into her mouth.

She let Eliot go. “Is he ready, Hardison?”

Hardison leaned back, breathing hard. His lips were shining. “You got hands,” he said, flashing a smile. “Why don’t you check?”

Parker did want to check. She poured lube on her fingers and hooked them into Eliot with almost no resistance. The opposite, actually: he tilted his hips to invite her in deeper. She worked him with three fingers, four, as he rumbled like an engine starting up.

“Come on, have mercy, girl,” Hardison said. “The man needs you to put it in him already.”

Eliot grunted agreement.

Parker moved the folded blanket in front of Eliot’s legs, where there was just enough room between him and the wall for Hardison to kneel. “I still need you. On the other side this time.”

Hardison scooted over to Eliot’s other side and kissed the purple head of his cock. Eliot’s hands tightened on the metal rings, knuckles gone white. “Got this side covered, ma’am.”

Parker rested the blunt tip of the dildo against Eliot’s hole. She took the ropes at his back and pulled him slowly backward onto her, feeling his lungs empty out in his chest as he made room inside for the thick cock. The press of the vibrator on her clit made Parker want to wriggle around, let out the energy under her skin, but Eliot wasn’t ready for that yet. The dildo wasn’t long, so it didn’t take long to get fully seated, but she could feel Eliot finding his new balance, breathing deep as Hardison and Parker worked to make him feel good from both sides.

“Move,” Eliot grit out, and both of them did.

Parker rocked in and out of him, holding onto him by the ropes, each thrust buzzing against her clit. She could hear Hardison gasping and choking on Eliot’s cock as he tried to keep his mouth on him, hands-free, as he bent with Parker’s thrusts. Sweat crawled down her forehead as she moved her hips faster, slamming herself into the vibrator. Parker imagined each snap of her hips moving Eliot forward into Hardison’s mouth, opening his face up. She could touch them both without touching them, the mastermind’s voice over the comms, putting their bodies where they needed to be.

Eliot roared a little, face mashed into the wall, as he came. Hardison pulled off his cock and took in a big gulp of air. Eliot let the metal rings hold his weight for a moment. “I want to keep fucking you while you suck Hardison,” Parker said, stroking his hair. “Can you do that for me?”

She could feel him nod through her fingers. “Good. I’m gonna pull out, and get a blanket for you, and you’re going to get on the floor in front of Hardison.” She eased out of him, petting the back of his neck, and got blankets for both of them, so they could all kneel. Somewhere else on the floor, Sassy and Em were talking and laughing. Taking care of the place they were now responsible for, the way Parker took care of the team that was hers. Hearing them kept Parker’s mind in the right place, steering them forward.

Hardison was kneeling down, sitting on his heels, Eliot on hands and knees holding his thighs apart. He kissed his way up Hardison’s thigh, sloppily, and took his cock in his mouth in a slow controlled slide. Hardison wriggled and shifted – he usually put his hands in Eliot’s hair when they did this, but
he couldn’t – and finally settled his head back against the wall, his back arched.

Parker knelt behind Eliot, enjoying the soft blanket on her knees, and grabbed his ropes to warn him what was coming. She sank the dildo back in, the angle on her clit even better this time, and moved him by the ropes, grinding the vibrating dildo between them. The pressure built up between her teeth, at the back of her neck. She chased down the orgasm with the dildo, with Eliot’s solid body against hers, with the almost-words Hardison tried to say to Eliot, and mixed her growl of release with Eliot’s low moans. She came down just a little, then thrust into Eliot hard and went back over the edge. She kept it going on and on in waves. Somewhere in there she heard Hardison make the high little hiccups he made when he orgasmed, and she opened her eyes to watch him, bound and sweat-slick and happy.

Finally it got to be too much, and Parker pulled out and turned the vibrator off. She pulled Eliot upright by the ropes and hugged him from behind. “Report.”

“Pegged good and proper like I asked for,” Eliot said. “Gonna lie down a bit.”

“I’m gonna give him some serious cuddles as soon as my arms are free,” Hardison said. He leaned over Eliot’s shoulder and kissed Parker. “I decided I like ropes. But my fingers are getting a little tingly right now.”

Parker turned him around and untied him, rubbing the rope marks on his wrists with her thumbs. “I don’t want to cuddle right now. I’m going to go say hi to the dominatrixes.”

“We’ll be waiting,” Eliot said, as Hardison dragged him by the ropes into a blanket nest. “Give them my compliments.”

“Now I get why you liked grabbing these so much,” Hardison said gleefully, pulling on Eliot’s thigh ropes to wrap his legs around Hardison. “Fully posable Eliot!”

“I’ll show you posable,” Eliot growled, flipping Hardison over.

Parker took the harness off and went to find the new club owners. She found all three of them on the play floor. Sassy and Em held hands, and Sassy leaned over to kiss Xandra on the cheek. They were like her and Eliot and Hardison, at least sort of. “Hey, Parker,” said Em. “Having fun?”

She said, “This is a good place now. It’s like the brewpub we own.”

Xandra laughed. “How is the Dark Castle like a brewpub?”

“You take care of it. It’s not your home, but it’s still a place that matters to you, and you share it with other people. Eliot said to give you his compliments. I think Hardison will thank you, too, but he needs more time.”

Xandra smiled and slung her arm over Sassy’s shoulders. “We love seeing other triads making it work. The three of you look great together.”

“We do?” Parker had never thought of their relationship like that, from the outside. Not even when all the people on the play floor had been watching her tie up Eliot and Hardison. She knew they were good together, of course. But it was weird to think that showed in ways other people could see. Weird. A little scary. But kind of nice.

“You do,” Em said. “And if you just did a scene together, you should go back to them. They’ll want you there for the comedown.”
“I’m not a very comforting person,” Parker said.

“I don’t think you’re the one who gets to decide that,” Em said. “Go on.”

Parker went back upstairs. Her partners were tangled together in a blanket burrito. Hardison was saying, “…and these metal anal beads, we gotta try those out.”

“This job turned you into some kind of sex toy fanboy,” Eliot groused.

“You’re the one who just got pegged out of his mind, you don’t get to say nothing,” Hardison shot back.

Parker knelt next to the blanket burrito. “I’m going to untie you now, Eliot.”

Hardison lifted the blankets. “You want in?”

Parker hesitated, then shook her head. This was what she’d meant. She wasn’t a comforting person, not like Hardison.

“She needs her hands free for untying,” Eliot said. “Let her work.”

“Oh, do his thighs first!” Hardison said. “I wanna see what the marks look like.”

Eliot’s thighs relaxed as Parker untied and loosened the ropes around them. Hardison watched, fascinated, tracing the red welts as they appeared. Was untying comforting? Maybe. They’d liked it when she’d tied them up, but they also liked it when she set them loose. Both of those things could be true. Parker the mastermind who put people and things in their place. Parker the white-hat thief who provided leverage to set people free.

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