



## **Served Up Cold**

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To Carolyn Doty, my toughest critic.

## Served Up Cold

Karen mumbled, and I struggled to hear every other word between verses of Trent Reznor telling me how he wanted to fuck me. What was even more distracting was Karen's choice of costume for the evening. I always loved it when she wore the white G-string underneath the see-through skirt split all the way up the center to her crotch. She had the most beautiful legs, which were forced to look twice as long by the six-inch stiletto heels. The different colored lights of the club tie-dyed what little she had on. I tried to concentrate on what she was saying, but my eyes kept wandering away from her face.

"Steven?"

"I'm sorry, I just can't get over that costume."

With that, she smiled and posed, turned and posed again bending her knee slightly and raising a finger to her lips.

"Oh, turn on the charm, sweetheart," I yelled at her.

I turned quickly when I felt a hand on my ass.

"Let the girl get back to work."

David had rolled up behind me. He let out his normal rasp of a laugh when I flinched.

Karen leaned in, "Grab a drink and a table, honey. I'll come sit with you in a bit."

David continued to laugh. He wheeled his way over to the bar behind me. "This shithead's drinks are on the house tonight," he barked at the bartender. The bartender nodded.

I grabbed two shots of Jack and a beer. The music had changed to something with entirely too much bass, and my eyes became focused on the young girl hanging from the pole at center stage. She couldn't have been much more than eighteen. It was obvious that she was still a bit uncomfortable having sweaty businessmen and overconfident frat boys

staring at her body.

The men in the club were like scavengers waiting for the kill. They all grouped around the catwalk, waiting for her to see them flashing their dollar bills. Most of them wanted a quick feel or to drool on her tits as she wrapped them around the flapping dollar bills, but there was always one in the crowd. The one that would jump up on stage and grope the girl until the bouncer or the other girls could shoo him off.

“You better not let Karen see you eyeing that little girl.” Once again, David laughed at his own joke.

I picked a booth in the corner of the club. I tried to find a place where David couldn’t join me, but he wheeled himself up to the head of the table. I slid one of the shots in front of him. He quickly gulped it down almost losing his sunglasses as he tilted his head back.

“So, how’s Desmond doin’?”

This was always the first question out of David’s mouth. He and my older brother played football together in high school, before the accident.

“He’s still stalking and fucking executive’s wives.”

David wheezed. “I always knew that fucker’d make it to the corner office. Next time you see him, tell him to come by. Shit, you’re here enough, bring him with you sometime.”

“I’ll try.”

“So, what’s the deal with you and Karen? You know she’s got that fuckin’ brat, right?”

“Yes, I know about Celeste,” I said in my most annoyed tone.

“Damn, that Karen is a fine piece of ass. You’re a lucky man, shithead.”

A crash echoed above the music followed by high-pitched screams. It had finally happened. One of the frat boys had ingested enough alcohol to brave the stage for the first time that night. He had made it just close

enough to the girl to touch her ass by the time the bouncer grabbed him by the neck. As he was being drug from the stage, one of his friends got tough and hit the bouncer with a beer bottle sending a small shower of glass over his head.

David turned quickly. "Steven, watch this. I got this boy straight out of the Toughman contest."

The bouncer turned and stared at the boy that had just blind-sided him with the bottle. He discarded the first frat boy to the ground like a rag doll and immediately proceeded to splatter the second's nose all over his face. It was over before it begun. David wheezed and laughed as he made his way over to the exit to tell the two boys they were banned from his club.

As I watched David wheel himself away from the table, I remembered the night Desmond came home babbling about the accident. His incoherent ramblings about how the party needed more liquor and how he and David went to his David's father's club to grab a couple of bottles and a case of beer. It was on their way back that Desmond hit the exit ramp going entirely too fast and flipped the Maserati. David was thrown from the wreckage. Desmond clawed his way out of the car and stumbled, battered and bloody, to the highway hoping that someone would stop.

When the police arrived, Desmond was charged with a DUI and David was rushed to a nearby hospital. The doctors said there was no reason that David couldn't walk again, that his paralysis was all mental. Desmond agonized over the fact that he had left his friend in a wheelchair. It was the sole reason Desmond still hadn't faced his friend after all the time that had passed.

I was snapped back to reality as Karen scooted her way into the booth. She rested a hand on my thigh and proceeded to drink the last quarter of my beer. She motioned to the waitress to bring us another round.

The music changed. "Ooh, I love this song."

With that, she slid onto my lap and started grinding her crotch into mine. She quickly discarded her bikini top and pulled my head to her

chest. Before I knew what was happening, she had my dick out of my pants and her G-string pulled to one side. Our bodies pulsed. I leaned my head back and enjoyed the ride. It wasn't long before my back started to spasm and forced me against her. Out of the corner of my eye, I could see David watching us from the edge of the bar. As soon as our eyes met, he turned and wheeled himself down the ramp towards the bathroom.

Karen wove her fingers into the hair on the back of my head as we both tensed and released for what seemed like twenty minutes.

"How was that for a dance?" I couldn't spit out any words in the aftermath. "Shit, I don't even know what to charge for that. Tell you what, it's on me."

My heart raced and my body continued to tingle as the waitress brought us two more shots and two beers.

"Steven, could you do me a huge favor?"

I nodded as I picked up the shot and threw it to the back of my throat.

"Celeste is in the back. I couldn't find a sitter tonight. So, the girls have been helping me watch her. Could you take her home? It's way past her bedtime, and I've been looking for a reason to get you in my apartment. I promise I'll be home in an hour."

One strand of her short brown hair dangled in front of her puppy-dog eyes. I couldn't say no.

She smiled and quickly gulped down the beer and her shot. Immediately, she grabbed my arm and started pulling me towards the dressing room. The door swung open to every man's naughtiest fantasy. Naked girls were everywhere. G-strings and bikini tops were being tossed to and fro. The only thing missing was a tickle fight going on in the corner. The room was filled with the unmistakable odor of cheap strip-per perfume. In one of the make-up chairs sat the small blonde girl. Celeste looked bored with all the goings-on of the dressing room.

As soon as she saw me, her eyes popped open.

“Honey, Steven’s going to take you home.”

“Really?”

If I didn’t know any better, I would have thought the five year-old was swooning over the idea of me taking her home. She quickly jumped out of her chair, grabbed her small pink backpack, and clung to my arm.

“Here’s my keys. Thanks so much for doing this. I promise I’ll be home in an hour.” Karen leaned over, gave me a kiss on the cheek, and whispered, “I’ll make it up to you when I get there.”

“Celeste, you be good for Steven, now.”

Celeste looked up at her mother with her most angelic face. “I will, mommie.”

I turned with the little girl still clinging to my wrist and made my way out the back door.

It was early morning before I heard the knocking at Karen’s apartment door. I had fallen asleep on the couch with the hopes of Karen waking me when she arrived. Celeste was still sound asleep. I looked through the peephole only to find Karen crying on her own doorstep. I quickly unlocked the series of deadbolts and chains.

“Is my baby okay,” she screamed and rushed past me to Celeste’s room.

“Karen, what’s going on?”

Karen had a defeated look as she walked from Celeste’s room to the living room. She threw herself down on the couch and continued to quietly sob.

I hadn’t noticed until just then that Karen was still wearing her costume from the club.

“Karen, what the fuck’s going on?”

“David.” Her words were scattered. “He was pissed, because of you and me. He said, the only one who gets fucked in his bar is him.” The sobbing overwhelmed her. “He ripped off my top. The bouncers held me on his lap...”

The words kept coming out of her mouth, but they were getting increasingly quiet. It felt like a knife had been slowly pushed into my side. I could feel the heat of my blood as it poured out around the twisting metal. My head was racing. I could feel my body start to pulse faster and faster.

“He said your brother...”

I was in my car speeding towards the club before she could even finish his sentence. I could feel the hair on the back of my neck prickling against the headrest. My foot was trying to push its way through the accelerator, through the floorboard. The car growled with the anger I felt. I reached into the glove compartment. Nothing. Not even so much as a church key. I tried to think of what was in the trunk. Nothing. Fuck, why hadn't I ever been macho enough to buy a gun, a knife, something... anything that could be used to... A gas can. There was a full gas can in my trunk. I relished the thought of burning that mother-fucker's family business to the ground with him in it. I pressed down harder on the accelerator. A small laugh started at the back of my throat. By the time it had reached my mouth, it was a full-on evil cackle. Revenge, I got his fucking revenge.

I could feel the glass from the windshield embedded in my cheeks and forehead. I reached over and released the seatbelt that suspended me upside down in the twisted wreck that used to be my '67 Camaro. I pulled myself out the window. It felt like days had passed while I laid in the street wondering what had happened. I didn't remember hitting the exit ramp that hard.

I crawled to the trunk and tried to pull myself up on the bumper. The trunk had been ripped open by the force of the impact. The gas can laid there in the street. I released my grip on the bumper and tried to walk over to the gas can. I immediately fell on to the pavement. I crawled to the can and pulled it under me. I frantically reached into my pocket to

see if my Zippo was still intact. As my swollen fingers pried their way into my pocket, I realized that I couldn't feel them on my leg.

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