

## Mr. Braunnfmann

The Party had started when Mr. Braunnfmann arrived. He was being pushed along in a wheelchair by a short and stocky Filipino man. The wheelchair was odd in that it had Mr. Braunnfmann seated a good three or four feet off the earth with all sorts of hinges and contraptions beneath the seat that looked simultaneously high-tech and profoundly facile. I believe Mr. Braunnfmann must have suffered a stroke, because it seemed from his movements that he lacked faculty in both his legs as well as his arms. Either that, or he was immensely lazy, because he had the little Filipino rushing and sweating to do everything for him, cutting food into small pieces and feeding it to Mr. Braunnfmann on a fork. It gave me the impression of a King whose entire life of utmost luxury has resulted in producing a being so unaccustomed to work that even the maintenance of his own body was too troublesome to deal with.

So there sat Mr. Braunnfmann on his throne (although more than likely he had suffered a stroke so it's quite rude of me to speak of him like this, but so be it) surrounded by the corporate types, men grabbing his hand and patting his back with toothy grins, doing their best to make an impression, and women in sports blazers with thick binders tucked under their arms running around looking busy. One particularly beautiful woman caught Mr. Braunnfmann's attention, a tall, slim girl with a Mediterranean complexion and circular frames obscuring her eyes. I tried many times to catch her eyes with mine, but I believe the sunglasses were there to create an aura of impersonality more so than to block out the sun. He said his *'Hello's'*, and of course, being the man funding the whole operation, and quite rich in his own right, she obliged him in conversation, but without sacrificing her sense of self-worth as the corporate men had so willingly done.

I came to know all this, about Mr. Braunnfmann that is, from Reuben, a wiry old South African man who was at The Party in the capacity of security guard. Apart from being an infamous mingler and shameless flirt, Rube is an abandoned pervert.

"I've just been talking to her, and I've got to say, you've got some good taste there. She's cute"

He's talking about the popsicle girl. She had her station, which consisted of a little push cart with two wheels and a freezer inside, set up right beside mine, and I had kept her in my attentions since her arrival. She had appeared a bit older from the side, on account of the depth of the veins which ran along her forearms. But when I had gone to speak to her, and had spoken to her from the front, despite the large shades which obscured her eyes, she appeared quite young. She had one noteworthy feature, which was a mole just above her lip, which I found to be extremely attractive.

"Yes" I say "But she's married"

Rube leans over to the side and casts a glance over my shoulder at the popsicle girl's hand.

"Ya, but the ring doesn't cover the hole"

"True. She's quite the conversationalist despite that"

She had a small board on her cart that listed the flavours of the popsicles she offered that day. I suggested to her a few flavour ideas. Oatmeal and cinnamon seemed to pique her interest.

"I put a touch of nutmeg too" I tell her "But just a touch"

"I've never experimented with grains..." she says thoughtfully with a hand on her chin.

"And chunks of strawberries and bananas, or blueberries"

I went back to work. There was a young girl at The Party, light-skinned, with the sort of perfectly symmetrical face and baby-like features that can only be found in ethnic races.

“That one over there” I say to Rube “She’s just my type. You know how I know that? I compare girls to ones I’ve known in the past. If they resemble, I assume they must operate the same. I used to date one, darker, but small, petite like that, and she was the best little thing in the bed. Not because she was real skilled or anything like that. It’s because she was so goddamned tight.”

“Oh” Rube says, intrigued.

“I feel she must be the same”

“You know why girls like that are the best?” asks Rube “You tie their hands and their feet together, and then loop them up to a pulley hung from the ceiling, and you lift them up and down with a rope, you know, faster or slower, and you spin them around too”

“Oh, yeah? Have you got one of those setup in your room?”

“Ha-ha. Ya”

Mr. Braunnfmann is seated by himself. The corporate types have gone off to the beer tent and left him sitting in the shade of a lamppost, the balding back of his head only just covered by the skinny shadow cast. The little Filipino is the only one who hasn’t abandoned him. He stood just back and to the side of Mr. Braunnfmann, nodding his head at me as I walked past to toss my popsicle stick in the garbage. Out the side of my eye I catch the Mediterranean girl leaving, off to the parking lot to drive away in her German car.

“Do you remember her name?” Rube asks me about one of The Party organizers “I can’t seem to remember any of their names. Except for that Asian one over there. I only seem to remember the pretty girls. Ha-ha. You know, my ex-wife was Asian. Taiwanese”

“When you go to Taiwan,” Rube continues “you see them all the time, sitting at tables in outdoor cafes with all sorts of men. They’re so poor out there that their families sell them into this shit, and you can tell they don’t want to be there at all. Having to do lord knows what with these fat older European men”

I laugh. It really is horrible when you think about it.

The light-skinned girl comes to my tent with her friend.

“You must be an actress” I ask her. She isn’t. She’s in set design.

“You’ve got the face of an actress. The perfect face for acting. You’ve never thought about acting?” She hasn’t, she tells me, but Mr. Braunnfmann just told her the same thing. I can’t help but notice the slight blush on her face. I also can’t help but feel sorry for her friend who I’m not showering with any attention whatsoever. There’s a moment of silence in the conversation, nothing significant, but just enough to introduce a feeling of awkwardness, that anxiety creeping behind any social encounter, and so she says thanks and heads off with her friend, and I can’t help but feel that that was my last opportunity to materialize.

“Did you see the butt on that one?”

“On which?”

“Your little girl, the one you like”

“Hardly, the back of her dress covers it all”

“Ohh, man!” says Rube, biting his knuckle, not listening “Man what a booty. So small and supple and just like this-” and he cups his hands to show how the meat would fall.

“Yes, that’s what I like too”

“How old are you?”

“27” I tell him.

“Ah, your still in that age range then” he says.

“You know what,” I tell him “despite being only 27, I feel like I’m entering a stage of celibacy. I look at it like I look at a *Melona* popsicle. My dad, he’s gotten into the habit of buying these popsicles called *Melona*, I think they’re from Thailand, and there’s three flavours; mango, coconut and melon. I’ve tried all three. They’re really good, nice and creamy, I like them a lot. But lately when I’ve gone over to my dad’s he’s asked if I wanted a *Melona*. I tell him no. My reasoning is, I already know what it tastes like, and the amount of pleasure eating another *Melona* will bring me doesn’t outweigh the negative effects. The negative effects being the bloating I’ll feel for an hour afterwards on account of all the sugar in these things. And that’s how I look at sex. I already know what it feels like. Sure it’ll feel good for a few moments while it’s happening, but then I know I’ll spend the next few days stressing about if this girl’s going to get pregnant (because raw *is* the only way to go) or if she’s infected me with some disease, or that she might turn around and say I raped her or some nonsense like that”

“Ya, it’s dangerous nowadays, especially with this metoo stuff”

A moment of silence.

“Plus,” I add “I like being alone”

“Ya, I’ve never really had a woman in my life for too long, before my daughter came along that is. Here, I’ll show you a picture of her. She’s adopted, you know?”

He pulls out his phone and shows me a picture of a young Asian girl sleeping next to a pair of cats.

“She’s young, looks like she’s 12, doesn’t she?”

“I would have said 8”

“She’s 26,” – I gasp – “but she’s got asperger’s, so she has that presence of a little girl. Very innocent. I rescued her, you know, from one of those...what’s it called?”

“An orphanage?”

“No, not quite, no...hmm...where they keep them, you know? A shelter”

“Ah, OK”

“Ya, you know, asperger’s, it’s a form of autism, so she’s very gullible. I met her, because she does security too” he points to his security badge “And when I saw her there, I saw all these older guys, circling around her like vultures, so I went in and whisked her right out. I protect her, you know?”

“Good on you, man” I tell him, but I can’t help but think he must be boning the poor girl and how much in bad taste it is to refer to her as his daughter while doing so.

Rube’s been talking to the popsicle girl. I go to the bathroom to wash my hands. As I exit I see her making her way in. She gives me a smile. She asks if I’ve got a card. I haven’t. She hands me one of hers. I ask her if she’s got *whatsapp*. No, she says, she’s a bit of a Luddite. That takes me aback. I wonder if this girl is trying to impress on me that she’s educated or something. No matter, I take the card and tell her I’ll shoot her a text. I gave her a delicate handshake, not trying in the slightest to take her whole hand into mine, only the fingers, but she shakes my hand like a man, grabbing it with determination and intent effort. I know immediately that it is over.

“The popsicle girl just gave me her card”

“Look at you then” says Rube.

“What happened to my Blasian nymph?”

“Ah, she’s gone. Gone off with Mr. Braunnfmann I suspect”