

Sweeter Than Pussy

by Tom Jacobson

Playwrights Ink  
3425 West 1st Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90004  
(213) 385-4562  
tom.jacobson@sbcglobal.net

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(5 Actors)

ONI, an artist, also plays:

KYLE, a publicist  
SPLASH, a personal trainer

DUNCAN, an administrative assistant, also plays:

HAINES, a market researcher

BYRUM, a security guard

PRESTON, a Korean-American factory owner, also plays:

BRAD, a lawyer, Chinese-American  
PARK, desperate to lose weight  
SUNOOK, dentally hygienic

ULISES, a maintenance worker, also plays:

JAVIER, a gangbanger  
GUZMARO, an angry young man

HOMELESS MAN, a storyteller, strangely attractive

CASTING NOTES: Doubling is suggested but not required. While ULISES should be Latino and PRESTON should be Asian-American, ONI, DUNCAN and HOMELESS MAN should be cast with as much diversity as possible.

The action takes place in a gym sauna over the period of several months. It is the present.

SETTING: A dry sauna, with benches and a wooden door with a small window. The heating unit for the sauna is located outside the sauna itself, with the heat pumped in.

A dry sauna. KYLE, wearing a towel around his waist, sits reading a paperback. HAINES, wearing a sweatsuit and running shoes, listens to music on his iPod. PARK, wrapped in plastic, sits in a lotus position. JAVIER, wearing a sleeveless t-shirt and boxer shorts, sits with his eyes closed. Silence. After several moments, PARK starts exercising. HAINES and JAVIER take note, then close their eyes. KYLE looks up, then returns to his book. PARK changes his exercise. HAINES starts humming or even moaning along with his iPod, possibly musical but certainly unintelligible. He gets more and more caught up in it, a little louder. KYLE and JAVIER look up, catch each other's gaze, smile, then KYLE returns to his book and JAVIER closes his eyes. HAINES gets a little louder. PARK stops exercising to look at HAINES. When he stops, KYLE, HAINES and JAVIER look up. HAINES sees PARK looking at him, then notices KYLE and JAVIER looking at him as well. HAINES stops his musical appreciation and leaves the sauna. As he opens and closes the door, a pop song from the locker-room sound system can be heard. Different pop songs are heard every time anyone comes or goes.

PARK

*Duhp da.* [Hot.]

Not understanding Korean, KYLE and JAVIER ignore him.

PARK

*Nuhmoo duhp da.* [Too hot in here.]

KYLE and JAVIER look up at PARK and smile, friendly but not understanding. PARK points to the thermometer on the wall.

JAVIER

*Que?*

PARK

(Fanning himself.)

*Ondoh!* [The temperature!]

JAVIER  
*Si, caliente.*

PARK  
*Mohra gooyo?* [What?]

JAVIER  
 (Fanning himself.)  
*Hace calor hoy!*

KYLE  
 (Fanning also.)  
 Hot!

PARK  
 (Gesturing.)  
*Yogi ondoh joojahlrry bakate isuhyo wehnya hamyun nooga mool nuhsuh mahnga jigeh guhgchung haniga.* [They control the temperature from outside because they're afraid someone will break it, pour water on it.]

JAVIER  
 (To KYLE.)  
 Do you know what he's saying? [Spanish]

DUNCAN, wearing a plain white towel and sandals, comes in and sits down.

KYLE  
 (Gesturing for "balance.")  
*Caliente--frio--*

PARK  
*Hanguok mal mohtamyun ojima!*  
 [You shouldn't come here if you don't speak Korean!]

PARK  
 (A noise of disgust)  
*Eishh!*

PARK storms out.

DUNCAN  
 Whoa! Was it me?

JAVIER  
*Loco!*

KYLE  
 They don't let us change the temperature. Afraid we'll break it.

DUNCAN  
 Whatever.

JAVIER relaxes but doesn't yet close his eyes. KYLE returns to his book. Silence for a moment. DUNCAN scratches his crotch through his towel. No reaction from KYLE. JAVIER closes his eyes.

DUNCAN

Speaking of *locos*, there's another homeless guy about to come in here.

KYLE

Guess they gotta shower somewhere.

DUNCAN

(Looking toward the door.)

Oh, shit.

HOMELESS MAN comes in and sits down. He's wearing a few layers of clothes, not at all right for the gym, and he looks pretty scruffy. Everyone is silent for a moment.

HOMELESS MAN

You hear about the guy?

No one responds.

HOMELESS MAN

You hear about the guy?

DUNCAN

I'm sorry--

KYLE

From the gym?

JAVIER leaves.

HOMELESS MAN

He was here. Now he's gone.

KYLE

Excuse me.

KYLE takes his book and leaves.

DUNCAN

Lots of guys come and go.

HOMELESS MAN

Middle Eastern.

DUNCAN

You're gonna have to give me more than that. When'd he quit the gym?

HOMELESS MAN

Year ago, maybe.

DUNCAN

No way I can remember that far back. Can't help you, buddy.

DUNCAN leaves. HOMELESS MAN sighs. Waits a moment. No one else comes in. He leaves. After a moment, DUNCAN sticks his head in, sees HOMELESS MAN has left, and comes back in and sits down. SPLASH, wearing a personal trainer uniform from the gym (polo shirt, shorts, athletic shoes) comes in, looks around, then starts to leave. After a moment, PRESTON comes in, almost running into SPLASH. He wears boxer-style swim trunks and a t-shirt with a Presbyterian church message on it in English and Korean. He carries a Korean-language newspaper.

PRESTON

Excuse me, someone has defecated in one of the showers.

DUNCAN bursts out laughing.

SPLASH

You're kidding! Which shower?  
(Starts to leave.)

PRESTON

On the end.  
(Calling after SPLASH.)  
Could you--or could you ask someone to--clean it up?

SPLASH

(Offstage.)  
Fuck!

PRESTON

(Sitting down and opening his  
paper.)  
What kind of person would do that?

SPLASH comes back in, infuriated.

SPLASH

Some idiot took a dump in the shower.

PRESTON

That's what I said.

DUNCAN

There's a new homeless dude. Maybe you can still catch him.

SPLASH  
 I keep telling 'em get  
 cameras in the locker room  
 but the members would throw a  
 fit--privacy, my ass, next to  
 security--

DUNCAN  
 I don't know why you sell  
 memberships to homeless  
 people anyway--

DUNCAN  
 Somebody's ass--

SPLASH  
 Koreatown is full of gangs--!

SPLASH  
 Lemme get somebody to hose it down.  
 (To PRESTON.)  
 My apologies on behalf of California Fitness.  
 (Leaves.)  
 Fuck!

DUNCAN  
 (After a moment of silence.)  
 Was it a big one?

PRESTON glares at DUNCAN then returns  
 to his paper. DUNCAN smiles to  
 himself. After a moment, he scratches  
 his crotch through the towel. No  
 reaction from PRESTON. Suddenly ONI  
 bursts into the sauna. He wears a  
 rather wild Speedo and flip-flops and  
 carries a number of hygiene products.  
 ONI sits down and begins applying the  
 various products, watching DUNCAN as he  
 does so.

ONI  
 Um...do you know who I am?

DUNCAN  
 Uh...no.

ONI  
 My name is Oni. I'm a famous artist.

GUZMARO comes in and sits down. He  
 wears sweatpants and a hooded  
 sweatshirt that completely obscures his  
 face.

DUNCAN  
 Oh, well, I don't know a lot about--

ONI  
Not just here in LA, but all over the country, nationally,  
internationally--

DUNCAN casually scratches his crotch  
through his towel.

INTERNATIONALLY--wow.

DUNCAN

ONI scratches his crotch through his  
Speedo.

Lemme show you.

ONI

ONI dashes out of the sauna. DUNCAN  
laughs softly. PRESTON sighs heavily,  
then gets up to leave.

He's a famous artist.

DUNCAN

I'm well aware.

PRESTON

PRESTON leaves. ONI comes right back  
in with photographs.

ONI  
Here I am with the mayor of Bangkok.

DUNCAN

Nice.

ONI  
This is me with the prime minister of Thailand.

GUZMARO makes a rather horrendous and  
aggressive throat-clearing noise.

ONI  
The prime minister of Laos.

And you.

DUNCAN

And me.

ONI

Puto.

GUZMARO

And the king.

ONI

Of Laos?

DUNCAN



ONI  GUZMARO  
Thailand!  Maricon.

  DUNCAN  
I've been to Bangkok.

                  ONI  GUZMARO  
Beautiful people!  Hijo de puta!

  ONI  
Once in Bangkok, on the Metro, you know they have a subway  
now--

  DUNCAN  
I didn't.

  ONI  
On the subway I saw this man, and he had a huge pimple, a  
sebaceous cyst, maybe even a whaddyacallit, a carbuncle. And  
I couldn't help myself, I asked him if I could pop it--

  With a great disapproving grunt,  
  GUZMARO leaves the sauna. They watch  
  him go. BRAD comes into the sauna and  
  sits down. He nods to DUNCAN in  
  recognition. They are all quiet for a  
  moment. DUNCAN scratches his crotch.  
  ONI scratches his crotch. BRAD  
  scratches his crotch. After a moment,  
  ONI gets up and starts to walk toward  
  DUNCAN. Suddenly HOMELESS MAN bursts  
  back into the sauna. DUNCAN, ONI and  
  BRAD all stop scratching instantly, and  
  ONI sits back down, but it's possible  
  the HOMELESS MAN noticed. After  
  HOMELESS MAN sits down, DUNCAN leaves.

  HOMELESS MAN  
You hear about the guy?

  Silence as both BRAD and ONI look  
  confused.

  ONI  
What guy?

  HOMELESS MAN  
The guy that disappeared.

  ONI  
Everybody disappears. Eventually.

  HOMELESS MAN  
From the gym. He stopped coming to the gym.

ONI  
(After a moment.)  
Hot in here.

BRAD  
Yeah.

HOMELESS MAN  
It's a sauna.

ULISES comes in with a mop and starts swabbing the floor of the sauna. The other guys lift their feet to help him out. He wears the gym's maintenance uniform.

ONI  
You ever hear about The Vault?

BRAD  
The Vault?

HOMELESS MAN  
You know what happened to the guy?

ONI  
In Beverly Hills all the mansions have special fire-proof vaults for valuables, like jewels and furs.

HOMELESS MAN  
Middle Eastern looking. Mebbe you seen him?

ONI  
And this one mansion, just built, they had an albino butler--

BRAD  
Albino?

HOMELESS MAN  
Young. Twenties. Very good-looking in a Middle Eastern kind of way.

ONI  
And they pissed him off somehow, so at the housewarming party he decided to get revenge.

HOMELESS MAN  
About a year ago.

ONI  
He waited till everyone at the party was totally drunk out of their minds, and he set the mansion on fire.

HOMELESS MAN  
Last anyone heard from him.

HOMELESS MAN  
I'm just wondering if you might have noticed him.

Both BRAD and ULISES are enthralled by ONI'S story. ULISES has even stopped cleaning to listen.

ONI  
Of course, everybody was drunk, so they didn't notice the fire right away.

HOMELESS MAN  
Something happened here at the gym.

ONI  
So when they did, it was too late to escape.

HOMELESS MAN  
I'm trying to find out for a friend of mine.

ONI  
So they all hid in the underground vault because--

ONI AND BRAD  
It was fireproof.

HOMELESS MAN  
He's been... traveling. For a year. And he has to know about this young Middle Eastern man.

ONI  
And it was. The whole house burned down, but the vault didn't.

ONI  
So when the embers died down enough, the firemen opened the vault to rescue the people--

HOMELESS MAN  
Anything you can tell me, or anyone you can point me to--

ONI  
They weren't burned, because the vault was--

HOMELESS MAN  
It's definitely life or death--  
-

ONI, BRAD AND ULISES  
Fireproof.

HOMELESS MAN  
You understand--

ONI  
But the heat was so intense--

HOMELESS MAN  
For my friend.

ONI  
They had--

ONI  
Baked.

BRAD  
Nice!

ULISES  
Horrible!

BRAD

Good story. Not true, though, is it?

ONI

And the albino butler somehow burned up outside the vault and haunts the ruins today. Victim of his own vengeance.

BRAD

Cool. Next time. Gotta go.

ONI

Ciao!

BRAD leaves. ULISES resumes cleaning.

HOMELESS MAN

Nothing like a good story.

ONI

The right story for the situation.

HOMELESS MAN

I never heard that one.

ONI

Was in the paper.

HOMELESS MAN

I know a better one.

ONI

We having a contest?

HOMELESS MAN

This one never made the papers.

ONI

(Starting to gather his products.)

Like the man said, next time.

(Gives an empty bottle to ULISES.)

Can you toss this for me, Ulises?

ULISES

Si.

HOMELESS MAN

It's happening. Still going on.

(ONI pauses at the door.)

About the war.

ONI  
 (Opening the door to leave.)  
 I hate war stories. They all end the same.

HOMELESS MAN  
 It's kinda, you know, hot.

ONI  
 Hot?

HOMELESS MAN  
 Dirty.

ONI  
 Wars are dirty.

HOMELESS MAN  
 It's about my friend, my student.

ONI  
 (Letting the door close.)  
 Your student?

HOMELESS MAN  
 He was my linguistics student at UCLA.

ONI exchanges incredulous glances with  
 ULISES.

HOMELESS MAN  
 Now he's a translator. For the army. Kinda 'gainst his  
 will. His name's Doyald.

ONI  
 Your student.

HOMELESS MAN  
 Like Donald with a "y."

ONI  
 Yonald?

HOMELESS MAN  
 You think I smell, don't you?

ONI  
 No--

HOMELESS MAN  
 Do I smell--?  
 (To ULISES.)  
 What's your name?

ULISES

Ulises.

HOMELESS MAN

Ulises says I don't smell. Shower every day. I got a membership.

ONI

You don't smell!

ULISES

Not allowed in the gym  
without a membership.

HOMELESS MAN

Doyald could tell you--!

ONI

But Doyald's over there. In the war.

HOMELESS MAN

Not any more. Not since...naw, some stories are too weird  
and gross and, well--

(Shrugs.)

--Hot to be told.

Indistinct yelling offstage.

ONI

What's the hot part?

HOMELESS MAN

Can't really separate it out.

ONI

I gotta get home for the news--

HOMELESS MAN

Another day, then.

ULISES

I want to hear it.

HOMELESS MAN

You'd like it.

ONI

It takes a lot to gross me out.

HOMELESS MAN

War? And worse than war?

GUZMARO

(Sitting down.)  
Tell it!

PRESTON sticks his head into the sauna.  
ULISES jumps up.

PRESTON  
Excuse me, will someone please remove this...deposit?

ULISES  
Deposit?

ONI  
Somebody dumped in the shower.

HOMELESS MAN  
(Helpfully.)  
Mierda.

ULISES  
(Distressed that he has to  
clean it.)  
Mierda!?

ULISES sighs and marches out.

PRESTON  
Thank you.

PRESTON disappears after ULISES.  
HOMELESS MAN and ONI look at each other  
for a moment. ONI starts to go.

HOMELESS MAN  
There a lot of action here?

ONI  
Um...action?

HOMELESS MAN scratches his crotch.

ONI  
Listen...I gotta go, but you're coming back...?

HOMELESS MAN  
Dunno.

ONI  
(Starts to go.)  
Sorry.

HOMELESS MAN  
The guy.  
(ONI pauses.)  
Who disappeared. Was waiting for Doyald. My student.

ONI

But he didn't make it.

HOMELESS MAN

(Scratches his crotch.)

Not yet. But that's the story.

ONI

(Looks about nervously, then  
sits down.)

I gotta go.

(Scratches his crotch.)

BYRUM comes into the sauna. He carries  
a colorful towel and a bottle of water  
and wears only a jockstrap and a knit  
cap. He nods to ONI, who nods back.

BYRUM

Oooh! Smell like Koreans in here!

(Sniffs.)

Ain't you dying? All that garlic. Comes right outta their  
pores from that rotten cabbage shit they eat.

ONI

(Starts to leave.)

Listen, I gotta--

HOMELESS MAN

She said she'd wait for him.

ONI

For Doyald? Wait--? *She*--?

BYRUM

(Wiping the bench with his  
towel.)

Garlicky Korean asses.

HOMELESS MAN

She said no other man could have her.

BYRUM

You know they all got a birthmark on their ass shaped like  
Korea.

ONI

She did? No other man?

BYRUM

Who she?

ULISES returns and quietly cleans.



ONI

It's a story.

BYRUM

Bout some fuckin' virgin?

HOMELESS MAN

A wife. A spouse. Pledged to virtue while her man is off at war.

BYRUM

That's cool. A man come back from action expects his lady still be his. Otherwise--  
(Makes a violent gesture.)

HOMELESS MAN

Gotta enforce a little discipline?

BYRUM

Damn straight.

HOMELESS MAN

But she disappeared. And he's on his way home.

BYRUM

They gotta give him leave for shit like that. Wife AWOL.

HOMELESS MAN

But they didn't.

ONI

Because--

HOMELESS MAN

A technicality. Request denied. Said no one could do what he was doing, spying, lying, and coordinating an international archaeology team charged with the recovery of looted artifacts from a museum.

BYRUM

Then how's he coming home?

HOMELESS MAN

Started a year ago, hasn't made it yet. But he is a patient man.

BYRUM

How'd he get leave...if they didn't--? Rules don't bend like that.

HOMELESS MAN

He's a translator, speaks Arabic, so they had him fake a notice to the enemy, the hidden enemy forces, about a meeting in such and such a house.

And damn if they didn't all show up, about thirty of 'em including some kids young as eight, he's that good. So the army surrounded 'em and said give up, but--

BYRUM

With these people there's always a but.

HOMELESS MAN

Instead of giving up, they blew themselves up, taking a bunch of our guys with 'em. But not Doyald.

BYRUM

That's war. Plus they each had 72 virgins waiting in heaven.

HOMELESS MAN

But seeing as he was pissed off at the army for not giving him leave, in the confusion, the evacuation that followed, 'cause you can bet there was fallout from the suicides--

ONI

Was this in the paper?

BYRUM

There's always fallout--

HOMELESS MAN

He managed to translate himself right outta there, along with what remained of his unit, eleven guys.

ONI

How?

HOMELESS MAN

Hitched a ride with an archaeologist from the team.

ONI

Where'd they go?

HOMELESS MAN

(Getting up.)

I'm overheated.

ONI

You're overdressed.

HOMELESS MAN

Not healthy to spend more than 10 minutes in a sauna.

BYRUM

Permanent brain damage.

(Drinks his water.)

ONI

Hitched what kind of ride?

HOMELESS MAN

A plane.

BYRUM  
They left the country? Snuck off from the army? Where'd they end up?

HOMELESS MAN  
Somewhere worse, kinda.

ONI  
Worse than the war? BYRUM  
Went AWOL!

HOMELESS MAN  
I'll come again later this week--

BYRUM  
Just fuckin' tell us. Army musta caught 'em.

HOMELESS MAN  
Afghanistan.

BYRUM  
Still some of them Taliban hiding out.

HOMELESS MAN  
Worst than the Taliban.

BYRUM  
Them bitches in burkees--

HOMELESS MAN AND ONI  
Burkas.

Wearing a baseball cap and an oversize t-shirt like a dress and sporting very long hair, SUNOOK comes in, brushing his teeth. He stands on one of the benches.

BYRUM  
Damn! Radical Islam got it all figured out. Nothing bone you up like wondering what's under that tent!

ONI  
What went wrong?

As they speak, BYRUM surreptitiously but pointedly sniffs SUNOOK, then nods to ONI and HOMELESS MAN for confirmation of garlic.

HOMELESS MAN

Nothing right off. Couldn't have been more hospitable. Afghani friends of the archaeologist's, who, by the way, stayed with 'em the whole time. Super friendly, Cambodian, missing an eye from the Kmer Rouge, he said. Afghanis just said make yourselves at home, gave 'em anything they wanted.

ONI

Sounds great!

BYRUM

Burka bitches?

HOMELESS MAN

No women anywhere to be seen. Pretty misogynist society--

ONI

Too bad!

BYRUM

Misogy-what?

HOMELESS MAN

No one cared.

BYRUM

You gotta be kidding me.

HOMELESS MAN

They had something better.

SUNOOK brushes enthusiastically, working up an overflowing mouthful of toothpaste foam, letting it drip out onto the floor.

BYRUM

I get it.

HOMELESS MAN

What?

ONI

Um....

HOMELESS MAN

Guess.

BYRUM

Only thing sweeter than pussy--the national product of Talibanistan!

ONI

I still don't get it.

HOMELESS MAN

(In a Wicked Witch voice.)

Poppies!

ONI  
 What? HOMELESS MAN  
 Poppies will make them sleep!

BYRUM  
 Catch up! Heroin! They got 'em hooked.

HOMELESS MAN  
 By the time Doyald realized what was going down, two of the  
 guys were so far gone they wouldn't leave.

ONI  
 What happened to 'em?

BYRUM  
 Don't wanna think about it, man. Americans in the hands of  
 what's left of the Taliban...that whole section of the world  
 is fucked forever, cursed by God. There was a guy here, Arab  
 type, gave me some shit like about a year and a half ago.  
 Come up to me at my locker, saying "Excuse me," like he was  
 starting to be all polite, then just grabs my sweatshirt  
 outta my locker, says "this is mine." Says it means a lot to  
 him 'cause it's got this Arabic writing on it.

(To ONI.)

You remember the guy.

ULISES leaves.

BYRUM  
 I stood there stunned. Dumbfounded at the balls on that  
 camel-jockey motherfucker. I told myself next time--next  
 time--and that's why I support the war, gentlemen, cause  
 that's the only way to communicate with the children of  
 Mohammed, 'cept mebbe to nuke the whole region to shit, hear  
 what I'm saying?

HOMELESS MAN and ONI just stare at  
 BYRUM for a few seconds.

HOMELESS MAN  
 After what happened next, I imagine Doyald would agree with  
 you.

ONI  
 How'd he get the rest of 'em out of trouble?

HOMELESS MAN  
 He got 'em out of Afghanistan, but not outta trouble.

(Sways slightly.)

Whoa!

BYRUM  
 Where'd they go? Off with the one-eyed Vietnamese--?

ONI  
 Cambodian.

HOMELESS MAN  
 I need some water--  
 (BYRUM proffers his  
 bottle.)  
 And a shower--

BYRUM  
 Aw, man. Just tell us the end.

HOMELESS MAN  
 I'm kinda lightheaded--

ONI  
 Can't just leave us hanging--

HOMELESS MAN  
 I think I might--

HOMELESS MAN runs out. Silence for a  
 moment.

BYRUM  
 He a nut.

Sound of HOMELESS MAN vomiting  
 offstage.

ONI  
 Think I'll go home for my shower.

BYRUM  
 (Peering out the window.)  
 Damn!

ONI  
 He said he taught at UCLA.

BYRUM  
 Mebbe before--  
 (Makes "crazy" sign.)

ONI  
 He doesn't smell homeless.

BYRUM  
 Do you believe any of that shit?

ONI  
 He mentioned that guy.

BYRUM  
 What guy?

ONI  
Guy with your sweatshirt.

  BYRUM  
Huh.

  ONI  
Tariq.

  BYRUM  
Tariq. Right.

ULISES comes in with his mop, and ONI and BYRUM leave. Without any lighting change, it's another day. ULISES is wearing a variant on the uniform he wore the first day, and he mops in exactly the same pattern as he did earlier. After several moments of mopping, HOMELESS MAN comes in wearing slightly less layered clothing and looking much more energetic.

  HOMELESS MAN  
Buenos dias, Ulises.

  ULISES  
Buenos dias.

HOMELESS MAN sits down. ULISES keeps mopping.

  ULISES  
Where did they go after Afghanistan? [Spanish]

  HOMELESS MAN  
Esta Guatemalteco?

ULISES says nothing, keeps mopping.

  HOMELESS MAN  
(After a moment.)  
Salvadoreno?

  ULISES  
(Quickly gestures for silence,  
then whispers.)

La Migra!

DUNCAN comes in, sits down.

HOMELESS MAN

Do you remember a young Arab guy named Tariq? [Spanish]  
 (ULISES doesn't speak, keeps  
 mopping.)

He was the friend of my friend from the story. He emailed  
 him about the gym when Doyald was in the war. [Spanish]

ULISES

(Grinning.)

Tell me the story. [Spanish]

HOMELESS MAN

Primero? [check Spanish]

ULISES

Si.

HOMELESS MAN

(To DUNCAN.)

You don't work for Immigration, do you?  
 (ULISES looks alarmed.)

DUNCAN

No, the Archdiocese.

HOMELESS MAN

You're not a priest?

DUNCAN

God, no.

HOMELESS MAN

You hear the one about the one-eyed Cambodian archaeologist?

DUNCAN

(Starts to get up.)

Excuse me.

ULISES

It's good!

DUNCAN

A joke?

HOMELESS MAN

(Gesturing to ULISES.)

He won't tell me what I need to know unless I tell him the  
 story.

DUNCAN

(Starting to go.)

Don't let me stop you.



HOMELESS MAN

You might like it, too.

DUNCAN

Cambodian?

HOMELESS MAN

In Siem Reap, near Angkor Wat.

ULISES sits down eagerly. After a moment, DUNCAN sits down, too.

HOMELESS MAN

The plane from Afghanistan had seven Americans--Doyald and nine guys from his company. The archaeologist commandeered the plane from the UN or some international relief agency. He had a camp set up near one of his sites, an Angkoran temple by one of the killing fields out in the country. He was a great host, gave them camp beds, simple but elegant Cambodian barbecue, a kind of sanctuary, because by then the US Army had figured out they'd deserted and was after them.

DUNCAN

Deserted? What?

ULISES

(Impatiently.)

From the war--

HOMELESS MAN

His name was Puthyrith, the archaeologist, big motherfucker--huge guy--and he even supplied the men with--can it be said delicately--?

DUNCAN

We're in a *sauna*.

HOMELESS MAN

Okay, fuck delicate. He supplied them with women, them as wanted 'em, that is. Also boys--

DUNCAN

For them as wanted 'em.

HOMELESS MAN

Surprisingly large percentage, that far from home, outta the Army, maybe not a surprise, really.

DUNCAN

A jungle paradise.

HOMELESS MAN

You been?

Thailand.  
 DUNCAN  
 Oh. *Ohh.*  
 HOMELESS MAN  
 What?  
 DUNCAN  
 You like eating ass?  
 HOMELESS MAN  
 DUNCAN  
 (Cautiously, glancing at  
 ULISES.)  
 Yeah...  
 HOMELESS MAN  
 Cambodian boy ass. Small, dark, smooth, and easily persuaded  
 with a few Thai baht.  
 DUNCAN  
 Young?  
 HOMELESS MAN  
 How young do you like?  
 (DUNCAN is embarrassed to  
 answer.)  
*That* young. So young they still have that special  
 sensitivity--  
 (Gestures toward his appendix.)  
 --Here.  
 DUNCAN  
 Yeah! When you get older--  
 HOMELESS MAN  
 Lick 'em here, and they squirm like they wanna die.  
 DUNCAN  
 They scream!  
 DUNCAN'S hand goes to his crotch.  
 ULISES'S hand goes to his crotch.  
 HOMELESS MAN  
 Which do you like better--  
 (Gestures.)  
 Or ass.  
 DUNCAN  
 Ass.

HOMELESS MAN  
 (Touching himself through his  
 clothes as well.)  
 You like 'em clean?

DUNCAN  
 Not...entirely.

HOMELESS MAN  
 You prefer a little flavor.

DUNCAN  
 Sweaty, at least.

HOMELESS MAN  
 A little--

HOMELESS MAN AND DUNCAN  
 Smell.

HOMELESS MAN  
 Otherwise it's too...clinical?

DUNCAN  
 I ain't nobody's doctor!

HOMELESS MAN  
 Get your nose wedged in those sweaty ass cheeks--

DUNCAN  
 A little hair--

HOMELESS MAN  
 And your mouth, your tongue--

KYLE comes in with a paperback.  
 Instantly, ULISES, DUNCAN and HOMELESS  
 MAN move their hands away from their  
 crotches, but HOMELESS MAN doesn't skip  
 a beat in his story (which terrifies  
 ULISES and DUNCAN). KYLE sits down and  
 starts to read, but soon picks up on  
 the conversation.

HOMELESS MAN  
 --Teasing that ass, past the rough hair, to the soft pucker  
 of that tight hole, as you poke and taste and probe and  
 breathe in the funk and the salt--

KYLE'S mouth slowly drops open as he  
 looks up from his book.

HOMELESS MAN  
 --Pushing back legs with one hand and pulling las nalgas  
 apart--

ULISES  
 (Delighted.)  
 Las nalgas!

HOMELESS MAN  
 To get a better view--

HOMELESS MAN  
 --With the other so you can force your tongue--

KYLE, while not touching himself (no one is at this point), clearly does not disapprove, and is in fact somewhat mesmerized, astonished at the boldness of this description in this semi-public place.

HOMELESS MAN  
 --So deep you have to pull out to gasp for air--

PRESTON comes in with his newspaper and sits down. Everyone else changes posture, as if to dissociate from the story, but HOMELESS MAN continues.

HOMELESS MAN  
 Air sweet with the wet, spicy reek of saliva on skin, of mouth on the opposite of a mouth--

PRESTON  
 Excuse me, but what in the world are you talking about?

Silence for a moment.

HOMELESS MAN  
 Telling a story.

PRESTON  
 A *pornographic* story.

HOMELESS MAN  
 Um...yeah?

PRESTON  
 No one wants to hear that.

HOMELESS MAN looks at the other guys. The other guys look guilty.

HOMELESS MAN  
 All men love porn.

PRESTON  
 I don't.

HOMELESS MAN  
 You never watch porn videos?

PRESTON

They all end the same.

HOMELESS MAN

Amid the uncertainties of life, isn't it comforting to count on *something*?

PRESTON

Onanism is a waste.

HOMELESS MAN

Onanism!

ULISES

Que?

PRESTON

And unsanitary. Who knows what germs lurk in--well, we know, don't we? We know *exactly*. Deadly viruses lurk in...spilled seed.

HOMELESS MAN

(To the others.)

For God's sake, keep your seed to yourselves, boys.

PRESTON

And please don't take the Lord's name in vain.

KYLE can't take it any more, and leaves.

PRESTON

See, I'm not the only one.

HOMELESS MAN

That's not the end of the story.

(To the others.)

But you can see why they didn't want to leave Cambodia.

DUNCAN

Uh-huh.

GUZMARO

Si, claro.

PRESTON

Well, I want to leave.

PRESTON goes out.

DUNCAN

He won't report us, will he?

ULISES

Dios mio!

HOMELESS MAN

For what? "They were talking dirty *in the locker room!*"

DUNCAN

Guess not. But be careful, dude. This is so *not* a gay gym.

ULISES

Excuse me...the story...?

HOMELESS MAN

That was about it.

DUNCAN

Naw, man, you were making like some bad shit went down--

HOMELESS MAN

Oh, yeah, they had to get outta there.

DUNCAN

Despite the exotic rectal cuisine.

HOMELESS MAN

One of the guys, Oni was his name--

DUNCAN

Oni? That's the name of a guy here.

HOMELESS MAN

This one was kinda quiet. So quiet no one missed him for a couple of days.

ULISES

What happen to him?

HOMELESS MAN

Remember that simple but elegant barbecue?

DUNCAN

Oh, man, you gotta be kidding!

ULISES

No shit!

HOMELESS MAN

In fact, no one missed Oni till one of the other guys disappeared.

DUNCAN

They'd been eating their friends?

HOMELESS MAN

With an authentic dipping sauce of garlic, fish sauce, soy sauce, cilantro, mint and roasted peanuts.

DUNCAN

Oh, come on! We would have heard about this! Twenty-first century cannibalism?

HOMELESS MAN

Puthyrith the archaeologist turned out to be a secret member of the Kmer Rouge--in an initiation ceremony years before they made him eat his own eye to prove his loyalty--

DUNCAN

And he acquired a taste!

HOMELESS MAN

Once somebody started asking about the missing guys, Puthyrith ordered 'em all to the back of this underground temple, and kept watch over them himself, sleeping in the little doorway so they'd have to climb over him to get out, and--did I say he was a big guy--?

DUNCAN

Immense!

ULISES

Huge!

HOMELESS MAN

And every couple of days he'd get his little dark boys to haul off another of the guys, sort of returning the favor from eating 'em out.

ULISES

How they get away?

HOMELESS MAN

Patience--don't rush the story--I'll confuse things--

PRESTON sticks his head back in.

PRESTON

Excuse me, but the showers are out of soap.

ULISES

(After a moment, when they look at him.)

All of them?

PRESTON

I wouldn't disturb you otherwise.

HOMELESS MAN

Go with him. [Spanish]

ULISES

But the end of the story-- [Spanish]

HOMELESS MAN

Go, or you'll get in trouble. [Spanish]

GUZMARO

Do they escape? [Spanish]

PRESTON

I'm not the only one waiting.

HOMELESS MAN  
Better hurry. [Spanish]

Reluctantly, ULISES starts to go.

PRESTON  
Thank you.

PRESTON leaves.

ULISES  
(As he leaves, to DUNCAN.)  
Remember it for me!

HOMELESS MAN  
He is not a patient man.

DUNCAN  
So how'd they get away?

HOMELESS MAN  
You remember an Arab guy used to come here?

DUNCAN  
(After a moment.)  
How old?

HOMELESS MAN  
Young.

DUNCAN  
Hot?

HOMELESS MAN  
Amazing. Quit coming about a year ago, I believe.

DUNCAN  
Yeah, I think I know who you mean.

HOMELESS MAN  
Who'd he hang with?

DUNCAN  
Here? Nobody--oh wait--

HOMELESS MAN  
Yes?

DUNCAN  
Why?

HOMELESS MAN  
A friend wants to know.



DUNCAN

His friend?

HOMELESS MAN

The man who loved Tariq not for his beauty, but his extraordinary generosity of spirit, his love of animals--he was studying to be a veterinarian--

DUNCAN

I don't wanna get nobody in trouble.

HOMELESS MAN

(Getting up.)

Thanks, anyway.

DUNCAN

But, hey, the story--

HOMELESS MAN

That's really it.

DUNCAN

Okay, okay--he talked a lot with this black guy who doesn't come here anymore. Alexander something, friends with what's-his-name, the guy who always wears a jock in the sauna--

HOMELESS MAN

Anyone else? Anyone who still comes here?

DUNCAN

That Oni guy.

HOMELESS MAN

Really?

DUNCAN

None of that is for sure.

HOMELESS MAN

Of course.

DUNCAN

(After a moment.)

So...?

HOMELESS MAN

Hmm?

DUNCAN

The escape.

HOMELESS MAN

What's sweeter than pussy?

DUNCAN

You're asking the wrong guy.

HOMELESS MAN

Doyald had some opium from their stopover in Afghanistan. He snuck it into Puthynith's next barbecue, and when he was passed out in the doorway, they poked out his remaining eye-- all the way into his brain. They scrambled over him and hitched a ride to Siem Reap.

DUNCAN

And flew back to LA?

HOMELESS MAN

Remember anything else about that Arab guy? Was his name Tariq?

DUNCAN

Yeah, think so, Tariq. Nothing. 'Cept maybe his underwear.

HOMELESS MAN

Nice basket?

DUNCAN

Shit. With those tight knit boxers that really show it off. White.

HOMELESS MAN

That it?

DUNCAN

What happened after Cambodia?

HOMELESS MAN

(Getting up.)

Another day.

DUNCAN

Aw, man, c'mon!

(As HOMELESS MAN disappears.)

I told you about the tighty whities.

After a moment PRESTON comes in. He's got a different Korean newspaper and a different religious t-shirt and shorts-- it's a new day. DUNCAN, uncomfortable with PRESTON, leaves. PRESTON settles in to read. ONI comes in, pursued by ULISES. Both are wearing different clothes. Apparently the gym's maintenance uniform has changed (ULISES) and ONI wears a different Speedo with the same flipflops.

He once again has a number of products  
that he sets down and applies.

ULISES  
(Pretending to clean the  
sauna.)

A cargo boat. Passengers not allowed.

ONI  
Then how'd they get on?

ULISES  
He didn't say. A big lake--

ONI  
Tonle Sap?

ULISES  
Tonle Sap Lake, giant lake in the middle of Vietnam--

ONI  
Um...Cambodia.

ULISES  
So they all "we go home, we go home!" but then--!

ONI  
(After a moment.)  
But then what? Another one-eyed anthropologist?

PRESTON  
Is this that same obscene  
story?

GUZMARO  
A storm! A monster storm on  
the lake!

ONI  
Monsoon?

ULISES  
You know the story?

ONI  
No.

ULISES  
Okay, so I'm telling. Monsoon, yes, so it's a weak boat and  
a strong storm, big wind--

PRESTON  
I'll say.

ULISES  
And water come over the sides and into the bottom--  
(Gesturing.)  
--And the boat go up and down--

ONI  
This is all from that homeless guy?

ULISES  
Si!

ONI  
Did he ask any more about that Arab guy?

ULISES  
No!

PRESTON  
What Arab guy--?

ONI  
The Arab guy.

PRESTON  
The Arab guy?

ULISES  
No, just the story, lemme tell you--

PRESTON  
Sounds absurdly far-fetched to me--

ONI  
I just wonder what he knows--

HOMELESS MAN comes in and they all stop talking instantly.

HOMELESS MAN  
Evening.

ULISES  
(Bursting.)  
I was telling the storm!

HOMELESS MAN  
Which storm?

ULISES AND ONI  
On the lake.

PRESTON  
Did it have a dirty ending?

ULISES  
No, no, happy!

HOMELESS MAN  
They lived through it, if that's what you mean, though not for long--

ONI  
How? Violent storms on Tonle Sap--

HOMELESS MAN  
Fortunately, they were all Christian.

PRESTON  
Christian?

HOMELESS MAN  
Doyald led them in prayer--

PRESTON  
Those--hedonist--perverts?

HOMELESS MAN  
His eye is on the sparrow...and the hedonist pervert.  
(PRESTON makes a derisive  
noise.)  
You'd think! Why would God care about these wayward, AWOL  
soldiers led by a lying son of a bitch translator? But  
apparently God hears the prayer of just such miscreants, for  
the storm--

ULISES  
It is stop!

PRESTON  
Like magic.

HOMELESS MAN  
Like a miracle.

ULISES  
Un milagro!

HOMELESS MAN  
And the next morning they were greeted by the rosy fingers of  
dawn--

ONI  
The what?

PRESTON  
More nastiness. So this dirty little story is religious in  
nature?

HOMELESS MAN  
It is the truth. And therefore multifaceted.

BYRUM, wearing his trademark jockstrap  
and carrying his water, comes in  
singing along with the salacious pop  
song that is playing on the sound  
system outside the sauna. He continues  
under the following.

PRESTON  
How long before it gets dirty again?

HOMELESS MAN

(Shrugs.)

It's life. Can't stay clean for long.

PRESTON

(Getting up.)

I don't need to stay for  
this.

BYRUM

(Stops singing the  
salacious song.)

What up?

ONI

(Pointedly.)

Maybe you do.

They all look at HOMELESS MAN.

HOMELESS MAN

Down the Mekong River--

ONI

Toward Ho Chi Minh City--

GUZMARO

How many left?

ONI

Seven, plus what's-his-name.

BYRUM

Doyald.

ONI

With a "y."

HOMELESS MAN

And so the eight offered up a prayer of thanks to God.

They all look at PRESTON. After a  
moment he sits.

HOMELESS MAN

And the captain of this boat, out of gratitude for their  
Christian prayers that seemed to stop the storm--even though  
he was probably Buddhist--he gave them a little piece of  
advice as they approached a particularly desolate part of the  
river.

ONI

It's a jungle river.

HOMELESS MAN

And because of the war, some parts were so isolated no one's  
mapped them or even tried to explore them since the 1920s.

ULISES

What is there?

HOMELESS MAN

They don't know. Something you can't see. But you can hear it.

BYRUM

Did they?

ONI

What'd they hear?

HOMELESS MAN

The captain warned them not to.

BYRUM

Some kinda sonic weapon shit--?

ONI

Jeez!

HOMELESS MAN

No.

HOMELESS MAN

As they approached a bend in the river, the crew put on headsets, old Walkmen, one even had an iPod. The captain stuck wax in their ears or cotton, whatever they had. The river narrowed, the trees lapping the water and almost meeting overhead, so the light turned green. The crew were communicating with hand signals--silent and eerie, like a ghost ship. Then, in the dim green light they saw a splash. Another of the guys--

ONI

Man overboard!

HOMELESS MAN

He'd taken out his wax and heard--

BYRUM AND ULISES

What?

HOMELESS MAN

Doyald ran to the stern, ready to jump in after the soldier, but the crew restrained him. In the struggle, the wax-cotton wad fell out of one of his ears and he heard it, too.

BYRUM, ULISES, AND ONI

What?!

HOMELESS MAN

Singing. Ethereal women's voices. And the words--

PRESTON

In English?

HOMELESS MAN

Doyald heard English, Spanish, even a little Arabic--the languages he speaks. The soldier who jumped overboard, now quickly disappearing in the green fog floating above the wake of the boat, was shouting in Korean, his native tongue--

PRESTON

What was he shouting?

HOMELESS MAN

I'm coming! Wait for me! I love you! [in Korean]

PRESTON

Who? Who was there? Who did he love? Who did he *think* he loved?

HOMELESS MAN

They've never been seen. And the men who swim to them are never seen again either.

BYRUM

Anything for pussy!

HOMELESS MAN

Thought you'd like this part.

BYRUM

Wait a minute, wait a minute! If this Doyald dude could hear the voices, why didn't he jump in, too?

HOMELESS MAN

Queer as a coot.

BYRUM

Damn!

PRESTON

I'm not surprised.

BYRUM

A fag? We're sitting here all this time listening to some gay shit?

ONI

Being gay saved his ass.

HOMELESS MAN

This time.

BYRUM

Wait, wait, wait! Wait. This chick who's waiting in LA for this Doyald to come back--she shit outta luck cause either he never coming back or he coming back a punk. Unless--

BYRUM AND ONI

She a he.

HOMELESS MAN shrugs.

BYRUM

Damn!



PRESTON

Are we to understand that this--young person--

ONI AND PRESTON

Young *man*--

PRESTON

Who remained behind in LA pledged utter fidelity to his--

ONI AND PRESTON

*Boyfriend*--

PRESTON

Who was off on a world tour of fornication?

ONI

Yeah--hey--

PRESTON

I have a bit of a problem with that. Morality aside--  
obviously--it also seems fundamentally unfair.

ONI

Unjust, even.

HOMELESS MAN

Unjust? Am I to understand you believe in justice?

ONI AND PRESTON

Yes!

BYRUM

Damn right!

ULISES

I think so.

HOMELESS MAN

Have you ever seen it? Is the execution of a criminal  
justice?

BYRUM

Yeah, pure justice!

HOMELESS MAN

Does it balance the crime?  
Erase it?

ONI

I guess it doesn't always  
match--

HOMELESS MAN

Or is it just government  
sanctioned--*government*  
*sponsored*--retribution?

BYRUM

Okay, okay, okay. Maybe justice is retribution--cause you  
gotta do payback--take justice into your own hands--hear what  
I'm saying--?

HOMELESS MAN

(Overlapping.)

Doyald, let me tell you, our translator, has ceased to believe in justice. He embraces retribution, overbalance. As his men die, so shall their murderers die, until none are left. It isn't justice--it's just over.

BYRUM

(After a moment.)

This fucker on the way to LA?

ONI

Scared of a homo?

BYRUM

Who his punk?

HOMELESS MAN

Pardon me?

BYRUM

Waiting for him. Here. Who is it?

ONI

Tariq!

PRESTON

Who?

HOMELESS MAN

Alexander.

ONI

A guy. The guy. Who's waiting for him.

BYRUM

Damn!

BYRUM AND ONI

Alexander?

BYRUM

Alexander who used to work out here?

HOMELESS MAN

I could be wrong.

BYRUM

Alexander no punk!

ONI

It's Tariq. Not Alexander.

BYRUM

How you know my man Alexander?

HOMELESS MAN

I stand corrected. Two different guys.

BYRUM

Alexander Fitzgerald? Black guy? Lives over on Virgil?

HOMELESS MAN  
My mistake. Or if you want to bring him to hear the story,  
then I'll know if it's the same guy.

BYRUM  
It ain't!

ONI  
Tariq's the Arab guy.

HOMELESS MAN shrugs.

PRESTON  
Tariq.

BYRUM  
That some messed-up shit.

ONI  
I gotta go.

ONI leaves abruptly.

PRESTON  
*Namoon iya-giga mo-ehyo?* [What's the rest of the story?]

HOMELESS MAN  
(Standing up.)  
*Nadoo gaya deyo.* [I should  
go, too.]

PRESTON  
(Signing "phone.")  
*Juhna buhnuhga mohmnika?*  
[What's your phone number?]

HOMELESS MAN  
(Shrugs.)  
*Juhna upsuhyo.* [I don't have  
a phone.]

PRESTON  
*Unjeh yogi dahshi orkuh ehyo?*  
[When are you coming back to  
the gym?]

BYRUM  
Hey, hey, hey--English! Rude!

HOMELESS MAN  
Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday nights, ten to midnight. Beat  
the crowds if you come just before closing. What's your  
schedule?

PRESTON  
See you Thursday.

BYRUM  
You leaving?

HOMELESS MAN  
Low tolerance for heat.

BYRUM  
 Gotta hydrate!  
 (Drinks his water.)

ULISES  
 But...from the river...where...what next...?

BYRUM  
 Back to LA?

HOMELESS MAN  
 They got to Ho Chi Minh City, caught a plane--

PRESTON AND ULISES  
 Back home?

HOMELESS MAN  
 Ah...no...there was an unfortunate--

BYRUM PRESTON  
 Aw, man! Of course!

HOMELESS MAN  
 It's just a story.

ULISES BYRUM  
 It's real! It better be the truth.

BYRUM  
 Got a lotta, you know, detail and shit.

SPLASH  
 (Sticking his head in the  
 door.)  
 Got a puker on the floor.

ULISES  
 Mierda!

SPLASH  
 No, puke.

ULISES  
 Okay, I come.

SPLASH disappears. ULISES gets up to  
 leave.

ULISES  
 No tell nothing!

ULISES leaves.

HOMELESS MAN

(To BYRUM.)

You coming on Thursday?

BYRUM

I guess.

HOMELESS MAN

(As he leaves.)

Bring Alexander.

BYRUM

Shit.

PRESTON

What do you think?

BYRUM

Just a crazy-ass homeless dude.

PRESTON

His story sounds familiar--parts of it--

BYRUM

It's just whack.

PRESTON

What do you think he knows about Tariq? That's the name, right, Tariq?

BYRUM

Uh-huh.

PRESTON

And Alexander.

BYRUM

He's just fucking with us.

PRESTON

But why *would* he?

BYRUM

Maybe--

KYLE, carrying a different book, comes in and sits down. BYRUM and PRESTON end the conversation abruptly and, after a moment, leave the sauna. KYLE settles in to read. Soon HOMELESS MAN comes in and sits down. He is wearing less than the previous time, in fact, his attire seems almost normal for a gym. It is another day.

HOMELESS MAN

Tariq.

(KYLE ignores him.)

Tariq.

KYLE

Excuse me?

HOMELESS MAN

You know Tariq?

KYLE holds up his hand to cut HOMELESS MAN off. HOMELESS MAN waits a few seconds, then tries again.

HOMELESS MAN

Arab guy?

KYLE gets up and leaves the sauna. After a moment JAVIER comes in with a copy of *La Opinion* or another Spanish-language newspaper and starts reading it.

HOMELESS MAN

Caliente.

JAVIER

Si.

HOMELESS MAN

Muy caliente.

JAVIER

Es una sauna.

HOMELESS MAN

Si.

(After a moment.)

Did you hear about this guy, this translator who escaped the war to Afghanistan then to Cambodia, but got caught by a cannibal then escaped to Vietnam only to lose a friend to these mysterious singers on the river before he made it out of Ho Chi Minh City on a plane? [Spanish]

JAVIER

(Stares a moment.)

No.

DUNCAN comes in and sits down.

DUNCAN

That was pretty hot last time.

HOMELESS MAN

Amazing, huh? You think it's true?

JAVIER leaves.

DUNCAN

Half the guys here don't speak English.

HOMELESS MAN

We're in the middle of Koreatown.

DUNCAN

All these conversations in Spanish, Korean, Filipino--

HOMELESS MAN

Tagalog--

DUNCAN

Whatever. I keep thinking they're up to something.

HOMELESS MAN

You thinking of anyone in particular?

DUNCAN

Well, yeah. That Spanish maintenance guy--

HOMELESS MAN

Ulises?

DUNCAN

Cute and all--

DUNCAN

But you were asking about that Arab guy--

HOMELESS MAN

Yeah?

DUNCAN

I didn't wanna say before--

HOMELESS MAN

There's always somebody around--

DUNCAN

Yeah, well, one night at closing what's-his-name Tariq was in the locker room just as whoozits--

HOMELESS MAN

Ulises.

DUNCAN

*Whatever*--got even a little pushy, not saying anything but just you know--mopping--in a very determined way wherever I went. Yet I see this Tariq dude hanging around, practically loitering and to be honest with you I felt jealous, kinda.

HOMELESS MAN

Just the two of 'em?

DUNCAN

That's the thing. I coulda sworn someone else was in the sauna still, and I had this little racial moment, like, why me? These other guys get to stay--

HOMELESS MAN

Not just the two of 'em?

DUNCAN

Maybe the same guys sniffing round that Arab's pretty booty, I dunno. But the *thing* is--

HOMELESS MAN

What?

DUNCAN

Okay, here I am all pissy and paranoid and feeling so sorry for my discriminated-against self that I'm the first one in the door next morning and ready to kick some butt with my workout but I find myself *lingering* in the locker room--with this weird feeling that I missed out on something--

HOMELESS MAN

Why would you *linger*?

DUNCAN

And when I tossed some lint from my gym bag in the trash, I noticed--

BRAD comes in, nods at them both, and hangs a wet shirt up near the heat source to dry. He leaves.

DUNCAN

Tighty whities.

BRAD comes back in and sits down, closing his eyes.

DUNCAN

Only they weren't so white any more.

HOMELESS MAN

No?

His eyes still closed, BRAD scratches his crotch. To HOMELESS MAN, DUNCAN mouths the word "blood."

HOMELESS MAN

What?



BRAD opens his eyes.

DUNCAN  
(Reluctantly.)

Red.

HOMELESS MAN sighs and sits looking at the floor.

HOMELESS MAN

I need proof.

After a moment, BRAD scratches his crotch. After a moment, DUNCAN scratches his crotch as well. ULISES comes in, mopping. DUNCAN leaves. ULISES smiles at HOMELESS MAN, but HOMELESS MAN won't look at him.

ULISES

Buenos dias.

(No response. Continues cleaning.)

Good morning.

BRAD

Good morning.

ULISES

I can't wait for the rest of the story. [Spanish.]

No response. ULISES keeps cleaning. BRAD takes his shirt and leaves.

ULISES

They say Africa.

(No response.)

What happen in Africa?

ONI bursts into the sauna in a different flashy outfit and carrying all his products.

ONI

So I was just thinking. If this Doyald guy is so hot to get back to his little Persian piece of ass in LA, why's he let himself get sidetracked to Afghanistan, Cambodia, Africa--I mean, where's his assertion, his--if he's such a hot-shot--his life force, know what I mean? Why's he let himself get blown all over like a candle in the wind?

HOMELESS MAN

(After a moment.)

He's a very patient man.

ONI

Um...I'm not patient.

ULISES

Africa!

ONI

Yeah, Africa. The plane crashed, you said--?

HOMELESS MAN

They made a perfect landing. The landing gear kissed the ground like a mother her baby.

ONI AND ULISES

Where?!

HOMELESS MAN

Zanzibar. A private airfield on a spice plantation.

GUZMARO

What kind of spice?

ONI

Wait a minute--sure that's legal?

HOMELESS MAN

Cloves, ginger, vanilla, cinnamon--

ONI

Nutmeg?

HOMELESS MAN

Yeah--tumeric, pepper--

ONI

Curry--

HOMELESS MAN

Chocolate, plus fruits--  
mango, jackfruit--

ONI

Passion fruit, durian--

HOMELESS MAN

Cassava.

ULISES

Did it--smell?

HOMELESS MAN

Intoxicating. There's always a breeze across the island, and the spices mingle and float--

ULISES

Paradise.

HOMELESS MAN

But you know the trouble with paradise.

ONI

Someone eats you.

HOMELESS MAN

What she did was worse.

ONI

(Disappointed.)

She?

HOMELESS MAN

Their host's name was Amina Shamuhuna--

ONI

An Arab woman or African?

HOMELESS MAN

Both.

ONI

Of black descent or Middle Eastern descent?

HOMELESS MAN

Does it matter?

ONI

Just trying to visualize.

HOMELESS MAN

She was entrancing. The men wanted her, but she kept a distance, a very definite dignity, a subtle sternness, that warned them off, that said "I do not belong to you." But you know these guys--

ULISES

Hot and horny American dudes--  
!

ONI

The orgy in Cambodia, the  
voices on the Mekong--

HOMELESS MAN

They were...easily swayed by lust. And so one touched her--

ULISES

No!

They all look at him. He is  
embarrassed.

HOMELESS MAN

She froze. For almost a full minute. Absolute silence as they knew he'd done wrong. This perfect woman. This perfect *Islamic* woman.

ONI

You don't touch them.

HOMELESS MAN

Especially not this one. Finally--she smiled. And offered them a feast.

ULISES

Barbecue?

(ONI giggles.)

HOMELESS MAN

Vegetarian, actually. First some of those fruits, coconut, sweet things. Squash soup, mashed-up yams with butter--

ONI

Don't, man, I'm hungry already!

HOMELESS MAN

And it tasted--incredible! Of course, they'd hardly eaten since that barbecue, so once they got started, they couldn't stop. Gorging, even though eventually the food didn't taste quite so good anymore, smelled a little funny, like it was starting to go bad, but they ate it up. Sour and bitter and sick-smelling, each course got nastier and nastier, till it seemed like they were eating garbage, but they just kept going, like pigs.

ONI

What's up with that food?

ULISES

Poisoned!

HOMELESS MAN

No--enchanted!

ULISES

What's that mean?

ONI

Magic!

HOMELESS MAN

Drugged, really, in some kind of African juju way with a little hypnotism thrown in--

ONI

Voodoo!

ULISES

Santeria?

HOMELESS MAN

So by the end of the meal--

ONI

They were all dead!

ULISES

She killed them!?

PRESTON comes in and sits down.

ONI  
Oh, man, you almost missed it!

PRESTON  
What? ONI  
Okay, they're in Africa--

GUZMARO  
Zanzibar! ONI  
And this woman, this--

GUZMARO  
Amina Shamuhuna! ONI  
Kind of a witch or something--

ULISES  
And she gave 'em magic food--

ONI AND ULISES  
And--

They look at HOMELESS MAN.

PRESTON  
And?

HOMELESS MAN  
By the end of the meal, the men, stuffed with food, were transformed.

PRESTON, ULISES, ONI  
Into what?

HOMELESS MAN  
Their bodies didn't change. But their minds were altered by the drugged food, sluggish, slowed down to the point of, well, devolving--into animal minds.

PRESTON  
Animal minds? ONI  
What kind of animals?

ULISES  
Tuncos! Cochinos!  
(They look at him.)  
Pigs! They act like pigs--they think like pigs!

PRESTON  
Pigs? HOMELESS MAN  
Si, cochinos!

ONI  
So--how long before it wore off?

HOMELESS MAN  
That's the thing. It didn't. Because--as pigs--they were always hungry, they kept eating the psychoactive food!

ULISES

Even...Doyald?

HOMELESS MAN

Ah. Ulises. You're getting to know him.

ULISES

He wait to see.

PRESTON

Hold on. Where is this?

ONI AND ULISES

Zanzibar!

PRESTON

Which is kind of an Islamic country?

HOMELESS MAN

Part of Tanzania, but Moslem, yes, about 95 percent--

PRESTON

And they think they're pigs? Pork? In an Islamic country?

ONI

Ooh, bad news.

PRESTON

Don't they have a prohibition--  
-like Islamic kosher--?

HOMELESS MAN

Halal--

PRESTON

So in the middle of this Islamic country she's turned them  
into the filthiest animal they know? What'd she do with  
them? Couldn't cook them!

HOMELESS MAN

Penned 'em up, fed 'em slops--

PRESTON

These--men--in a pen--

ONI

In mud?

HOMELESS MAN

Well...yes.

ULISES

Crawling around?

HOMELESS MAN

Yes.

PRESTON

Wearing clothes?

HOMELESS MAN

No.

ONI

Shitting themselves?

HOMELESS MAN  
Acting like--

ONI  
Naked!

PRESTON, ULISES, ONI  
Pigs!

PRESTON  
Exactly how they think of Americans!

ULISES  
Who?

PRESTON  
The Moslems. Surrounded by these people that despise them--  
at their mercy--

BYRUM comes in.

BYRUM  
Gentlemen.

PRESTON  
The Koran tells them the whole world must worship Allah, must  
convert, and those that don't--

ONI  
The infidel--

PRESTON  
Good Moslems not only free to  
kill--

PRESTON  
They're obligated to kill. Mohammed told them to exterminate  
the infidel, told them God told them to exterminate the  
infidel! But seventy-two virgins are nothing next to  
vengeance--I don't care what your culture is. And in the  
middle of this undeniably 95 percent hostile population, she  
got these drugged Americans rolling around in their own feces  
eating filth, snorting--hogs!

BYRUM  
(After a moment.)  
I miss much?

ULISES  
But not Doyald?

HOMELESS MAN  
No. He didn't eat. He watched. He waited.

ONI  
He's a very patient man.

HOMELESS MAN  
And when he saw his comrades slide down the evolutionary  
ladder--

BYRUM  
Down and sideways--

HOMELESS MAN  
He slipped out of the room  
unnoticed, hid outside the  
building, and observed Amina  
herding the men--

ONI  
On their hands and knees!

PRESTON  
Naked--

HOMELESS MAN  
Into the stinking, manure-filled pens.

ONI  
There's something kinda...hot about that.

PRESTON  
You are disgusting.

BYRUM  
Freak.

ONI  
Admit it, you feel it, that animal transformation, wallowing  
in filth--

BYRUM  
I don't feel it!

PRESTON  
I like things clean.

ONI looks to ULISES for validation.  
ULISES shrugs.

ONI  
You feel it.

ULISES  
Then Doyald--?

BYRUM  
What he do?

PRESTON  
Did he escape?

HOMELESS MAN  
He couldn't leave.

ULISES  
He had to save them!

HOMELESS MAN  
More than that. He wanted something.

ULISES  
What?

HOMELESS MAN  
He'd been through a lot. Suffered. Seen his men drugged,  
drowned, slaughtered, eaten, and now this--deliberate  
humiliation.





ONI

If he held her nose, she'd need her mouth for breathing, not biting--

HOMELESS MAN

So he did. Although she struggled.

BYRUM

He pin her arms to her sides?

HOMELESS MAN

Tightly, yes. But she kicked.

BYRUM

His legs are stronger--?

ONI

He pushes his in between--twisting his around hers--

BYRUM

Using his weight--

HOMELESS MAN

She used his weight against him and they fell--

BYRUM

He on top?

HOMELESS MAN

On top.

ONI

Crushing her.

BYRUM

Her arrogance.

HOMELESS MAN

He forced one knee between her thighs--

BYRUM

Then both--

ONI

Then spread--

HOMELESS MAN

But she was dry.

BYRUM gasps, and ONI starts scratching his (own) crotch.

HOMELESS MAN  
 Dry with terror. She had magic, she had powers, but he had  
 force. He--

ONI  
 Spit on his hand--

BYRUM  
 He spit on her!

HOMELESS MAN  
 And that smell.

ONI  
 Saliva on skin.

BYRUM  
 Spit on pussy.

HOMELESS MAN  
 No--*blood*.

Almost unconsciously, BYRUM starts  
 scratching his crotch.

BYRUM  
 You need blood.

ONI  
 Or it's not revenge.

HOMELESS MAN  
 The smell of blood. Intoxicating as spice.

ONI  
 Drunk on vengeance.

HOMELESS MAN  
 His mouth on one breast.

BYRUM  
 His teeth.

ULISES starts scratching his crotch.

HOMELESS MAN  
 His hand on the other.

ONI  
 Pinching. Twisting.

BYRUM  
 Blood on his tongue. Screams in his ears.

HOMELESS MAN  
No screams. His hand on her mouth.

ONI  
His finger up her ass.

BYRUM  
And jerking her hair--

ULISES  
Too many hands--

HOMELESS MAN  
What?

ULISES  
That's...too many hands. He can't--

HOMELESS MAN  
Yes, too many hands. Like he was more than one man forcing himself inside her, pinning her--

BYRUM  
Slapping her--

ONI  
Opening her--

HOMELESS MAN  
Like three men--

ULISES  
Four men--

HOMELESS MAN  
Five men?

BYRUM  
Biting her mouth--

ULISES  
And--wait--he is gay!

HOMELESS MAN  
Doesn't matter--he's not hard for *her*, he's hot for revenge. The ultimate seduction, worth dying for.

BYRUM  
Does he get off?

HOMELESS MAN  
Not right away. As wild as he feels, as aroused by her pain, he doesn't wanna cum too fast--

It has to last.

BYRUM

Almost unconsciously, PRESTON has started scratching his crotch as well. ONI and perhaps BYRUM stroke themselves under their towels.

Or it's not revenge.

HOMELESS MAN

He goes in. She whimpers under his hand. He pulls out--

ONI

She whines through her nose--

HOMELESS MAN

He goes in--

BYRUM

She too tight.

HOMELESS MAN

He pulls out--

ONI

She tears and bleeds more.

HOMELESS MAN

That makes him harder. Her perfect skin--

BYRUM

Bruised.

HOMELESS MAN

Her lovely face--

ONI

Broken!

HOMELESS MAN

Her pussy--

ONI AND BYRUM

Torn!

HOMELESS MAN

On the tile of the floor--

BYRUM

HOMELESS MAN

The hard tile. In the sweltering heat--

It's so hot!

ONI

Suddenly--like five men--

HOMELESS MAN

Fuck him!

ONI

Fuck him!

BYRUM

Her! Fuck her! (Quickly.)

ONI

Fuck her!

HOMELESS MAN

Like five men at once--

ONI AND BYRUM	GUZMARO AND PRESTON
(Growling.)	(Whispering.)
Fuck.	Fuck.

HOMELESS MAN

He comes.

The others exhale. Perhaps one or more of them has come as well. They freeze.

HOMELESS MAN

He is avenged.

BYRUM

How?

HOMELESS MAN

She's an Islamic woman, sorceress or no. What's an Islamic woman worth after...something like that?

PRESTON

Nothing.

HOMELESS MAN

And so.

ULISES

What?

HOMELESS MAN

She did the only thing. She could do.

ONI

Killed herself?

HOMELESS MAN smiles a strange smile.  
Suddenly PRESTON jumps up.

Oh, God! Oh, my God!  
PRESTON God!

PRESTON runs out.

Holy shit.  
BYRUM

I no believe--  
ULISES

Damn!  
ONI

We don't tell nobody 'bout this. I mean it!  
BYRUM  
(To HOMELESS MAN.)  
You one fucked-up motherfucker!  
(Leaves.)  
Goddam!

I wonder if I could trouble you for a ride.  
HOMELESS MAN  
(To ULISES after a moment.)

Where? Home?  
ULISES

ONI, for once, says nothing. He stares  
at HOMELESS MAN, never letting him out  
of his sight as he gets up and walks  
out slowly.

I don't have a home.  
HOMELESS MAN

Where?  
ULISES

ONI is gone. ULISES and HOMELESS MAN  
remain.

Your house.  
HOMELESS MAN

ULISES thinks about this a moment then  
stands. HOMELESS MAN stands.

I got to close. Ten, fifteen minutes.  
ULISES  
(HOMELESS MAN nods.)

Is okay?

(HOMELESS MAN nods again.)

ULISES goes to the door.

ULISES

You wait.

HOMELESS MAN

No problem.

ULISES leaves.

HOMELESS MAN

I'm a very patient man.

END OF ACT ONE



## ACT TWO

ONI and HAINES sit in the sauna, ONI looking anxious as he applies his products, HAINES listening to his music and reading the *Wall Street Journal*. After a moment PARK enters in his plastic wrap.

ONI

Excuse me, you seen that maintenance guy?

HAINES

(Taking out his earpiece.)

Pardon me?

ONI

Ulises, the--

(Gestures for mopping to PARK.)

--Maintenance guy, Latin--?

HAINES

No, sorry.

(Puts his earpiece back in.)

PARK looks uncomprehending, starts exercising. HAINES leaves. After a moment HOMELESS MAN comes in, nods to ONI, and sits down.

ONI

(After a moment.)

Um...

HOMELESS MAN

Hmm?

ONI

Good story.

HOMELESS MAN

Which?

ONI

Zanzibar.

HOMELESS MAN

Yeah.

ONI

Kinda, you know, mesmerizing.

HOMELESS MAN

Just the truth.

ONI  
No one wants to hear the truth. It's how you tell it.

HOMELESS MAN  
I'm a good listener.

ONI  
And a very patient man.

HOMELESS MAN  
(After a moment.)  
Yeah.

ONI  
Killed herself?

HOMELESS MAN  
Yeah.

ONI  
How?

HOMELESS MAN  
Like a man.

ONI  
Like a man?

HOMELESS MAN  
Gun. Mouth.

ONI  
Ah.

HOMELESS MAN  
Imagine if someone loved her. What wouldn't they do to  
avenge her death?

ONI  
But he got away with it. No one loved her.  
(HOMELESS MAN just looks at  
him.)

No one.  
(Unable to stop himself.)  
You seen Ulises?

HOMELESS MAN  
Who?

ONI  
Maintenance guy?

HOMELESS MAN  
Oh. No. Not since....

ONI  
Yeah. Me, either. So...what next?

HOMELESS MAN  
Guess I'll shower.

ONI  
The story!

HOMELESS MAN  
Oh, you wouldn't believe me--

ONI  
The drugged food wore off and they finally got home?

HOMELESS MAN  
It wore off. But they were still a long way from home.

ONI  
Plane? Boat? Swimming?

HOMELESS MAN  
Fishing boat. Transportation continues to degrade. And it was going the wrong direction, but they were in no position to negotiate.

ONI  
Where was it going?

HOMELESS MAN  
Back east. Indonesia.

ONI  
Oh, man!

HOMELESS MAN  
What could they do? They couldn't go anywhere legally with the US Army after them. They couldn't *exist*.

ONI  
Another Islamic country!

HOMELESS MAN  
Don't tell--what's his name--the prissy-pants Korean guy--?

ONI  
I dunno. Preston or something.

HOMELESS MAN  
Don't tell Preston.

PARK leaves.

ONI  
 Could they fly home from Indonesia?

HOMELESS MAN  
 They didn't exactly get there--

BYRUM comes in.

Oh.  
 BYRUM

Hey.  
 HOMELESS MAN

Yo.  
 ONI

I...  
 BYRUM

What?  
 ONI

Naw...shit...never mind.  
 BYRUM

What?  
 HOMELESS MAN

Nothin'! Just nothin'.  
 BYRUM

ONI  
 (After a moment.)  
 They're on a boat again.  
 (No reaction.)  
 To Indonesia.  
 (No reaction.)  
 'Cept they don't get there.

BYRUM  
 (Reluctantly.)  
 Why come?

They both look at HOMELESS MAN.

HOMELESS MAN  
 (After a moment.)  
 Tsunami.

ONI  
 No way!

BYRUM  
 Shit!

Come on! ONI

You heard about it. HOMELESS MAN

Yeah, but-- ONI

HOMELESS MAN  
They were just pulling into the harbor when it hit. If they'd been out at sea, it would have passed under them, just another swell. But in the shallow water near the harbor, the wave stumbled over itself, building higher and higher, a mountain of water, three stories high by the time it crashed into the fishing boat--

Swamped? ONI Sunk? BYRUM

HOMELESS MAN  
That's the strange thing.

BYRUM AND ONI  
No?

HOMELESS MAN  
They rode it.

BYRUM ONI  
What? You're kidding!

HOMELESS MAN  
You saw on TV--debris rode the wave--

ONI  
But they were like--what--?

BYRUM  
Surfing?

HOMELESS MAN  
Like they were protected somehow, spared, divine favor--

BYRUM  
How far?

ONI  
Yeah?

HOMELESS MAN  
Far.

A mile? ONI

Two? BYRUM

Three? ONI

HOMELESS MAN  
That was crazy, too. Somehow their part of the tsunami followed a river up from the harbor, deep into the island--

ONI  
I never heard about--

BYRUM ONI  
Yeah, somebody woulda said if- --Anything like that, a boat  
- riding that far--

HOMELESS MAN  
Western media misses a lot. And these guys weren't about to talk to any reporters. When the water receded and the boat finally ran aground, they just wanted to get out of there, hiked as fast as they could across the suddenly haunted island.

SUNOOK comes in, sits down, and starts flossing.

BYRUM  
Haunted?

ONI  
That's just a whadyacallit--metaphor.

HOMELESS MAN  
No, really haunted, kinda.

ONI  
How?

HOMELESS MAN  
It's full of bodies, right? Buried in piles of splintered lumber, wedged high up in trees, sometimes just parts scattered here and there, carved up by the glass and wires and sheet metal turned into a blender by the wave--

BYRUM ONI  
Okay, okay-- We saw it on TV, man--

HOMELESS MAN

So they're trudging across this tropical Auschwitz, this battlefield without a war, and maybe it's that there's no clean water and no untainted food, but--no--if you don't buy the boat traveling that far, you sure ain't gonna buy this.

BYRUM

Try me.

ONI

Yeah, c'mon.

HOMELESS MAN

At first it was just one or two of 'em thought he heard something, so nobody said anything right away. But after not too long, everyone was looking over their shoulder, stopping to listen, and finally they all saw what was making the sounds.

ONI

What?

HOMELESS MAN

They all saw it at the same time. Maybe it was a dehydration or starvation hallucination, but they all had the same one.

BYRUM AND ONI

What?!

HOMELESS MAN

The dead people were talking.

BYRUM

All of 'em?

HOMELESS MAN

At first they just saw the one. This guy dangling over their heads from a palm tree--

BYRUM

Maybe he wasn't dead.

ONI

Yeah, he got above the water--

HOMELESS MAN

Wasn't but half of him. A torso. Intestines wrapped around the tree like a maypole. Definitely dead. But also talking.

ONI

What'd he say?

BYRUM  
How could they even understand him? Wasn't he speaking Indonesian or shit?

HOMELESS MAN  
English.

ONI  
What?

HOMELESS MAN  
Kind of a warning.

ONI  
A little late!

HOMELESS MAN  
Not about the tsunami. He told them "Tame your desires."

ONI  
Musta been Buddhist.

SUNOOK, finished flossing, leaves.

BYRUM  
Okay, this don't make--fuck!--how could this half a guy--?

ONI  
It was hypnosis! A group hallucination.

HOMELESS MAN  
They spoke to him and he answered back.

ONI  
What do you say to a guy whose guts are decorating the forest?

HOMELESS MAN  
They asked his name.

ONI  
And?

HOMELESS MAN  
Byrum.

ONI  
(After a moment.)  
Huh?

BYRUM  
Huh-uh!



HOMELESS MAN  
What he said. What Doyald said he said.

BYRUM  
No fucking way, asshole!

HOMELESS MAN  
I'm just reporting--

ONI HOMELESS MAN  
You knew--you heard before-- I'm sorry--I don't understand--  
-

BYRUM  
I'm Byrum. That's my name.

HOMELESS MAN  
Oh. Really?

ONI  
Not exactly an Indonesian--

BYRUM  
(Overlapping.)  
Yeah, hardly an Indonesian-type name! What are you trying to pull? Intimidate me?  
(Gets threateningly close to HOMELESS MAN.)  
Bullshit--name-dropping--

HOMELESS MAN  
That was just the first one.

ONI BYRUM  
There were more? More talking bloaters?

ONI  
And what were their names?

BYRUM AND ONI  
Oni?

BYRUM ONI  
Alexander? Ulises?

HOMELESS MAN  
No, no! Of course not. Anyway, they didn't ask names after that. Or if they did, Doyald didn't tell me. But the warnings continued: "Don't eat the flesh!"

ONI  
Duh! Everything's contaminated.

HOMELESS MAN

From a little boy perforated like a collander: "Don't profane the sacred!"

BYRUM

Ghosts always say that kinda shit.

HOMELESS MAN

From a woman without a head: "Your appetites will betray you."

BYRUM

Now how she say that without a head?

ONI

They imagined it. Only way it's possible.

HOMELESS MAN

"Don't stay after hours."

ONI

What?

BYRUM

I don't get it.

HOMELESS MAN

"Go home at closing."

ONI

What's that got to do with the story?

BYRUM

That don't make sense.

HOMELESS MAN

Look, I don't have to be telling you this. You wanted to hear--

ONI

Yeah, but you're--embellishing--

BYRUM

Exaggerating!

ONI

Adding in all kinds of irrelevant--

BYRUM

Shit!

ONI

Yeah! Shit!

HOMELESS MAN gestures that further talk is futile, shakes his head and leaves.

BYRUM

Hey, no, wait--!

ONI

Oh, man, we're sorry--!

He is gone.

BYRUM

Damn!

ONI

The fuck was that about?

BYRUM

Do you think--?

ONI

I'm trying to put it together--

BYRUM

How could he--?

ONI

I dunno. 'Cept last time he was trying to get Ulises to give him a ride.

BYRUM

You seen Ulises?

ONI

No--that's the thing--!

BYRUM

(Looking out the small window.)

Goddam! Speak of the devil!

BYRUM opens the door.

ONI

He's here? Thank God!

BYRUM

Hey, dude, c'mere--

ULISES comes in. BYRUM closes the door behind him.

BYRUM

Yeah, come on in--

ONI

Ulises, wassup?

ULISES

I no--que?

BYRUM

English, pal, this is America!

ULISES

What?



Yeah? ONI

I can't find him. BYRUM

He quit the gym. ONI

But he's like my friend or whatever. I go to his house, used to, before, so I go over there-- BYRUM

Why? ONI

To check. Just to check--cause--you know these homeless dudes is crazy--and-- BYRUM

What? ONI

Gone. Quiet. Nobody there, newspapers piling up-- BYRUM

BRAD comes in, nods, sits down.

Sit-ups! I do seven hundred a day, and not on those pussy machines, just the damn floor. BYRUM

I'll try it. ONI  
(Starts to leave.)  
On the floor.

A man's workout! BYRUM  
(Following ONI out the door.)

They are gone. After a moment, HOMELESS MAN comes in wearing shorts but no shirt. His body is surprisingly good, having been hidden previously under layers of clothes. It is a new day. After a moment BRAD scratches his crotch. HOMELESS MAN does not.

You ever find that guy? BRAD  
(After a moment.)



BRAD

In the Cultural Revolution I was just a kid but they sent me out to the country--Mongolia--where I learned about horses and sex. I stayed with a Mongolian family, and had to share a bed with the son, older than me. He taught me riding and fucking, this big unspoken secret.

HOMELESS MAN

Cultural Revolution? You seem too--

BRAD

(Overlapping.)

The toilet was a shed on the fence where the pigs were. They'd come up under and eat the shit right out of our asses.

HOMELESS MAN

I can see why you like it better here.

BRAD

It's easier to get fucked.

HOMELESS MAN

I heard *that*.

BRAD

I love getting fucked. Everybody does.

HOMELESS MAN

Everybody?

BRAD

Gay men, straight men, women--in China no one admits it, it's like weakness, so never--but here the most masculine top, the most tightass straight boy is dying to be dominated, destroyed.

HOMELESS MAN

Destroyed?

BRAD

It's death. Closest we can come, anyway. Being--penetrated--an agony and an epiphany. We're all in love with death.

HOMELESS MAN

*What* kind of law do you practice?

BRAD

(Grinning.)

Litigation.

HOMELESS MAN

Damn.

BRAD

(Laughs.)

Here we sit, mostly in silence, with all these thoughts raging through our heads, this quiet room exploding with secrets, things we don't know about each other. I don't talk in the sauna, don't want to violate the silence, cause I don't want just anybody to know me. You don't think--what?-- I'm old enough for the Cultural Revolution, cause you don't know me.

HOMELESS MAN

True enough.

BRAD

You wanna fuck me? Meet me in the parking garage.

HOMELESS MAN

Um....

ONI and BYRUM come in. They are wearing slight variations on their previous clothes, but BYRUM is still in his trademark jockstrap.

BYRUM

Told you.

HOMELESS MAN

Hey.

ONI

We have a question.

HOMELESS MAN

What?

While the others talk, BRAD gets up and leaves, pausing to give HOMELESS MAN a significant look before he goes out the door.

ONI

(To BYRUM.)

Go ahead.

BYRUM

Naw--

ONI

He was your friend.

HOMELESS MAN

Who?



Alexander.

ONI

Who's Alexander?

HOMELESS MAN

Black guy--you asked about--

BYRUM

HOMELESS MAN

Hmmm?

BYRUM

You said bring him to the gym to hear your story.

HOMELESS MAN

I'm sorry, I don't remember.

BYRUM

Well, I can't.

HOMELESS MAN

Can't?

BYRUM

Can't ask him.

HOMELESS MAN

Okay...?

ONI

(Blurting.)

Cause he's dead!

HOMELESS MAN

Alexander?

BYRUM

Alexander Fitzgerald was found beat to death in his apartment yesterday.

HOMELESS MAN

I'm...sorry...I guess. He was your friend. Sorry.

BYRUM

I'm trying to figure it out.

HOMELESS MAN

Lotsa gangs around here--Rockwood Street, 18th Street--was he a member of--

JAVIER comes in and sits down.

BYRUM  
 No. He wasn't.  
 (Silence.)  
 He'd been there a couple of weeks. Like that.

HOMELESS MAN  
 Ah.

Silence.

BYRUM  
 I wanna hear a story.

ONI  
 Yeah. That'd be good.

BYRUM  
 And not some crazy-ass shit with dead people talking.

ONI  
 They get outta there? Off that dead island?

HOMELESS MAN  
 Yeah.

ONI  
 How?

HOMELESS MAN  
 Got a boat through the Straits of Malacca, headed to Singapore.

ONI  
 A real city, with a real airport--

HOMELESS MAN  
*Headed to Singapore.*

BYRUM  
 They didn't make it?

HOMELESS MAN  
 Not all of 'em.

ONI  
 Why not?

HOMELESS MAN  
 Pirates.

BYRUM  
 Pirates!

ONI  
 Modern day?!

HOMELESS MAN

There are still pirates--occasionally--attacking ships in the Strait. The captain knew this, so he kept to the Sumatran side away from the Malaysian side where the pirates were 'sposed to be.

ONI

But they got 'em anyway?

HOMELESS MAN

No, they never saw a single pirate.

BYRUM

Then what?

HOMELESS MAN

Well, legend says--

BYRUM

A goddam legend now--

HOMELESS MAN

Legend says it was once a woman, but, betrayed by a man, her vengeful grief turned her into a ravenous--

BYRUM

Shit!

HOMELESS MAN

I *said* it was a legend.

ONI

What's the true part?

BYRUM

What was it, really?

HOMELESS MAN

In Bahasa Melayu she's called Laut Pembunuh, which means "sea killer," and she lives on the Sumatran side of the Strait.

ONI

And they steered right into it to avoid the pirates?

HOMELESS MAN

She only takes one. Whereas the pirates would take the whole boat.

JAVIER leaves.

BYRUM

She, she, she! What is she?

HOMELESS MAN

The scientific name for the species is nudibranch--

BYRUM

English!

HOMELESS MAN

Sea slug. She's the biggest, most beautiful sea slug in the world, longer than a man is tall, a nudibranch thought to be physically impossible, almost never seen, certainly never scientifically described. She undulates in the water, flashing bright orange, scarlet, gold, and vivid, vivid pink--

BYRUM

Are those those things that look like--

HOMELESS MAN

An oyster without a shell--

BYRUM

Like some kinda fancy pussy?

HOMELESS MAN

I...suppose...

ONI

So, wait a minute, how does this--invertebrate, yes? How does this boneless creature grab a guy off a boat?

HOMELESS MAN

He jumps. He wants to go to her. He desires her. So he jumps.

BYRUM

Into the giant pussy?

HOMELESS MAN

Into her soft, moist folds, into her glowing lava colors, into her passionate embrace.

BYRUM

He drowns?

HOMELESS MAN

She eats him. But he doesn't even notice because her toxic mucus renders him paralyzed but euphoric. She opens her mouth, he slides right in, the only sound his first splash in the water.

ONI

He wants to die?

PRESTON comes in.

BYRUM

Lotta men'd die for pussy.

PRESTON starts back out.

ONI

Preston, wait!

PRESTON

I don't--need--this kind of conversation.

BYRUM

This guy just got ate by a giant--

ONI

Nudibranch!

PRESTON

This is...that story?

ONI

Next chapter.

PRESTON

It seemed...ended...last time.

HOMELESS MAN

There's always more.

BYRUM

Till everybody's dead.

ONI

That the ending? Everybody dies?

HOMELESS MAN

What kind of story is that? There's always somebody still alive.

PRESTON

Is it you?

HOMELESS MAN

What?

PRESTON

Are you the one who lives, the translator, what's-his-name--?

BYRUM AND ONI

Doyald.

HOMELESS MAN

No.

BYRUM

You speak all these languages--

Korean--  
 PRESTON  
 Spanish--  
 ONI  
 HOMELESS MAN  
 I'm a linguist, but not a translator. Not *the* translator,  
 not Doyald. He was my student. I told you that.  
 BYRUM  
 Yeah, but--  
 HOMELESS MAN  
 What?  
 ONI  
 But some of what you say--  
 BYRUM  
 It's bullshit! Some of it--  
 ONI  
 Cannibal archeologists!  
 PRESTON  
 Men thinking they're swine!  
 BYRUM  
 Giant glowing va-gi-nas!  
 HOMELESS MAN  
 The story is for you. You wanted to hear it. I don't have  
 to tell it.  
 (Goes to the door.)  
 ONI  
 Don't be so touchy!  
 PRESTON  
 I just asked a question. Did Doyald ever get back to LA?  
 HOMELESS MAN  
 And I gave an answer. Now I must shower.  
 HOMELESS MAN leaves.  
 BYRUM  
 Wait--did they all get ate by the coochie from hell?  
 (Dashes out after HOMELESS  
 MAN.)  
 Hey!  
 Silence for a moment.

Alexander's dead. ONI

Alexander? PRESTON

You know Alexander. ONI

Dead? PRESTON

Plumber's helper shoved up his ass. All the way. ONI

So it wasn't an accident. PRESTON

And it wasn't a gang. They don't do that ritual shit. ONI

Who--? PRESTON

Byrum and me, we were thinking-- ONI

That homeless--? He couldn't-- PRESTON

We oughta do something. Just to make sure. ONI

What kind of something? PRESTON

Like before. Get Ulises to let us stay-- ONI

He won't do that again! PRESTON

All's I have to say's "la Migra." ONI

But we can't *make* a street person-- PRESTON

The story. He wants to tell the story. He'll stay as long as we can keep the story going, not question it, no matter how bizarre-- ONI

PRESTON

It's insane.

ONI

He's making it up as he goes. That's how it seems so *endless*, like they're never gonna get to LA.

PRESTON

He's stringing us along?

ONI

'Cept pretty soon he's gonna run outta companions if they keep getting killed.

PRESTON

So it's gotta end sometime.

ONI

And we just turn it around, string him along, get him after closing--

PRESTON

And do what?

(ONI shrugs.)

I have nothing to do with this.

ONI

That's so not true.

DUNCAN comes in.

ONI

(Without missing a beat.)

There's no way I'm accepting Jesus Christ as my personal savior.

(Leaves.)

PRESTON stands looking foolish for a moment, then leaves. After DUNCAN settles in, ULISES comes in, mopping. He is wearing some variation on the official uniform. It's a new day.

ULISES

I am sorry. We are closing.

DUNCAN

It's only quarter till.

ULISES

We are closing soon.

DUNCAN

Gimme a minute. I need to sweat.





No. Not at all. HOMELESS MAN

They're closing. DUNCAN

You said. HOMELESS MAN

You staying? DUNCAN  
(Gets up.)

Little bit. HOMELESS MAN

Shit! DUNCAN

DUNCAN leaves. After a moment ULISES  
returns, mopping.

I could get fire. ULISES

I know. Thank you. HOMELESS MAN

I no believe. ULISES

You saw. HOMELESS MAN

I did not. ULISES

You'll believe. HOMELESS MAN

Como? ULISES

If I can get them all here. HOMELESS MAN

SPLASH sticks his head in.

Justice? I don't believe. [Spanish] ULISES

Closing. SPLASH



Including Doyald.  
PRESTON AND HOMELESS MAN

PRESTON starts locating the areas  
around the sauna, a microcosm of the  
geographic area covered in the story.

PRESTON  
Lose how many to opium--

PRESTON AND HOMELESS MAN  
Two.

PRESTON  
(Continues indicating spots  
around the sauna.)  
Escape to Cambodia. Two guys get--eaten. Eight remain.  
Then down the river and there's a drowning--

ULISES  
Seven.

PRESTON  
Flight to Africa--

ULISES  
Zanzibar!

PRESTON  
Any little piggies get eaten there?

HOMELESS MAN  
No, actually.

PRESTON  
Then back across the Indian Ocean to Sumatra on a tsunami--or  
so I hear--

HOMELESS MAN  
Again, nobody killed.

PRESTON  
But in the Straits of Molokai--

HOMELESS MAN AND ULISES  
Malacca--

PRESTON  
One jumps into the giant--genitals--

ULISES  
Six!

PRESTON

Including Doyald. So that's where we got to--the Straits of--

PRESTON AND ULISES

Malacca.

PRESTON

Forgive me, but they're bouncing all around the Indian Ocean, hardly a direct route--

HOMELESS MAN

They can't go direct or the Army will find 'em. They're AWOL, deserters, doomed if found, doomed if not--

PRESTON

I'm sorry--aside from being far-fetched, this story doesn't sound entirely original.

(HOMELESS MAN shrugs.)

Where next?

HOMELESS MAN

When the other guys get here.

PRESTON

Where are they?

ULISES

I see.

ULISES leaves.

PRESTON

So while all these American soldiers are getting picked off one by one and Doyald the translator is shuttling back and forth, his--*partner*--that's the word these days, yes?--remains faithfully home here in LA, patiently waiting for the translator's return.

HOMELESS MAN

That's my understanding.

PRESTON

That's actually the part I find least credible. This young man was not a Christian.

HOMELESS MAN

No.

PRESTON

A young non-Christian homosexual in Los Angeles. Preserving his chastity.

HOMELESS MAN

Yes.

Tariq. PRESTON

Right! HOMELESS MAN

Couldn't be the same guy. PRESTON

Why not? HOMELESS MAN

That Tariq fellow was far from chaste. My understanding, in fact, was that he had AIDS. PRESTON

No! HOMELESS MAN

And was unstinting in sharing his infection with others. PRESTON  
(After a moment.)  
That's my understanding. I could be wrong. It's not my business, certainly.

ONI comes in with ULISES.

I find him! ULISES

Wouldn't wanna miss. ONI

Can we start? PRESTON

Where's Byrum? HOMELESS MAN

Haven't seen him. ONI

I thought he was coming. HOMELESS MAN

I check. ULISES  
(Indicates outside.)  
Lock up.

ULISES leaves.

Waste of time if I have to tell it again. HOMELESS MAN

ONI

We can fill him in if he doesn't make it.

HOMELESS MAN

I really don't want to--

ONI

Listen, man, we don't have to hear the story. You wanna tell it. At least we thought--

PRESTON

I mean, it's interesting and all, but--

ONI

I could be home watching the real news.

Lighting change outside the window in  
the door indicates the gym is closed.

HOMELESS MAN

If you don't find it credible--

PRESTON

No, no, we want to hear it--

ONI

But no biggie if you don't feel like it.

ULISES comes back in. No music leaks  
in.

ULISES

Everybody gone.

HOMELESS MAN

No Byrum.

ULISES

No.

ONI

(Starts to leave.)

We can go.

HOMELESS MAN

No. I'll tell it. It's almost over anyhow.

PRESTON

Really?

HOMELESS MAN

We'll see how far we get.

PRESTON

So did they get to Singapore?

HOMELESS MAN

No.

ONI

The nudibranch got them all?

HOMELESS MAN

Scared 'em. There was a mutiny on the boat, captain was accused of steering 'em into danger, and they turned around, back up the strait--

PRESTON

Heading--west?--again?

HOMELESS MAN

That's right, west. Away from the pirates and the Laut Pembunuh--

ONI

And the tsunami--

PRESTON

And the dead.

HOMELESS MAN

To India.

PRESTON

India?!

ONI

But they didn't make it.

HOMELESS MAN

No, not exactly.

PRESTON

Of course not.

HOMELESS MAN

Because they were fighting constantly, the captain in charge, the captain tied up in the hold, the mate drugged at one point--the boat actually ran aground.

ULISES

Where?

HOMELESS MAN

An island. An Indian island in the Nicobar chain.



PRESTON

Full of Hindus?

HOMELESS MAN

It was Hindu, but none of them were there. They'd been evacuated after the tsunami, those that were still alive. So there were no people on the island at all.

ONI

What was?

HOMELESS MAN

Cows.

ONI

Sacred cows?

PRESTON

Hindu cows?

HOMELESS MAN

And the men were starving.

PRESTON

But they couldn't eat the cows.

HOMELESS MAN

Who's to stop 'em?

ONI

They musta known they were sacred.

HOMELESS MAN

What's sacred next to starving?

ULISES

They eat them.

HOMELESS MAN

They did. But just as they were about to eat--

ONI

Um...something got 'em?

HOMELESS MAN

No.

PRESTON

What?

HOMELESS MAN

The cuts of meat--steaks and roasts and organs--hastily hacked slabs slippery with blood--the meat started to bellow--

PRESTON

Still alive?

HOMELESS MAN

They were dead, dismembered, but their raw flesh moored and lowed in accusation. The men put it on the fire and it twisted itself off like it could still feel pain.

ONI

So they didn't eat it?

HOMELESS MAN

One did.

ONI

Uh-oh.

HOMELESS MAN

Before the meat started mooing and moving, he ravened it down. It came alive inside him.

ULISES

What happen?

HOMELESS MAN

You ever see the movie *Alien*?

PRESTON

Never mind.

ONI

So we're down to six--

PRESTON AND ULISES

Five!

ONI

So how'd they get off the island?

HOMELESS MAN

Red Cross, following up on the tsunami. Got 'em out of there on the first plane from Port Blair to Bangalore, then--

PRESTON

Wait--this was a commercial plane?

ONI

Yeah, I thought they couldn't--

HOMELESS MAN

It was a charter pressed into service after the tsunami.

ULISES

Where is it going?

HOMELESS MAN

Its original flight plan wasn't altered as it was heading west anyway.

ULISES AND ONI

Where?

HOMELESS MAN

It was a world tour of spiritual places. Full of rich Americans happy to feel useful, an act of mercy on their way to Machu Picchu.

ULISES

Peru!

HOMELESS MAN

(Gets up.)

Cuzco, actually, was the destination, however--

PRESTON AND ONI

Of course!

ULISES

They crash!

HOMELESS MAN

In the Andes--

ONI

And you ate them! I mean--

PRESTON

The translator--Doyald--had to eat them--!

HOMELESS MAN

No, he didn't. But they did crash. Doyald thought it some kind of karmic punishment for killing the sacred cattle.

PRESTON

At least they're back in the right hemisphere.

ONI

And were they killed?

HOMELESS MAN

Yes.

GUZMARO

PRESTON

Even the kind rich Americans? Wait a minute, even Doyald--?

HOMELESS MAN

All but Doyald.

So he lost 'em all. ONI

That's the end, then. PRESTON

Yeah, so he just came home? ONI

Flew back to LA. PRESTON

Um...it wasn't quite that simple. HOMELESS MAN

No? PRESTON

Still a long way from home. HOMELESS MAN

Just finish it. PRESTON Did he get here? ONI

Not without Byrum. Come on! Next time we're all together. HOMELESS MAN  
I'll finish it, I promise. You wouldn't do that to Byrum,  
would you?

HOMELESS MAN leaves. The others follow  
him out.

When? PRESTON

After hours again? ONI We can't tomorrow-- GUZMARO

They are all gone. Silence in the  
empty sauna for a moment. Then BYRUM  
comes in and sits down. He seems on  
edge. He is joined after a moment by  
PRESTON, who nods and sits. PRESTON is  
wearing a different t-shirt; it is a  
new day. ONI comes in and sits, also  
in a different outfit. They wait  
tensely in silence. Soon ULISES sticks  
his head in.

He's coming. ULISES

Everyone else gone? PRESTON Is it closed? ONI

Is close.

ULISES

BYRUM  
Make him hurry the fuck up.

ULISES disappears. Again, they sit in silence.

BYRUM  
(After a moment.)  
Plane crash?

ONI  
In the Andes.

BYRUM  
Shit.

PRESTON  
I stopped believing this weeks ago.

ONI  
Me, too.

BYRUM  
Then why we here?

PRESTON  
He's feeding this to us for a reason.

ONI  
Some kind of contest of wills.

BYRUM  
More than that.

ONI  
He knows something.

BYRUM  
How could he?

ONI  
Just gotta find out what.

ONI  
And do something about it.

PRESTON  
What, exactly?

BYRUM  
See what presents itself.

ONI  
Shhh!

HOMELESS MAN comes in wearing only a towel. He looks better than he has previously, kind of hot, in fact.

HOMELESS MAN

Gentlemen.

BYRUM

Yo.

ONI

Hey.

ULISES follows HOMELESS MAN in and sits down.

ONI

So.

BYRUM

Peru?

HOMELESS MAN

That's right. South of Cuzco.

ONI

Everyone dead.

PRESTON

Except Doyald.

HOMELESS MAN

Some Quechua-speaking locals found him and brought him to Cuzco, then a tourist plane got him to Lima.

PRESTON

And he was completely unscathed.

HOMELESS MAN

Injuries, but minor. He was well enough to get on the boat.

BYRUM

Another boat?

HOMELESS MAN

A cruise up the Pacific coasts of South and North America.

PRESTON

So--to LA--

PRESTON AND HOMELESS MAN

Eventually.

BYRUM

A cruise? Like Princess or Royal Caribbean?

HOMELESS MAN

The boat was the Calypso.

PRESTON

Wait, wait--

ONI

Yeah--

PRESTON

Wasn't that--?

ONI

Yeah!

PRESTON

The name of--

ONI

What's-his-name's boat--

ULISES

Jacques Cousteau!

(When they all look at him.)

Discovery Channel.

HOMELESS MAN

Yes, it is the same. Boat names aren't copyrighted or anything.

PRESTON

Just--

ONI

Making sure.

BYRUM

Cause, you know, truth is important to us.

HOMELESS MAN

Sure. So the captain of the ship developed this intense attraction for Doyald--

BYRUM

Is everybody in the whole damn world gay? I mean--*shit!*

HOMELESS MAN

And he wouldn't let him off the boat. Doyald kept trying to sneak off in ports of call, catch a plane for home--the Army be damned--but the captain had the whole crew on alert.





HOMELESS MAN  
I thought Preston was getting it--

PRESTON  
What?

HOMELESS MAN  
And yet here we are.

BYRUM  
Here we are.

Silence.

ULISES  
(Bursting out.)  
He come back!

(They stare.)  
He come back to LA. He come back here! He got to!

PRESTON  
Got to?

ONI  
Why?

ULISES  
Tariq! Because Tariq.  
(Looks at HOMELESS MAN, who  
gives him no clue.)  
Because you--you--!

ONI PRESTON  
Who? Who? One of us?

ULISES  
All of you. Alexander also.

BYRUM ULISES  
Don't you be talking about my You--you--and Alexander rape  
man Alexander! Tariq. You rape him!

ONI BYRUM  
La Migra, pal, don't forget-- May he rest in peace.

ULISES  
I no care La Migra--! You say La Migra so I--so I do what  
you want--

PRESTON ULISES  
Ulises, what did you see? Stay after hours you say--  
Did you see anything?

ONI PRESTON  
Where are you getting this? What did you actually see?

BYRUM

I know where he got it.

They all look at HOMELESS MAN.

BYRUM

While you been selling us this load of crap, you been feeding him this other shit.

ULISES

No! I saw.

(To ONI.)

You said. You said Arab has SIDA.

(To PRESTON.)

You said he dirty habit--

PRESTON

I did walk in on him one time.

HOMELESS MAN

What?

PRESTON

With--Alexander--

BYRUM

No way!

PRESTON

I reported it. That was the end of it.

HOMELESS MAN

You didn't walk in on him.

PRESTON

(Quick glance to ONI.)

I did. It was disgusting. Just as he was--smearing--his--

ONI

Infection--

HOMELESS MAN

He didn't have AIDS!

(To ONI.)

You started that rumor because you went after him and got nowhere.

ONI

Nowhere? Only if you call deep up his not-so-very-tight little ass nowhere.

BYRUM

Jesus!

ONI

I fucked him in this exact spot.

PRESTON  
Language!

ONI  
And I wasn't the only one.

ONI  
Alexander had him, too. That boy sucked or fucked half the  
guys in the gym. Even--

BYRUM  
Shut--!

ONI  
Some of the straight ones.  
*That's* what was going on  
after hours.

ULISES  
That...is not...true.

HOMELESS MAN  
No, it's not.

ULISES  
He touch no one.

HOMELESS MAN  
Doesn't matter what they say. Doesn't matter what I say.  
Only matters what you think. That's the only contest here.

ULISES  
Me? Porque?

HOMELESS MAN  
You are the judge. [Spanish]

ULISES  
Oh, no--

BYRUM  
Talk English goddammit!

ULISES  
I am no judge!

HOMELESS MAN  
I only need one more piece of evidence.

BYRUM  
You got nothing!

HOMELESS MAN  
What I do know is something happened here, in this room, one  
of those nights. And that beautiful young man went home and  
shot himself.

ONI  
He didn't.

HOMELESS MAN  
I'd die for that boy. Would you?

BYRUM  
Too late, if he's dead.

HOMELESS MAN  
No, it's not. Not if you love him.

PRESTON  
Love him?

HOMELESS MAN  
(To ONI.)  
Did you slander him for being aloof?

ONI  
You are crazy, man.

HOMELESS MAN  
(To PRESTON.)  
Beat him for being infected?

PRESTON  
I never beat anybody!

HOMELESS MAN  
(To BYRUM.)  
Rape him for being a faggot?

BYRUM  
Don't be getting all in my  
face.

HOMELESS MAN  
(Hits BYRUM.)  
They get you to do it for  
'em, big man?

BYRUM  
(Hits HOMELESS MAN back.)  
Crazy mother fucker!

HOMELESS MAN  
(Swinging at BYRUM,  
missing.)  
They used you--or did you  
want to do it?

ONI  
(Grabbing HOMELESS MAN.)  
Preston, help me!

PRESTON  
(Grabbing HOMELESS MAN.)  
We didn't have to do this!

ULISES  
(Lunging for ONI.)  
Let him go!

BYRUM  
(Knocking ULISES aside.)  
Stay outta this!

PRESTON  
You made us do it!

PRESTON and ONI hold HOMELESS MAN while  
BYRUM beats him.

HOMELESS MAN  
Big stupid straight man  
manipulated by this sneaky-  
ass little queer--

BYRUM  
I do what I want, asshole!

ONI

Who you calling queer?

ULISES

Stop! Stop it! I set alarm!  
I call police!

HOMELESS MAN

Me, you idiot! I'm the  
sneaky-ass little queer!

HOMELESS MAN'S towel falls off, leaving  
him completely naked as the beating  
continues.

BYRUM

Then this what you wanted?  
Wanted all along?

HOMELESS MAN

I'm not the only queer,  
though.

BYRUM

Or did you want me to fuck  
you? Pretty sick way of  
going about it, punk.

HOMELESS MAN

Closet-case Christian--  
looking for a miracle--

ONI

Fuck him, Byrum!

HOMELESS MAN

Jesus to save him from  
himself--

HOMELESS MAN

You can't fuck a man, only boys--

PRESTON

Yeah, fuck him!

ULISES

I no care La Migra! I call!  
You hear?

BYRUM

You don't think I can? Fuck you!

PRESTON and ONI hold the now weakening  
HOMELESS MAN so that BYRUM can fuck  
him.

HOMELESS MAN

You're fucked, cause I know what happened.

BYRUM

And after I fuck you, I'm  
gonna fucking kill you, you  
bastard. You little lying  
pussy!

ONI

So goddam smart! See what  
you get?

HOMELESS MAN

Yeah, give it to me. Fuck  
that ass.

PRESTON

Make it hurt. Make him  
bleed.

BYRUM

Cover his lying mouth!

ONI tries to cover HOMELESS MAN'S mouth, similar to HOMELESS MAN'S description of the rape of Amina.

HOMELESS MAN

Ulises, you are the judge! [Spanish]

ONI manages to cover HOMELESS MAN's mouth for the moment. The rape continues.

BYRUM

This it? This what you wanted? Big cock up your pussy ass? That hurt? I hope it hurts!

ONI

Fuck 'em, fuck 'em, fuck 'em, fuck 'em, fuck 'em!

PRESTON

He's bleeding! Yeah, bleed, motherfucker--!

ULISES

I go. I go!

BYRUM

Take it! Take it!

PRESTON

Force him! Tear him!

ONI

You're never gonna walk again after this!

BYRUM

Oh, yeah, sweeter than pussy! The blood makes it sweet.

ULISES starts to leave, hesitates, takes BYRUM'S water bottle, then goes out the door.

PRESTON

Break him!

ONI

Slam him!

BYRUM

Oh, yeah! Oh, yeah!

ONI

You coming?

BYRUM

Oh, yeah!

PRESTON

Come inside him!

BYRUM

Goddam, yeah!

BYRUM has an orgasm.

ONI

Come! Make him take that load!

PRESTON

Shoot! Shoot!

Fuck! I hate you!

BYRUM

Silence except for heavy breathing. BYRUM pulls out of HOMELESS MAN, covers himself with his towel. ONI and PRESTON let HOMELESS MAN collapse to the floor. They all stand there for a minute, panting. The lights go out inside the sauna. The only illumination is the light that streams in through the window in the sauna door.

Damn.

BYRUM

HOMELESS MAN starts to laugh weakly.

Don't laugh.

ONI

We ain't done with you.

BYRUM

I'm done.

HOMELESS MAN

I *heard* that.

BYRUM

I got...my evidence. You lost.  
 (No response. They know he's right.)  
 Everybody wants...a story. So I gave you one...in exchange for yours.

HOMELESS MAN

What do you mean?

PRESTON

Cause you wanted to tell 'em. You did. Really.

HOMELESS MAN

What stories?

ONI

Even if it meant you were fucked.

HOMELESS MAN

You got fucked.

BYRUM

HOMELESS MAN

No, we're *all* fucked.

PRESTON

What the hell do we do with him?

HOMELESS MAN

I gave you every clue--

ONI

Security cameras--

HOMELESS MAN

--You shoulda known--

BYRUM

Could we...put him in something?

HOMELESS MAN

Even the goddam rosy fingers of dawn--

PRESTON

Oh, God. What are we--?

ONI

Don't panic.

(Pulls on the door. It doesn't move.)

HOMELESS MAN

But you had to hear the ending.

BYRUM

Gotta clean up the blood, too.

ONI

Um...the door--

(Pushes. It doesn't move.)

HOMELESS MAN

I made you want this ending.

PRESTON

Guzmaro--the mop--

ONI

(Tries the door again.  
No luck.)  
You guys....

HOMELESS MAN

Even though I hadda change it.

PRESTON

Hot in here.

BYRUM

We been--exercising.  
(Laughs.)  
Where's my water?

HOMELESS MAN

Fortunately, I'm  
a...very...patient...man.

The light from outside illuminates ONI'S rising panic as he tries the door again with no success. He turns toward the others.

ONI

Um....



They turn toward him. The light from outside the sauna goes off, plunging the sauna into utter blackness.

HOMELESS MAN

(In the darkness.)

Sweet...

THE END