

Ninja

by Kyle Hemmings

I wake up with a scream. On the pillow next to mine, Zin opens one eye then the other. When did you shave your head? I ask.

Oh, some guy crept in last night and cut it. I think he was a modern ninja. He said he wanted to bring my chestnut locks to his master. His master thought chestnut was just for horses. There might be a ritual involved. Maybe even barter. My lock for seven of your dribbling goats that you promised could talk like big shit mountain gods. I couldn't see much of him in the dark, but he was kind of cute dressed as a simple wood gatherer. Then he flew out the window like a skylark. Or maybe the floor opened up for him. I bet he could walk on water too. Maybe surf on a wave of my hair. I don't think it was a dream.

Very funny, I say.

I dive head first under the sheets. I'm Jacques Cousteau without a flashlight, looking for signs of hair.

Stop, Zin says, that tickles.

I'm on a mission, I say, just hold your breath.

You feel like a water spider.

How would you know what a water spider feels like?

A ninja crept into my room last night.

She catches my head in a leg scissors and says for me to say Ninja Uncle. Instead, I bite into her flesh that only remotely tastes like a soft salt pretzel.

You small time bitch, she says, muff diver, loser. My ninja man would never bite me. If he knew, he'd kill you with a dart. Avenge my dishonor.

In black bra and panties, Zin walks across the floor with soft even foot-slaps. She opens the window and yells out over Avenue C: *Anybody see my Water Spider Man? He got away with my hair.*

I get dressed and turn on Canadian radio. A news report about a hiker, stranded in the wilderness for weeks, claiming to have lived on fly soup and bear paw. Returning home, he couldn't adjust to society and, last seen, he was walking naked along a highway.

Do you think he was kidnapped by a bear? I ask Zin.

Fuck, she says, I got blood on my panties. Those cramps last night hurt. Like worse than the worst. Made me crazy.

So, like you got crazy and like cut your own hair?

I said like those cramps hurt. Most people listen with only ¼ of their brain. With you, it's just the ear canal and no further.

Take some Black Haw. It's good for cramps.

You speak from experience?

My ex, who loved to fuck listening to *Insects in Minor Keys*, said it worked.

Was she a grasshopper?

No, Aquarius. She was from South London.

Go to England and suck breast milk.

We spend the rest of the morning, chasing and humping each other's shadow, waiting for the ninja to return.

