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Deleting Fernando

by Nick Barrett

Prince Lascelles Drinkwater Metsarents languidly surveyed the harem with his great friend Chobarian Arshag. Their old enemy Mendicant Britannica was crucified on the door opposite with spears; now decapitated, his flayed skin hung down in sheets. He had died badly and slowly, and the memory made them smile.

Lascelles seemed to have had his fill of the Nubian slaves, their torments being continued in front of him by armoured bodyguards. Some small children were being led into the harem. Chobarian's face lit up expectantly.

"You don't need to watch the entire fucking snuff movie Fred," his supervisors' voice cut through his mid shift torpor. "Just enough to realise that it needs to be deleted and then hit the wipe key.

"You've been warned watching this crap corrupts your brain, so keep your viewing times down or HR will be all over you."

Lowering his voice he warned: "You need to keep your productivity up if you wanna stay here. And that's important."

Fernando de la Mancha Bonatorte dragged himself from his reverie.

His grandfather the Caudillo would have given what Mendicant got to anyone impudent enough to speak in this manner to one of his family, he thought.

This job in the clean up division of the video sharing website company paid no more than burger flipping would, but it was all he could find since the revolutionaries took revenge on his family.

It was easy work, in some ways. Sit in this giant shed all day viewing already posted material for anything that the Americans or Europeans would object to and delete what looked inappropriate before the company could be fined.

A growing industry. Staff turnover was high but it wasn't just the money; although it could be a dream job for a certain type - who didn't get the nightmares.

Single women were not employed now, some had killed themselves from shame or despair, it was said. Only women with mouths to feed could stand the work. But men fared little better.

This work is insane and corrupting; this was Fernando thinking. New filth was being made all the time, you could never catch up.

On his way home he stopped at a bar for a beer. The television was showing the usual movie nonsense, naked couples copulating, cars crashing, explosions, beautiful women being rescued by grim and grimy faced heroes, dozens dying. The madness is mainstream now, thought Fernando.

He imagined other sheds just like the one he worked in, all over the world, staffed by people deleting material. Uploading material must be a growing business as well.

The supervisor joined him at the bar. "You thought it over then Fred? You coming along for tonight's shift? We could use you, you know where to find the deleted stuff. We just upload the same sort of thing instead of deleting it, that's the only difference. Oh, and double the pay rate."

Resigning himself to being Fred once more Fernando nodded acceptance. He would find his favourites again tomorrow.