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Woody Bleeker, private detective, followed Maria up Broadway into Harlem. He was supposed to be helping her with her case—her cheating husband and the mysterious and malevolent Andiamo that seemed to be pursuing them—but he didn't have any leads to speak of. A little following couldn't hurt, right?

A cab honked, and Maria turned around to see what the noise had been. Woody ducked for a trash can, but he was too late.

"Mr. Bleeker?" said Maria.

"Mr. Bleeker was my father," said Woody, removing a banana peel from his shoulder.

"What are you doing here?" said Maria.

"Well, my office is just up here, and—"

"—Your office is on the Upper East Side," said Maria.

"This is my satellite office," said Woody, improvising. "I have many offices. Anyway, what are you doing here?"

"Oh, I was just going to see a friend play some music. Louis. I suppose you might as well come along."

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Louis walked down the Harlem bar's creaky stairs with a smile that made Woody like him, to his dismay. A saxophone hung from a strap around his neck.

"Hey, Moretti!" he called. "Isn't it past your bedtime?"

"Oh, suck my dick," said Maria.

"Well, I gotta get my tonguing practice in somehow. What's up?"

"I... might need help with something. Something non-musical."

They went to another bar to watch Louis's quintet play. The trumpet player up front scowled towards the counter whenever the cash register rang. Louis played a mournful solo. The air was thick with smoke.

Louis sat down to join them and the rest of the band continued as a quartet. The piano player began to play a mysterious tune. It wound its way around the room, filling the air with expectation.

"Damn," Maria whispered.

"I know," said Louis. "I think he's the only one of those Juilliard guys that doesn't feel the need to play every scale he knows when he gets up there."

The rest of the band kicked in, and the pianist punctuated the space between them with strange, spare chords.

"So, a little while ago," Maria began, "I... took some pictures."

"What kind of pictures," said Louis.

"Well, I was, uh, naked in them..."

"I see," he said. Woody didn't detect any flicker in his expression—it was serious and empathetic.

"So, what? You don't want them to get out?"

"Oh, no, it's too late for that. ...They were supposed to be artistic."

"Who took 'em?"

"Some guy. Phil."

"Your husband?" said Louis. His eyes didn't leave Maria's.

"So, what, he sold them? Have you talked to the police?"

"It's worse than that," said Maria. "They're being used for a, a—"

Maria stopped and seized on something in her field of vision, behind Woody. "Is that guy staring at me?" she said.

Woody turned around, pretending it was some kind of stretch. Three men sat in conversation... but was there something fake about it? Had they just abruptly switched the topic?

Louis was getting up from the table.

"Hey. Louis—" said Maria.

Louis approached the table with absolute calm.

"Would you mind if I asked if you were checking out my friend over there?" he said.

"Hey, man, it's a free country," replied the one that had turned to face Louis. The other two were staring into their drinks. They suddenly seemed like scared college kids. Meanwhile, an air of confidence and—not menace—but power—emanated from Louis.

"Yeah, it's nice for some," he said. "Would you mind my asking if you know her from somewhere?"

"Yeah," the bold one said, grinning. He was the most drunk, and suddenly seemed eager for a fight.

"We've seen a lot of her," he said. "Harris here has touched a lot of her, too."

"No I haven't," said Harris. The kid was terrified. "I saw some of the other girls, but she was never there when I went."

"...Went where?" said Louis.

The bold one grinned. "The cathouse on 55th, man."

Woody watched Louis. For a second, it seemed that he was capable of flipping over the table; of breaking the drunk one's nose and casting the other two through the air and into the bar. Instead, he took a breath.

"Listen," he said. "Whatever you might think, my friend is not in that kind of work. Now, if you'll kindly pay up and enjoy the rest of your evening somewhere else, that would be much appreciated. My friend is going through a lot." Though he was still calm, there was a note of danger hiding somewhere in his speech.

He turned and started back towards Woody and Maria's table.

"I bet she has," the drunk said, making a gesture in the air.

It happened before Woody could register what was happening. Louis was back at the other table, airborne, and the drunk was underneath him. Louis's eyes were a centimeter from his.

"Now," he said. "I happen to be a believer in nonviolence, and that's why your head is still a solid and not a liquid; but nonviolence, while a noble goal, is not always the most expedient method for getting results. I employed the doctrine of nonviolence to try and get you to act like a human being, and not a drunk monkey that's about to shit itself, in front of my friend. But if that doesn't get results within the next five seconds, I will have to resort to violence. So what'll it be?"

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