**Close Shave**

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“Help me.”

She stumbled toward me on the empty beach, completely naked – not a hair on her body. She had been shaved clean, from the top of her head down the length of her legs. I would have blamed what I saw that morning on the drinking I did all night, but she wasn’t acting like a girl in my dreams. She crawled and ran and brushed unseen hands off her body. Her face and arms were pink from heat and exposure, but not yet blistering. Even her eyebrows were shaved. Her eyelashes looked crinkled and short surrounding her gray eyes like little stars.

“Don’t look at me.”

She shuddered when she saw me, and curled into a ball. She might have stayed there baking in the rising sun for hours, I guessed, afraid to go on, and scared to death to go back. I got her some water, and an old shirt and pair of shorts of mine. She slipped into them, and found some shade under a palm tree. She was thin enough to be a model but probably too old, somewhere between 19 and 27. She had a large bruise on her right hip, purple and brown in stark contrast to her soft skin that was well-tanned everywhere but the bright white triangle where tiny bikini bottoms might go. On her left shoulder a tattoo of a tiger started; it prowled over the shoulder and toward her gently swelling breast, where it stopped. Its fierce mouth showed sharp teeth ready to close on her nipple. It was the most beautiful tattoo I had ever seen, with just two flaws – the eye looked too dead, and the mouth looked too hungry. She watched me until late afternoon, wordlessly. I didn’t have anything to say, either, and watched her back.

“Who else is here?”

The cay we found ourselves on was empty except for the beach house my Miami friend loaned me whenever I needed to feel sorry for myself. I stayed for weeks at a time, sometimes writing, sometimes drinking, sometimes screaming at the stars over the ocean. No one cared which I chose. The cay had only this beach; the rest of the island was steep, sharp rock. I could go weeks seeing no one but an occasional passing pleasure yacht. Oh yes, sometimes Deputy Doris would stop by. Deputy Doris came by occasionally to check for smugglers, pirates, and terrorists, and to see whether I was still alive. Doris looks like the paintings of Sabine women done in the middle ages – heavy with fleshy arms, legs, stomach, lips and breasts. Her dark hair was luxuriantly heavy when she let it down. I swear I could smell her rich, musky odor before I saw her on my porch some days. She refused to sleep with me, but I let her sunbathe nude anyway. When I closed my eyes to masturbate, I whispered “Doris.”

“You won’t hurt me?” The thin girl folded her arms tightly about her. The stretchy shorts fit her, the shirt hung loosely about her. She took a step closer to the house.

“Of course not. Take it easy. Easy does it now. Just sit there.” She sat on the edge of a kitchen chair, her elbows on the table, her hands rubbing her bald pate, and tears dripping from her cheeks. “What’s your name?”

She looked up suspiciously, then away, and shook her head.

“Do you need help? I’ve got a radio. We can get help here in two or three hours.”

“NO! No.” She shuddered again. “Please, no.”

That was all the talking we did that night. We had some supper I made from stuff I forgot I had, shared some rum, and watched the stars come out. She wouldn’t take the bed, but slept curled on the hammock half outside, the bottle of rum in her hand. I stayed awake as usual until the sun started to come up.

“My name is Lily,” she said to wake me up the next day. “Thank you.”

Lily had found some other clothes of mine that fit her a little better. There was fruit and vodka on the table, and an exotic flower in the empty rum bottle. Sleep must have agreed with her. She wouldn’t let me look her in the eye for long, but she did smile occasionally. Her smile would melt titanium.

She asked about the cay, and we walked the beach. I showed her my boat, my typewriter and the pages half-finished. She let me put balm on her burnt arms and face, and suntan lotion on her legs and her back. She spoke with a slight foreign lilt, and seemed unashamed to be topless. Her tiger fascinated me as much as her perfect small breasts.

“I can tell you now,” Lily said on the second day. “Yes, I was foolish. Alone on a boat with three rich men, but I trusted them. Instead, they gave me alcohol and drugs. They beat me. They did unspeakable things to me to please themselves. Finally, they tied my arms over my head, and lifted me so I was hanging by my arms. Then, they shaved my hair. I screamed; I tried to bite; I cursed them. My blonde hair, it was gone. Then they shaved between my legs, under my arms, and my legs, too. Then Charrad saw my eyebrows, and he decided to shave them off, too. I spit at him, but it did no good.

“The sight of my hairlessness made them feel like big men. They put scented oil on me, everywhere. Their hands, their fingers, were everywhere. Their penises poked me, until I could have died from shame. They filled my punta, and my mouth; they made me grab on with my hands. Charrad didn’t quit though; I felt his thick cock stab into me from behind. In my ass! Oh my God! He put his thing in my ass!” She leaned her head onto my chest, crying again. I could feel the stubble of her head on my cheek.

“The scented oil helped me wriggle out of my bonds while they slept. I dove off the yacht, and swam until I thought I would die. Then I saw your island, and I met you. So kind. So different. You are nothing like them.” She put her arms around me, and kissed me.

That filthy whore kissed me.

Lily would have slept with me, I think, but I wouldn’t let her. Instead, I took the hammock, and let her have the bed. She slept naked under the sheets. Often at night she would wander the beach wearing just a short shirt; sometimes wearing nothing at all. She looked out over the ocean, listening intently, but she never screamed at the stars.

Lily asked about the house and its owner. She asked about the other islands around, and about Deputy Doris. We talked about my boat, and fishing, and snorkeling. I showed her the spear gun and the machete. She even asked about the handcuffs I kept near the bed. They were supposed to be a joke for Doris and me.

Before the week was up, Deputy Doris showed up. Lily made herself scarce, but I saw her stubbled head and star-encrusted eyes watching Doris and me from the window. Doris brought me a case of rum and vodka, 15 gallons of water, and some fresh fruit. She did stuff like that. It made her feel okay about not fucking me. She undid her hair, and shook it out. It looked like a dark curtain. She stripped and laid on the towel, and set a timer to know when to turn over.

“Sleep with me, Doris.” I asked, you might say. “My balls are going to burst looking at you naked like that.”

“Nobody ever died from blue balls,” she said. “Here. Rub my back.” She tossed some scented oil my way. “Do you know how to use this?”

I rubbed sloshed it on thick, so that my hands and fingers could go everywhere on her. I mounded her thick flesh, and rolled it between my fingers. Oil dripped on the towel, and she seemed to like it. “Any new cases, Doris?” I liked to hear her talk while she was almost napping. She had a husky voice.

“Terrible case,” she murmured. “Two men burned alive in a yacht not far from here. Scratched their fingernails raw trying to get out before the thing blew up. Four people on board originally, according to the harbormaster. We’re looking for the other two – a man and a woman. Don’t think we’ll find them, though. If the sharks didn’t get them, then they’ve escaped with the loot.”

I slathered it on, rolling her ribs and gripping her ass until my fingers slipped. “How much loot?”

“With smugglers, hard to say. I’d guess $30 million. The rumor is it was in diamonds and jewels.” The timer dinged. Doris gave me a “back-away” look, so I did. She turned over onto her back, settled into the sand, and with a wave of her hand and lift of her eyebrow, summoned the oil and me for her front. “See if you can’t be a little less punishing on this side, buster.”

I thought I had been dreaming when I saw that fireball out on the ocean. Huge, orange, like a harvest moon rising fast with nothing to gather on the ocean, it had risen to the stars and disappeared. Ten seconds later I heard the explosion. I thought it was the rum. I’ve seen stranger things. Like shaved bare Lily the next morning, stumbling, crawling and running from something.

Doris never asked, so I didn’t tell her about what I saw, or about Lily. It really didn’t matter, did it? And I had never seen any other guy.

“We’ll find them, or pieces of them,” said Doris. “Already we’ve found singed blond hairs showing up in nests. Singed hair – quite a stink, too. Birds will nest with anything though.”

“Sleep with me, Doris.” But she wouldn’t, and after another ding, she cleaned herself in the ocean, dressed in her official uniform, and piled up her hair under her hat. She gave me a sisterly kiss, and started back to the pier.

“What do I have to do, Doris?” I pleaded.

She blew me a kiss. “I’m not anchoring to a beach rat with no prospects. Call me hard, buster, but a girl has to look out for her future.” The cruiser sounded like it was giving me the raspberries as it left.

Lily was wide-eyed, and scared again. “Did she know I was here? Will she tell anyone?” Her eyes scanned the horizon, and both edges of the beach.

“Shut up, Lily.” I was mad. At her, at Doris, at my lot in life. “Just shut up.” I stamped into the house.

Lily followed, and was more docile now. She tried to cuddle; I shook her off the first two times, but there’s only so much a man can take. Lily kissed my neck, and slid my shirt off. She kissed my shoulders, and with her nails, scratched my chest and my nipples. She shrugged off her own shirt, and I saw the tiger about to crunch her areola. I wanted to suck it too, and Lily guided my head to her breast. I swirled my tongue around her nipple, which grew tauter in my mouth. She moaned, and arched her back. She was good, I’ll give her that.

We lay on the bed, and she pulled my shorts off. My erection sprung up, and wobbled back and forth; her eyes watched it hungrily. She curled down to it, and blew on it gently, with an occasional kiss, but never swallowing it like I wanted. “Stop it, Lily. You’re only teasing. I can’t stand any more of that. Just back off.”

She slid her shorts off her narrow hips. The bruise was less obvious; the white patch now was as brown as the rest of her, the result of her nude naps in the sun. “You’ve got to trust me. I can make you very happy. Very. Very. Happy.” She raised my right arm and clicked the handcuff to the bed post. I gripped the other post with my left hand.

She went to work on me, using her hands, her lips, her ass, her pussy. While my nipples were in her mouth, she stroked me with her hands; but not too long. She put my toes in her pussy, and writhed. She lowered her ass onto my cock, a little bit at a time, raising up after an inch or so, to start again. Her nubbled head ran along the side of my hips. She poured rum onto my stomach and lapped it up. She eased herself onto my throbbing dick just in time for the cum to explode inside her as I bucked on the bed like a fucking bronco, arching my back so that I was violating her as completely as possible. I held it in her, until it was just a limp piece of meat, and still it was clenched by her vagina, and re-clenched until it became hard again.

“Your turn,” I gasped. I wanted to make her body feel as alive as she had made mine. I wanted her to moan, scream, and writhe with furious pleasure.

“That’s enough, tiger,” she said. “I can’t take any more.” She kissed my lips and lay upon my chest. Her legs apart. With my uncuffed hand I grabbed her ass, and fell asleep gently tracing her asshole.

A scream on the pier woke me up. I was groggy from the love-making, and the room was in total darkness. Lily was gone, leaving my right hand cuffed to the bed. I pulled at the post, but it wouldn’t give. I heard another scream, a woman’s scream, and knew it had to be Lily’s. Sitting up, I reached for the key, which I kept in the night table. I used it to mark my place in the Bible. After all, not even for Doris would I go without a safe word or safe key.

Shorts I grabbed, the cuffs and the spear gun. That’s all. I looked out to the pier. Lily was in my boat, with someone else. Her arms were tied behind her, the shirt pulled back, her chest exposed. In the moonlight, a knife glinted as it grazed against her shoulder.

“No, Charrad, I’ll tell you. Please! No more.”

Charrad’s face grimaced into the kind of smile a man gives while having furious sex, or torturing someone. “Shall we take away all of the tiger, ma cher? First the tail.” A swift flick of the knife, another scream, and Lily cried as she tried to catch her breath.” Blood had begun to flow to her nipple. “I know you’ll tell me.”

Lily began to talk as fast as she could. I crawled on my belly trying to get closer to them, to get within range of the spear gun, without being seen. Lily swore she could take him to the diamonds, but he wasn’t satisfied. The knife flashed again and the tiger lost a rear leg. He was flaying her alive.

Lily told Charrad where the diamonds were. She told him her bank account numbers, her hiding places at her own apartment. She promised him pleasures beyond what money could buy. Whatever he wanted to have from a woman, she would give him.

“No, ma cher. You left me and my partners to be burned alive. The explosion should have killed me too, but I was lucky. I only lost my eye and the side of my face.” His face was away from me, but the grimace could have been made by scar tissue. “You suffered some minor burns on your face and arms. Is that why you shaved your head, ma cher? To gain pity, or to show remorse? In either case, it’s not enough.” He lifted the knife again, and placed it against her skin at the point where the tiger’s other leg began.

I fired the spear gun, and it caught Charrad in the gut, knocking him out of the boat. He stood in the shallow water, and walked toward me with the spear sticking out of both sides of him. The knife he had dropped in the boat, so he meant to kill me with his bare hands.

Lily screamed with the effort of fighting her ropes, and freed one hand. She picked up an oar and ran after Charrad, striking him in the head once, twice, again, and again, until his brains ran from his head, and I had my arms around Lily to stop her. She collapsed onto me, still breathing angrily. We carried Charrad’s body to my boat. Lily sat in the prow, and as I pushed off, I saw her pick up Charrad’s knife.

She slid it behind her, and I pretended not to see. But as I got in the boat, she extended her arms to help me, and I cuffed them both.

We motored to the opposite side of the island, where she told Charrad she had hidden the diamonds. While we were still a ways out, I tossed Charrad over like so much chuff. Judging by the water turbulence, his body never made it to the bottom.

“You don’t trust me?” Lily said. “The jewels are there. Go see. Plenty for us both.”

I found the spot where Lily had hid them. It was pretty obvious, even on the rocky coast. I think I would have found them eventually, or someone would have. $30 Million in diamond and jewels. Plenty for both, that’s for sure.

I motored around the cay toward the beach side. Lily sat upright in the prow, and reminded me of the Indian Princess in Peter Pan. Lily sat straight-backed, tight-lipped and eyes closed.

I stopped the boat far from the beach. Lily opened her gray eyes, still surrounded by the singed stars. I leaned forward toward her, to the damaged tiger on her chest. I kissed it, and licked it, and sucked at it, while she moaned. The blood began to flow again, and a single drop poised at the tip of her nipple, while other rivulets ran on either side of the hungry tiger’s mouth. I reached behind her, and grabbed the hidden knife.

Lily’s face went white. Her head looked like a second moon, still round and egg-shaped, though defaced by the stiff stubbles of hair coming back. They say that after you die, your hair and your nails continue to grow. How long would Lily have to be dead before her hair grew back to it former loveliness?

I used the knife to cut my clothing from her. She was as bare as the first day I saw her, but for some small hairs that had sprouted in various places. I pointed to the fading bruise on her hip. “How did that happen?”

She lifted her chin proudly. “After I started the fire in the men’s sleeping quarters, I had to use my body to slam the door shut. It wasn’t easy when there were three of them trying to get out. I threw my hip against the door to slam it. So there.”

The blood dripped around the tiger. I knew she would not have a chance to grow her hair long, or her nails. The ocean would churn around her, and she would have as little chance hitting the bottom as Charrad had had.

“Doris? She doesn’t love you, you know.” She said this as I lifted her lithe, naked body. She could have struggled in my arms, trying to upset us both from the boat. Instead, she kissed me.

The filthy whore kissed me.

I layed her gently in the water, and as she sank, I saw her star-encircled gray eyes looking up at me. I may or may not be successful in courting Doris; of course, the money will help. Eventually, it will be Doris’s bold brown eyes I remember; but for now, every night I see gray eyes and stars.