

"Blackjack" Temperance Ryder

Female Professional Gambler, in a male dominated world.

Former Debutante.

Once, you were a well-to-do widow in Boston. You married your husband for his wealth and advanced age, and after he died you were free to do as you pleased. You went to all the right parties, knew the right sorts of people and hobnobbed with robber barons. It was a good life. Then, ten years ago, you were taken in, by a cheap swindle. A pair of women, **Lillian Von Valzak** and **Hannah Brownfield** pulled a con job on you, and in the end you transferred your fortune off to a "holding company" that turned out to not exist.

You were ruined, destitute, penniless. The supposed friends that you had before did not want anything to do with you: it turned out most of them had merely pretended to be your friend to advance their own social status. Now that you had no status to speak of, you were no use to any of them. So you became a social outcast.

You resolved to head westward. Others were finding fortunes out there; perhaps you could find a new one. Unfortunately, your job skills were lacking, so there were only a few career options available to a lady such as yourself: criminal, prostitute or gambler. Gambler seemed the least disagreeable of the three, so you tried your hand at that. Riverboat captains were entertained by the novelty of a lady playing poker or blackjack or whatever. To your surprise, you were quite good at the games, and you enjoyed them immensely. Even more than that, you enjoyed the freedom of the gambler's life. Thus you have drifted ever westward, further from your stuffy upper-class roots. You have become increasingly rough-and-tumble over time, losing the reservation expected of a high society lady, in favor of drinking, gambling and wild partying. This life is, it turns out, a lot more fun, even if you're never sure of your next payday or even where you will tonight.

Most male gamblers don't take you very seriously. They don't think a lady can be a serious opponent at a game like poker. They try to give you advice on how to play a hand, or sometimes refuse to deal you in at all. You try to prove to them that you can be as skilled at cards as any man, if not more so. After all, much of your time as an uppercrustwoman was seeking out "tells" in their behavior to see if a rumor was true. The years of training in liedetection and intuiting people's motives and thoughts has served you well at the card table. Sometimes, if the male players underestimate your skill, you can turn that to your advantage. They think you are weak and unskilled, so you can keep them fooled until the cards are shown.

Unfortunately, Lady Luck has not been kind to you recently. And an increasing number of riverboat casinos are unwilling to seat you, as your reputation as a card shark spreads. So you have wound up

having to take out a loan, from one **Lulu Kingsbury**. You owe her quite a lot of money, but you hope that your winnings from this tournament can pay her back. To do that, you'd have to win the majority of the pot, though. Or find some other source of cash, fast. Or maybe convince Miss Kingsbury to accept something else in trade, instead of money. What that might be, you don't know.

[insert paragraph about the witch, once I've seen it]

Hey, that saloon owner, **Bedelia Derrick**, looks familiar. Looks an awful lot like **Lillian Van Valzak**. Is it her? A relative? Find out more, and see if you can get your fortune back from her.