

<And who by fire, who by water>
<who in the sunshine, who in the night time,>
<who in your merry merry month of may,>
<who by very slow decay,>
<and who shall I say is calling?>
---"Who by Fire" by Leonard Cohen/"New skin for the old ceremony" (1974)

Date: 11-12-2022

Location: TGI Fridays Shibuya-Jinnan/Tokyo, Shibuya, Jinnan

A small crowd ambled into the TGI Fridays late on a Sunday night, some of them looking rather exhausted while others were still somewhat energized as they were being lead by a short Japanese man who was speaking excitedly with the apparent leader of the group who was a young man with blonde hair that had light blue colored into his hair.

The rest of the group that followed the blue haired man was just as equally confusing to look at this late-it was a fairly strong mixture of foreigners, all dressed rather casually and ranging from tall to short, broad to slender, muscular to lean, and the only one that truly bothered any of the patrons was one of the shorter men in the group with half of his face was painted up in peeling white face paint that resembled vaguely like a skull.

"I wish they'd stop staring, Archer." the face-painted man grumbled to a man close to him as he looked around the room.

Archer, the man in question, turned to look at the speaker and then let out a bark of laughter. "Dude, they would stop staring if you'd remember to get the rest of your face paint off before we left the venue, Marc."

"I am not wearing my paint." Marc grumped.

"Actually, you are." a lanky, long haired man said as he walked next to Marc as he leaned forward just enough to look at the shorter man before he reached out and pulled a little bit of the peeling white paint off of the younger man's face and showed it to him.

"Kanapapiki!!" Marc growled loudly which caused some of the customers to jump. "If you guys will pardon me, I gotta go and scrub my face off...I thought I got all of this crud off."

A heavysset Japanese man wearing a gray shirt with a fetching red-head done up in an anime style holding the "hand"...wing of a little penguin in her right hand while a light bulb tube was held high in her left with the words "Super Hardcore Anime Kimberly Williams" on the front

looked over at Marc and pointed at a section of hallway. "Men's room is that way, Marc-san!" he said with a wide smile on his face.

Marc bowed his head respectfully to the man who spoke. "Thank you, Taro." he said before he stalked off.

Archer and the rest of the crew couldn't help but chuckle at the events as they took their seats finally and were handed a set of menus. "I keep telling Marc that face paint of his would be a bad idea in the long run." blue-hair quipped with a grin.

"I don't know, Ethan. Marc's pretty dead set on wearing that stuff. He thinks that it really helps the character that he's trying to build." one of the few women in the group said from her spot at the table.

Ethan, the blue-haired man, looked over and chuckled. "I can understand that, Kim. But I think that maybe he's taking things a little bit too far with that look?" he countered.

"Eh, maybe. But it's no different than dying your hair." A man next to Ethan said which brought a couple of sounds of agreement up.

The conversation halted just long enough for the waiters to take the various drink and food orders before it picked up again, "Kyle's got a point, a solid one but a good one nonetheless." Archer said as he leaned back in his own chair. "But all of that aside, I'm just curious what's all going to happen. I mean I thought that Raijin was going to join us at the very least tonight for one?"

"Nah, his girl has to fly back out to Texas for her job Stateside, so two guesses where he'd rather be." Marc said as he came back, face freshly scrubbed. "Oh and did you also hear that the front office is thinking about expanding the tour until the situation with the main roster is figured out?"

From his spot at the table, one person said in a low tone "That could really derail President Slayton's efforts for that pay per view he's been wanting to do."

Ethan slowly turned to regard the speaker and saw that it was Irvine, the Texan was looking over the menu and trying to make his final choice on what to eat when he glanced up and saw that people were looking at him. "What?"

There was some faint chuckles coming from around the table and the group at the table broke down into various conversations for the next couple of hours over the meal before the group broke up and Irvine noticed something about one of his friends and quickly caught up with him. "Oi, Davey. Wait up!"

Davey or David Striker stopped in his tracks, lowering his phone as he did so. "Everything alright, Irvine?" he asked as the big Texan caught up with him.

"I was actually just about to ask you the same question, you've been looking at your phone off and on throughout dinner and I was just curious about what was up." Irvine explained.

David was quiet for a couple of minutes, "I'm probably not going to be sticking around here in Pro Wrestling Nova for too much longer, Irvine. I got an offer to go and work for a promotion back in the states and it's looking pretty damned killer."

Irvine raised an eyebrow, "What promotion?"

David offered Irvine his phone, "It's called Supreme Championship Wrestling. My brother, you know Jacob? Well he put out some feelers for me and he said that they are definitely interested in me due to what they've seen of my work in Project Honor and here in Nova and they think that I'm perfect for their roster." he explained with a smile on his face. "Not going to lie, it's my first promotion without working with DJ."

Irvine nodded in agreement, "So what about your deal with New Frontier Wrestling with Dylan and Zach?"

The expression on David's face said a lot as the other man ran a hand through his short blonde hair. "To be honest, I'm not too sure about NFW. I mean I love the idea of expanding the Phantom Troupe into a trio and all that, especially working with a guy like Devon Slayton and everything...but after talking with Jacob about his time in NFW, I'm not too sure about that company."

Irvine nodded but otherwise stayed silent as David explained the situation about his older brother's time with that particular company and the lengths that they went to get rid of the elder Striker brother because he wasn't "one of their kind" (for whatever that meant) despite Jacob's hard work to move past the "eternal jobber" phrase that the NFW front office had seemingly decided to keep him in.

It was at this point that Irvine noted a certain tone in David's voice to which the slightly older man reached out and placed a brotherly hand on David's left shoulder. "Dude, what's up? If this deal with SCW is really as good as you say that it is...then why not go for it?"

"I'm just a little bit concerned like I said, that I'm concerned that they'll just see me as a step towards getting Jake on their roster."

Irvine understood that all too well as a couple of other promotions like Project Honor and Gamma Pro Wrestling had only recruited David for their respective rosters in order to recruit the elder, more established brother or even crazier yet in one case with Phoenix Pro, his older sister

Jessica. But from what Irvine read of the contract-it was a full time deal for David himself complete with one hell of a full sail for a single's contract.

"Hm...I might have to get in on this." Irvine said softly.

Now this brought a raised eyebrow from David, "Thought you were keen on staying here and working on helping to start this...thing that Ethan's got started?"

Irvine then looked over at where Ethan was standing with some of the others in their group like Marc, Archer, Kyle, and Dallas...conversing about perhaps that very thing that David had just mentioned from how animated Ethan was as he talked, but even though he was really good friends with Ethan...something about this "*idea*" that he had troubled him a little bit.

"So David...tell me more about this *Phantom Troupe* of yours.."

{TBC}