

Shifting Gears

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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.

Not a Good Ride

I commute to work on a bicycle most of the time, about 18 miles each way. Most of it is along Foothill Expressway, which has bike lanes. Well, it has bike lanes, but also commuter traffic, and worse. Some spots can be more exciting than others.

Tuesday morning I'd made it safely past exciting spot one, where the gravel trucks use Foothill between Stevens Creek Boulevard and the freeway on-ramps. Exciting spot two is the Rancho shopping center, where a turn-in lane crosses the bike path, an exit lane immediately following. Why do people think it's a good idea to speed up around bikes, then suddenly slow down and turn right? I ride aggressively in the bike lane, wearing bright cycling jerseys. I could be carrying lit flares and some idiots still wouldn't see me. Maybe carrying a semi-automatic pistol would help.

I made it past the turn-in. Sitting in the exit lane was a Volvo wagon. I looked at the driver, an attractive woman, and said, "Look at me, honey!" I knew she couldn't hear me with her windows rolled up, but I think it helps to make eye contact. She stayed put and I zipped by.

I was going about 30 miles per hour, shifting gears, still accelerating, taking advantage of the slight downhill slope.

Then bam! I flew over the handlebars. I tucked, rolled, and bounced, my feet popping out of the pedals. I came up on my hands and knees, turned at an angle more or less facing the street, just in time to see a minivan run over the front of my bike and continue speeding down the expressway, not even a flicker of its brake lights.

"Fuckwit!" I yelled, reaching for the back wheel of the bike and dragging it out of the roadway. I turned and looked behind me. Oh shit -- the Volvo was coming straight at me. I thought she was going to run me over.

But she stopped maybe twenty feet back and her emergency flashers went on. She got out, looked behind her, and opened the back door. She grabbed a bag and walked quickly to me. I started laughing; I was still alive.

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She set the bag down and was putting on gloves as she introduced herself. “I’m Doris; I’m an emergency room nurse. You seem to be in good spirits considering the spill you took.”

“I’m still alive,” I told her, trying to sit up more.

She knelt down next to me, putting one hand on my shoulder, the other on my helmet.

“Lay back down, please. What’s your name?”

I recognized the drill from my emergency medical training. One of the first things you do is establish level of consciousness. I decided to relax and not worry; I wasn’t going to make my morning meeting.

“Your name is Doris, my name is Bill, it’s Tuesday morning, I’m on my way to work, and I have no idea in the world what sent me flying. The good news is I really didn’t want to attend that meeting anyway. Airway, breathing, circulation are okay. C-spine, don’t know. Bleeding -- probably under my warm-ups; shock -- I’m getting there.”

She smiled. “Okay, here times four. And I don’t think you’re going to work. How hard did you hit?”

“Don’t think I hit my head. Feels like road rash on my knees and right hip, something interesting with my right foot, jammed my left shoulder.”

She started going over me carefully. “This is your lucky day -- I just got off work and was headed home. Can you move your right toes a little; just the toes?”

“Sure,” I told her. My right foot felt funky. I sighed. I didn’t like it.

“Okay, what did I break?” I asked.

As she started to answer I saw another car; a police car pulled in front of us and backed up, emergency lights flashing. I heard a man’s voice say, “Good morning. Can I join the party?”

I said, “Sure.”

Doris said, “We could use an ambulance.”

All of a sudden I didn’t feel very good.

Doris gave the cop the run down. She’d seen me flip, and saw the jerk run over my bike. She also had his license number. I was a little happier; someone was going to get grief.

I got to talk some more, answering their questions. They both recognized me as a bike commuting regular. At one point I went to reach for my wallet, which was in the back pocket of my jersey. Doris put a hand on my shoulder; her other one was still on my helmet.

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“Don’t move. I’ll get it.”

“C spine?” I asked. “I don’t think I hit my head.”

“Well, you hit on your left shoulder, and something put dents and scratches in your helmet. Humor me.”

She pulled my wallet out and they got the rest of the information they wanted. Someone put a blanket over me after she completed her secondary survey; she didn’t like my left collarbone, or my right ankle. Neither did I. The ambulance arrived a few minutes later; I heard the siren coming up the expressway through the morning traffic.

I heard another gal say, “So this is what you do when you get off work!”

“Well hello again you two,” Doris said, “I thought we’d seen enough of each other.”

I was introduced to the paramedics, Bev and Jim. They’d seen Doris a few hours ago, in the El Camino Hospital Emergency Room where she works. They didn’t like the angle of my right foot, and my left collarbone was touchy. Because of the dents in my helmet they did the whole cervical collar and backboard routine. I had Doris call work for me; she told Tina we were going to El Camino. I didn’t have any family or relatives in the area she could call.

They were loading me in the ambulance when I hollered “What about my bike?”

Doris leaned over me and said, “I’ll put it in my car and see you at the hospital.”

I had an I.V. in one arm, an oxygen mask on my face, and Bev sitting beside me. We started off, and I winced at every bump.

It felt as if it took forever, even though it was probably only took a few minutes to go the four miles to the hospital. They wheeled me in and I became the center of activity. About the only thing I remember was complaining when they started cutting off my clothes -- I’d just spent \$80 for the shorts, and the jersey was one I couldn’t replace -- it had been from a ride I’d done in memory of a good friend. I was bounced and jostled some more, and finally someone put a mask over my face and told me to take a deep breath.

Now What?

I woke up bleary eyed, fuzzy headed, and in pain. I was also thirsty. I was in a small room by myself. The clock on the wall said 4:30. I tried to move a bit and hollered. Wow, what a cheap thrill that was! My right foot was in a cast to just above the knee and my left arm and shoulder were taped up and hurt like hell. I didn't want to move my left arm at all. I looked for the control for the bed and a call button; guess which side they were on? As I was planning my attack, a nurse came in.

"How are we doing?"

"I don't know about you, but I've been better," I told her, trying to be civil.

"I'll let doctor know you're awake," she said, and before I could ask her to move the controls around, she left. I closed my eyes and felt the blood pounding in my head.

Hearing footsteps some time later, I opened my eyes and looked to the door. "Tina! Help at last!" I said. Tina is my administrative assistant. She's got kids older than me.

She came over with a look of concern. "How do you feel? What can I do?"

I looked at her. "I feel like shit. You can move the controls over to the right side of the bed so I can use them. That would be a good start."

Between the two of us we got the head of the bed elevated and she helped me to a glass of water. She told me I had a cracked collarbone, broken ankle, road rash, and a concussion.

"So how long am I going to be here?" I asked her.

She frowned. "They haven't told you?"

"You're the first person to give me any information at all. A nurse popped her head in here after I shrieked in pain, but she vanished."

She frowned again, a frown I recognized. I smiled a bit; my condition should be improving soon, and someone wasn't going to like it.

She patted my right shoulder. "I'll be back in a moment."

As she strode out the door I said, "Be gentle."

She turned and frowned, said, "No," and walked out the door, hands in fists at her sides. I didn't want to be the first person she ran into.

Ah well, but that's what's so wonderful about having her support me. The venture capital people insisted we bring in experienced management to run our startup, and helped us

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find some great people. Lou came in to head operations and brought Tina with him. One of the first things he did was have Tina work for me. He said it was because I needed the help. I said it was because I needed housebreaking. She has been a Godsend.

She returned with three people fluttering around her, and she was chewing them all out at the same time. She pointed out things such as the fact that my left arm was not useable, yet everything I'd need, from water to the call button to the controls for the bed were at my left side. She was not pleased that she had to brief me on my condition, as the staff seemed to be unavailable. She was not pleased that I was in a state of pain as well as a state of woeful neglect. When an administrative type started to bleat excuses, Tina cut her off by bluntly stating that her beagles received better care at the vet. I would have laughed louder, but it hurt.

I broke into the party by saying "Tina, your beagles bite; I don't."

Tina gave me a fierce look and said, "That's why I'm here."

I chuckled and said, "Thank you. Now, can someone answer some questions for me?"

As Tina stood there arms folded, still fuming and enjoying herself immensely, the three hospital people all started bleating excuses at the same time. Thankfully that didn't go on too long before a short gal with long black hair pulled back in a ponytail cut through them and walked to the right side of the bed.

"Bill, I'm Doctor Miller. I was tied up down the hall with another patient. How are you feeling, and what can I do for you?"

I smiled. "I'm sorry we're meeting in such circumstances, but I'm glad to meet you."

I looked over to see Tina flushing the others out of the room and closing the door behind them. I laughed a little, and it hurt.

"Doctor Miller, this is Tina Williams, my administrative assistant and protector. She has a heart of gold, she really does."

That got a smile from Tina.

We talked about my condition. I'd done a good job on my ankle, which now had some hardware in it. There wasn't much they could do for the collarbone save to restrict motion of the arm; it wasn't a bad break, just a crack. My helmet had some dents in it; much better to dent the helmet than what was in it. The road rash would be painful but wasn't serious. She'd set up standing orders for pain medication, and would check in on me herself while she was on shift. If there was something I needed, or didn't understand, either my protector or I should definitely ask. She smiled at Tina.

Other than that, I was in for one night, probably two, so I should probably enjoy the rest as best as I could. After that, I'd need a few days resting at home before going back to work. I'd

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need to take it easy for a week or two; I'd be in a cast for probably two months, and with limited mobility for three to six months. I was young enough and in good enough condition that I should heal well and without impairment.

I looked to Tina and sighed. "Will you break the bad news to Lou?"

Tina nodded. She looked to the doctor and said, "Doctor Miller, thank you very much for your time, and your compassion."

I chimed in. "Thank you. I won't be a burden."

Miller laughed and glanced over to the still closed door. "No, you're doing the right thing, both of you. Around here, you get the level of service you demand."

She shook hands with us, then left the room, leaving the door open.

Tina leaned against the bed and sighed. "Bill, what are we going to do with you?"

"Thank you, Aunt Tina. It looks as if I'll be driving to work for a while." There were a few people at our company who didn't relish the idea of their founder and chief scientist spending so much time on a bicycle.

I thought for a moment. "Tina, can you swing by my house and pick up some things?"

She nodded. I wanted her to pick up my travel kit, with the CD player, earphones, ear plugs, and eye shades. Some clothing would also be useful, as would a toothbrush.

What was left of my clothing was in the small closet; my cycling shoes, helmet, keys, and wallet were there. Jersey, shorts, socks, and warm-ups had been cut off and discarded. Damn, that had been one of my favorite jerseys. They'd cut the laces on my bike shoes, but those could be replaced. Tina took my keys and headed off.

After Tina left, a nurse came in with a pill. I took it with some water. She gave me a cross look; she'd probably been chewed on. I thanked her with a smile. What the hell, might as well be pleasant. I laughed to myself; I could be pleasant and use Tina for the nasty stuff.

Just after I took the pill, the cop I'd met in the morning came in. We shook hands. His name was David and he'd seen me commuting for a while. He asked me what I remembered; I still didn't know what sent me flying. But I did recall very clearly seeing that asshole run over my bike and speed off, without so much as a flicker of brake lights. He asked me if I saw the driver swerve into the bike lane. I told him I didn't, although as he sped off, he was definitely well inside the bike lane. David smiled and said Doris saw the jerk move over and deliberately run over my bike; they were going to pay him a visit. I was feeling a little better; part of it was the pill undoubtedly. We talked a bit about bikes and wheels. He recognized a Rolf Vector Pro wheel and knew they cost about \$700 a pair. He shook my hand before he left and told me to take it easy; he thought someone would be replacing my bike.

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I zoned out for a while. Tina returned. When I inquired about dinner, the staff told me I needed to place my order by three in the afternoon. I smiled at Tina; she frowned. Dinner arrived a short while later. It was better than airline food, but not by much.

Lou dropped by later that evening, as did Deb and Larry from my team. Lou told me they'd survive. Deb and Larry told me they were putting pressure on folks to get the high-speed net connection to my house installed earlier than planned. We all agreed it would be a good idea. I think Tina saw I was getting tired; she shooed everyone out.

I put on the eye shades and my headphones and started the CD player going. I usually sleep on my side, so being on my back wasn't comfortable.

For some reason I pulled up the eye shades. Doctor Miller was standing by the bed.

"How do you feel?" she asked.

"Good evening." I said, smiling, removing the headphones. "I think I'm doing better."

She helped readjust my legs, elevated slightly with the knees bent. It was around ten thirty. We talked about not much. I saw her look to the door, so I turned my head to look.

"Doris! Fancy meeting you here!" I said as she walked in the door.

Miller laughed. "I take it you two have met."

Doris chuckled a little. "Yes. I scraped him off the road this morning. I thought I'd drop in before my shift started and see how you were doing."

Miller said, "You're in very good hands. Sleep well."

Doris and I talked. I told her of my police visit, and thanked her for everything she'd done. She gave me her view on my condition. She'd stuck around in the morning and had seen Tina in action. There had been some concern at my low blood pressure and low heart rate until Tina told them how much riding I did. She was impressed at how Tina had taken over, very much to my benefit. She said Tina had told her quite a bit about me, especially once Doris mentioned she was single. I laughed and told her Tina had a heart of gold; she was being protective. Doris told me I was lucky. I winced and moved around a little. I told her I wasn't sure how lucky I was at the moment. I also wondered to myself just what Tina had told her.

She asked if I was in pain; I told her I wasn't sure that was it. I always sleep on my side. I've wanted to learn to sleep on my back, but it's never happened. Maybe it would now, since I didn't have any choice.

Her face lit up and she gave me a warm smile. "I'll talk to Doctor Miller. I have a solution to that."

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Okay, I can get used to drugs for a while I thought.

Before she left, she put the bedpan underneath me, telling me someone would be in to retrieve it in a few minutes.

She was right, and after it was retrieved, I settled in again, wondering whether to call for more pain medication or what. After about twenty minutes Doris returned with another nurse. They closed the door behind them.

Doris stood on the left side of the bed, the other nurse on the right.

Doris said, "I talked to the good Doctor Miller, and she approved. This is my friend Sarah. She works in oncology upstairs."

I looked to Sarah, who was holding a tray with a syringe and a thin tube. "Hi Sarah," I said, trying to figure out what was going on. I was pretty sure I had broken bones, not cancer.

"Bill, Doris told me you'd like to be able to sleep on your back, but can't?"

She had a wonderful voice. She wasn't as cute as Doris; I didn't go for the skinny types - but her voice was something else.

I sighed a little. "Yes, that would be nice."

"Any other things? Problems dealing with stress?" she asked.

A funny question -- I laughed a little; it still hurt to laugh. "Well, you may have heard stress is a problem in Silicon Valley. Some times I wish I could just let go of things, just relax and stop my mind, or at least slow it down. Maybe I do push too hard some times."

She smiled as she extended my right arm. "After tonight, you're not going to have those problems any more." She looked up; I looked over to Doris.

Doris smiled -- what was in that smile?

"We need to turn on the room light for a bit. Okay?"

I started to shrug my shoulders, but my left one hurt. "Sure," I said.

Doris turned on the lights; Sarah raise the head of the bed a little, then put on gloves. I recognized a butterfly needle in its package, sitting next to the loaded syringe.

"If you're looking for a vein, go just above the freckle." I told her.

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Sarah smiled to me. “Thank you, Bill. Why don’t you look at Doris, just look at her. I’m going to give you some medicine that will take away the pain, make you feel a little drowsy, and very, very good. All you have to do is relax and look at Doris.” I felt a little bite as the needle entered my arm. “Good. Relax and look at Doris.”

I looked at Doris, standing there. She moved away from the bed and turned off the bright lights, leaving only the dim one on, then moved back to the side of the bed. She sat on the bed and leaned over me so her face filled my vision. She was very pretty.

“Good, Bill,” Sarah said, “Let me know when you start to feel it.”

A few seconds later I felt warmth filling me. I sighed and my eyes started to close.

“No, keep your eyes open, look at Doris, eyes open,” Sarah said.

I probably moaned a bit; I felt so relaxed now. I managed to open my eyes. Doris was smiling at me. She put a hand on my forehead. That felt very nice.

“That’s it Bill, look at Doris, look into her eyes, and listen to me as you relax more and more.”

I looked at Doris as Sarah’s voice filled me, helping me relax even more. I was happy when I didn’t have to concentrate on her voice, that I didn’t have to remember what she was saying, and even happier when she let me close my eyes. They closed and I couldn’t open them. Her voice went on, taking me through a wonderful meadow, then down some stairs, floating down so I didn’t have to walk, floating down deeper and deeper.

At the bottom of the stairs was a wonderful comfortable bed. I was on my back, but I wasn’t comfortable. Someone asked me what I needed to be comfortable. I heard someone saying, “I need to be held.” Then I was being held, and so comfortable, so happy. Her voice went on and on. I think I heard Doris as well. Maybe I talked to them. It wasn’t important; I was so relaxed, so comfortable on my back.

I woke up on my back. I tried to move and pain flashed through me, reminding me where I was, and why. I reached up with my right hand and pulled off my eye shades. The clock said 6:30. I closed my eyes for a moment. It was so nice, there on my back. I relaxed and felt as if I was floating, rocking gently, almost as if I was being held. It was very nice.

I opened my eyes again and it was 7:15. I took a deep breath, exhaling slowly. I was sore, but well rested. I fumbled for the bed control and raised the head of the bed, rolling my head from side to side.

A nurse came by, seeing I was awake. I smiled and told her, “Good morning.” She took my blood pressure and temperature, and gave me the bedpan. She retrieved the pan a bit later and told me she’d see if she could get my breakfast a bit early. I thanked her.

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I closed my eyes again for a bit, seeing if I could recapture that floating feeling. I could, and it was just as nice as it had been earlier. I heard footsteps on the floor and I opened my eyes, expecting breakfast.

It was Doris. “Good morning, beautiful,” I said, “You are wonderful to see in the morning.” Where had that come from, I wondered, even though that’s what I felt.

She laughed a little. “Well, you seem better this morning than yesterday when we met. I trust you slept well?” She moved to the right side of the bed, putting one hand on my forehead and one on my shoulder. I looked into her eyes and the world started to buzz.

“Oh yes...” I whispered.

She smiled, and her smile filled me with warmth. She moved her hands and slid them along the sides of my head to the back of my neck, and said softly, “Dream time, dream time.”

I sighed and slipped back to that place where I was floating in her embrace. She spoke to me for a while, moving my head back and forth, back and forth so gently, so relaxed.

“Breakfast is here!”

I blinked my eyes open, taking a breath. An orderly brought in a tray and started setting it on the left side of the bed. “Right side, please, I can’t use my left arm,” I suggested. She smiled and moved it over, helping me sit up and get things arranged so I could feed myself. I thanked her very much.

Breakfast was a little better than dinner. I usually ate a banana, maybe a piece of toast, some orange juice, and a handful of vitamins in the morning.

Afterwards I listened to music, zoning out again. I found all I had to do was take a breath, imagine Doris (or was it Sarah?) saying, “Dream time,” as I exhaled, and I was there.

About nine Tina returned. She was joined by Lou and a male doctor. He quizzed me on how I felt, and how much I usually rode a week. I told him I’d been better, and that I usually did a few hundred miles per week; it was good for my blood pressure and resting heart rate.

They were going to do some repeat x-rays that afternoon to be sure things were properly positioned. They’d also get me up for a bit. If things were in place, I’d be thrown out the next morning. That sounded good to me.

Lou, Tina, and I talked business for a while. Lou started getting more hard-core, and eventually Tina interrupted him. “Lou, for God’s sake, he’s got broken bones and a concussion. Let him rest.” We all laughed, and they left soon after.

About eleven I had to pee. I reached for the button, then reconsidered. Hell, they were throwing me out tomorrow; I better figure out how to do this. I had a feeling I was going to be

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living pretty much downstairs in my house for a while; I was glad I'd left the half bath with the walk-in shower when I'd remodeled.

I swung my legs over the edge of the bed and more or less held my breath waiting for a flash of pain. I felt the pressure and the weight of the cast, which went from below my knee to my toes. It was a synthetic, lighter than I'd expected, and blue. I'd have to thank Tina for that -- blue is my favorite color. Let's see -- I didn't think I wanted to put any pressure on my right foot. I got out on the right side of the bed, up against the wall. I couldn't use my left arm, so I hobbled around the periphery of the room using my right arm and left foot, sort of hopping. I made it to the bathroom and the toilet, thankful for the grab bars.

I sighed mightily as I took my seat on the can. It felt good to not use a bedpan.

I'd finished wiping myself when a nurse stuck her head in and said, "What do you think you're doing out of bed?"

I smiled and said, "Peeing," as I flushed. I gave her a big smile and she started to laugh.

She put her hands on her hips trying to be stern, but she was still smiling. "You shouldn't have done that. Do you need help getting back?"

I nodded. "Yes, please." She helped me back to bed, admonishing me to at least call for help the next time.

When I was more or less horizontal again I thanked her very much for her concern.

She smiled and gave me a quizzical look.

"What is it?" I asked.

"You don't *look* like an ogre," she said.

I laughed a bit. It didn't hurt as much as it did last night. "I'm not the ogre, that's Tina, my protector, and she has a heart of gold."

She laughed a bit with me. She asked me if I needed another pain pill. I told her I didn't. She admonished me to call, please, if I needed anything.

I zoned some more. My surf recording worked really well for that. Take that deep breath, imagine her voice, and float.

Lunch was followed by a wheelchair ride for x-rays. I learned how to get in and out of the chair. I'd be able to use crutches in a week or so, when my left arm and shoulder became more useable. They didn't want me to practice using one crutch until I told them, "You mean you don't want me practicing while someone is here to help; you'd rather I practice by myself,

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alone, in my room.” That worked. We practiced, and I agreed I wouldn’t use it on my own unless I really needed to.

Back in bed, I was in pain again --shoulder, leg, and foot throbbing. I put on the eye shades, earphones, and imagined her voice. It worked for a while; the pain seemingly far away.

Doctor Miller insisted I take another pain pill when she visited in the afternoon. She told me the x-rays looked fine, so I was off for home tomorrow. I gave in and took the pill and was able to zone out again.

Tina and Lou came by and stayed through dinner. I wondered out loud how I was going to manage, but Tina laughed and told me everything was under control. When I asked what that meant, she told me I’d find out. Everyone at work was concerned, and glad I wasn’t more seriously injured. Tina told me that everyone was on notice to leave me alone and not try to contact me until I said I was ready. Right now I was supposed to rest.

“Yes, Aunt Tina. Let me know when I’m ready,” I told her. That’s what I call her when she’s being protective, or meddlesome. Right now, I needed all the protection I could get.

Sarah appeared about seven. Tina and Lou left, and Sarah closed the door. I thought I saw a sign hanging on it. As she closed the door she turned off the overhead lights.

As she walked back to me I said, “It’s good to see you. Whatever you did last night helped very much.”

She smiled as she put a hand on my right shoulder. “Good. You’re easy to work with, and a good change of pace for me.”

She told me she usually worked with people dealing with the discomfort and pain of chemotherapy and terminal cancer. I started to ask her what she did with them when she slid her hand softly down my arm from the shoulder to my hand and said, “Dream time, dream time.”

I was floating again, listening to her voice taking me deeper and deeper, more and more relaxed. I quickly got to the place where I didn’t have to listen anymore. All I had to do was float in a sea of warm glowing blue healing energy.

I opened my eyes again with her standing at my side. She smiled softly and said, “I’ll see you later tonight,” then left the room.

I could say what happened was funny, except that it wasn’t. I couldn’t get comfortable. I wasn’t exactly in pain, but I wasn’t enjoying myself either. Music didn’t help; eye shades didn’t help. I kept looking at the clock, wondering how long I could take this.

Finally around ten thirty Sarah and Doris came in, closing the door behind them. I was practically in tears as I looked at them.

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Doris' smile changed to a look of alarm and concern as she approached me.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

"I don't know. I'm so uncomfortable," I told her.

Doris shot a nasty glance at Sarah, who'd set the tray down on the bed and was putting on gloves as I turned to look at her.

"Don't worry Bill," she said, "we're going to take care of that right away."

I watched as she prepared the syringe with the butterfly needle and inserted it into my right arm. She pushed the plunger a little and looked up at me smiling.

"Let me know when you feel it, Bill."

I felt the warmth creep in and the discomfort start to fade. I sighed and relaxed; I'd been holding myself so tight. I felt a hand turn my head, then hands holding my head.

"Open your eyes and look at Doris, Bill. Look at Doris. You want to look at Doris."

I opened my eyes; it was hard. She was above me, looking down. There seemed to be moisture in her eyes, and a slight smile. I started to ask her what was the matter when Doris said, "Dream time, dream time, eyes still open."

My eyes were still open, but I don't know who was looking through them. I was floating and so comfortable again. After a while I got to close my eyes and listen to them speak to me from both sides of the bed.

I may have woken up a couple times, I don't know. I had such pleasant dreams, being held, being rocked, being suckled, and finally drifting off to sleep.

Home Again

I woke up to a twit wanting to take my temperature and blood pressure. I lifted my eye shades; it was 7:20. I asked her to bring me the bedpan. She smiled and left the room.

I was about to push the call button when Doris walked in.

“Good morning,” she said with concern in her voice. “How are you?”

I sighed. “I slept wonderfully; I’m doing pretty well, except for needing to pee.”

She smiled and helped me get up and hobble to the toilet. She put an arm around me and helped me walk. Her touch felt very good.

When I finished, she stabilized me while I washed my hands and face and brushed my teeth. That felt good as well.

“I must be getting pretty gamey; I haven’t had a shower in a few days,” I told her.

She said, “Don’t worry about it,” and patted me on the back. I sighed again.

She helped me back to bed, letting me sit on the edge of the bed with my right leg up and my left on the floor. It felt good to stretch a bit.

She held my right hand and looked me in the eye. “I’m sorry if you were uncomfortable last night, I really am.”

I looked in her eyes. “I hardly remember it. After you and Sarah showed up I felt a lot better. I slept very well.”

She said, “Good,” and helped me back into bed. Breakfast arrived, and she helped set it out on my right side so I could actually eat it. Before she left she leaned over and kissed me on the forehead. “I’ve got some things to do. I’ll see you later.”

I grabbed her hand as she tried to get away. She looked at me with concern.

“That sounds wonderful. Don’t make it too long,” I told her.

She smiled and left. After she left, I started wondering. When would I be seeing her? Why? When was I being thrown out, and how was I getting home? How the hell was I going to get around? I had the futon and the sofa bed downstairs; I’m going to be using them, I guess.

Tina, Lou, a nurse, and a doctor showed up around nine thirty. They helped me put on a T-shirt and an old pair of my sweat pants that had been cut up the leg and sewn a bit. Velcro tabs had been added to close the leg around the cast. My left arm went in a sling, the tape removed along with what little hair I had on that part of my chest.

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I was given my instructions. I could go to work Monday if I felt up to it. No pressure on the right foot. It went on.

I was starting to wonder how I was getting home when Doris appeared pushing a wheelchair, wearing casual clothes. "Ready to go?" she said in a cheery voice.

I was still confused. "I guess so."

My worldly belongings were put in a paper bag. Tina and Lou had taken care of the paperwork. I was loaded into the wheelchair and got to go out through the main door.

"So how am I getting home?" I asked Doris as we headed through the lobby.

"In your car," she said as we went through the doors. I looked out and put my sunglasses on. My two-seat Mercedes was sitting in the patient loading area.

"Who's driving?" I asked as she wheeled me up to the passenger side.

"I am," she said. She pulled the keys out of her pocket, unlocked the door, and helped me in. I noticed a handicapped parking sign hanging from the rear view mirror.

Doris got in and buckled us both. "Comfy?" she asked with a smile.

"Confused. Looks like someone has been busy."

She patted me on the leg as she started the car. "Very. And you don't need to worry."

I sighed. She pulled out of the lot and headed to my place.

"A little more zip than your Volvo?" I asked. She was enjoying driving my little toy.

She grinned at me. "This car is a lot of fun to drive." She laughed a little and said, "Relax baby, just relax," touching the side of my face as she spoke.

Something about the way she said that was magic; it was as if someone turned the world to "soft." I relaxed from the inside out.

As we pulled up to the house she hit the garage door button but didn't pull all the way in. "We'll need the room to get you out."

That made sense. Going in through the garage I'd only have two steps to traverse, as opposed to quite a few going through the front door.

As she opened the door and swung my legs out she said, "I didn't get a wheelchair because I don't think we'll need it. I can always pick one up if we do."

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We? I was still feeling relaxed, but what's this "we" business?

She helped me hobble in past the laundry room and into the hall. As we walked by the downstairs bathroom we peeked in. I noticed some changes.

"Support bars went in yesterday, both for the toilet and in the shower. There's a seat in the shower as well."

We hobbled on to the living room, where I had the stereo and TV. The furniture had been pushed around, and the king-size bed from the guest room upstairs had been set up, headboard and all.

"Wow, someone has been busy," I said as she sat me on the bed.

"Yes. Tina, Lou, Larry, and some others," she said as she swung my legs up on the bed, putting a stiff foam reading pillow behind me to prop me up. "But Tina organized most of it."

I sighed and shook my head. I had such great friends.

"What would you like?" she asked, smiling.

I took a breath. "A can of Dr. Pepper from the fridge, please."

She laughed and said, "Coming right up."

She returned with a cold can and opened it for me. I put it in the can holder attached to the side of my reading table; it had been reassembled to make it right-hand accessible.

She sat on the bed next to me, giving me a soft smile. "Anything else?" she asked.

I was feeling a little more confused. "How about some answers? I'm not sure I can get around by myself yet. I didn't see any crutches in the..."

She put her hands on the sides of my head, slid them around the back of my neck, and kissed me. My eyes closed and I melted into her kiss.

Her lips moved away and she said, "Silly, I'm staying here with you. I'm taking a few days off work. You can't take care of yourself."

I laughed and opened my eyes. "Tina has been saying that since we first met."

Doris laughed along with me and said, "She does have a heart of gold."

I held her hand. "But the couch," I nodded my head to the couch moved over against the wall, "is a sofa-bed. Why not use that?" When my brother and his family came to visit, which

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was every few months, he and his wife slept in the guest room; I got the king-size bed for them. Their kids slept on the sofa bed and futon downstairs.

She frowned a little and shook her head. "Because it's too small."

Too small? For what? I was getting more confused. "What about Sarah, what was that all about? I'm confused."

She smiled at me again. "I'll show you first, explain later. First you need to relax, then we'll shower."

We? I was about to say something when she slid her hands around the sides of my head again and said, "Dream time, dream time."

My head fell back as my eyes closed and I was floating again. I listened to her voice as she helped me undress.

I awoke on my back. She was straddling me, and we were both naked.

"Bill," she said softly, "would you like to make love with me?"

I tried to raise both arms to her and winced. I caressed her side with my right hand.

"Oh yes, please," I whispered in reply.

She took in a ragged breath as I caressed the side of her breast with my fingers, and her eyes closed as I lifted it gently, feeling its weight and warmth, then lowered my hand so her nipple just grazed my palm as I moved my hand under her.

Her eyes opened filled with fire. She lowered herself down on top of me and we kissed. At one point she must have squeezed or pressed my left shoulder as I winced and sucked in air.

"Oh I'm sorry darling," she said as she kissed me again. As we kissed she grazed my chest with her nipples and breasts. I was stiff and soon so were her nipples.

She moved and took me inside her, so wet, so hot, so tight. We both moaned as we slid together. My eyes closed and my back arched as I moved my hips to fit better against her. We rocked together as she said, "Oh my God," over and over.

She shifted her hips, taking me deeper. Then I felt her arms near my head, her hands above my shoulders. She rocked on me with abandon, squeezing my neck between her forearms.

It was too much for me; I moaned and came inside her. I felt her grind against me faster, harder. I opened my eyes to see the frustration on her face as I felt myself softening.

"Oh Doris, I'm sorry. It's been so long, so long. I told her.

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She sighed and smiled. "That's okay. We've got time." She grabbed my T-shirt and stuck it between her legs as she moved off me with a slurping sound. She sat at my side, a hand running over my chest.

"You felt so good inside me," she said.

I put a hand on her thigh. "I agree."

I frowned momentarily. "How long are you staying? What about your job?"

She moved her hand to smooth out my brow. I melted under her touch as she told me, "I'm off until Monday, when I start day shifts for a while. Is that okay, or am I going to fast?"

I laughed a little, forcing my eyes open and moving her hand from my forehead. "I thought it was my problem being too fast."

She looked at me, smiling. "Don't you like that?"

I sighed as I held her hand, then kissed her fingers. "It's wonderful. You do that and I melt. I've never experienced that before."

She straightened a little. "Care for an explanation, or should we shower first?"

I was learning; I shrugged just my right shoulder. "We're here...."

She sighed. "I told you Sarah works in oncology, mainly with people in active chemo, and also with intractable pain. She helps them deal with the pain and discomfort, and more."

"How?" I asked.

She smiled at me. "Hypnosis. And I thought of her when you mentioned not being able to sleep on your back. You don't have that problem anymore, do you?"

I laughed. "I sure don't. I close my eyes, imagine either of you saying those magic words, and I'm off floating somewhere."

"And dealing with the pain?" she asked.

I looked into her eyes. "It would be so easy to close my eyes and just be there..."

She put a hand on my forehead and said softly, "Then do it, darling. Go there, go there now, and tell me about it. You can go there and still talk to me."

I could and did as she stroked my forehead. "I'm floating in a sea of blue healing light, all around me, seeping into me, filling me, healing me and taking away the pain." I felt myself

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rocking gently. “And now I’m rocking back and forth, so safe, so comfortable, so...” I stopped talking when a nipple filled my mouth.

“Floating in my embrace,” her voice reached me from far away. “Floating in my arms and healing, relaxing, letting go of the pain, of tension.”

I floated that way for a while. Eventually her nipple pulled away and her voice asked me to wake up. It felt like coming up from underwater, but eventually I opened my eyes and took a deep breath. I looked into her eyes, her face over mine.

“Thank you.” I whispered.

She shook her head gently and smiled. “You look so peaceful, so relaxed.”

I sighed and felt her waist. “So can we use that to lengthen my fuse and shorten yours?”

She gave me a wry smile. “Why not? A good idea. Feel like a shower?”

I closed my eyes and pulled her down to me a bit. “In a while.”

She laughed and pulled away. “Oh no you don’t. You can have your nap after we shower. I need a nap as well; I worked last night.”

With that she moved off the bed. She helped me up and we hobbled to the bathroom together. The shower stall is fairly large; it’s held three people at once. It now had grab bars and a metal seat in it. Doris had me sit on the seat, then opened the cabinet under the sink.

“How do we keep my leg dry?” I asked.

She held up what looked like a leg shaped bag made of heavy clear plastic, with a round diaphragm-like seal at the top. “These are great,” she told me as she slid it on. “They keep out the water and still let you bathe. You can even soak in the tub wearing one.”

It did seem to seal around my leg pretty well. It was long enough to go over the knee, so the road rash on my knee was kept dry. The bruises on my hip were just starting to turn colors.

We showered together, with Doris doing the work. I could only help a little, with my left arm still pretty much useless and resting in my lap. It felt really good to be clean again. It was also wonderful to kiss her and suck on her in the shower.

“Ah, you’re starting to get carried away, I guess shower time is over,” she told me.

“You’re no fun,” I gave her a mock pout.

She laughed and slid her fingers over my rapidly inflating cock. “Some parts of you seem to be enjoying it.”

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She gave me another kiss, then we dried off. She dried me, then herself, then slipped the thing off my leg. I sat on the can to pee as I combed my hair. She used a hair drier on hers.

She looked to me and said, "Thank you very much for not urinating in the shower."

I chuckled and said, "Not a problem. I won't do it -- when you're showering with me."

She shuddered momentarily then laughed. She stepped out of the bathroom, leaving me stranded on the can.

"Hey!" I hollered.

"Don't worry, I'm turning down the bed."

She returned and helped me to bed. She crawled in and slid over next to me, moving up. "Now where were we," she said as she lowered a nipple to me.

I closed my eyes and accepted her gift. "Dream time, dream time," was the last thing I heard for a while.

I woke up hungry a little after noon. She was sleeping quietly beside me. Hmmmm... If I'm going to be without the use of an arm for a while, and otherwise limited in mobility, maybe I should get a little refrigerator to keep by the side of the bed. I was very thirsty. I started to move a little to the edge of the bed.

"Where do you think you're going?" she said a little sleepily. I lay back down and she snuggled up to my side. We snuggled together for a while. I drifted in and out of sleep with more wild dreams, floating again.

I woke up to her propped up on an elbow beside me, smiling.

"Like some lunch?" she asked.

"Did you hypnotize me again?" I asked her.

"What do you think?" she asked as she lowered a nipple to me again.

I kissed it briefly, and just started to settle in when she pulled away.

"I'll get you another shirt. Be right back down," she said as she hopped out of bed. I thought about sinking back into that healing place, but opened my eyes and pulled myself up, flipping the covers off me. I moved my left arm cautiously; it was coming back.

I was still moving it when she reappeared. "Good, keep it up, but slowly. You'll regain most use in a week. You're not going to be doing pushups or pull-ups for a while though."

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She helped me get the T-shirt on; she was wearing another one of mine. “You fill out that shirt very nicely,” I told her.

She laughed as she slipped on a pair of sweats, then helped me into mine. We hobbled to the kitchen and she sat me in a chair, my foot up on another chair. “What would you like?”

“Peanut butter and jelly sandwich, and a Dr. Pepper,” I answered without a thought.

She looked horrified. “Do you know how much fat is in peanut butter?”

“Do you know what my percentage of body fat is?”

She chuckled. “Okay. But, you need to be careful -- you’re not burning calories at the rate you’re used to. You need to cut intake or you’re going to put on weight quickly.”

I nodded. “Yes, thank you. Hadn’t thought of that. Make it half a sandwich.”

We had a simple lunch and talked about things. It turned out she’d seen me commuting for a year or more. She really liked her job; she liked the adrenaline rush it gave her. She sighed though as she spoke, and admitted it was hard some times, and took its toll. She stood and came over to me. I put an arm around her and held her.

“Does this help?” I asked, as she put her arms around me.

“Oh yes, it helps so much.” She started rocking me, and I started fading fast.

I gave her a squeeze. “Why don’t you plop me in my office, and you go back to bed for some more rest?”

She sighed and stepped back. I looked up into her eyes.

“That does sound pretty good. Sure you don’t want to join me?”

I laughed a bit and felt her leg. “You need the rest. You look tired.”

She sighed. “You’re right. Okay, but you have to call me if you need anything.”

She helped me into the office, then kissed me on the head once I was in the chair.

“Don’t work too hard or too long.”

I dialed into work and checked email. As expected, I had a pile of messages wishing me well. I spent too much time with email and catching up on the net. I sent a note to the cycle club telling them I didn’t expect to be participating in any rides for a while.

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I sent another note to my friend Meg; she runs a local bike store. I told her I had good news and bad news. The bad news was that I'd broken some bones and wouldn't be riding for a while. The good news was that I'd crashed my bike, and I wanted her to rebuild it.

After a while my foot started to throb; I wasn't used to it being down. I scooted the chair back a bit and propped my right leg up on the desk. That felt better. As I felt the throbbing in my foot I closed my eyes, took a deep breath, and let myself sink into that healing place again.

I opened my eyes a while later; my butt and lower back were beginning to feel it now. Leg down, I pushed the chair to the door and across the hallway to the bathroom. I heard Doris talking, laughing; she must be using the cordless phone. I got into the bathroom and successfully maneuvered myself onto the can. Unfortunately the chair slid away from me.

I finished my business and tried to stand; no dice. I sat back on the can and said at moderate volume "Oh help! I'm stuck!"

Doris had to move the chair out of the doorway to get to me. She sighed as she did, hands on her hips. "You are going to be trouble, you know that?"

I smiled back and told her, "It's one of the things I'm very good at -- ask Tina."

She laughed and helped me back to the bed. "How are you doing?" she asked as I got repositioned on my back, a pillow placed under the right leg, elevating it a bit.

"Feels better to have my foot up; I think that's what got to me," I told her. "How are you doing? Have a good nap?"

She sat on the bed next to me. "Yes I did. Unfortunately I've gotten used to shift changes, and know what I need to do to make the transition."

An idea was forming in my mind; I looked at the back rest sitting on the bed. It was a right triangle made out of foam, one long side and one short side. Short side down it was a good prop for sitting up. Long side down...

"Sort of like jet lag when traveling?" I asked.

She sighed. "Something like that, except you're still in the same place when it's over.

"I've got an idea. Why don't you slide that thing under me." I flopped it onto its long side with my good hand. She shrugged and helped prop me up putting me at a gentle angle.

"No, more toward the middle of the bed," I told her, and we got me repositioned.

"Now what?" she asked.

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I smiled. “Why don’t you get naked and sit on my face. I’ve heard a good orgasm is the best way to combat jet lag.”

She smiled and started peeling off her T-shirt. “Sounds like a great idea to me.”

Then she hopped off the bed. I heard the toilet flush a bit later; she was evidently in the bathroom. Then I heard the water running for a while; she must be waiting for warm water. I thought I heard a moan in there as well.

She came back into the room, her hips swaying. “That feels much better,” she said, climbing on the bed and straddling me. She started slipping off my shirt and underwear.

“That can wait until later -- it’s your turn,” I told her.

She ran her fingers along my shaft, causing my eyes to close. “I’m just planning ahead.”

I couldn’t fault her for that. She slipped me out of my T-shirt and worked her way up, letting me kiss her lips, then nipples, then work down her stomach, all the way to heaven.

She was warm, moist, and smelled heavenly as she settled in straddling my head. I kissed gently and nuzzled for a while before I started in with my tongue.

Even before my tongue touched her the first time, she was moaning and moving appreciatively as I kissed her and breathed hotly on her. The first touch of my tongue brought a gasp and a sharp movement of her hips. Soon she was gasping and rocking her hips, fucking my tongue. She leaned a little more into me, giving me more access to her delicious taste. I slid my right hand over and started sliding a finger into her.

“Oh God yes!” she cried, her sounds getting more high pitched. Matching her motion, she started pressing down on me harder, her hips moving with more urgency, until they suddenly stopped and she shuddered. I heard the headboard creak and felt her weight shifting forward a bit. I sucked gently at her button and teased it a bit.

“Oh God no,” she said weakly. I kissed her as she moved her hips slowly.

As she pulled away she brushed my left shoulder, sending a wave of pain through me; either I remained quiet or she was too far gone to notice any noise I made.

She slid down me and used one hand to guide us together. We both moaned. I tilted my hips to her and was rewarded by fitting into her even better. I closed my eyes, enjoying the feeling, enjoying being able to last longer than earlier in the day. And I did, until I felt her nipples brush against me. She slipped a hand behind my head and pulled me to her as she moaned again. I filled her again, and this time I was so relaxed.

I drifted for a while, still propped up. The foam against my back was beginning to itch; I was thinking about covering it with something when I heard the doorbell ring.

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It was like swimming up from deep water; it took me a while to get my eyes open and get oriented again. By that time Doris had hopped up and gone to the door.

“Hi! Come on in.” I heard her say. What was she wearing? Who was here?

Sarah walked into the room with Doris. Doris was wearing one of my T-shirts, with a pair of my jockey shorts tucked between her legs. Sarah was wearing her uniform for work. I was naked in bed with a sheet and blanket covering me.

Sarah sat on the edge of the bed; Doris went around to the other side.

“How are you doing today?” Sarah asked.

“Better, I think, thanks to your help,” I told her.

She smiled. “You’re welcome; it’s rare I get to work with healthy people.”

I snorted. “I’ve felt a lot healthier.”

She laughed, as did Doris. “Relatively speaking. You’re still in great shape.”

Doris growled, “I’ll say.”

Sarah continued. “Doris and I talked earlier. There were some things I wanted to check. So right now...” She touched the sides of my head gently. The sensation was electric. She slid them to the back of my head as she said, “Dream time, dream time.”

I woke up flat on my back. I turned my head; Doris was asleep next to me. I turned the other direction and looked at the clock. It was almost six. Sarah had gotten here a little before four. Wow. I closed my eyes and remembered her touch and felt the world fading again. It was such a pleasant sensation.

I opened my eyes and looked at Doris again. I wanted to touch her and moved my left hand. Or I tried to; the flash of pain cleared my head quickly, just like too much wasabi on a piece of sushi. I laughed; that would sure be good tonight. I haven’t eaten very much recently.

She moved some, opened her eyes, and propped herself up on an elbow next to me.

“Hi beautiful.” I told her. “Sleep well?”

She blinked and shook her head a little. “Yes, I did.”

She looked a little confused.

“So what happened?” I asked her.

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She sat up, putting a hand on my chest. “I’m really not sure. Sarah put you under, and we worked with you for a while. Then we talked, and after that I don’t remember anything until I woke up next to you. And that’s a wonderful way to wake up.”

“Thanks. I think you’re pretty sneaky though.”

“Oh?” she asked with raised eyebrows.

“Yeah, being on my left side so I can’t grab you -- yet.”

“We can switch sides. I thought that side of the bed would be better for you.”

I held her hand with my right. “It is. Thanks. I’ve got a question for you.”

“Okay, what?”

“You like Japanese food?”

“Love it. That what you’re thinking about for dinner?”

“Yes, and I know where I’d like to take you.”

“Where’s that?”

“Ever been to Ikenohana in Cupertino?”

“Nope, not until tonight. Let me help you sit up.”

She got both of us dressed and into the car. She helped me into the restaurant on my crutches, and we were seated immediately. We arranged the chairs so my right leg was up on the chair on the other side of the table, next to Doris.

We packed away raw fish and some tempura. Their miso soup is great. We talked about random things. We talked about Sarah. Doris had known her about three years.

The first time they’d met was in the emergency room. They had an injured teenager who was in pain, but couldn’t be given drugs until the extent of his injuries was determined. One of the docs suggested calling Sarah. Doris sat by the kid’s side, holding him, as Sarah hypnotized him and helped him deal with the pain. In the process, she also hypnotized Doris and an intern.

I suggested she must be pretty popular around the E.R. then. Doris laughed and told me that some docs treated her as if she practiced witchcraft. Sarah worked mainly with the pain cases, but she’d had success assisting with childbirth, and was developing a following there.

I shook my head. Whatever she did, I was certainly convinced of its effectiveness.

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With that I moved a little and winced.

“About ready to go?” she asked me.

“Yeah, my butt is going numb from sitting like this,” I told her.

I paid the check and she helped me out, slower this time. We got home and she sat me on the downstairs can. I think she ran upstairs to use one of the other bathrooms. How clean was the upstairs? I’m fairly neat, but I certainly hadn’t been expecting a house guest. I hadn’t been expecting a bike wreck and broken bones either.

Damn, everything was on my left side. I could reach the toilet paper with my right though. Funny how you get used to doing things with one hand, and they just don’t feel or work the same with the other hand.

I stood up briefly on one leg and put the toilet lid down. That way I could sit on it and turn to more or less reach the sink. I managed to brush my teeth and was just about done when she reappeared.

“You’re certainly adapting well,” she told me with a smile.

“Thanks. I’m glad you’re here.”

“So am I,” she said softly.

She helped me back to bed. We were both tired again. She held me gently and started speaking softly. That’s all I remember.

I woke up in the middle of the night needing to pee. By the time I managed to sit up at the edge of the bed, Doris was awake. She helped me to the bathroom.

“Sorry about that,” I told her when we were back in bed.

“Nonsense,” she said. “That’s why I’m here.”

I chuckled. “I hope that’s not the only reason.”

With that she moved over and straddled me, lowering a nipple to me. I started sucking, she started speaking softly again, and I was off to sleep.

Even without an alarm, I woke up at the usual time Friday. Doris was still asleep, and my bladder wasn’t about to burst, so I closed my eyes again. I felt that tingling in my temples and remembered Sarah’s voice, speaking softly. It was weird; it felt as if her voice was so far away. And thinking about it, remembering it, I could hear her voice but I couldn’t understand it, but that didn’t bother me as I knew I didn’t have to remember what she said.

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Some time later the phone rang. My head cleared slowly, and by the time I was moving, Doris had gotten the phone.

“Yes, yes. Okay, we’ll be here.” She pushed the “off” button on the phone and tossed it to the bed. Then she smiled and leaned over to kiss me.

As she helped me sit up, I said, “Good morning to you too... Who was on the phone?”

“Your cable modem will be here between nine and eleven,” she told me.

I almost said, “And I promise not to come in your mouth,” but stopped, laughing.

“What’s so funny?” she asked.

“I don’t know. This is such a weird trip. Sarah’s voice -- it seemed so far away, and this feeling I get in my head. Wow. I get this feeling in my head, and I think of her voice, the feeling gets stronger, and things start to fade, her voice starts getting far away...”

I looked at Doris. Her eyes were half closed and her face relaxed. “Doris?” I said softly. Her eyes closed briefly then opened as she took a deep breath.

She smiled and said, “I know, it’s quite a feeling.” She took another deep breath. “Shall we shower?”

I don’t know if I was better or worse than the day before. We showered and dressed, then had a bite to eat. I was itchy, wanting to get back into bed with her, wanting to curl up again.

But we had to wait for our visitor, who showed up around half past ten. Actually, it was visitors -- along with the cable guy was Dale from our information technology group at work. When I gave him the eye, he told us he was along to insure everything went well, and the tunneling software was set up. The cable guy didn’t mind. I didn’t even stay in the room.

They took about half an hour to give me blazing fast net access, which included a secure virtual circuit to the systems at work -- very cool.

The first thing I did, having been in the computer business for a while, was to back up everything. As I was getting the backup started, Doris came into the room.

“Bill, I’ve got a question for you.”

“Okay?”

“Can I trust you to stay out of trouble if I leave for about an hour?”

“I think so, if you help me to the bathroom first.”

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I went to the can again. I agreed that I wouldn't try anything even moderately difficult, and I'd keep the portable phone with me. She took off.

I was itchy to use the damn computer, but I didn't want to touch it until the backup completed. Talk about watching water boil -- it was hard not to jump into things. I knew I could do other things while the backup was running, but I also knew I was taking a chance, and would be happier with a solid backup, even if I never used it.

The ringing phone came to my rescue. I tried to reach for it with my left hand, as usual, and was reminded as to why that wasn't a good idea. I answered it right handed.

"This is Bill," I said.

"Hi Bill, this is Sarah. How are you doing?"

I sighed, and concentrated on not drifting away. "Sarah, do I have questions for you!"

She laughed. "So you're feeling better?"

"Yes, thank you. But I want to understand what's going on."

"Oh, like what?"

"Oh, like that feeling I get in my head, especially when I remember your voice coming from someplace far away. God, I think about it, say it, and it starts happening."

I heard her sigh; her voice started doing weird things. It was almost as if I was hearing her through both ears and from far away, even though I had the phone up to my right ear alone.

"Bill, relax. I'll be happy to explain. Is Doris there?"

I found I could talk without leaving the place I was in. "No, she left a little while ago and won't be back for another forty minutes or so."

"Can you let me in if I come over now?"

"Yes, I can get to the door in my chair."

"Good. Now I want you to close your eyes and listen to my voice..."

The phone was on the table by the computer and my backup was done. What happened? One moment I'm talking on the phone, the next moment... Weird. Wonderful, but weird.

Oh well. I connected to work and checked email. I had stuff from Lou and Tina, and a bunch of get-well messages. I did the get-well stuff first, then dug into the Lou and Tina stack.

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The doorbell rang. I hollered, "I'm coming, but it may take me a while." I rolled out of the office in the chair and pushed myself to the front door.

I opened the door to Sarah standing on the step.

"What's wrong?" she asked.

I laughed. "Nothing, why? Come on in. Help push me back."

She came in and I closed the door. She helped push me back to the living room. "You had the most interesting look on your face, as if I was some creature you'd never seen before."

She helped me back up on to the bed. She sat on the foot of the bed.

I looked at her; I knew I was giving her that same look. "I don't know what's happened to me. I've never experienced anything like it, and I don't understand it."

She smiled. "Does that scare you, or bother you?"

I thought for a moment. "No, I'm not scared, because I figure whatever is going on, I'm doing it. It's just..."

She told me she'd used some very powerful techniques from the start, and I was a very good subject. A lot of what I was experiencing, such as the distance her voice took, were typical of deep trance states.

"Do you find those states pleasurable, Bill?"

As I thought about it, my eyes closed and I felt the feelings growing again. I barely whispered, "Very much."

I felt the bed move a little and felt her stroking my arm as she said, "And because they are, you find it so easy to go back there, to where you are floating in my voice, so relaxed..."

When I awoke again I felt great, so relaxed and refreshed. I looked at Sarah and shook my head. "That is amazing. What did you do for me? What did you do for Doris?"

She said, "Doris?"

I laughed. "Yeah, this morning I told her about those sensations, God, I feel them starting to build again now. As I told her about it this morning, I watched her face relax and her eyes half close."

Shifting Gears

Sarah nodded. “Yes, I’ve worked with her, mostly with stress. With you, it’s been dealing with the pain and helping you heal, helping you sleep on your back, helping you cope with the new situations you find yourself in as a result of your injuries.”

“Having a longer fuse with Doris, and her having a shorter fuse with me?” I asked.

“Would you like that? Do you mind? Some people have problems with that.”

I leaned back more and sighed. “It’s a new exploration for me. I could use more help dealing with stress, being able to relax better and not let things get to me. Is that why I’m not more frustrated? Now that I think of it, I’m surprised I’m not climbing the walls, freaking out over my bike, things like that.”

She nodded again. “The most important thing for you to do right now is rest and get better. Worrying doesn’t help, and the energy you put into worrying is all the less energy you can put into healing.” As she said that, it was as if I was hearing an echo of her voice coming from that far away place; my eyes started drifting closed again.

“Bill, awake and alert again, awake and alert,” she said, and my eyes popped open as I took a breath. I laughed a bit.

“You really like that, and you really need it; that’s why it’s happening so strongly,” she said. “When’s the last time you had a vacation?”

I frowned, then smiled. “You sound like Tina and Lou. Not for a couple of years probably. No, more like four or five.” My honesty surprised me a little. “Is that part of it too? I can’t imagine admitting something like that to myself, let alone to others, even though it’s true.”

“Not holding back is important. You need to let things out. But don’t worry, you don’t have to worry about blurting out things in crowds. You’ll only tell people you’re comfortable with and feel safe with.”

I nodded. “That’s good. And who can send me off to this nether world?”

She smiled. “Doris and I. And only when you feel safe and secure. You know at a very deep level that nobody can make you do anything you don’t want to do, or use this to hurt you.”

I sighed. “God... You use that tone of voice, you look at me that way, and it’s like my mind opens up for you to rearrange.”

“Does that bother you?”

I sighed. “No! I’m wondering what else I’d like changed while you’re in there!”

She nodded and leaned over, touching my leg. “Good, that’s very good. Let me know what you’d like to change, and we can talk about it.”

Shifting Gears

I didn't have to think very long for one thing. "How about less sensitivity to pain?"

She smiled. "Have you noticed your foot doesn't hurt much at all?"

I thought about it, and realized I'd had sprains that had been more painful.

Sarah continued. "You're doing a very good job at controlling pain from your foot and leg. But in other parts of your body, such as your clavicle and shoulder, pain is nature's way of telling you not to do something. It's very protective, and right now, you need protecting."

That was Doris' cue to return, coming in through the front door. I heard her set something down, must have been in the laundry room. Then she walked into the living room.

"Hi, I thought I recognized your car. Been here long?" she asked Sarah.

Sarah smiled. "Not long. I called to see how the two of you were doing and Bill answered. He had a lot of questions, so I came over. How are you doing?"

"Great. I've got more stuff to unload from the car."

"I'll give you a hand."

The two ladies left, to return with bags of groceries and other stuff that must have gone elsewhere in the house.

I heard them unloading stuff in the kitchen. They finally returned to the living room.

Sarah touched a finger to Doris' forehead and slid it slowly down her forehead. I watched Doris' eyes close and her head fall forward. Sarah moved her to sitting in the chair, and knelt by her side. She stroked her arms as she whispered something I couldn't hear. I felt myself slipping as well, and also felt an incredible hard-on.

Sarah turned and smiled. She sat on the edge of the bed, looking at Doris.

"Doris, can you hear me?" she asked.

Doris answered softly but clearly, "Yes."

"Do you like being hypnotized?" she asked.

"Oh yes," Doris answered. I couldn't believe how erotic this was.

Sarah moved closer, smiling. She touched my cock, rock hard in my sweat pants. I thought I was going to come. Then she touched my forehead, and as she spoke, everything faded.

Shifting Gears

Then I was sitting up on the bed again, with Doris sitting beside me and Sarah in the chair. I blinked and took a breath; I could hear Doris taking a deep breath as well. Doris and I exchanged glances, then looked back to Sarah.

She laughed softly. "I need to get to work. Have fun -- I'll see you tomorrow."

I turned to Doris, looked at her, and laughed. She smiled and shook her head.

"What did your friend do to us?" I asked her.

She smiled. "I have some great new ways of hypnotizing you."

I was going to ask her to show me when she grabbed the back rest and put it behind me to incline me, helping me lie back. Then she started drawing circles on my forehead with a finger.

I woke up hearing things in the kitchen and smelling something good. I shook my head a little to clear it and sat up. As I moved my left shoulder I called out, "What's for dinner?"

Doris walked in, wearing one of my T-shirts and the chili apron I use when I barbecue.

"That's a very attractive outfit," I told her.

She smiled and held out a wooden spoon with some rice on it. I had a taste.

"That's good, and I'm starving!"

She laughed a little. "Dinner in about fifteen minutes. Need to use the bathroom?"

I nodded. "Please."

She walked into the kitchen and returned sans spoon, then helped me to the can.

As soon as I sat down, the phone rang. She went and answered it. "Hello? Yes, he's here. Oh, he's doing pretty well considering. No, nothing serious. Okay, here he is."

She came into the bathroom and handed me the phone, kissing me on the head.

I said, "Hi," into the phone.

"And who the hell is that?" It was Meg, and she sounded pissed.

I sighed. "Thanks for calling, Meg. Her name is Doris. She's a nurse from El Camino, and she's ... taking care of me for a while."

Shifting Gears

Meg was upset, especially that I hadn't called her immediately. I was surprised at the strength of her reaction. We talked about the accident, the damage to my bike, and to me. She shared my grief when I told her they'd cut my jersey off at the hospital -- the one I'd been wearing was a commemorative jersey from an event a few years ago, and couldn't be replaced.

We agreed to drop my bike off at the shop Saturday. I told her it wouldn't be any hurry, as I wouldn't be riding for a few months. She was really sorry to hear that.

I told her I'd see her tomorrow. She told me to take care, and call her if I needed anything. She sounded kind of sad as I hung up the phone.

I wiped and flushed; Doris reappeared in the doorway.

"So who was that?" she asked.

I looked at her and smiled. "She had the same question," I told her.

We stopped in the living room for me to pick up the remote for the stereo and start some music. Then she helped me to the table, propping my leg up.

Dinner was a rice casserole, salad, and white wine. She'd even found candles.

"Who was that on the phone?" she asked softly a bit later.

I put down my fork; I probably sighed. My brow was furrowed and I felt a little confused. Meg's reaction, the strength of it, surprised me. We'd known each other for quite a few years and been good friends.

"An old girl friend?" Doris asked.

I looked up and smiled. "Not quite, and I think that may be part of it."

She gave me an inquisitive look. I told her about Meg, and her bike shop. I'd known her for many years. I told Doris of the mess Meg had gone through, discovering her boyfriend of many years in bed with a man, the trauma that had been, and trying to help her through that.

She smiled and gave me an inquisitive look, her head tilted to one side.

I chuckled and said, "I don't understand why we didn't get together either. But I'm happy things worked out the way they have."

She gave me a dreamy smile. I picked up my knife and whacked the cast with the heavy end. "Pretty much anyway. It's a hell of a way to pick up women."

She laughed and said, "But it works really well."

Shifting Gears

We talked as she cleaned up the kitchen, then we moved back to the bed where we continued talking. It had been so long since I'd spent time talking to someone outside work. We talked about her job, and about mine. We talked about Sarah. I told her a bit more about Meg, and that we needed to drop off my bike between ten and eleven the next morning.

I switched music from new age to classical. We talked about life in the Valley; I could tell she was a bit envious of my success. I told her the price of that success; three years of nonstop long hours with a startup that didn't make it, and now two years with one that had paid off very well. I mused aloud at the tone of voice Meg had used. She was such a great gal.

I'd lost track of the time; it was a little after ten. Doris helped me up for my nighttime bathroom routine. She installed me in bed afterwards and did hers.

Something inside me called for Beethoven's 7th Symphony, the second movement. I restarted it as she came to bed. We made gentle love to its slow cadence and gradual buildup. Something in the music, something in her; whatever it was brought me to a crashing orgasm. I faded out to the music, and Doris holding me to a nipple.

We woke the next morning, made love, and showered. After a light breakfast, I showed Doris how to take the top down on my car. She got my bike, which had been hiding in a corner.

I thought I was going to cry. The front wheel was trashed. The carbon fiber front fork was gone, as was the front brake. I didn't know if the titanium frame was intact or not. The right pedal was shot, and the gear rings didn't look good. I don't know which was more painful - the damage to the bike, or knowing I wouldn't be riding for many months. We loaded it into the car, along with my crutches, and headed to the bike shop, pulling around the back.

Danny stuck his head out the door; he practically lives at the shop. By looking at him, you wouldn't think he had an art history degree from Stanford. He saw me and waved, then ducked back in the shop.

A little while later Meg came out with him. I was standing up on the crutches and Doris was getting the bike out. Meg came over to me in tears and gave me a gentle hug.

I introduced Doris, and told Meg with a surprising amount of emotion in my voice that Doris had saved my life. I was even more surprised when Meg smiled and gave Doris a hug.

Danny was in tears over my bike. We went in the back of the shop; Danny and Meg grabbed some chairs. Doris and I crashed on the cot Danny keeps in one corner of the shop.

We went over the sordid tale again. I learned more about what happened, and about my prognosis, from Doris. She told me, and the others, that I needed to take it easy and allow things to heal. Meg shook her head at that, and told Doris that other than keeping me flat on my back, she didn't know how that would happen. Doris said, "Oh, I'm working on that," and gave me a wicked smile. We all laughed, even Meg.

Shifting Gears

Doris asked Meg to take pictures of the bike as is, and keep good records of everything that had to be done; someone would be paying for the repairs.

Danny was shaking his head. He couldn't tell if the frame was bent or not. If it was.... Doris put a hand on my back and moved it up to my neck. That seemed to take all the worry out of me. Meg smiled and told us all the parts I needed would be at her cost.

Doris got me loaded back into the car, then went into the shop again. She didn't come out for a few minutes.

"She's quite a gal," Doris said as we drove off.

"Yeah, she is. So what did you talk about?"

She gave me an overly innocent questioning look.

I laughed and said, "Okay, you'll tell me if you want to."

"Tell you what?" she asked.

I shook my head. "I'm sorry I can't use my left hand. I'd love to give you a squeeze."

She smiled and said, "Good."

Pride and the Fall

We got home and she helped me to the bathroom again, then installed me in the office. She brought me another can of Doctor Pepper, kissed me on the head, and said, "I'm going to go get some more things from my place, okay?"

"Please, whatever you need," I told her.

She turned my head so I was looking at her. "I'll only be gone a little while, and I expect you to behave. Got it?"

I smiled and nodded. "Yes dear, I'll behave."

She laughed a little. "Why don't I believe you?"

"Because you're as smart as you are beautiful?" I answered.

She sighed and gave me a kiss, then left with my car.

I had to go to the bathroom about an hour later. I started wheeling out in the chair, but my crutches were by the office door. I easily had enough leg strength to stand on one leg; what the hell. I got up on the crutches. My left arm was still pretty useless, and I couldn't take weight on the left shoulder, so I went with just the crutch on the right. I hobbled successfully to the bathroom and placed myself triumphantly on the can.

After completing my business I turned and washed up, sitting sideways on the toilet and going at the sink from the side. As I was finishing up I heard a car pulling into the garage.

I got up quickly, grabbing the crutch. Just as I heard the door to the garage open and close, the crutch tip went out from under me with a clatter and a crash.

I pulled my right leg up and grabbed the sink with my right hand as the crutch clattered noisily into the hallway. Damn that was close, I thought as I wobbled there, stabilizing myself.

Doris rushed over and looked at me in shock; I was still straightening up.

"Damn you!" she yelled, sweeping in and picking me up, then carrying me over and dumping me on the bed.

"Damn you! I leave for a few minutes, and what do you do! One stupid move like that is all it would take to leave you crippled for life! Is that what you want?"

I was shocked. I reached for her hand. "Doris, I'm sorry. I won't do it again. I promise. It scared me too."

Her hands were shaking as she took my hand. She sat down on the edge of the bed.

Shifting Gears

“Oh Bill,” she said softer. “I’m sorry, but you scared me. I don’t want you hurt more.”

She moved closer and hugged me. I hugged her as best as I could. “I’m sorry. I’m sorry I scared you; I scared me too.”

She sat back a little and frowned. “Meg was right.” Then she smiled and touched a finger to the end of my nose. “And I think I know how to handle this problem.”

I smiled; I was glad she was smiling again. “I’ll behave,” I told her.

She reached for the cordless phone and dialed a number. “I know you will sweetie,” she said as she raised the phone to her ear.

“Hi there. Want to come over for dinner? ... Yeah, that would be fine. ... I’ve got a compliance problem I want your help with. ... Okay, see you half past five.”

She put down the phone and gave me a wicked grin.

“Like to tell me what that was all about?” I asked.

“No,” she said. She stood up, then pointed at me and said, “Stay! I’m going to go get some things from the car.”

I didn’t dare laugh, at least not until I heard the door close behind her.

I listened to her going through the house, including upstairs. Then she went into the kitchen, returning with some lunch for us. She sat on the bed with me, and took my hand in hers. She smiled, and this time she spoke softly.

“Bill, you have to take it easy. The swelling from your injury hasn’t even gone down yet. If you push things, you’ll cause much more damage. Especially for the next two or three weeks, you have to be very, very careful.”

I sighed and nodded. “It’s going to be difficult, I’ll admit it,” I told her. “I’m not used to sitting around watching my fingernails grow.”

She sighed. “I’ll help. You don’t know how to relax, do you?”

I looked in her eyes. The more I looked in them the more I liked what I saw.

“No, I don’t. Relaxing isn’t what built Silicon Valley.”

She nodded. “Well, you’re going to learn.”

“Will you learn with me?” I asked her.

Shifting Gears

She laughed out loud. “Touché. Yes, I can do better as well.”

I started some music and we ate lunch.

After lunch she helped me to the bathroom again.

“What was that piece of music you put on last night?” she asked when we were back on the bed.

“When?” I asked.

She ran a hand down my chest and started pulling up my shirt.

“When we were making love?” I asked.

She smiled and said, “Yes. Could you put it on again?”

“Want to take my shirt off first?” I asked.

She nodded; I sat up and we took off my shirt. My left arm was a little better. We both got undressed, and she put the reading cushion behind me to prop me up slightly. I picked up the remotes and started the second movement from Beethoven’s 7th again.

She moved on top of me, kissing and teasing. We slid together and she moved with the music. I was so dizzy, I wanted to be able to hold her with both hands. I heard and felt her coming around me, still moving in time. Then she slid her hands around my head and kissed me. I let go, coming deep inside her as she rocked slowly on top of me.

I felt her sit up and I opened my eyes to see and feel her hands moving to my temples. She started drawing circles on my forehead; I exhaled and let go to her, my eyes closing.

I woke up still propped up on the cushion. I was amazed at how well I slept on my back now. I looked over to her, asleep on her side facing away from me. I pulled myself up and moved to touch her.

She turned quickly, opening her eyes to look at me. “What do you need?” she asked.

“We need to switch places on the bed,” I told her softly.

She frowned. “Why?”

I shook my head slowly. “So I can hold you after making love.”

She smiled. “That would be nice.”

Shifting Gears

I thought we'd do that, but instead she took a deep breath and sat up, stretching.

She looked at me and laughed. "Don't worry Bill, we will, I promise. Right now I need to get up and get started on dinner. Would you like help to the bathroom and your office again?"

I nodded. As she helped me up she told me, "Your crutches are upstairs, and they're going to stay there for a while. Got that? While I'm here, you don't do *anything* without help."

"Yes dear," I told her, then smiled. I visited the can again, and with her help got dressed. She installed me in my office chair again. I noodled on the net for a while, even spending a few minutes checking in at work. I also spent some time doing slow shoulder circles, testing my left shoulder. It was feeling better all the time. I thought about reading about hypnosis, but decided against it, not because I didn't want to know, but because I figured it would be like reading about bike riding; much better to do it.

I heard her going in and out the sliding door to the patio, and going about the house. My, how pleasant that was! For a while I leaned back and closed my eyes, listening to her walk around, hearing her singing softly to herself, doing things.

The doorbell rang; I opened my eyes. It was almost five thirty.

"I'll get it," Doris called out. I turned and watched her walk by.

She walked into the office shortly thereafter with Sarah. Sarah smiled at me and turned to Doris. "I take it he's your compliance problem?"

I tried to look innocent, but they both laughed, and Doris said, "In spades. I'll tell you while I start the charcoal."

They walked out. I thought about wheeling myself back to the bed, but figured I'd be better off staying right here. I had some e-mail messages pop onto the screen; it looked as if the usual crowd was at work today.

It took me a while to answer their messages. I'd just sent off replies when Doris walked back into the room, putting her arms around me.

"Time for a break, sweetie," she told me.

I sighed -- as if I had a choice in the matter. She helped me up and we made another pass at the toilet before I was installed on the bed again, leaning back on the cushion. I closed my eyes and sighed.

I felt the bed move, and felt legs straddling me, but... I opened my eyes to see Sarah sitting on top of me. At least she was clothed. She smiled and sat on me, rocking her hips. I sighed and my eyes closed. I felt hands at my head and started slipping fast as I heard her voice.

Shifting Gears

“Awake and alert again,” Doris said.

I opened my eyes. It was easier to wake up this time; I didn’t have the feeling of swimming up from deep water as I’d had the last couple days. I smiled. “Help me up?” I asked.

She smiled and helped me get up. I could smell meat; I was hungry. We visited the can again, and then went to the dining room table. We had candles, good crystal wine glasses, the whole deal. Even better, I had an attractive woman sitting on either side of me.

“How do you feel?” Sarah asked after we had a brief toast. Someone had found my wine cellar, and picked well.

I closed my eyes momentarily. “I feel softer. I’m not worried my edge is gone; I know it’s there when I need it, but I don’t need it now.” I opened my eyes. “Does that make sense?”

Sarah and Doris smiled and raised their glasses. I laughed. “I guess that was the right answer. Thank you both,” I told them, raising my glass.

Dinner was very nice. We moved back to the living room for coffee; I couldn’t sit in chairs that long yet.

Doris helped me to the bathroom after a bit, and when I got back on the bed I started more music. As the music started, I thought I heard Doris sigh. I looked to her and saw the most incredible look on her face; a soft smile as her eyes drifted closed.

I turned a bit to see what was going on. Sarah was holding something; she brought it closer to me. It was a crystal pendant. My eyes locked on it and I fell into the colored light.

Things were hazy, but I know I made love with Doris. I ate her, and ate her, and ate her until she collapsed on top of me. Then I ate her some more. She finally slid down onto me and rode me. She came quickly, strongly, and often. I came when she asked me to, as she held me to her. I floated in her arms, rocking in that sea of blue light, as we drifted down to a soft bed and went to sleep holding each other.

I woke up on the other side of her in the morning. I slid over next to her and snuggled up like a pair of spoons in a drawer. Her breathing shifted momentarily, then settled in again. I could move my left arm enough to put my hand on her hip. She made a contented noise at my touch, and another as I kissed her bare shoulder.

After a while we got up and showered. As we kissed in the shower, Doris whispered in my ear, “Last night was incredible.”

I held her as best I could, letting my head rest on her shoulder, smelling the mixture of shampoo, soap, and bodies. My eyes drifted closed as the memories returned, memories of sensations, sounds, tastes....

Shifting Gears

I started laughing; there was no doubt about it.

Doris held me and said, “What is it?”

I pulled back a little and looked at her. “Your girlfriend.”

“Sarah? What about her?”

“She choreographed things last night. Do you remember her holding the crystal?”

Doris frowned a bit. “I... I’m not sure.”

“I thought I heard you sigh. I looked over and you had a soft dreamy look on your face, and your eyes were drifting closed. Then I looked at Sarah and she was holding a crystal on a chain, and she brought it closer to me, and the sparkling caught my eyes and pulled me in...”

I could feel myself going there again as I spoke, but Doris was really there. She was wobbling a little on her feet, and her eyes were almost closed. I deliberately moved my left shoulder, hoping the flash of pain would bring me back. It did, in spades.

“Oh yes, it was so nice, falling into the crystal,” I told her softly and slowly. I let the words bubble up from within me somewhere. “And as you fall into it again, you can remember everything that happened last night, every detail. You can even remember the things that you didn’t need to remember last night. Every detail comes back to you. It doesn’t upset you, because it already happened. It’s like watching a movie or listening to a story; it doesn’t bother you, as you drift so peacefully in the crystal. And now it’s time to wake up again, waking up on the count of three. One... Two... Three, awake and alert again.”

She took a deep breath and opened her eyes. A number of expressions flashed over her face; she settled into a wry smile. “She caught me. How did you figure it out?” Doris asked.

I smiled. “You looked so peaceful, so relaxed. Is that how I look when I’m under?”

She nodded. “But how did you figure it out? She told us we didn’t have to remember.”

I laughed a little and moved on the stool. She held me a little better, which helped.

“I know. I was so sure I’d made love with you, eating you and then being inside you. But I remembered a different taste, one besides yours. She tastes different.”

Doris gave me a low laugh and nodded her head. “Let’s get out and get dry. We’re running out of hot water.”

She turned off the water and started drying me off as she recounted her memories. “She put me down on the bed and told me I was listening to the sound track of a skin flick, and it was getting me so aroused.”

Shifting Gears

Her description was making me hot. We'd put a dry towel on the closed toilet lid; I sat there while I dried my hair. I could almost use both arms again.

Doris was still shaking her head, smiling. "I couldn't recognize the actors voices, but it made me so hot. I know I came while I was listening to it. Damn, I didn't know about that side of her. She touched me while I was listening; I was so relaxed I didn't have to move."

"What a puzzle..." I told her. "What should we do about it?"

Doris helped me back to our bed. "I'm not sure. What do you think?"

"Well, I feel like calling her and thanking her for a very nice evening, and asking if she enjoyed me as much as I enjoyed her."

Doris gave me another low laugh. "That sounds good. I've got an idea too."

I was going to ask what it was when she touched my forehead and said something. I felt myself falling, and falling.

Then I remembered what happened; it was like watching it on a movie screen. Sarah took us both deeper and got us undressed. I remembered she'd moved my left shoulder the wrong way; that must have brought me a little more out of trance. I remembered what she said to Doris, about listening to the movie.

And I remembered something else Sarah said, and I remembered it so clearly that I was fully awake again. I blinked a couple times and saw Doris naked, moving on top of me.

I stroked her side gently and said, "Sleepy time Doris, sleepy time." She sighed and her head moved down a bit.

I heard Sarah's voice saying "just as it does with me...." Let's try it and see if it still works. I stroked Doris and moved her up so a nipple was near my mouth. I kissed it and she moaned. I said, "Dill, dill, dill." and started sucking on her.

The effect was amazing. She started moaning and going through a strong orgasm, her body shuddering and her hips moving above me. I pulled away from her nipple and said it again, "Dill, dill, dill." She gasped and moaned again, starting to collapse on top of me.

That wouldn't work -- she was coming down on my left shoulder. I pushed with my right arm as best I could, easing her to the side. "Doris, roll over on your back now, so relaxed on your back, you're floating on your back. Dill, dill, dill."

She shivered on her back. I moved over and down, sliding my right arm under her.

Shifting Gears

“Doris, now I want you to hold and suckle me, and take me to sleep in your arms. Then you will drift off to sleep as well.” My heart was beating faster. Would that work?

She moved slowly. She sighed as she put a hand behind my head and pulled me to a breast. I closed my eyes and lost myself in her warmth, floating into the softness on her voice.

I woke up to Doris laughing softly, propped up on an elbow beside me.

“Well?” I asked.

She put a hand on my chest, a wry smile on her face. “I don’t know when we’re going to do it, but I know what we’re going to do to her.”

I laughed with her, caressing her waist. “So how was that?” I asked.

She closed her eyes momentarily and shivered. “God... It was intense. Building up so quickly, and wham!” She shivered again and opened her eyes. Her nipples were erect again. She looked down at me, eyes full of lust, then softening.

“And as for you,” she said, leaning over to present me with a nipple, “I wouldn’t have taken you for a tit man.”

I accepted her gift, hungrily. She pulled away after a few moments, leaving me dizzy and wanting more. She laughed.

“Wow...” I sighed. “I didn’t think I was, either.”

She sat up again.

I put a hand on her thigh. “But there’s something so satisfying, so comforting, so fulfilling...” I sighed again.

She smiled. “Oh, I agree. It’s a new feeling to me as well, and a very deep one.”

I nodded. “Deep -- that sums it up. You fill something deep in me,” I told her.

She gave me an intense look, then closed her eyes, her head going back as she chuckled. She opened them again and said, “Let’s get dressed. We have some shopping to do.”

“Oh?” I said, sitting up. My left shoulder was doing pretty well.

“Yes, we need to get you another pair or two of pants that I can cut up. What you’ve got upstairs won’t fit around the cast.”

I sighed. I looked up at her as she stood by the bed. “Some times the real world sucks.”

Shifting Gears

She bent over to put on her bra. As she did, she laughed. “You’re right about that.”

We got dressed, had a bite to eat, and went shopping. We stopped at the hospital first. She ducked in and reappeared with a wheelchair. I’d wondered how I was going to get around.

We drove to a local mall. On the way we plotted what we were going to do about Sarah. Doris wanted to work with me to see if I remembered any more interesting tidbits. We got two inexpensive pairs of pants; trying them on was somewhat comical, the two of us in a small dressing room at the same time. Doris was lucky I only had one good arm to grab her with.

We went to her apartment afterwards so she could do the alterations. It was nice, but small. After looking around, I asked her to please move in with me. I was surprised at the emotion in my voice, but not surprised by the tears in her eyes as she held me.

The rest of the day was lost in a fog. She took me through the previous night again. I’m sure she wanted it to be as realistic as possible, which is why she sat on my face and made love with me so intensely. I’m sure she was talking with me, but I don’t remember much of it; I don’t have to. I do remember feeling warm, safe, and secure in her arms as we went to sleep.

Back to Work

I thought the world had run out of surprises by Monday morning. We got up early; Doris was back to working days. We showered together, had a quick bite, and then got into my car. Doris drove; she called my office just before we left to let Tina know we were on the way.

When we arrived, there was a small crowd waiting. At the front of the crowd was Tina, with a wheelchair.

“What’s this for?” I asked as Tina opened the car door, the chair beside the car.

“This is what you’re in until your left arm is strong again.” Tina told me. “Doris told me about your fall over the weekend and we aren’t taking any chances.”

I grumbled but got in. Actually, I was relieved. In the chair at least my right leg was held up, which should help. Doris hopped out and gave me quite a kiss before she drove off in my car, squealing rubber as she took off out of the driveway.

We went inside for bagels, juice, and good wishes. It was good to be back.

Wheeling to my office afterwards I was in for another surprise. The furniture had been rearranged. My small futon from home was in the office, with the meeting table and chairs gone.

“Tina,” I hollered, “what’s with the futon?”

She stepped in behind me as I rolled over to my workstation. Work surfaces had been adjusted so the wheelchair fit in fairly well. Someone had been busy.

Tina had our “To do” file in her hands; it looked full of goodies.

“The futon is for your afternoon nap,” she told me.

“Nap?” I asked somewhat incredulous.

She smiled and nodded. I knew that smile; I would be taking a nap, like it or not.

“Yes, nap. You’re still recovering, and Doris won’t be by to pick you up until after five. So, you get a nap in the afternoon. Isn’t that a good idea?”

I laughed; I knew when I was outgunned. “Yes, Aunt Tina,” I told her.

She sighed and said, “It’s good to have you back so quick. You are going to take it easy though, especially this week. You owe it to yourself, as well as to the rest of us.”

With that she sat down and we went through the things that had accumulated for me. After that I waded through email and other catch-up work.

Shifting Gears

I wheeled out of the office around eleven, or at least I tried.

“Where are you going?” Tina demanded.

“Pee,” I told her, “I can do it myself. Really.”

She smiled. “Okay, just checking.”

I managed fine on my own. A change of perspective helped me realize the utility of the wider stalls and the grab bars.

We’re still a small place; while we have our own building, we don’t have food service on site. We had a postponed technical review, which included lunch, in the conference room.

After lunch I went back to work. About a quarter to two Tina stuck her head in the office and said, “Nap time in 15 minutes; finish what you’re doing and hit the bathroom.”

I didn’t even look up from the screen. “Yes Aunt Tina,” I said, a pen between my teeth.

I wheeled to the bathroom again. This time I remembered to set the brakes on the wheels before I moved out of the chair. Returning to my office, I saw Tina had pulled out the futon and closed up the blinds on the windows as much as possible.

“Do you need any help?” she asked me.

I wheeled over and got onto the futon. “Nope. But do you expect me to actually sleep?”

She smiled as I lay down. It did feel good to be horizontal. I’d just closed my eyes when I felt her touch my forehead. As she drew small circles lightly on my forehead she said, “Nap time, nap time. Time for your nap.” I sighed and the world fell out from under me.

I awoke after some pleasant dreams. I sighed and looked at my watch; it was almost four. I’d slept almost two hours; I guess I needed a nap after all. I felt great.

I sat up and hit the light switch, then hauled my ass back into the chair. I was about to wheel back to the desk when Tina opened the door and came in.

“Have a good nap?” she asked.

I smiled, a tight smile, and waved her in. She sat down in the chair in front of me.

“Who told you about that?” I asked her.

She sighed and smiled. “Doris and Sarah.” Anticipating my next question she continued, “They told me what to do to help you sleep, and to deal with pain. Does it really work?”

Shifting Gears

I smiled. “You saw how well it worked. You touched me and spoke, and I was asleep. Let’s just keep it quiet though.”

She sighed again. “You looked so relaxed. And don’t worry, I won’t tell anyone. They told me it’s only the three of us that can do it to you, and only when you feel you’re in a safe, secure place. How does it feel?”

It was my turn to sigh. “It’s wonderful. I didn’t even have time to be surprised.”

She nodded. “I need to talk to Sarah some more. This could help David and me.” David was her husband.

I nodded. “Thank you for taking care of me. I appreciate it.”

She gave me an intense look. “You look so relaxed, so peaceful and rested.”

“That’s what a good nap does for you,” I told her. She sighed again and got up. I went back to work.

A little after five I heard Doris in the hallway.

“Are you ready to go home?” she asked me, coming in the office door.

I turned around to her. She gave me a very nice kiss, holding my head in her hands. I was starting to let go when she stepped back.

“I’ll follow you anywhere,” I told her.

She chuckled. I saw Tina standing in the doorway. Doris turned to her and asked, “Did he have a good nap?”

Tina moved in and closed the door. Leaning against the closed door she said, some emotion in her voice, “I couldn’t believe it. And the way he looked when he woke up....”

Doris smiled. “He’s pretty special. Sarah told me not everyone is as easy to work with, but it can be very powerful.”

I thought to myself that intravenous drugs may have had something to do with being easy to work with.

I got into the passenger seat of my car. I sighed as we headed home.

“So how are you doing? How was your day?”

Shifting Gears

“I can’t believe how tired I feel. I’m beat. A few weeks ago, I’d do the Portola loop at lunch, then do another thirty miles going home.”

She chuckled and patted my good leg. “You’re injured sweetie, and healing takes a lot of energy. It’s early to bed for you tonight.”

I laughed, my head against the headrest. “Yeah, but how much sleep am I going to get?”

She dug fingers into my leg. “Enough, trust me.”

“So, did you see Sarah today?”

“Nope, hardly got a chance to stop and pee, let alone get upstairs. I was lucky to get out on time.”

We had a simple dinner, sitting around the kitchen table to eat.

“I’ve got a question for you,” I said.

She smiled. “And it is?”

“What started you after me, or was it just love at first crash?”

She laughed. “No, I’ve watched you for quite a while. You may not remember it, but one afternoon summer before last you were riding on Foothill, coming up to the light at El Monte. You put on an incredible sprint to make the light before it changed, and when you got to the other side of the intersection, you sat up and threw up your arms as if you’d just won the Tour de France. You were wearing a very tight fitting tank top.”

I nodded, that’s what I liked to wear during the hot part of the year. They gave me more of a tan. “And?” I asked.

She sighed. “I’ve seen a lot of cyclists, usually scraped off Skyline Road or Highway 9. You’re the first one I’d seen with a good pair of shoulders.”

I lifted my glass; we were having white wine with dinner. “Thanks for remembering me, and thanks for scraping me off the road. I always thought if I was going to buy it on Foothill, it would be from a gravel truck, though.”

We talked a little more through dinner, and as she piled up the dishes.

She sat by my side again. “How are you feeling? What do you want to do tonight?”

“I need to spend a couple hours on the computer getting caught up,” I told her.

Shifting Gears

She gave me a smile and shook her head slowly from side to side. She raised a hand and started doodling on my forehead. My eyes drifted closed.

“How do you feel?” she repeated.

“I’m exhausted, I hurt, and I need to be held,” I heard myself say.

She told me to wake up. I opened my eyes. She smiled and said softly, “Don’t push yourself. I’ll help you get ready for bed.”

I sighed and nodded. I couldn’t fool her; I shouldn’t try fooling myself. I was soon installed in bed, and she was holding me close, whispering me off to sleep.

The rest of the week passed uneventfully. It wasn’t until Thursday that I actually felt like doing some work after dinner. But I didn’t see that as bad news. All I saw was good news. Thanks to Doris (and Sarah) I didn’t need pain pills. I also slept very well, and could nap in the afternoon. If anything, I was a bit more productive at work.

Our lovemaking was grand. One evening after making love I must have let out the grandfather of all sighs. Doris laughed and asked if I missed being on top. I smiled and told her I might some time, but not yet. She laughed and worked her magic on me once more.

Friday after dinner I was taking care of e-mail when she called to me from the doorway. I turned to see her holding two cycling jerseys.

“Which one do you want to wear tomorrow?” she asked.

“Tomorrow?” I responded.

She smiled. “I talked to Meg. We’re riding up to Sam MacDonald Park with Danny in the van, that is if you feel up to it.” She walked over and put an arm around me.

I sighed and put my arms around her; I was regaining use of my left arm rapidly. “Yes, that would be great. You’ve been talking to Meg?”

“Yes, she’s quite a gal. I think she may let me live, at least until you’re recovered.”

I laughed with her, holding her tight.

I asked her for a different jersey. She found it, and a pair of shorts I could wear. After that it was time for lovemaking and bed.

Saturday in the Park

That was about the most difficult ride I've ever been on, riding in the bike shop van with Danny and Doris on Saturday morning. I really wanted to be on a bike. I finally closed my eyes and put my head on Doris' shoulder.

She held me and asked, "Do the bumps hurt?"

I held her and said, "Not being on a bike hurts."

She held me close and whispered to me to relax; I melted into her arms.

It was great to be in the redwoods though. Even better, I didn't have to do anything except enjoy myself. Doris helped Danny get things set up. It would be a while before the riders got in. Doris and I moved to a blanket. I leaned back against her.

Danny filled me in on my bike. The frame wasn't damaged, other than needing to be repainted. They had all the parts, and there were quite a few, including the front fork, brake, and wheel. Both shifters and the crank were gone. He also told me the asshole that had done the damage had been charged with a felony. That made me feel better.

Doris helped me to the primitive restrooms; that was a challenge. Afterwards I went back to a bench; I was closer to the food that way.

Meg rolled in first, as I'd expected. She looked like she'd really pushed herself hard. More surprising was the guy right behind her, who looked as if he'd just come off a leisurely trip to the corner store. He had a custom bike, and evidently knew how to ride it. I thought I knew most of the good riders around here.

Meg introduced me; his name was Paul. We all laughed when he admitted to just moving here from Boulder, and remarking that these weren't really hills. I could tell from the way he talked that he loved to ride. He'd done a couple of the local loops, but wouldn't tell us his times. He'd also done the Pike's Peak climb a few times.

I saw sparks flying between Paul and Meg; that could get Doris and me out of trouble.

I got a better look at his bike as Danny checked it over and swapped saddles. It was a custom frame, and set up very nicely. He had good taste in equipment -- same as on my bike. That thought caused me more than a little twinge. How long would it be before I could make this ride again, and how long before I could make it easily?

We ended up with a full bus going back, with only Meg and Paul riding. Danny told us Paul had come into the shop just a few days ago. The first time Danny saw him, Paul was wearing a suit and tie. Meg helped him, and he showed up again a little while later in riding gear with his bike. Meg invited him on this ride pretty much on the spot.

Shifting Gears

They seemed to be getting along pretty well for such a short time. I'd watched him give Meg a massage, one which she enjoyed very much, by the amount of moaning she did.

Back at the shop, Doris helped me to Danny's cot in the back, then helped him unload. I had a trip to the restroom, then got to be in her arms again, leaning up against her on the cot. She rocked me gently and started whispering in my ear....

When I came back to the real world, they were closing up shop for the night. We stood around for a while, talking with Danny and Ted, the co-owner of the shop. Ted told us he hadn't seen Meg so happy in a long time. When I saw Meg walk back, and Paul, I almost broke out laughing -- both had that extremely well and recently-laid glow about them.

Someone suggested dinner and I called for Chinese. I was very pleased when Paul agreed to hot and spicy. We grabbed my parking permit and all piled into Meg's car.

It's weird. It's as if there's a switch inside me now. When I'm at work, it's set one way. When I'm away from work, it's set the other way, and I'm a different person, much more relaxed. That night at dinner Paul told us he was a patent attorney, and all of a sudden the switch slammed to the "work" position. We needed a patent attorney; they're hard to find. I grilled him, and would have kept on grilling him if he hadn't gotten up to go to the bathroom. As soon as he did that, Doris put one hand behind my head, which sent shivers down me, and started doodling on my forehead with the other, which soon had me floating.

As we were driving home in my car later, she asked, "What was it with you and Paul?"

I could squeeze her with my left hand now. "We need someone like him at my company. I think he'd fit. I'm going to talk to Lou tomorrow."

She reached over and put a hand behind my head, squeezing me gently and making the world lose its sharp focus. "No you're not; tomorrow is Sunday. It can wait. Tonight and tomorrow you're mine."

I wouldn't argue with her if I could. She kept me in a daze all day Sunday, either resting or making love.

My left shoulder was feeling much better; I was told if I behaved, this would be my last week in the wheelchair.

I talked to Lou about my impressions of Paul. Through Danny at the bike shop we got Paul's last name. Lou had a friend do some checking; I read over the patents he'd written. He looked like our boy.

Timing, so much of what we do is timing. How do I spring this on Paul? I had an idea; my birthday was coming up, all too rapidly. I knew something would happen at work.

That evening after dinner I broached the subject with Doris.

Shifting Gears

“You know,” I said, “I’ve got a birthday coming up.”

“Oh really?” she said, feigning ignorance.

I laughed. “You’d make a lousy poker player. But, I was thinking, it would be nice if we could get together, say maybe with just Meg and her boyfriend, what’s his name? Paul? If we could get together with just the two of them for a nice dinner on Saturday night. Some place nice, like Bella Saratoga, or Cafe Fino. It was just a thought, mind you.”

She laughed and put her arms around me, hugging me, melting me. “Just a thought, was it? Well, I think something like that might just be possible, especially if you’re good to me with that talented tongue of yours tonight.”

Some times she drives a hard bargain.

A few nights later, we’d gotten into bed, and she’d just climbed on top of me. She was moving gently, rocking us to ecstasy.

“How about dinner on Friday night?” she asked.

I forced my eyes open. “Oh? Okay. Why?”

She smiled at me as she rocked, looking in my eyes. “It’s best for Paul and Meg. And we can have a private room at Cafe Fino; I thought that would be better for buttering up Paul.”

I know I reacted to that; I wasn’t drifting away anymore. I knew she felt it as well.

She laughed. “Who wouldn’t make a good poker player?”

I sighed. “What can I say?”

She leaned over to kiss me, whispering, “I’ll think of something.”

Birthdaze

If you'd asked months ago what I thought I'd be doing on my birthday, I sure as hell wouldn't have guessed I'd be walking around on crutches with my right foot in a cast. Of course I also wouldn't have guessed I have a beautiful sensuous woman living with me.

I knew it was going to happen at one in the afternoon Friday, and in our big conference room. I hobbled in to cheers of "Surprise!" which it wasn't, but I took it as well as I could. We had cake and ice cream. The cards were good; quite a few people were glad I was driving. Quite a few folks also had noticed the changes in my attitude, and liked them.

The conference room phone rang and one of the secretaries got it.

"Okay Bill, close your eyes," she told me as she hung up the phone.

I closed my eyes. After a few moments I heard the conference room door open, and an unmistakable sound. I didn't know whether to smile or cry; I think I did both. I recognized the sound of a bicycle freewheel clicking.

"Okay!" someone said.

I opened my eyes, and there was my bike, with Meg and Danny standing beside it. True, the frame had been stripped to bare metal, and the carbon front fork was unpainted as well, but there it was, back together again, well almost -- minus cables, pedals, and other details.

I got my crutches and started standing up. Tina leaned over and whispered not too quietly or subtly in my ear, "If you even try to get on it, I'll drop you in front of all of these people, and Sarah told me how to do it."

I looked at her and smiled, tears in my eyes. "Thank you Aunt Tina, I won't. I just want to touch it again."

I hobbled over and put a hand on the saddle, then on the handlebars. How long would it be before I could ride again? How long until I could ride well?

I looked up and gave Meg, then Danny, big hugs. "Thanks guys, thank you so much."

Danny told me, "We know how important it is to you."

We got a picture of me standing with it, cast and all, and another with Danny and Meg on either side of me.

"Hey, I kind of like the way this looks. Can we just get it clear coated?" I asked Danny.

He smiled and looked at Meg, then said, "I told you so."

Shifting Gears

Meg and Danny had some cake and ice cream. I sat in a chair next to my bike, fondling the handlebars. It felt good just to touch it again.

But all dreams come to an end; they had to get back to the shop, and insisted on taking the bike with them. It was missing a few things, such as cables, pedals, and tape on the handlebars. "Hey!" I hollered as they headed out the door. "I want to pick out some wild tape for the bars!"

I felt a hand on my shoulder, and a gentle squeeze on the back of my neck; I relaxed. Tina said, "Don't worry -- you have plenty of time for that."

I sighed and turned to her on my crutches. "Thank you Aunt Tina. I mean it, thank you."

She smiled. "Back to your office -- you've had enough excitement for a while."

I sighed. "I agree. I'm stopping at the plumbing, then it's nap time."

I was ready for Friday night. We agreed on meeting at the bike shop, and taking Meg's car, with my parking tag. Parking in downtown Palo Alto can be exciting.

Paul showed up on time, and we got in the car. They dropped Doris and I in front of the restaurant and went to park. I ordered champagne as we were shown to our little room in back.

We had a very good dinner. Service was superb, which is to say unobtrusive. I hit Paul with the occasional work-related question, telling him along the way what our startup was about.

I received a huge piece of mud pie with a candle on it, and after the singing, Meg handed me a package.

I was stunned when I opened it -- a Tahoe Century jersey, just like the one that had been cut off me. "Where did you find this?" I said, my voice surprisingly emotional.

Meg squeezed Paul's hand. "It's from both of us. I told Paul how much it meant to you."

I didn't know what to say. I felt moisture filling my eyes. I turned to Doris. She gave me a hug, and a kiss.

I turned back to Meg and Paul. I'd heard they were living together at Meg's place.

"Paul," I said, taking a breath. "I know just how to thank you. I want to offer you a job." I handed him a piece of paper outlining our offer. We were offering him at least 150% of what he was currently making, plus stock options in a pre-IPO company, plus a starting bonus.

He looked over the sheet, sighed, and handed it to Meg.

"I don't know what to say," he told us. "They just moved me out here."

Shifting Gears

“We’ll cover any moving expenses -- that’s not a problem.” Lou and I’d talked about the possible contingencies. “We’d like you to come in and talk to Lou, our chief slave driver, and Denise, our General Counsel, then some of our other folks. Does Monday or Tuesday morning work better for you?”

He laughed, leaning back a bit, then looked me in the eye. “You’re serious about this.”

I nodded. “We’ve read all your issued patents. So have a lot of our folks. We need someone with your skills. You’re at the right position in your career -- take a chance and go for the brass ring.”

Paul sighed and shook his head. “Holy shit. Okay, Tuesday morning, 9 to noon. I can’t believe I’m doing this.”

I held out a hand, and we shook. “I’m not promising we’ll make it big, but it will be an interesting ride.”

He nodded again. Meg squeezed his hand, smiling.

“I’ve got a package of stuff for you to look over, if you want.”

He looked at Meg, smiled, then said, “Sure.”

“Okay, it’s in my car when we get back to the shop. Right now, though, help me eat this thing before it melts!”

We polished off dessert and headed out after I paid the bill. When we got back to my car, I gave Paul the package we’d put together. It had my home phone number on it. On impulse, I told him, “Let me know if you’d like to get together Sunday at my place for dinner -- we could talk about things more.”

Paul shook my hand, firmly. “That’s a good idea. What time, and what do we bring?”

I looked at Doris. She smiled -- big help. “Five, and bring a red wine -- how about that?” I told him.

He nodded. “Done. Happy birthday, Bill.” His Jeep still had Colorado plates on it. They drove away.

Doris drove us home -- she wasn’t letting me drive, and I didn’t know how I’d do it anyway, with the cast.

“That went really well,” she said as we drove.

“I think so. I’ll give Lou a call -- I hope he and his wife can make it.”

Shifting Gears

“Oh, so I’m cooking for six now?”

I laughed and put a hand on her thigh. “I was about to say I’d also call Tina, and have her arrange catering.”

She laughed, but said, “You’ll do no such thing! We may buy some things pre-made, but we’ll do it ourselves. You’re healthy enough to run the barbecue.”

“Sure. Let me know what else I can do,” I told her.

She rubbed my leg, moving her hand to my groin. “Well, there are some other things you can do....”

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