

I'm a sucker for bad boys. Gangsters. Don't judge me. Like Treach said, it is 19 Naughty three and the 206 is full of the finest bad brothers you've ever seen. Got damn it, I love me a gangster. And the mo' gangster the mo better. Like Kenyatta.

That man is 22 years of danger wrapped in a package so fine, he fills the dreams of chicks from Rainier Beach to the CD. Named after a Donald Goines character, Kenyatta was born a gangster. He rocks that Jordan bald look, he's built like a Husky linebacker, and is dark and lovely. I'm talking Wesley Snipes Nino brown type dark! He barks, I listen. I mean, If he told me to rob a store, I'd do it.

But, as much as I love me a gangster, I'm catching feelings for a square. That is better for me right? A square might be in the house at 9:00 on Friday night, watching Eurkel or some corny Cosby reruns. He might know too many Spider-Man story lines, and even be as into Star Trek as he is school. But, there something nice about a nice guy holding your hand in the mall, smiling when the see you, and buying you flowers. Maybe thats what I need right now. Maybe thats why I am catching feelings for a square named Fish Boy.

His real name isn't Fish Boy, of coarse. His real name is Dominik Saunders. A real chill, light skinned brother with goals and dreams. Local brother. Born and raised by educators, Mr. And Mrs. Saunders are local teaching legends. Mrs, is a sweet but tough teacher in the CD, while Mr. Is one of the baddest Joe Clark acting principals in the district. Hard! That man runs Mercer like a prison. But he's cool though. I heard he had one of his students arrested for fighting and bringing a weapon to school. But Mr. Saunders rode in with them in the police car, just to make sure five o acted right. These are the people who raised Fish Boy, so you know he is cool, collected, straight down to

earth.

The first time I meat him was on a early summer Saturday night. My girl Tasha and I were rolling with Kenyatta's crew. DJ Quick was in town, playing at The Spotlight up in Capital Hill. Someone suggested Skippers Seafood Bar for dinner, so Ken rolled Rainier until we hit the spot. Parking lot was hella full too. Being that Skippers was in the heart of Columbia City, ballers were there. Cars looking fine, fresh from the detail shop. But Kenyatta's was the best. His burgundy BMW with gold trims rolled into the last empty spot. People gave us nods of respect as we walked to through the lot. All but one square who was trying to show out for his square ass girl. She loud talked Ken when he bumped her, and the youngster jumped in to defend her honor. Dumb move. Ken popped him upside his head, dropped him to the ground with one 4 fingered ringed punch, and we left him there, bleeding all over his fake as Guess jean jacket.

Skippers was almost packed, but there wasn't a line to get in, so we walked straight up to the register. Now, we were rolling five deep, and everyone knew Ken and gave him proper respect, if not acting straight up afraid of him. Even the OG working the fryer. He nodded at Ken, lowered his head and got back to work. But when we got to the counter, the thin light skin brother didn't even flinch. He looked Ken right in in his eyes and said, "Welcome to Skippers, how may I help you?"

"Get a load of this goofy Niggah." Kenyatta laughed. "Aint no way your goofy broke as can help me. But what you can do is hook me and my peoples up with some food."

"Hey! Fish Boy," a drunk screamed from the other end of the counter. He banged an empty plastic basket on the counter."

Fish Boy said to Kenyatta, "One moment sir."

"Nah dog, I'm first. Take care of that..."

"One moment sir," Fish Boy repeated. His voice was cool yet commanding, like a parent or traffic cop. "I'll be right back."

"Do you believe this?" Kenyatta asked.

"I'm going to fuck little niggah up." Wood, Kenyatta's boy, punched one hand into another.

"Corny ass little mutha fucker," Tasha chimed in.

I mean, dissing Ken like that was a no-no, and the boy had to know he was going to get his ass kicked. But when he returned to the counter, there was no shame in his game, no fear in his eyes.

"Sorry about that disturbance, what can I get you fine folks today?"

I don't know if it was Fish Boy's ignorance or his goofy square-ass attitude that caused Ken to laugh. I mean, here we are in Skippers, in the hood. And this little clown, dressed in a goofy shirt with a name tag that read Dominick, was acting like we was dining at the top of The Space Needle or some shit.

"Man, just give us 5 all you can eats. And throw some shrimps in that mother fucker." Kenyatta laughed.

"Yes sir," Fish Boy said. "And for your patience, let me knock off 15% for you."

"Whatever," Kenyatta said. We followed him to an empty table.

We ate like kings and queens. All you can eat like it was our last meal. Even

though the bad boy I was with had my attention, I glanced at the hard-working brother behind the counter more than once. And I caught him glancing my way too.

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Like I said, I'm a sucker for bad boys. Gangsters. The more gangster, the better. But, after kicking it all weekend with Kenyatta and his crew, the thought of slowing things down with a regular brother had me warm inside. So that Sunday, I drove back to the little joint and found Fish Boy. He was right where he was before, working the cash register.

Our eyes locked for a moment; he fixed his collar and pulled and tugged at his shirt to remove the wrinkle. He straightened his hat. I'd already checked myself in the car mirror, and once more in the restaurant door window.

"Welcome to Skippers," he said. "How can I help you?"

"What's good, Dominik? I'm not even all that hungry. Just killing time."

He smiled. A goofy smile. Like he'd just won the lottery or something. A fine girl, just out chilling, deciding to spend her time here, with him. "Well, alright then. I thank you for spending your valuable time in this lovely establishment of mine."

"You sound like J.J. from Good Times."

He looked to the sky and smiled. "I know."

I shook my head and ordered a two-piece and a Coke. Dominik handed me a

red number 5 to place on my table. I thought that was dumb because there was only one other person there; a homeless-looking fool, scarfing down his food from a red plastic basket. It was a super slow Sunday, nothing like it was on Friday night. Which was good because nobody would see me here, without Kenyatta, chopping it up with Fish Boy.

"Here you go." Dominik placed a large Coke and red basket with two pieces of fried fish and fresh fries. Spicy steam rose from the basket and teased my nose. "Oh, I know you only wanted a 2 piece, but this red basket is for all-you-can-eat meals. If you decide you want more, bring it up to the counter."

"Okay," I smiled.

On his way back to the register, Dominik stopped at the old man's table. They chatted for a quick minute, before Dominik handed the man a few dollars, collected his red basket, and walked behind the counter. The old man shuffled out of the restaurant.

Ten minutes later, Dominik filled my red basket and my drink cup. I told him to sit down.

For the next two weeks, all of my spare time was his. Dominik and I went to the movies, dinner, shopping, and miniature golfing. He opened the doors for me, held my hand, and kissed me softly. All that corny shit the square girls talk about, that was him. And I loved it.

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Dominik and I had been talking for a month and a half. We'd kissed more than a few times, but nothing heavier than that. We hadn't even discussed being serious. This was the slowest brother I'd ever dealt with. I could tell he could see that I was getting anxious though, and I figured he might step up, and speed things up soon.

It was late on a Friday night when I decided to visit Dominik at work. When I walked in the door, I saw the aftermath of what must have been a busy night. Friday and Saturday nights, were the busiest, he'd told me. He and the crew would work nonstop, feeding the neighborhood as they got ready for their parties or nights at the club, or whatever. And that night must have been their busiest in a long time. Although there were only a few patrons, it was thirty minutes before closing, and many tables hadn't been cleaned. The carpet was a mess. The condiment table looked like children decided to finger paint with the ketchup and mustard. And poor Dominik looked like he could barely stand.

"Rough night, baby?"

"Brutal. But much better now that you are here." He leaned over the counter and planted his lips to mine.

The front door opened, and four men dressed in black stormed into the old Skippers. All of them wore tight black masks. One headed for the dining room and held the few patrons hostage with a shotgun. Two stormed straight to the back to work the employees. And the fourth, the most gangster of all moved straight for Dominik and me.

I raised my fist, but before I could throw a punch, the butt of the pistol hit

my head, and I collapsed. Just as fast as I went down, I was pulled to my feet by my hair. The attacker wrapped his thick arms around my neck and put the gun to my head.

"Alright, Fish boy," the masked man said. Empty the register, and the safe too! Hurry up or I blow her head off."

"Alright, be chill." Dominik raised his hands and slowly obeyed the commands. Within two minutes, the register and the safe were empty, their contents stuffed into paper bags.

The gunmen made their way out of Skippers; the leader let me go in the parking lot. Dominik, the hero sprinted to my aid. His bravery was rewarded by a shot to the leg from the fleeing car. I held his hand and stayed with him until the police and medics arrived. It was a nightmare of a night for him, robbed and shot, in front of the love of his life. He didn't know it when the ambulance sped off, taking him to the hospital, but it would be the last time Fish Boy would ever lay eyes on me.

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I took the bus to the CD and walked towards the apartments across the street from the library. I climbed to the third floor and knocked three times on the familiar door. Kenyatta greeted me with a hug and a smile.

"Welcome home, baby."

"Baby my ass! You didn't have to hit me so hard, mother fucker!" I felt the bruise on my head.

"Sorry baby, I had to make it look real, right? Kenyatta said.

"Whatever."

He closed the door and led me into the apartment. One of his crew tossed him a stack of bills secured by two rubber bands.

"Fish Boy and friends had a good night. Here's your cut. A cool \$1200. Not bad for taking a bump on the head."

Not bad at all. I kissed Kenyatta and stuffed the money in my purse. Like I said, I am a sucker for bad boys. And I love me a gangster.