

Who shaves the barber?

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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.

Business was good, maybe too good. I was running out of hours in my schedule, and I wasn't sure I wanted to extend it. I'm a bodyworker, a massage therapist. I've been doing it for about four years. I work through a massage center along with a number of other people. We're an "ethical" center -- no funny business.

Six months ago my clientele was about half repeat business and the rest drop-ins or overflow from others. Then both new clients and repeat business picked up dramatically; currently I'm running about 80 percent repeat business, which is good in one sense, but bad in that people get upset when they can't have their "regular" times. I've had many new clients come in and want weekly sessions for a few weeks, then go to every two or three weeks. The money is good and it's great to build the rapport and help them, but it's getting hectic.

I should have seen the pattern developing; I've got the records for it. Every time I see a client, I fill out my own work sheet, noting both their concerns and what I found. I guess it comes from my first career as an engineer, but it helps both of us. It's a great way of building rapport and helping them understand their bodies. People love it when you greet them and ask how their shoulder feels, or lower back, remembering what's particular to them. It also helps me catch recurring problems they might not spot. It's also a great way to watch change and growth.

One of the things I track with some clients has to do with one of my specialties: hypnosis. That goes back to how I got involved in the first place. I was in a serious auto accident, and physical therapy involved regular deep tissue massage. I was hooked from the start. Then later during rehab I started going to a hypnotherapist to get over the emotional trauma.

I'll never forget that particular massage session. I was going through deep tissue work weekly; some parts were not fun. My weekly hypnotherapy session had been cancelled; the hypnotherapist had been in an auto accident. You can imagine what that phone call did to me; I went into that massage session with Judy really screwed up. She started me out on my stomach, as usual, and recognized I was really wound up. She coached my breathing for a couple of minutes, then put her hands on my back. She said, "Now take a deep breath, right to my hands, hold it for a moment..." I took a deep breath; I was starting to unwind. Then she said, "Relax..." as she applied pressure, and all the air went out of me. It felt great. She repeated this again and again.

Hypnosis had been hard for me; it had been hard for me to let go. Now, under her hands, I felt that curious sensation of distance I'd only felt once during hypnosis up to then and let go to

it, let go to her hands and voice. The sensation was incredible, fading away and falling into that soft void. At the end of that session, she told me it had been our best, most productive so far; I agreed. From then on, we'd start out the same way.

We had three sessions like that before I got back to hypnotherapy. After that first session back, my therapist told me he was surprised at how quickly and deeply I went under. I knew that all hypnosis is self hypnosis; I laughed and told him I'd learned what to do. He was surprised when I told him of the massage connection.

Judy wasn't at all surprised; it's one of those things many practitioners know at some level, that their clients drop off to one degree or another during a session. In fact when we do deep tissue work we depend on it; we depend on them being relaxed enough so the normal protective reflexes are lowered or bypassed. So when I started practicing massage, I asked myself why not accelerate the process and do deliberately in the first few minutes what happens haphazardly over the period of an hour? I started training in hypnosis, and working hypnosis and deep relaxation into my sessions with select clients.

While most people don't think about it, getting the most out of a massage is something you learn. Good bodyworkers help you develop this by coaching your breathing, telling you to relax, things like that. Usually after three or four sessions the client is attuned to the process and it's a lot easier and more rewarding for all involved.

The same is true with being hypnotized; it's a learned skill and it takes a while to master. I usually start out with the client on the table on their stomach, first working the back. I speak softly, coaching their breathing, helping them relax, and spreading the relaxation with my hands and voice, encouraging them to let go and relax. It's very powerful; even in the first session I can tell most are in a trance after ten minutes. By the sixth or eighth session they're under in a couple of minutes.

I have some clients that are usually under after the first few breaths, when I put my hands on their backs and say, "Now take a deep, slow breath to my hands, hold it for a moment, and relaaaax." If they're under a lot of stress, something they might not recognize consciously, they might take five or six breaths before they let go. That breath when they let go is magic; you can hear and feel it.

Anyway, that should have been the tip off; an increasing number of new clients that would drop off really deep practically when I touched them, after just a few sessions.

It was a crazy Wednesday; full of people, 15 minute breaks between sessions, and a forty five minute break in the afternoon. I was coming off that longer break and walking up to the front desk to meet my next client, a regular for a half year or so. I'd gotten a page earlier and checked voicemail; my four o'clock regular, the time slot after this one, had cancelled. That still left me with one of my "new" regulars at five fifteen.

As I reached the desk, Jenny the afternoon receptionist said, "Hold on, he's right here; I'll let **you** talk to him." She made an exasperated face, shaking her head from side to side as she handed me the phone.

"Hi, this is Scott," I said to the phone.

"Scott, this is Monica. Do you have **anything** open today?" Monica was an every two week regular for the last eight months or so; mostly stress, but pushing her body recently through exercise. She also sounded really wound up, and as if she was on a cellular phone.

"Monica, this is your lucky day. I just had a cancellation for today at four. Can you make it by then? It's only an hour and a half from now."

Jenny gave me an exasperated look, rolling her eyes; I guessed she hadn't heard of the cancellation. On the phone Monica said, "Oh thank God yes, one way or the other."

"Monica, calm down," I said into the phone. "Where are you now?"

"I'm at the damn car dealership in their damn waiting room, using my own phone to call you because theirs is out of order."

I almost started laughing. "Okay, are you in a quiet place where you can close your eyes for a minute or two?" I asked her.

"Yes, I am," she said, sounding a little calmer.

"Okay then," I said, my voice changing to the professional tone and slowing. "Close your eyes for me, put your other hand in your lap. Now take a slow, deep, breath, let it out slowly, and relaaaax. Let the muscles in your forehead and around your eyes relaaaax. You can think much more clearly if you let yourself relaaaax. Good, take another breath and let it out. You are calmer now, your mind is clearing and slowing down."

Jenny started poking me. I looked up and she pointed behind me. My client Joanne was sitting in one of the chairs, the only person in the lobby at the time. Her eyes were closed and she was breathing slowly. I'd gotten her without trying! I faced her and spoke louder so both of them could hear, "Now I want you to take another slow, deep breath, and as you inhale, your eyes will open, and you'll be awake again, refreshed and totally alert."

I watched Joanne's lights come on again as I heard an exhalation in the phone. Monica said, "You're terrific. I'll see you at four." She sounded much better.

"See you at four," I said, and she hung up. I turned and handed the phone back to Jenny. "I was just coming up to tell you about the cancellation; he called my voicemail rather than you I gather; anyway, Monica is at four." I looked down at the schedule. "We've got the shower and sauna booked afterwards already; Monica usually likes a shower, so let's keep that. Thanks, beautiful." I gave her my best smile, and she smiled back.

I went over to Joanne. “Come on back if you're ready,” I told her. I hadn’t had that many sessions with her, yet she had dropped like a rock. Weird; that shouldn't happen, which meant I was missing something.

We had a good session. She was doing aerobics again, and tennis, so she was sore from the exertion, as well as the usual stress. I left the room for her to get undressed and on the table. When I came back in, she was face down with the towel over her bottom. I started my surf recording playing and walked over to her. I took a deep breath and cleared my mind as I reached out to touch her. I smiled; I guess I go into a trance as well, focusing completely on the person in front of me. I felt along her back and legs gently; shoulders, back, legs tight, but the tightness that comes from exercise was there along with the tightness from stress. I placed my hands on her back gently, said, “Joanne, take a deep breath to my hands, let it out, and relaaaax.” I felt her shiver a bit, and with her second deep breath I heard and felt that exhalation that told me she had let go.

I picked up one wrist; limp as an overcooked noodle. I'm not that good; what am I missing?

I worked through my usual routine, tailoring as always to what she needed, giving her feedback, noting where she was improving and praising her efforts, reminding her to warm up and stretch. I finished the session, waking her and reminding her to get up slowly. She gave me a big smile as she took a deep breath and said softly, “Thank you.” I left the room, closing the door behind me. I love to see that wonderful relaxed glow on people.

I went to the staff room in the back and curled up on the floor in the Yoga “child” position. It felt good to let go for a few minutes. I could relax and recharge, then it was change the linen on the table and start over again. I heard the door open and close, and after a moment felt a pair of warm hands on my back. They pressed along my spine as I shifted my breathing, then spent a while on my neck and shoulders. That's one of the side benefits of this place; we take care of each other. Then I felt a hand on my head. “Namaste,” a voice said; it was Angie. I smiled and said, “Namaste. Thank you, Angie.”

I stretched and sat up. A few more deep breaths and I stood slowly and went back into the hall. The door to the room I was using today was propped open, indicating my client was gone; I went in and quickly changed the linen on the table, then sat on my stool for a moment, letting my shoulders drop, then my head; two more to go for the day.

I went out to the lobby to get Monica; she was a regular, every two weeks for the last eight or nine months. Her usual time was Thursday morning at 9; I'd seen her last week. She was looking extremely frazzled as I walked up. “Ready?” I asked with a smile. “You bet,” she said. As I walked by the desk again, Jenny gave me a strange look and made weird gestures with her hands. I nodded; I'd check back.

Monica and I walked back to the room. I closed the door behind us. She had her bag with her; I'd guessed right about the shower. “So, do you want to tell me about it?” I asked.

She sighed as she slipped out of her shoes and started unbuttoning her blouse. She opened her mouth as if to speak, then tilted her head a little to one side, smiled, closed her eyes and took a couple of slow, deep breaths. I watched her shoulders drop a bit. She opened her eyes, smiling a little more.

“That was very good,” I told her, “You don't need me.”

She laughed. “Oh yes I do. It's been a tough week -- no, month. I've been putting off dealing with something, and responding in inappropriate ways to problems. It's beginning to get to me. I'm so glad you had the time today.”

“So am I. I've got the shower reserved for you afterwards as well. Anything special today?”

She sighed again as she looked at me. “Just work your usual magic. Spend plenty of time on my feet and my head and leave me blissed out.”

I laughed. “We can do that. We'll start on your stomach.” I left the room, closing the door behind me.

I walked to the desk. When Jenny got off the phone I asked, “What's up?”

She took me into the office, closing the door behind us. “I just thought I'd tell you -- when your previous client came out, she recognized Monica and said hello.”

“Joanne? Okay, so?”

“Well, Monica jumped like she'd been stuck with a cattle prod! Joanne was happy to see her, but Monica was definitely not.”

I shook my head; another puzzle piece. “Okay, thanks. I think she's just stressed out.”

“I'll say. If anyone can unwind her, you can.” Jenny gave me a smile.

“Thanks, Jen. She thinks so as well.”

I went back to the room, knocking on the door before entering. Monica was face down on the table. She'd started my surf CD playing and was breathing deeply.

This called for a change of tactics. I pulled the stool up to the head of the table and sat down. I started gently massaging her neck and shoulders. “Relaaax,” I told her softly. “The only thing you have to do for the next hour is let go and relaaax.” I gently worked her shoulders, neck, and the back of her head, speaking softly. It wasn't long before I felt her let go.

Then I stood up and focused on her. I deepened her relaxation while I worked on her shoulders and back, working down her legs. I spent a few minutes on her feet; I'd spend more time on them when she was on her back. Women like having their feet done; most men couldn't care less. Everyone seems to like head and neck massage.

She had some tight spots in her right shoulder. I worked that a bit more, then had her roll over on to her back, covering her with the towel. I worked my way back down to her feet. When I started on her feet again in earnest I was rewarded with a big sigh and a smile.

When I went back up to her head and sat on the stool, I decided to help a little more. I don't have my hypnosis certification yet; I'm still a ways away. Yet here was a situation where I could make a difference. As I started in on her neck I got another deep sigh. I smiled; I really loved this myself. I loved having someone like Angie or Toni spend time on just my neck and head; it was bliss.

"Monica," I spoke softly, "You know you have a problem you need to deal with. Let your subconscious help you find a way to deal with the problem in a creative, effective way. Your subconscious will help you find a way to deal with the problem that's appropriate and fair. Your subconscious will also help you deal with the other problems that come up from day to day in an appropriate manner, allowing you to remain calm, focused, and effective."

She smiled as I spoke; one of the wonders of hypnotherapy is how effective content-free suggestions can be. I went on working her head and neck, then went back to that right shoulder, working the deep tissue, the subscapularis, sliding my hands under her, letting her weight help me.

In massage, especially deep tissue work, it's not uncommon to have some kind of emotional release. When it happens you deal with it; it can be very profound for the client. I had a couple of sessions recovering from the accident when I would burst into tears, emotion pouring out. So I'd been there myself, and seen it and dealt with it in clients.

Still, I wasn't quite prepared for what I got from Monica. She started laughing; softly at first, then with more intensity. Her eyes were still closed; she was still in a trance, but she was laughing, and I could see tears forming in the corner of her eyes.

I moved from working her shoulder back to her head and neck, supporting her and letting it happen. After a few minutes she slowed down, and lay there with a big smile.

"Monica," I said, "nod your head if you've thought of a solution to your problem."

She chuckled and sighed under my fingers, nodding slightly. I started massaging her temples again.

"Good. Now you can relax again, let go and relaaaax, satisfied knowing you've found a solution, one that you can put into effect. Let go and relaaaax."

I got another big sigh and her face smoothed out, the smile still partially there. I reinforced my earlier suggestions. Our time was just about up; I brought her up gently as I continued working on her head, massaging her temples and the crown of her head. She opened her eyes with a deep breath and the smile popped back on to her face.

“Be careful getting up,” I told her softly. “Take your time in the shower; I’ll see you next week. Namaste.”

She looked up at me and chuckled. “Thank you. I’ll see you later.” Then she closed her eyes and took a deep breath.

I stepped out of the room and closed the door. I went back to the staff office and made some notes for this session. I heard her laughter as she walked down the hall to the shower as I was reviewing the sheet for my next client. Well, she’s in a better mood at least.

I went back and changed linen. One more client for the day; Chris. She’d also become a regular; I’d been seeing her for about three months. She seemed to fit the usual pattern; stress, learning how to deal with it, starting to exercise and listen to her body more, and another one that dropped like a rock when I started with them... Was this part of the pattern? Something was nagging at me.

Oh well, I’ve got another client to unwind. I went up front; Chris was waiting. “Ready?” I asked.

She nodded her head. She seemed pretty bubbly as we headed back. When we went in the room, I asked her the usual. “Anything special today? How are your legs feeling?” She’d started aerobics and Stairmaster, and her legs had been tight and sore the last couple of sessions.

“Was Monica here? I thought I recognized her voice,” she said in an excited tone.

“Yes, you’ve met her?” I asked innocently.

“Why yes, she’s my um... therapist,” she said.

My world flipped inside out. I focused on my breath, attempting the outward appearance of calm.

“That’s nice, let’s start with you on your stomach, then,” I said, the routine taking over just in time as I stepped out the door.

I stood in the hallway in shock. Monica is a therapist. Monica is a therapist I’ve been using hypnosis on for the last eight or nine months. I’d relied on that hypnosis to get her to unwind over the phone, and just given her what amounted to therapy in anyone’s book. My, what an interesting world I was in all of a sudden. I closed my eyes and leaned against the wall, feeling the coolness on my back, the image of a firing squad popping suddenly into my head. I focused on my breath, clearing my mind. I have a client to deal with I told myself; these

problems are not her problems and I will deal with my problems later. Right now my client is the focus of my attention.

Good idea, but I wasn't sure I was buying it. I thought I heard the table creak, so I knocked on the door. "Ready?" I asked as I opened it slightly.

"Yes," came the muffled reply.

I stepped in and started the CD. I wanted more information; how? I decided to stick with what works. I moved my hands gently along her body feeling for the trouble spots; her legs were tight, but were toning up nicely. "Your muscle tone is really improving," I told her. Then I asked, "Chris, you said Monica was your therapist?"

I heard a soft "Yes" from the head cradle.

"If you don't mind telling me, what kind of therapist is she?"

Chris said softly but clearly, "She's a hypnotherapist."

I wobbled from another solid kick to the head. "And did she recommend me?"

"Yes, she recommends you a lot."

The puzzle pieces started fitting together a little more.

So, I'd been working on a hypnotherapist, and she'd been sending me business. That explained the clients I had that went under so quickly and easily. Had I slit my throat with what I'd done earlier with her? I had to think not; she knew what I was doing; probably better than I did.

"Why did she suggest me?" I asked.

"She said it would be good for me. She's right," she said with a sigh.

That made sense; I'd spend an hour putting them in a trance and helping them relax; she could build on that pretty easily. That also explained the once-a-week for a few weeks then every two or three weeks pattern; I was preparing her clients for her.

Then I placed my hands on her back, between her shoulders, and said, "Now take a deep breath to my hands, hold it for a moment, and relaaaax..."

She gave me that wonderful sighing breath and I felt her let go on the first breath. The pieces of the puzzle were starting to fit together. "Good. Thank you. For the next hour, the only thing you need to do is let go and relaaaax. Another deep breath."

I sighed and took Chris deeper, focusing on her. I praised her for the exercise she was getting. I reminded her to warm up and stretch and listen to what her body told her.

I finished up on her head and neck with her on her back. I woke her; she thanked me and after reminding her to get up slowly, I left the room.

I went back to the staff room. I needed quiet to think, and wasn't going to get it; the room was full, the day people like myself finishing up and the folks that worked a few hours in the evening coming in. I changed into my street clothes, then went to clean up my mess.

I took care of the linen. I picked up my CDs, the oil and aromatherapy stuff I like to use, and put them into my bag. Then I walked up front to see how I'd done for the day.

It's common for people to leave tips after a massage; we use little envelopes. I don't check mine until the end of the day, that way I'm not affected either way between clients.

When I went into the lobby I was shocked to see Monica standing there. She saw me and gave me a big smile, a smile with something extra. Well, here goes, I thought. "Hi, can I help you?"

She came over and took my arm. "You're going to dinner with me, and I'm not taking 'No' for an answer."

Why all of a sudden did I have the feeling that the problem she'd been worrying about earlier involved me? "Okay," I told her, "Let's go."

As I was about to head out, Jenny interrupted me. "Here" she said, handing me my schedule for the next day and a stack of envelopes from clients.

"Thanks for your help, Jen. See you tomorrow," I said as Monica hauled me out the door.

We walked to a new two-seat Mercedes; her business must be pretty good. I got in on the passenger side. After she got in and we buckled up, she said, "Japanese?"

"My favorite. To what do I owe this honor?"

She chuckled as we pulled away from the curb. "I owe it to you. We need to talk."

We didn't do much talking as we drove about four blocks to one of the better Japanese places in town, one of my favorites. We parked and I hopped out to get her door. She smiled as I helped her out of the car. "Why thank you," she told me. Hey, even if I'm on my way to the gallows, might as well be pleasant I thought.

We had a reservation and were led to a small tatami room I didn't even know existed. As we sat down, Monica spoke to our hostess in rapid fire Japanese. I raised an eyebrow; I was impressed. Monica did not look oriental.

"I was raised in Japan - Army brat," she said as we wiped our hands with traditional hot towels.

Hot sake quickly appeared. Our cups filled, our hostess once again disappeared.

We picked up our cups. I looked into Monica's eyes. She sighed and smiled once again. "You don't know how much you've helped me. It's time to thank you."

We had a sip. It was good and hot, and not the run-of-the-mill sake I usually got here.

"You're welcome," I told her, "Thank you for the clients."

Her smile became a little wry. "When did you figure it out?" she asked.

I looked at my watch. "Oh, about an hour and a half ago, but I don't think I understand it."

She laughed and put a hand on mine. "Joanne?" she asked.

"No, it was Chris. She recognized your voice."

She shook her head side to side as she smiled. "I was afraid of coming in late in the day, but it was worth it." She squeezed my hand. "It was definitely worth it. So what have you figured out?"

I smiled. "I know you've been sending me business. You tell me -- how did this start?"

She took another sip. "Okay, we'll share. Remember Bob, the patent attorney?"

I nodded. "You got his four o'clock slot today." He was a regular; he'd been coming to me for over a year, every three weeks or so now. He started out as a stress case, but he'd been working out regularly and now was in pretty good shape.

"Well, he started with me about nine months ago. Even though he said he'd never been hypnotized before, he went under so easily I couldn't understand it. After a few sessions, he mentioned you and described the work you did. I was very curious. That's where it started. I made an appointment with you, and here we are."

I couldn't remember my first session with her; I'd have to review my notes. My usual practice is to ask a new client if they mind me talking to them to help them relax and get more out of the session. Some do mind; I am quiet and they get a good massage. I still had some of these as regulars, but most of my regulars were the ones I talked to.

“So why did you start sending people to me?” I was curious.

She smiled again. “Because you are very good, and I am very busy. What's the common denominator with most of the people you see, especially the new ones the last few months?”

“Other than going under fast?” I asked. “It's got to be stress; that's most of my business.”

She was nodding her head. “Stress -- that's most of the business for both of us. You do something I can't do: you relax them from the inside and the outside, and make working with them so much easier for me. You help them learn to pay attention to their bodies, learn to live in their bodies again.”

“And you?”

She laughed. “I need it as well. You don't know how much I look forward to those sessions.”

We looked at each other; both of us sighed together, then started laughing.

“So why don't you schedule for the end of the day when it will do you more good?” I asked her.

She sighed. “Well, the cat is out of the bag now. I could, but we both finish our days about the same time.”

“I'll go an hour later for you, or an hour and a half, just call up and do it. I'll let the front desk know,” I told her. I saw goosebumps on her arms momentarily. “Why doesn't that surprise me?” she said softly, smiling and shaking her head slightly from side to side.

“So why me? And why so many all of a sudden?” I asked.

“I told you. I couldn't handle as many people if it weren't for you. My business expands like yours -- personal recommendations and word of mouth. I've been relying on you for months. It's time we talked about it. Together, we're making a difference in a lot of lives. Ideally...”

And I'm feeling exhausted, I thought suddenly as she spoke, the long day taking its toll, my eyes and head drifting down. I still hadn't had a chance to look at my tips for the day; they were out in Monica's car. I didn't really need the money; I could quit tomorrow. But I loved what I was doing, and was glad to be helping people. Still...

“What's wrong?” she said softly, interrupting herself.

“Who shaves the barber?” I asked softly, looking up again.

She nodded her head.

Our hostess reappeared and we ordered dinner. Rather, Monica ordered after checking with me.

We had a very nice meal, talking about how we got started. I told her a little of my story, an engineering career, the traffic accident, and getting into this through rehab.

Her story was more normal, going through school, working her way, hanging out her shingle, going through lean years, and now building a reputation and a rapidly expanding client base. She was interested and very happy that I was going for my certification; she knew some of my instructors and thought highly of them. I told her it was a long road, with quite a ways to go. She sparkled at that and smiled, telling me I had options I didn't know about.

We squabbled over the check; she insisted on paying so I left the tip. Back in the parking lot, she said, "Let's go to my office. We still have more to talk about."

Monica's office was in a professional building. She had a small reception area, the usual stacks of files, and an office to the rear. It was a nice office; very professional, very calm. She had a desk and a few chairs, and a fabric covered lounge. She sat in one chair in front of the desk and motioned me to the other. We sat in silence for a minute or two.

"I want you to work with me, here," she said finally. "Working together we can do a better job, help more people."

I was stunned. I didn't know what to say.

She pushed on. "It's the right thing for you to do. You'll get your certification far sooner; I can help with that. You'll also make more money, and we can both work fewer hours. It makes sense for both of us. We are helping people now. Working together we can help more, and better."

I looked at her for a minute in silence. "That's quite an offer," I finally said.

"That's not all," she said softly. "You wanted to know who shaves the barber?"

I looked at her; she continued. "I was asking myself a very similar question about a year ago. I was frazzled, ready to quit, and then I found you. You've not only made a difference in other people's lives, you've made a big difference in my life, and I want to thank you for that."

She stood up and extended a hand. I stood up and took it.

With that she put her arms around me, I held her, and we kissed. I held her gently, feeling her as she held and kissed me hungrily, offering herself to me. When we stopped for a

moment I sat down, still holding her hand. She pulled her chair over closer and sat next to me. I smiled and started to chuckle.

“What?” she asked. I tried to explain it to her; this was the first time I'd kissed a client. I knew her body so well, how it moves, what it likes, how it responds to my touch. I'd seen her, felt her so many times on the massage table, naked save for a towel draping her. I prided myself on my professional detachment, something she was now asking me to discard.

She nodded her head. “I understand,” she said, “That's one of the things that makes you so attractive; how you've never taken advantage. All the people I've sent to you tell me how safe they feel. That's how I feel. I'm not asking you to discard your detachment, I'm asking you to explore and grow.”

We looked in each other's eyes for a minute. This felt so right, but would it feel right tomorrow? Next year? That's what I wasn't sure about. I was sure I'd walled off part of my life for a long time; too long perhaps. I'd thrown myself into my work, ignoring any social life outside of the people I worked with, the yoga crowd I practiced with, classes.

She stood again, pulling me up. She led me to the lounge. “On your back. Time to shave the barber.”

I smiled and lay down. She pulled her chair over to the head of the lounge. I heard a click and saw a small bright red spot appear on the ceiling over my head. I smiled and took a deep breath. Yes, this was something I wanted. I could feel myself sinking down without a word from her, the spot getting brighter and the room fading.

Then I felt her hands at the sides of my head. “I've been taking private lessons from Tina on head and neck massage,” she said as she gently stroked my temples. “Tina thinks I'm getting pretty good.” I sighed, letting my eyes close. Yes, she was. Tina was very good, and a wonderful teacher.

“You don't have to open your eyes if you don't want to,” she said softly, “Just relax, that's all you have to do, relax.”

I took another deep, slow breath and let it out. It felt so good to let go to her, let her voice fill me. I let myself float. Her hands on my head were great; I wanted to feel someone's hands on my back, on my shoulders, working deep, like Angie or Michelle. I felt that sensation of distance that told me I was going deeper and I let go to her voice, letting her take me where she wanted.

I opened my eyes a while later. She was sitting beside me. I lifted an arm and she held my hand.

“Is that what I do for you?” I asked softly.

“No,” she smiled, “you do so much more.”

She leaned over and we kissed once more. I could feel the hunger in her hands as she felt and squeezed me. I held her gently, feeling her muscles move.

"I know this is sudden," she said some time later, looking into my eyes, "but will you come home with me? Tonight, now?"

I pulled her back to me and kissed her hair. "Yes," I whispered.

I felt her take a deep breath and squeeze me, her nails digging into my shoulders. She stood up. I looked at her anew; I could see her tight nipples through her blouse and bra and smell her perfume. I'd experienced these sensations before, but the professional in me interpreted them differently. I took a deep breath, taking in her aroma through my nose and her vision through my eyes. She smiled and shifted her hips slightly, invitingly. Both bodywork and hypnosis teach you to listen to what people's bodies tell you. Her message was clear. What message was my body sending? Was I afraid to listen?

She helped me stand up and we kissed again. This time I ran my hands over her back, feeling her and running a hand up her neck into her scalp in a way I knew she liked. She shivered and moaned, "Let's go before we end up on the floor."

I laughed and stepped away a bit, still holding a hand. She grabbed her purse and we quickly left, locking up the office.

On the way to her place she asked, "When do you need to be in tomorrow?"

I looked at my schedule. "I'm a victim for students at nine. My first client on Thursdays isn't until ten fifteen."

She gave me a puzzled look. "You take me at nine..."

I smiled at her. "Yes, but you're special. I start early on those Thursdays."

She sighed and shook her head.

It took us about twenty minutes to get to her townhouse. We parked in the garage, and as we got out of the car she told me, "Excuse the mess - I wasn't planning on this, but then again it was your idea."

I laughed. "So I was your problem -- I'd been wondering. And you aren't going to do me for practicing without a license?"

She came over to me and put her arms around my shoulders, leaning her hips into mine, pressing me against the car. "No, I'm going to grab you up before someone else does." We stood there kissing and holding each other until the light on the garage door opener went off, leaving us in the dark. "Wait here," she told me, and went to turn on a light.

She gave me the quick tour of her place. I laughed when I saw the stack of massage books in the room she used as an office.

“What's so funny?” she asked, sounding a little hurt.

I held her again. “Nothing. What books did you read to learn hypnosis?” Massage and hypnosis are two skills you learn by doing, not reading.

“Hmpf,” she said. She opened her mouth to say something else, but I kissed her before she could speak.

When we broke for air she said, “That was Tina's response.”

“Oh?” I asked, “I've never kissed her. How good is she?” Her eyes flared and when she opened her mouth to protest I kissed her again.

She led me to the bedroom. She had a large very comfortable looking bed with plenty of cushions and pillows. I looked at the clock; the evening was still young.

“Do you have a beach towel or some large towel we can use?” I asked her.

She looked a bit puzzled. “What for?”

I smiled at her. “I want to learn your body all over again.”

She smiled and I could see the goose bumps on her arms in the dim light of the room. “That sounds wonderful,” she sighed.

I followed her to the bathroom, carrying my bag. As she rummaged for towels I got out my toothbrush and toothpaste and brushed my teeth. She looked in my bag briefly.

“You're pretty well equipped for the spur of the moment,” she said accusingly.

I laughed, rinsing my mouth out. “It's all professional. I brush my teeth three or four times a day; there's nothing worse than a bodyworker with bad breath or body odor. And I carry my own soap and shampoo because I work with students - you wouldn't believe how much oil some of them put on you.”

She was still giving me the hairy eye. I stepped over to her and put my hands on her shoulders. “It's the truth,” I said softly, “I've been celibate for a long time... Too long.”

She gave me a wry smile. “Okay. I believe you.”

I stepped into the little room with the toilet, closed the door, and took care of business. I came out and gave my face and hands a quick wash. She was washing her face. I kissed her on the back of the neck.

"I'll be waiting for you," I told her softly. I picked up my bag and the towels she'd gotten and closed the bathroom door behind me.

Her clock-radio had a CD player; I put on my surf CD. I selected some cushions from the bed and put them on the floor, spreading the towel over them. I got my massage oil from my bag, took off my clothes, and sat on the floor waiting, clearing my mind.

She came out of the bathroom nude a few minutes later. She looked at her clock radio, hearing the surf, and smiled. She came over and stood by me. She was beautiful. I could see a slight blush on her erect nipples, and smell her delicious aroma, accompanied by perfume.

"Why don't we start with you on your stomach?" I said.

She nonchalantly dropped a package of condoms next to me before she lay down on the floor and I arranged the cushions beneath her head and shoulders.

"Next time, we'll have my table, or at least a proper set of bolsters to use. You know," I said as I warmed a bit of oil in my hands and started smoothing it on her back, "one of the things we learn is how to handle a client who asks for "more" during a massage. When that happens to me, the session is over, and I'll never see them again." I ran my hands up her spine, from her beautiful bottom up to her shoulders, extending my fingers up her neck into her scalp. She moaned softly. "But you aren't a client, so you can ask me for more, or ask me to stop, whatever you want." I massaged her neck gently; she took a deep breath and let it out, sighing, "more." I could feel her muscles loosening as she let herself go.

"That won't do," I told her, "I want you responding to my touch." I ran my fingers up her sides starting at her waist, extending them to slide along the sides of her breasts, startling and tantalizing her. She took a deep breath and moaned again. "That's better."

I moved along her body, learning it anew. I used long sensual strokes, circling both hands on her back and then moving one lightly down an arm while the other moved down a leg, ending at the toes and fingers at the same time. I got goosebumps and a sigh; she liked that; it's a very sensuous stroke, one we teach in the "massage for couples" classes. I spent a few minutes doing both sides of her body in that manner. After that I worked down her legs and did her feet, kissing them as I worked.

Then I moved astride her, straddling her bottom, letting my hard cock press into the crack of her ass as I started deeper strokes on her shoulders and back with my hands. She inhaled sharply and moaned, wiggling her bottom beneath me. We both enjoyed the mixed signals. I was using long, slow, deep strokes along the sides of her spine, some times extending up into her scalp, some times finishing by lightly running my hands down her arms, occasionally finishing by lowering myself down and either kissing or gently biting her neck, all the time pressing into

her bottom, timing my strokes to her quickening breath. She moved her legs a little further apart; it was so tempting to let myself slide down and enter her now.

But her right shoulder called to me; I could feel the tightness again. I repositioned her head and arms a bit to open up the area. I started some long strokes over the area to warm up the area for deeper work. "Let go and relaaaax... You won't miss anything, I promise, let go for me and relaaaax..." I told her. With her head turned to the side I could see her eyes flutter a bit and watch her face relax as she let go, the slight smile remaining.

I worked deep tissue for a while, using my hands and my voice to get the muscles and fascia to loosen up. When I was satisfied, I got off her and went to her side. I picked up her arm and moved her shoulder; it was much better. As I put her arm back by her side I glanced down between my legs. I laughed softly; the professional had taken over -- my once raging hard-on was back to being a limp willy. Well, we can fix that, I thought.

I picked up the smaller towel and gently and sensuously wiped any excess oil off her back and legs, speaking to her, bringing her back up to a twilight level as I did so. Limp willy heard her moans and perked up again.

I had her move to her back and rearranged the pillows under the towel, supporting her head and bottom. I worked her shoulders first, insuring they were both open and free. Then I spent a few minutes on her head and neck. At one point she opened her eyes, looked at me, gave me the most wonderful smile, then sighed and let her eyes flutter closed again.

I moved down and spent more time on her feet, telling her periodically that she was half awake, very relaxed. After her feet I worked her legs moving up. Her inner thighs and hips were tight. Her inner thighs were also hot. I took the small towel and wiped my hands as well as I could, then put on one of the proffered condoms.

"Now we're going to do a hip stretch." I told her as I moved her feet together, bending her knees and drawing her feet up to her bottom. The first part I'd do just like we did in yoga, but after that...

"More awake now. I want you to take a six count breath; count slowly to yourself and inhale fully and exhale fully to a count of six." I placed my hands on her knees as she breathed in and out deeply. "Good. Now the next time you inhale, press your knees together against my hands, and when you start to exhale, relax again, and I'll stretch you a little. Let me know if I press too hard. Open your eyes and look at me so I know how you're doing."

She opened her eyes and smiled. She started to inhale and pressed against my hands. When she started to exhale, her eyes closed and she relaxed; I pressed her knees apart gently until I felt resistance. "Good. Two more times please." We repeated the stretch; each time I was able to deepen her stretch a little. She opened her eyes inhaling and let them close exhaling, smiling all the time. Her aroma was making my head spin; time to move on.

“Good,” I told her after the last stretch. “Now you can relax and let me move your legs. Eyes open again, awake and alert, but still relaxed.”

She opened her eyes, looking at me and smiling. I moved her heels down a bit, then moved her knees together some. Then I knelt down, slipped her legs over my shoulders, and put my hands on her hips as I closed my eyes and dived into her.

When I first kissed her mound she shuddered and said, “Oh, God, yes!” I moved lower and kissed her slit, helping it open with my lips and tongue. She was delicious as I adored her, feeling her hips begin to move, feeling her legs squeeze my head, feeling her hands on my head. I slipped a finger inside her, hooking it to tantalize her from both inside and out. I timed myself to her motion, until she shook, squeezed, and spasmed around me, then lay still, relaxing once more.

I moved her legs off my shoulders and moved up, looking at her. Her eyes were closed, her head tilted back. I moved my hips up to hers, my bent knees at the sides of her hips, my cock poised to enter her. I moved one hand and placed it on her belly, pressing lightly. I felt a tremor run through her and she raised her head, opening her eyes. She inhaled, gave me a look of raw lust and exhaled, “In me, now please.”

I put my hands on her hips and slid into her. We both moaned. She surprised me by straightening her legs, putting them up by my shoulders. I held her hips, pulling myself into her, snuggling my legs up closer around her, my eyes closing as we moved together.

Then she said, “Look at me.” I opened my eyes. She held out her arms and I leaned forward a bit. She grasped me, fingers along both sides of my head, squeezing gently as she pushed and pulled with her leg as we moved together. I moaned and she smiled. She squeezed me and carried me over the edge, the world spinning as I came inside her. Then she slid her legs apart and I lay on top of her, with my face buried in her hair. She laughed softly as she held my head with one hand, feeling my back with the other. I slid out of her and we rolled apart; I ended on my back. She pushed herself up on one elbow, then leaned over and we kissed.

“That was almost a dream come true,” she told me with a smile.

“Almost?” I asked, moving an arm under her and pulling her closer.

“Yes,” she said as she put a hand on my chest. “I wanted you to take me so much when I was on my stomach, that was my dream... But what you did was better.” She leaned over and kissed me on the nose.

I looked into her eyes. “The thought crossed my mind. But what we did was better.”

“Do you think we can work together?” she asked as she started stroking my forehead with one hand.

I sighed and let my eyes close. “I think so.”

“Move on to the bed?” she asked me.

I sighed. “But I have to get up to do that.”

She laughed a little and helped me up. I started to lie down, but she told me, “No, I want your head down by the foot of the bed. I sighed and did as I was asked, relaxing in the middle of the bed.

I felt her hands on my head and neck again and I moaned.

“Thank you so much for what you did this afternoon,” she told me as she turned me to jelly. “You did that very well. And now I’m going to do to you what I’ve dreamed of, and what you helped me see this afternoon.”

I was more than half gone, relaxing to her touch and her voice.

“That’s it,” she continued, “let go and relax, let yourself go deeper and deeper. You can go as deep as you want, right now, and then I’ll take you deeper and deeper, more and more relaxed.”

Her voice got so far away, yet I could still feel her hands. I could hear her clearly, and knew what she was doing, and loved every moment of it. Then I drifted off, knowing I didn’t have to remember what she told me.

When I opened my eyes she was straddling me; I was turned around on the bed with a pillow under my head.

“How do you feel?” she asked me.

“Like this,” I said, running my hands over her sides and her waist.

She gave me a moan and sat back on me. She put her hands on my shoulders and ran them out my arms. The effect was electric. I felt myself going limp and relaxed, all my strength going to my cock. And as she caressed me, all my strength went from the rest of my body into my cock; my cock got harder and harder with the rest of me relaxing more and more.

I moaned at the intensity of the sensations as we slid together, her on top of me. I heard her moan as well, a sound that continued as she rocked on top of me. I couldn’t talk, I couldn’t move, I couldn’t even move my hips to push myself deeper into her. I was on fire and there wasn’t anything I could do about it, even if I wanted to.

A higher pitched noise started building in her. I felt her weight shift forward. Her hands touched my neck, and then her lips touched mine. As we kissed I was overcome by orgasm, overcome as I’d never been before.

Afterwards I found I could move again, and I put my hands on her waist and held her, sliding my hands up to her shoulders as she collapsed on top of me.

I found my voice and said, "That was incredible."

She laughed a little as she panted on top of me. "I'll say." Then propping herself up on top of me she added, "You didn't mind that?"

I looked into her eyes. "No... Of course it would have been nice if I could have moved my hips some, or opened my eyes, or told you how much I wanted your nipples."

She laughed more, shaking her head and cascading her soft hair on to me. "I'll fine tune that later. But it was your idea."

"It was? When?"

"Just a few minutes ago silly. You must have really needed that -- you went very deep very fast."

I nodded as best I could. "I did need that. I do need that, more, please."

She leaned down and hugged me. "Oh, I look forward to working with you, to working on you."

I hugged her to me. I thought about taking her deep into trance, learning her fantasies and making them come true. "So do I." I told her.

Important Note

This story is presented as a work-in-progress. It's not complete. It may never be complete. If you'd like to see it completed, let me know -- I appreciate comments from readers. Oh, and this story is only posted on asstr -- if you found it somewhere else, please let me know, as it's stolen.

Work In Progress (rev 7/22/2000)

Who shaves the barber?

By artie@netgate.net

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