

Snips

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A work of fiction, meant for adults. Read something else if you are not an adult, or are offended by stories with sexual content. Then again, if all you're looking for is in-out, in-out, in-out, you should probably read something else. I welcome constructive comments. Enjoy.

Bill smiled as he walked through the mall. He was tired, but happy. Redeye overnight flight to Dulles, but from there taking the underground to the MegaMall underneath Alexandria. This was his first chance to visit, and he was impressed -- it was an underground city, spread over six levels (currently), business, residential, shops of course, you name it.

He checked in at the Marriott (there were two -- he was at the East side one), and then set out for his appointment. 3-Bernal 2025, third level, B-block, Bernal 2025 -- the note had been waiting for him in his room. The on-screen map he'd checked showed him it was a small side-street, almost an alley. The people at the front desk reminded him that a lot of the fixed signs weren't up to date, but the automated kiosks of course were.

Such a place! High ceilings, so many people, yet it didn't feel crowded or closed in. The air was clean, fresh, and moving. Throngs of people moving as well -- the front desk folks had warned him he would hit the early morning rush, and if it got to be too much, just step on to a side street, or into a shop and unwind for a while. Folks who worked and lived here understood.

Bill paused to watch a throng of workers move through one of the broader avenues, visible badges on lanyards with some, others just the lanyards visible. Casual and upscale dress on all of them, knowledge workers.

Sitting on a bench overlooking the avenue, Bill mused professionally, wondering what changes in tactics such places and populations would encourage, or had he already seen them in the teeming depths of Sao Palo, or Shanghai...

Moving again, yeah, the street signs weren't helpful in the recently built-out sections. He was looking for an intersection... Ah, a cookware store with a big red plastic lobster in the window. To the right here, down a few hundred meters to Bernal, left to 2025.

Yup, past an interesting looking restaurant/bar, there's Bernal, to the left. The place was so clean! Like a Disney park, or with that more sinister Singaporean edge? He'd have to make professional inquiries.

2025 on the left, a single unadorned glass door which unlocked with an audible "clack!" as he grasped the handle. That part he understood.

Inside, a small reception area like a myriad of professional or semi-professional offices; he could have been standing in a medical office, lawyer, accountant.

“Good morning!” the pretty woman behind the counter greeted him.

“Good morning,” he replied, stepping up to the counter. “Bill Harris. I believe I’m expected.”

She looked briefly at a screen. “Yes... And this is regarding?”

That surprised Bill a little. “Touchstone,” he replied, the codename for his last mission.

She nodded. “Have a seat -- Mary will be right with you.”

Three chairs and a small table in the reception area, no magazines. He chuckled; they probably didn’t have crowds. The so-called “art” on the walls probably came from the same Chinese factory as the stuff in the Marriott.

“Mister Harris?” another pleasant voice called from the now opened doorway to the rest of the office.

Bill stood up and walked to the smiling brunette.

“We’re in room 2,” she told him, gesturing him through the door.

The room was done in calming pastels and indirect lighting. It was dominated by a treatment table, segmented and adjustable with a head rest/cradle at one end slightly lifted, the segments covered in a soft looking cloth.

“If you would, please,” Mary requested, gesturing to the authentication panel by the door.

With a nod, Bill placed his right palm on the panel. It gave a short chirp, and after a second or two, a longer beep.

Mary glanced to the infopad she held in her hand. “You’ve been through this before?” she asked.

Bill smiled. “Not that I’m aware of, so probably many times.”

They both laughed.

“Well, the protocols have changed dramatically since your last time. It’s much easier, and much more pleasant for all of us. If you’d disrobe and get on the table, we can begin.

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With Mary giving no indication she was going to leave the room, Bill started undressing. “Sorry, I haven’t had the opportunity to shower for a few days,” he offered.

“That’s quite all right,” Mary said with a smirk as she watched him undress.

Bill folded his clothes and placed them on a chair, then got up on the treatment table. Very solid, and who knows what lurked in the enclosures underneath.

Relaxing back, the cushioning on the different segments adapted quickly to his body. Nice. Mary pushed some buttons, adjusting the back and the headrest, making it more comfortable. “Very nice,” Bill sighed.

“And that’s just the beginning,” Mary replied with a lilt in her voice. She placed a pink plastic mask over his face, securing it lightly with elastic straps to the edges of the headrest. “Just breathe normally; it will help you relax,” she told him, and then leaned over to kiss him on the forehead.

Bill exhaled, letting go. Whatever it was, it was lightly scented. He couldn’t tell if the buzz he was feeling was from the mask, or from jet lag and a redeye flight. Didn’t matter. He smiled in the mask at the growing warm feelings of arousal.

Mary looked at her infopad. His identity had been confirmed, and the “treatment” protocols retrieved and verified. The sensors in the table had a good lock on major systems; the headrest sensors were scanning and recognizing. Effectors were cooling down and would be at operating temperature in two minutes. She smiled -- it would take her longer than that...

She clipped her pad into the arm extending from the upper section of the table and positioned it where she could see the display, then undressed.

As she did, she looked him over. In good shape; in his line of work they usually were. She didn’t want to know how he’d come across some of the scars she saw...

With a smile, she got to work.

Bill felt soft hands sliding along his chest, a gentle voice telling him, “Deep breath and relax... Enjoy, let me do the work...” The voice coached his breathing, the hands ran across his body, relaxing, enticing, arousing at the same time.

Bill’s head was buzzing; he felt the buzzing in his cheeks, in his ears. He was so hard and it was so hard to move, but he didn’t need to move, and her hands were on his cock now.

Her hands moved away, but were replaced by her weight settling on top of him, sliding them together, rocking on top of him, so good.

Mary looked to her pad as she rocked her hips. Oh, she was close, so close... Her pad showed all green lights; effectors at operating temperature and charged, sensors locked and

showing all nominal, waiting for one last green light. “Deep breath for me,” she cooed, moving her hands to his shoulders. She exhaled and leaned forward as she rocked her hips, and sealed her lips around the exhaust port on the mask, and as Bill exhaled, she took in the residual gas.

Her own head buzzing, orgasm rippling through her a minute or so later, she pushed up on her arms and rocked her hips more, swirling him around, calling, “Oh yes, yes! Now, please!” As she rocked, she felt him stiffen and heard him moan. Her smile grew as she gripped his shoulders. “Oh yes!” she growled.

Bill was buzzing from head to toe, so good as she rocked on top of him, so close, hearing her voice from far away urging him on, letting go and coming inside her.

Mary heard her pad beep, and looked over to see the final indicator had gone green. With a smile she leaned forward again, his head with the mask between her breasts. As she held him in place, she reached behind the headrest with both hands, grabbed the handles, found the buttons on the tops of the handles, pushed them, and held on.

Three short beeps for the countdown followed by a long tone as the effectors started their work. She held still, holding him still, feeling a tingle run through her breasts, a side-effect of the effectors on her nerves.

When the tone stopped, she sat back, releasing the handles. The sides of the headrest rotated into place, securing his head. She heard the low hum of the power supplies in the treatment table pedestal, another indication the effectors were at work. Her panel showed five minutes and counting down until the process completed. She closed her eyes and put her hands in her lap, breathing slowly, enjoying the residual glow.

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Bill looked around, such a fascinating place! He’d never visited the MegaMall before, or at least he didn’t think he had. Mid-morning, the throngs headed to work had dissipated, replaced by more normal, casual traffic. Where was his appointment? 3-Bernal 2025? He looked at one of the printed maps on display, but it didn’t show some streets around him. He found one of the automated kiosks, and that was much better. Down a few hundred meters, look for the intersection and to the right.

He was confused, like he hadn’t gotten enough sleep or something. There -- that’s the intersection. A cooking store on one corner, with a big red plastic lobster in the window. The street should be to the right a few hundred meters, turn left?

He found Bernal, more of an alley than a street. 2025 was up a ways, a single door. It unlocked audibly when he put his hand on the handle.

He stepped into the small reception area, to the counter. The receptionist looked up at him in surprise.

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“Yes? Can I help you?”

“H... Harris, I have an appointment?” Bill said hesitatingly.

She nodded. “If you’ll have a seat for a moment, Mister Harris...”

Bill took a seat, watching the receptionist leave the area.

Alice tried not to bolt from the desk, but moved quickly to the back.

“Mary!” she hissed as she heard the door close behind her. “He’s back!”

Mary looked up from the book she was reading. “What? Who?”

“Harris! He just walked in! Again!”

Mary sat back. “How? Why? I just...”

Her infopad beeped. She flicked the screen away from the book she’d been reading. She scanned it quickly. “Jesus!” She hunted on her desk for her headset, pushing the button on the side as she stuck it in her ear, waving Alice away. “Keep an eye on him. Hello? This is Captain Burke, at center sixteen.”

Alice went back to her desk, forcing a smile. This was a weird one! How had he...

“Who am I talking to?” Mary demanded. “Oh, *Major* Dumont. ... No, I didn’t call you - your system called *me*. Why? Look at your screen, *Major* -- Mister Harris just walked in, again, even though we pickled him two hours ago! Yes, I’m sure! I did the procedure myself! ... What? ... Listen, Major, explain to me how *we* could have screwed up -- *we* can’t even unlock the damn front door to let people in! *Your* systems authenticated him and let him in. *Your* systems authenticated him again, downloaded, and verified the protocols to the device. *Your* systems locked on and gave me green lights. The only thing *I* can do is pop his goddamn cork and hit the buttons! And after I did that, *your* systems said everything was nominal! I waited for him to wake up, got him dressed, and took him back to his hotel room. And he shows up an hour later!”

Mary fumed, listening to the idiot at the other end of the call. “Major, I’m really, really glad this whole thing is being recorded... Back to the issue at hand, what do *you* want me to do with Harris? He’s sitting in my lobby! ... Listen, Major, look at your screen -- *your* systems are telling me to call *you* for a decision. *Your* systems placed this call. What do we do now?”

Mary shook her head. Who was this clown related to? How the hell had he gotten this job? “Major? ... Okay, Major, let me confirm -- you want us to rerun the treatment protocol? ... No, Major, I do *not* have a problem with that -- but we can’t initiate it from this end. Someone on your end of things has to authorize and initiate -- like I said, the only things we can do at this end are put him on the table, pop his cork, and hit the buttons. Everything else is run from your

end. ... Yes, I'm *sure* it has to be set up at your end. No, I'm not sure who does it; check with your operations group, you should have a medical officer on duty at all times. ... Of course I'll wait, Major."

Mary sat and fumed, extending a raised middle finger in the air vigorously towards what she hoped was Bethesda.

"Hello? Doctor Clark is it? Thank you, Doctor Clark, this is Doctor Burke at center 16. Yes, I personally ran the protocols on Mister Harris earlier this morning -- look at your screens, everything reported nominal, but he just showed up on our doorstep! ... No, I haven't interviewed him yet. ... Yes, check your screens -- all systems reported nominal, and I felt residual effects from the first effector pulse. ... You might want to check with your system s people, Doctor Clark, but I don't think the systems would have reported nominal if that were the case. No, I performed standard reflex arc tests when he regained consciousness, and the tests clearly demonstrated the heightened reflex arc sensitivity concomitant with intense electromagnetic stimulation of related regions of the brain. Those arcs would have been severely depressed by the gaseous anesthesia if electromagnetic stimulation had not been present. ... No, I don't understand it either. ... If you're asking my opinion, I'd whack him up with Vitamin T and have him transferred to the tank at Walter Reed for a full eval. ... I understand, Doctor; you asked my opinion, and you got it -- I'm not the decision maker here, I understand that. ... Oh? What medical school did the Major attend? ... Really? We could bump this up to Doctor Nakamura. ... I understand. ... Okay -- Doctor Clark, I have on my panel a full rerun of protocols on Mister Harris. ... Yes, we'll get started right away. ... Yes, I understand you'll be monitoring; I'm glad you'll be monitoring. ... Okay, thank you Doctor Clark."

Mary removed the headset from her ear very delicately and used great restraint in not flinging it across the room. She met Alice in the hallway.

"We're re-running him?" Alice asked in disbelief.

Mary shrugged. "That's what they say. Let's do it -- they'll be recording everything that goes on. Which room?"

"One," Alice replied, a little shaken.

Mary glanced at her panel, confirming. She took a breath, exhaling and letting go of the tension. She had a job to do. She opened the door. "Mister Harris? This way, please -- room 1."

Bill stood up and followed the two young ladies to a small room. Nice pleasant colors and indirect lights, and a big table like a massage table in the middle of the room.

"Mister Harris, if you please?" Mary requested, gesturing to the authenticator plate by the door. When he gave her a questioning look, she added, "Please place your right hand on the authenticator plate."

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Bill nodded and put his hand on the plate. A short chirp, a pause, and a longer tone.

Mary said, "Thank you. Have we met before?"

Bill looked at her. "I don't think so."

She nodded. "And what brings you in today?" According to protocol, she couldn't proceed unless he knew the codeword."

Bill thought for a moment. "T... T... Touchstone!" he said, happy to remember it.

"Very good!" Mary told him. "If you'd please get undressed and on the table, we can begin."

Bill got undressed and got up on to the table. One of the women pushed some buttons adjusting the table while the other put a pink mask over his face, telling him to breathe normally and relax.

Bill relaxed back, still feeling confused. But the hands on him felt so good, then someone riding him, holding him, coming and fading out...

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Walking along, trying to find something. What? Why? He wasn't sure. he looked around -- the area looked familiar somehow. A big red plastic lobster in a window -- that looked familiar -- but shouldn't it be on the other side? His fuzzy memory was of it on the right side, going right?

That felt better, and then left at the corner. A lot of doors, not a lot of signs. Which one? Left side but right hand, something told him left side and right hand. 2021 -- no, 2023 -- no, 2025 opened with a loud click.

Alice looked up at the door and shrieked. She jumped up and pulled the door to the back open, yelling, "Mary! He's back!"

As Bill entered the small reception area, two young women came out to greet him, stopping a short distance away.

Mary asked cautiously, "What can we do for you?" How the hell had he gotten back here?

He opened his mouth, but it took a while. "I ... I don't know."

"Who are you?" Mary asked.

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He felt lost and confused. He opened his mouth again, closed it. He felt the back pocket of his pants, then his front pocket, taking out a thin wallet. “W... Wi... William Ha... Ha... Harriss.” He looked to them for help.

Mary put her arm around him. “Please come with us.” Mary led him back to room 2, and had him lay on the table, fully dressed. She raised the back until he was almost sitting.

He sat there while one of the women shone a light in his eyes, and tapped his knees, his elbows, other places. She wanted him to do things. He was confused, and didn’t understand. He tried his best. He didn’t know; he didn’t remember. They let him lean back and rest. They would help.

“Alice will stay with you,” Mary said, patting him on the shoulder.

She exited the treatment room, closing the door softly behind her.

At her desk, her pad was beeping incessantly. She picked up her headset and her pad.

“Hello? Hello? Yes, this is Captain Burke at center 16 -- who am I speaking with? Colonel Matthews? Doctor Deborah Matthews? Oh thank God! This is Doctor Mary Burke. ... Yes, you wrote recommendations for me while we were at Johns Hopkins. Have you been reviewing your screens? ... Yes! He showed up here about ten or fifteen minutes ago! ... I have no idea! I personally walked him back to his hotel and put him in his bed, fully clothed, about two hours ago! ... No, systems showed nominal both times. ... What? ... Yes, *both* times! Look at the records! Rerun *ordered* by Major Dumont, and checked by Doctor Clark. ... What could I do? I looked for opportunities to downcheck him on the protocols, but I didn’t have anything to hang my hat on! ... Oh, I agree Dumont may well be unqualified, but *someone* put him in charge! ... Yes, so we did the rerun, I checked him, pretty nominal, and walked him back to his hotel. He could walk, good startle responses, did okay in crowds. Not very verbal, but then he’d been pickled twice in a few hours. ... No, look at the records, unit 2 the first time, and unit 1 the second time. Both times I felt the residuals from the initial effector pulse, and again, observed heightened reflex arc sensitivity when he regained consciousness. ... Yes, both times. Oh, I agree! That’s what I suggested to Doctor Clark, almost verbatim! Whack him up with Vitamin T and send him off to the tank! But Dumont overrode both of us! I suggested to Clark that we call Nakamura, and I think he wet his pants! Dumont insisted we go, so we did.”

Mary closed her eyes, shaking her head slowly. What a mess.

“Yes, he returned a few minutes ago, fifteen to twenty now. We took him back to treatment one and I gave him a quick eval. Reflexes still a bit elevated, but he’s almost completely aphasic. On presentation, he didn’t know why he was here, or his own name. When I asked his name, he didn’t respond, and then reached for his back pocket, and then his front pocket for his wallet. Stuttering on reading his name, demonstrating limited function in Wernicke’s and Broca’s areas, visual processing through speech generation, however impaired, but when I ran him through the Folstein screen, Deborah, I’ve gotten higher scores from poodles! No awareness of time, place, orientation, purpose, phylum, or species! No short-term memory,

no ability to follow simple verbal commands, let alone multi-step commands. ... I know! He's here, again, and I don't know how! ... Yes, I agree -- treatment parameters should have blown out all his memories for the last two and a half to three weeks, and we ran him on that twice! ... No, I didn't check for metal in his mouth. We were both naked as jaybirds, per protocol, and the initial sensor screens would detect and alert on magnetic anomalies, right? Especially anything strong enough to distort the effector fields. And the feedback processing, the loop filters would respond to magnetic interference during effector operation much the same as they would to movement, terminating immediately, right? And before today, he's been run what, four different times, with no ill effects, well, unless you consider permanent loss of memories."

Mary leaned back in her chair, a hand at her forehead. She held her pad up and brought up his vitals as sensed by the table. "He looks nominal, as far as EKG, heart rate, respiration go. EEG looks like someone who has been pickled recently. ... Oh, right now, he's a fine candidate for Congress, or the Joint Chiefs! ... No, haven't checked BP -- I'd expect it to be somewhat elevated. You know they don't give us BP cuffs, but I have one in my own crash bag. No, really -- and nothing to test body temperature. What's the number one contraindication to the procedure? Yes, and they don't give us any way to test blood pressure! ... What? ... That makes perfect sense! ... certainly -- I'll do that right now."

Mary got up, grabbing her pad, and pulling her emergency medical bag from behind the desk. Out of habit she gave a quiet knock on the door to room 1 before opening it.

Alice was standing beside him, one hand on his shoulder, the other stroking his forehead. His coat and shirt were off.

"How is he doing?" Mary whispered to her.

"I figured he was suggestible, so I've been relaxing him," she whispered in reply.

Mary nodded, setting down her bag and clipping her pad to the arm on the table. "You know why they don't give us BP cuffs?" she whispered as she got the cuff out of her bag.

Alice frowned and shook her head.

Mary frowned as she got her stethoscope out of the bag, and wrapped the cuff around his upper arm. "One suggestion is that by not giving us BP cuffs, we can't abort on high BP."

Alice frowned more. "That figures," she whispered.

Mary nodded, slipping the stethoscope ends into her ears and pumping up the cuff. After pumping up the cuff for a bit, she opened the release valve a little, but shook her head, closed the valve, and pumped the cuff up higher. She released it a little, listening.

She nodded her head and released the valve all the way, moving that hand down to his wrist, measuring his pulse.

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“I measure bp at 176 over 108 pulse 78 and he’s in a very relaxed trance state, little muscle tone. My cuff is in good condition and my technique is superb; I have no reason to doubt those numbers. I can repeat on the other arm if you’d like,” Mary said clearly.

Alice raised her eyebrows.

Mary looked at her and nodded. “Yes, treatment room one. ... Confirming, releasing gas, initiate gaseous anesthesia, follow with IV Thorazine from the emergency kit, continue to monitor vitals until the pickup team arrives.” Mary nodded as Alice set the hissing mask in place covering his face, securing the straps. “Mask in place,” she reported.

Alice nodded and said, “I’ll go get the kit.”

Mary nodded again. “Captain Drake retrieving the kit.”

Alice left the treatment room. Mary held his limp wrist, monitoring pulse and muscle tone. “I have a good, strong pulse and fading muscle tone.”

Mary sighed and hooked a chair with a foot, sliding it closer so she could sit down. She sat with a sigh. “Transport team ETA 40 minutes, roger.”

She rolled her shoulders. It was going to be a long day.

FIN

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