

ROYCE: Oh, bad karma. What if the friend actually dies? What will you tell Cory when you have to go to the real funeral?

MERRITT: By then Cory may not care where I am.

ROYCE: Oh, so pessimistic. Or is that optimistic? Your resume is impressive. And as I said I've checked you out. But what do you consider your most recent success? What's given you the most gratification?

MERRITT: Besides being invited to this interview?

ROYCE: Oh, I'm easy. We're going to put you through the wringer today. Don't be too flattered just yet.

MERRITT: Wring me. I've been looking forward to it.

ROYCE: Interviews don't make you nervous? They make me tense, no matter which side of the table I'm on. (*Touches instep*) I get a knot right here.

MERRITT: Is it there now?

ROYCE: Yes, and it's awful. Right at that place you can't get enough leverage to massage.

MERRITT: I can.

ROYCE: Only if you're an orangutan.

MERRITT: Yours. I can get enough leverage for yours. May I?

ROYCE: (*Kicking off a shoe*) Well...as long as we don't tell Inhuman Resources.

MERRITT: (*Starts massaging ROYCE's foot*) You're very tight.

ROYCE: It's been said. Oooh.

MERRITT: Does that hurt?

ROYCE: Deliciously. (*Moving foot to MERRITT's crotch*) Harder.

MERRITT: (*Rubbing with foot in crotch*) You sure?

ROYCE: If I thought we could get away with it, I'd lie down on the floor right now.

MERRITT: Oh?

ROYCE: So you could walk on my back. You look like the perfect weight.

MERRITT: It's been said.

(*They grunt, moan and murmur as they chat, ROYCE's foot pushing hard into MERRITT's groin.*)

ROYCE: I hope you won't find our interview process too formal.

MERRITT: I'll survive. Interviews are inherently artificial.

ROYCE: Putting your best foot forward.

MERRITT: Yet you never know if you're getting to know the real person.

ROYCE: Only pieces.

MERRITT: Trying to make them cohere.

ROYCE: Trying to tear down a facade.

MERRITT: Searching for contradictions.

ROYCE: Patterns.

MERRITT: Exaggerations.

ROYCE: Truth.

MERRITT: It's all just personalities.

ROYCE: Compatibility.

MERRITT: Liking someone or not.

ROYCE: You're rough.

MERRITT: Sorry.

ROYCE: It's good rough. Almost a religious experience.
(*Licks front teeth as in the old Pearl Drops commercial*)

MERRITT: How much more time do we have?

ROYCE: (*Looking at watch*) Fuck. You have to run over to Hollis.

MERRITT: The curator?

ROYCE: Yes, and you can't be late. You're on a strict schedule today so you can see everybody before lunch.
(*Standing*) That was exquisite. I'm resurrected.

MERRITT: Deep tissue. Deeper later?

ROYCE: (*Grabbing MERRITT for support while putting on shoe.*) After you're hired. We do have to be careful. This is a wonderful museum and people here work very hard, but not everyone is a soft touch like me. You never know who might be out to get you.

MERRITT: Should I guess who? Is that part of the evaluation?

ROYCE: Our Grants Coordinator, for instance.

MERRITT: Really? Chris seems so nice, so helpful. Full of advice.

ROYCE: Chris was a candidate for your job. This job. Your almost job.

MERRITT: But is no longer a candidate?

ROYCE: Not a serious one. Not to me anyway. But I have a feeling Chris still harbors hopes. So take any advice with a grain of salt. A cube of salt. A salt lick. Sorry, I'm from the farm. You know what a salt lick is?

MERRITT: For the cows?

ROYCE: Oh, you know! I used to lick it sometimes when I was little.

MERRITT: Me, too. At my grandparents' farm.

ROYCE: So now we have a secret.

CHRIS: (*Appearing*) Already?

ROYCE: Pardon?

CHRIS: Are you ready?

ROYCE: Yes, where've you been?

CHRIS: Proofing the trustee letters—

ROYCE: Hollis is waiting, and you know how that can be.

CHRIS: (*To MERRITT*) Shall we jog?

ROYCE: Thanks, Merritt. I'll re-connect with you after lunch. (*Disappears*)

CHRIS: So. How'd it go with Royce?

MERRITT: Very well, I think.

CHRIS: (*Surprised*) Really?

MERRITT: We seemed to bond.

CHRIS: No kidding. Royce is a tough—nut—to crack.

MERRITT: Guess I just had the right cracker. Royce even warned me not to trust you.

(*They both laugh. MERRITT stops laughing first.*)

MERRITT: Um...who's next? The scary curator?

CHRIS: Hollis isn't so bad. Just a little hostile to the Development Office. Never quite enough money for contemporary acquisitions. If you live through it, Hollis can take you to Sidney, our trustee. (*Points*) Right through there.

(*CHRIS leaves. MERRITT heads in the direction CHRIS indicated and almost runs into HOLLIS, who is dressed in the latest fashion, wears sunglasses, and carries a mug of coffee.*)