

Shaken But Not Stirred

by Kyle Hemmings

It happened right after I had taken my Uzi to work, retrieved it from my Brooks Brothers briefcase, and fired it upon my desk and its assorted discontents, their paper lives bunched together by clips and notary stamps of approval, now set flying and free. I then walked into the middle of the bank's marble floor, built somewhere after the stock market crash of '29 and announced that I, William Bingham III, hereby resign my position as senior financial advisor at Synergy Savings and Loan.

I turned around and perused each set of eyes peeping over counters, desktops, opaque windows. Laurie, the security guard who secretly moonlighted as a teller at a competing bank, Laurie with the sexy implanted mole and a most remarkable lisp, uttered, "William, were those real bullets this time? Like the kind they use in Play Station?"

I smiled and said, "Laurie, you're richer than you think."

Just then, my cell went off. I raised a hand, signaling everyone to return to their jobs and just pass off this incident the way they would another passé botched robbery that occurs at least once a week at Synergy.

It was a returning client, or more specifically, a client who kept returning to my life, a woman who called herself "James Bond." She had the legs of an Italian supermodel and the face of a Swedish porn star with a tragic cast to her blue-green eyes and an upturned nose, almost detached in its tulip-like poise, as if inhalation was an added feature.

"Bing," she said, "I'm in a blue period."

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She sounded drunk and about to fall from somewhere.

"James," I said, "does that mean we can't have sex?"

"Shut up you fucking idiot and get over here and save my pissed upon life."

"Where?"

"The Gobi Camel on Spruce."

I unloaded my Uzi and threw it over to Laurie, who caught it like a real pro. "Here," I said, "give it to your kid brother. Tell him to terrorize his teachers."

Sweet, she said.

I drove like a maniac to The Gobi. James Bond had problems. Like no shit, Sherlock. Who doesn't. Her estranged husband was now involved in a horrendous scandal. He was discovered having fellatio with a top senator from Illinois, named Ronnie Babbage, a champion of civil liberties and a flamboyant libertarian. From the rumors I heard, it was hard to tell who was on top. But one thing was certain: More than one person would take a fall.

There were nights when James called me threatening to commit suicide, something really dramatic that would make the papers, like Hari Kari with a blow torch, or drinking ten bottles of toilet cleaner just so she could feel release. The press hounds, she said, were on her back night and day and in between. She wanted to give them something to write that was uniquely about her.

I double-parked my hybrid and entered the bar with a vague sense of guilt and let-down. I should have quit that job long ago. James was

sprawled against a back booth, looking half-cocked, perfect for the role of neo-femme fatale, but her maroon lipstick was not smudged.

The jukebox played Carly Simon's *You're So Vain*.

I sat down and ordered a Purple Fat Lip and told the waitress to tell the bartender to pour the shit like tomorrow never comes. She smiled, exposing braces and a slight flush.

“What took you so long? Did you walk on your hind legs?”

James placed a shoeless foot against my crotch. She wiggled her toes.

“I quit my job.”

“I always loved that hobo spirit about you. A real Ironweed.”

“You wanted to talk? I was in the middle of something important when you called me at the job.”

“Yeah. No. I don't want to talk. I want to fuck. I want to fuck like an imprisoned dragon lady for three days and four nights. I'm horny, lonely as a pit bull, and existentially strapped. A woman in an iron mask. The shit is getting to me, Bing. Coming out of my pores. My husband's photo will be in tomorrow's paper. Who knew he was gay? Well, I did. It was a beautiful platonic thing. Now the media whores have got to spoil it. They're raping me every day. Fucking me in the ass.”

The waitress came with my drink. She blushed and avoided eye contact.

“We could go to my cabin in the Westshire Mountains.”

She grabbed my head and slammed my nose in my Fat Lip.

“Shut up, you fucking idiot. I want to fuck you in a back alley.”

Her words were beautifully sloshed, a voice of ice chips and mint julep.

“James, I'm not the most stable person to confide in right now. I'm jobless and I want to drift.”

“Did you say drift or draft?”

“Drift.”

She looked at me with that far eastern glint of wisdom.

“Look,” I said, “the Berlin Wall came down. The cold war is over. China is becoming like us. Give it time. Give it a decade and a thousand green apples. People will forgive your husband.”

She pulled my seersucker tie and French kissed me using teeth. Then, we both stared at each other for an incredibly long time, my tongue throbbing where she had bitten it. She pushed me hard against the seat.

“I have to use the little boys' room,” I said, “my ocean is standing room only.”

“Watch out for the sharks.” She laughed and slurped her drink.

I returned and took a big swig of Fat Lip. It tasted funny, as if someone spiked it with a date rape drug. My head began to swim. From Belgrade to Bangkok.

I slid over in the booth. I retained a slight semblance of

consciousness.

What I remember was James lugging me over her shoulders, as thin and small as she was. She carried me past the bar to an overwhelming round of applause. Outside, she tied me to the roof of her Volvo. Riding on the roof in the open air and with her driving, how could I go wrong.

Some people will do anything for publicity.

