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Then there was this one girl who was certainly the unsuspecting party favor. You can learn all kinds of thing about the darker side of male-female relationships at Spring Break if you pay attention. The vacation can be wonderful, but seeing fuck-head bottom-feeders getting girls wasted for the eternal glory of Girls Gone Wild and the ability to stick their prick into someplace it doesn't belong, and they haven't earned the right to be in, truly sucks. For the moment, I had to look past her.

The focus of my anxiety was a couple, both African-American and from a different mold than everyone else there. I knew the guy because he was somewhat famous.

"Hey Bitch," I replied in an off-handed manner.

"What?" Brennan hammed up his confusion. The 'Home Alone' gasp. What had he done wrong?

"What?" I responded.

"Did you just call me a 'bitch'?" he clarified.»WŴ.noVe(i)(w)or@.Com

"No," I lied. "I didn't even know you were talking to me. Hi, I'm Cael Nylas. Who are you again?"Www.n0vcIW0Rm.com

"I think you called me a bitch," Brennan watched his whole weekend plan to dispose of me coming gift wrapped here in the opening round. He looked to the 'famous' guy. I am an idiot.

"Well, with your family money, I'm sure you can hire top notch Otolaryngologist to handle that hearing problem of yours," I grinned.

"Orlando, what do you think Kibble here said?" Brennan indicated the guy.

"Orlando Keyes," I smiled. "Man, you are one mean son of a bitch. That fighter from Ecuador... missed his name... you broke his left cheek with one hit during that MMA bout in New Orleans last Thanksgiving. The only thing almost as impressive was that guy managed to stand up afterwards."

No, I wasn't buttering this guy up. There was no point. I only knew about him because the whole 'martial ardor' doesn't have to be yours to get some tail. Girls who like watching physical combat - MMA, Kick-boxing, Boxing, and the NHL (WWE if they are somewhat gullible) - will jump on your bones at the completion of that match.

"I think this pussy called you his bitch," Orlando came my way. I gently pushed Brooke and Libra aside to give me space.

"You are mistaken," I kept smiling at Orlando. "I was calling that lady over there," I pointed at the lady he had been talking to, "my bitch for tonight. The acoustics in this place must suck."

Outdoor pool... the Atlantic Ocean crashing less than 100 meters away... this place rocked.

"You are going to die," Brennan laughed at me. Keyes kept coming.

"Right, or left?" I asked him in a pleasant tone. He glared yet hesitated.

"What does it matter?" Orlando studied me. He had stopped being a hired thug and returned to being a modern day gladiator.

"I'm packing so I wanted to know which knee you can live without," I stated.

"He's got a gun?" one of the other males mumbled.

"Gun?" Orlando's eyes narrowed.

"Knife," I corrected.

At this point, everyone but Orlando and I felt better. In that snippet, Orlando and I exchanged a vital piece of information - I was going to hurt him. No matter what he did, I was going to put a knife into him. How did he know? I had warned him and I laughed at Death. I wasn't bluffing and Orlando made his life's work piercing his opponent's deceptions.

"That's my fiancé," Orlando grumbled. I extended my hand.

"I apologize then," I said as he shook my hand. "That was rude of me and uncalled for. Not only is she one of the classiest ladies here, she was hanging out with you, a man not known for accepting anything short of the perfect match. Besides," I whispered, "we both know who I was truly talking about."

Orlando wasn't happy with me, or forgiven me. What he did accept was that I'd given him an out. I had backed down and apologized. Brennan was frowning. Orlando and I didn't care; we were both fighters and we'd both ponied up on the promise of pain. If there was to be a conflict, he wasn't going to do it for Brennan. He was going to do it because he always wanted to know how tough the other guy really was.

Names floated around. The only people that mattered to me were Anima and Casper. Anima was Brennan's 'girlfriend' which I translated as a debauchery enabler. She was under the delusion that life was boring and pointless, so she should punish the world for her ennui. Her life's cup had been emptied at twenty-three? Bitch, I worked with real women who couldn't even consider such nonsense.

Casper... Casper was going to be a problem. For starters, Anima had taken Casper under her wing - was going to show Casper the 'ropes'. Casper proudly proclaimed that. Casper was also not as rich as the 'in crowd' and not a hanger-on - she was the weekend's amusement, or would have been if Brooke hadn't shown up. And, of course, she couldn't see the danger, she was so eager to be with the super-rich.

After the name game came the initial party shuffle. Who was aiming for whose bedroom tonight and how would they get what they wanted. Brennan sent two backup boys cruising for Libra while he angled in for Brooke. Anima and Casper were supposed to keep me busy. Libra promptly showed she'd thumbed through my Book of Social Fugliness.

"I only date real men," she shredded the 'second-stringers' to pieces. The blast socially staggered them. "If you have to think about it, boys, you are not a man. Don't strain yourself trying to be something you can't even comprehend. Now one of you go get me a drink while I think about what Cael and I are going to do to Brooke tonight."

In social parlance, that was shooting someone with both barrels of a shotgun then using the stock to tenderize the remains.

That was one flank secure. Next, Casper and Anima. Anima had the feeling I didn't like her - good for her.WWw.n.v@lW0rM.com

"Would you really have cut Orlando?" Casper asked me softly while she ran a fingernail over my right forearm.

"Casper, to begin with, call him Mr. Keyes. There will come a time when you can freely use his first name, but you ain't there yet," I cautioned her. "To answer your question: yes, I would have sliced down and across, cutting his right hamstring." Keyes heard me, as I had intended.

"Brennan says you are a co-worker of Trent," Anima cooed.

"Kind of," I shrugged. "Trent is a big-shot with the Far East Unit while I remain in Personnel in the city (Manhattan)." They both looked disappointed then Casper handed me a plum. She wasn't stupid, just wilfully blind.

"Where did you learn to use a knife then?" Casper tried to 'salvage' me. She was doing herself a favor by trying to make me look better to the rest - doing me a favor. Nice.

"I'm with the Records Redaction Unit of Havenstone's Executive Services," I lied. Blink.

"That doesn't make any sense," Casper's brow furrowed. "You delete records?"

"No Casper," I returned her arm rub, "someone creates a list with names on it. I am part of the team that reduces the number of those names on that list to zero." Blink.

"You fire people?" she remained uncertain. She had to believe I was playing with her, which I was.

"No," I shook my head. "That implies extra paperwork. We take a more ergonomic approach. No termination rigmarole - no traceable termination at all."

"That sounds vaguely like you murder people," Anima murmured.

"Murder is a crime. Converting all the data of a given person into one, misplaced file is a way of circumventing the whole 'exit interview

roviding references for other jobs

ension' process." If you believed that this nation, nay, the whole world, was run by soulless corporate monsters that made scary sense.

"What do you do with the people?" Anime was showing the tiniest bit of enthusiasm for this conversation.

"What people? People have names," I smiled. "Bodies with no records are normally handled as John and Jane Does and are buried in Potter's Field, or used at medical schools."

"Do you enjoy sex with multiple partners?" Anima smiled - veering the conversation off in a different direction for reasons I couldn't fathom.

"Yes. Do you always use protection?" I bantered back. Casper was heady with the hedonistic direction this weekend seemed to be taking.

"I do," Anima gave me a droopy, somewhat sexy smile»Ww.N0vcOwo(i)m.cOm

"I don't believe you," I chuckled. "That's okay because I don't find you all that interesting anyway. Casper here is a peach... you... you would pay for the experience of using a stick to push a dying person's head beneath the quicksand - the more they trusted you, the happier you would be. Casper doesn't believe it, but you and I know it's true." The blazing necrophiliac wasn't put off in the least.

Anime found me attractive because she wouldn't have to hide her evil around me. My understanding meant she could be as creepy, callous and vindictive for no damn good reason. By now, Brennan bored her to tears as did all people after a random amount of time. I was new.

"I'm going to have fun with you," Anima purred. Even Casper was unsettled by that.

"You are having a blast being a terribly miserable person, Anima," I began.

"If something happens to Brooke, Libra, or Casper, you are going to discover that you haven't a clue about what real misery and suffering are. I don't know those depths either, but I know some people who do and once I relate the tale of this weekend, they are going to proactively beautify the human species," I smiled. "We clear?"

No answer. Again, Anima's pampered existence had given her false certainty about what happened in the dark, neglected recesses of the world and how she was untouchable. I had to shift fronts, as Brennan was using every sleazy, oily, subliminal physical contract trick in his arsenal to maneuver between Brooke and me. Moron.