The Nude Pianist: A Novel: Chapter 15

by Daniel Harris

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Frank stopped at the Maple Tavern and downed a shot and a beer in one minute and left, much to the chagrin of his friends. When he arrived home, Bounder, his new companion, reminded him that he needed food. After feeding the cat, he lay on the bed reading Carlos Fuentes' *The Death of Artemio Cruz*. Bounder curled up next to his thigh and started snoring.

—Jesus, a snoring cat. No wonder Alex put this cat outside.

At midnight he fell sleep. The phone rang at 2:30 in the morning. He tried to ignore it, but it kept ringing.

—Hello, he said in his most gruff voice.

—Frank, it's me Michiko.

He hung up.

The phone rang again.

—What do you want?

—Frank, you have to help me. I'm really sick.

—Now what? I'm not a paramedic you know?

—Please, Frank, I need your help.

—*I* should help *you* after *you* ignored me for the last two weeks?

—I can explain everything, but I'm in serious pain. I need you to help me.

—Michiko, call 911.

—No, only *you* can help me.

—What do you want me to do?

—Come to my apartment and bring me a bottle of cranberry juice.

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—Can't you just call an all night bodega?

—I need more than cranberry juice. I need your comfort.

Frank scratched his crotch and walked to the door of the bedroom. Bounder was drooling on his blanket.

—What does that mean, you need my comfort?

—Frank, don't be a pig, just hop a cab and come help me.

Frank was torn between going and blowing her off.

—Okay. I'm on my way.

He slammed down the phone.

—Shit, what a sap I am.

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When Frank entered Michiko's apartment she was slowly pacing the living room.

—So, what's the problem? asked Frank.

Michiko did not answer. She continued to pace the living room.

Frank could see that she was sick. She was pale and disheveled. Not the totally together Michiko he knew.

—Michiko, you don't look good. What's wrong?

Michiko sat on the sofa, but immediately stood and began pacing the room.

—Frank, go in the kitchen and make me a glass of cranberry juice with ice.

Frank returned with nothing.

—Michiko, there is no ice and there are no glasses. You'll have to drink this out of the bottle.

—Shit!

—Look, you haven't completely moved in. There are no plates, glasses or silverware. There's nothing to cook on. You didn't put water in the ice cube trays. There is no ice.

Ohhh!, she screamed.

—Frank, I have to ask you to do something that is terribly embarrassing to me. Will you look at my private parts and tell me if they are infected?

—Jez, Michiko, what the hell happened?

—I was raped.

—But…didn't you go to the police?

—I was drunk. It was my fault. You can probably see the hickey on my neck.

—I don't want to look.

—Please, my gynecologist said I should call her if things became worse. They are worse. There's blood in my urine and my vagina is infected. I'm so sore I can barely walk.

—I have limited experience with this. My ex-wife would get cystitis during the time she was using a diaphragm. It was painful, but not as bad as you seem to be experiencing.

—What should I do? I want you to examine me. It's not like you haven't seen me there.

Michiko lay on the sofa and opened her legs. Frank carefully and gently examined her private parts.

—I'm sorry Michiko, but this does not look good. I should take you to a doctor or the emergency room.

—I don't want to go to hospital. Call my doctor. Her number is on the pill bottle.

—It's 3:30 in the morning.

—Frank! Please, just call her.

Frank called the number. He got the doctor's service. Twenty minutes later the doctor telephoned. Michiko answered the telephone.

—Hello.

—This is Dr.Hohenlangen. Michiko you telephoned.

—Yes, doctor. I'm in excruciating pain. I can't sleep, sit or rest.

—Can you meet me at St. Luke's Hospital in thirty minutes?

—Yes. I have a friend with me who can help me.

—Meet me there by four-thirty.

—Thank you, doctor.

Michiko hung up.

—Frank, you have to get a cab and take me to St. Luke's Hospital.

—It's chilly outside. You need to dress warmly.

—I'm burning up. I can't wear underwear. This skirt and top will have to do. I'll put a trench coat over me.

Michiko was admitted to the hospital. Frank was sitting with Michiko waiting for a bed when a police officer approached them.

—Are you Michiko Mita? asked the officer consulting a piece of paper on a clipboard.

—Yes, said Michiko.

—And you? Are you the husband or boyfriend of Miss Mita?

—He is, said Michiko.

—I didn't ask you, I asked the young man.

—She is a friend, said Frank, who did not get good vibes from this cop.

—What is your name?

—Frank Martin.

—Mr. Martin, you will come with me.

Frank followed the officer to a small room near the waiting area.

—Everything you tell me can be used as evidence against you. You have the right to an attorney. Do you understand?

—Yes I do.

—How do you know the victim?

Jesus Christ. Michiko is a victim? Am I a criminal? What the fuck is going on here, thought Frank.

—I don't understand what you mean.

—Did you have sexual relations with this woman?

—A few weeks ago.

—Did you pander her?

—What do you mean?

—Did you sell her to men for sexual purposes?

—Are you crazy? I barely know her. We were neighbors and had a fling, but I haven't seen her in weeks. She's an internationally famous pianist who travels frequently.

There was a knock at the door of the room. The cop stood and answered the door. A hand gave him a paper cup of coffee.

—I didn't know if you drank coffee, so I didn't order for you.

—I want a lawyer. You seem to be accusing me of something I had no part of. She called me at 2:30 this morning and said she was in pain. She used to live across the street from me when she lived on Greene Street. I came to her apartment. She called her doctor and I escorted her to the hospital. You are saying I am to blame for her problem?

—You are the boyfriend or most likely the pimp. This woman was brutally raped.

—Whoa, officer. This woman is an award winning internationally know classical pianist. She's not some Japanese call girl. What you are thinking is totally out-of-bounds.

—We don't think so.

—Well, you're wrong. Totally fucking wrong.

—You'll watch your tongue, you disgusting pimp.

Angelique Brody arrived at St. Luke's at six in the morning. She was not happy missing her five a.m. racket ball game. She could see that some bully cop thought he had collared a pimp of high-class Japanese call girls. After Angelique made a few telephone calls, and the Meyer agency sent someone to the hospital, Frank was released.

—I don't know how to thank you Angelique. That cop thought I was some sort of pimp. He wanted to know whom I sold Michiko to who abused her so badly.

—Frank it's over. Go home, rest, and then paint more pictures. That's how you can pay me back.

—Where is Michiko?

—She's in a woman's ward. You cannot see her. Go home and don't try to contact her. For you, she is poison. The NYPD will be watching you. If you try to contact her, they will think you are trying to silence her.

—What do I do if she calls me? We are, or were lovers, at the least, good friends and neighbors.

—If she knows what's good for you, she won't contact you again. Ever.

To be continued.