

Mall Walkers

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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.

It started a few months ago. I was recovering from foot surgery; back to wearing real shoes after being in a cast and a brace for over three months. I was under orders to get some exercise. Luckily, I work near the "Great Mall" as it calls itself. I started going over at lunch time and walking orbits for thirty or forty minutes. My temporary disability parking sticker always got me good parking places when I arrived, and good parking places when I returned to work.

This quickly got addictive; I was walking at lunch (rather than eating) three to five days a week. My secretary was helping me keep a good schedule; she had noticed the improvement it was making, in my health, weight, and sometimes even my attitude.

After a while, I started noticing the same people. I especially noticed one particular woman -- early thirties, great looking body, always smiling. I'd wave to her, and she'd wave to me.

One day I saw her sitting in one of the green leather chairs in the "Train" theme area of the mall. I waved, and she waved for me to come over. I was on my third orbit, and had plenty of time, so I went over and sat next to her.

"Hi there -- I'm Carol. It's good to finally meet you." She held out her hand.

I shook her hand; I was still catching my breath from walking fast. "Glad to meet you -- I'm Tom." I sat down in the chair next to her; the chairs were in pairs turned at right angles, so our knees were a few inches apart.

"Your third lap for the day?" she asked me.

I smiled; she was more perceptive than I was. "Yes, on my third, I call 'em orbits."

She shook her head. "Where do you sit and relax when you finish walking. I don't think I've seen you sitting down."

"I just get in the car and go back to the salt mines." I told her.

She reached over and put a hand on mine. "No, that's not good for you, you need to relax for a few minutes after a brisk walk. You need to cool off and relax."

I agreed that I should probably do something like that. It was nice just talking to her, let alone having her express some kind of interest.

We exchanged small talk. It turned out we worked in adjacent buildings -- I work for a high tech company, and she works for a medical concern.

"Then we should car pool over here at lunch!" she suggested. Good idea; I told her; I get the best parking spaces, at least until my sticker expires. "Good, and that way I can get you to relax for a bit after walking." She seemed proud of herself, having accomplished something important.

We quickly developed a routine, one of us phoning the other and meeting in the parking lot to drive to the mall. At the mall, we would put in two laps before looking into any stores; shopping could only be done after the second lap. Then we would sit together, resting and chatting for five or ten minutes before heading back to work. It was a great deal.

Talk about dark clouds with a silver lining; I was going through an intensely bad week/month/life period. A field sales guy had placed a very large harpoon in my back. He sent an email to my boss, his boss, and a couple of corporate VPs -- but not to me -- complaining I was uncooperative. My boss and I agreed that I was doing the right thing; this guy didn't want to understand what "no" meant, but that still left me with this thing sticking painfully in my back. I had also been thinking about my wife, my family, wishing they were still alive. I was on a tight downward spiral, and I knew it.

We had finished our laps for the day, and sat in our usual chairs. I closed my eyes, not wanting to talk today. Carol reached over and took one of my hands. "What's the matter, Tom -- something is bothering you." I opened my eyes and looked at her. She looked genuinely concerned. Eventually I told her the harpoon story, and that it was just stress, and it was catching up to me; I didn't mention other things. She questioned me for a while, teasing out answers. I had good eating habits, no real bad habits. I was getting exercise on a regular basis, relaxing a bit in the middle of the day. I enjoyed her company. No, I prized her company. But still, my sleep was for shit, I was twitchy, things were catching up to me.

She sighed, and moved us to one of the larger red leather seats, where we could sit together. She took both my hands. "Tom, I want you to lean back and close your eyes, and just listen to my voice and do what I say. I can help you with this problem. Trust me."

Can't hurt, I thought. so I closed my eyes and leaned back, enjoying the feeling of an attractive woman holding my hands. She started by having me take a few deep breaths and trying to relax. It actually seemed to help a little. She then told me to start counting backwards from one hundred to myself. She kept on talking in a soft soothing voice, helping me relax my head, my neck, my shoulders...

Along about seventy and my shoulders it got hard for me to count; I kept forgetting where I was, my mind kept wandering. Her voice was clear but far away. I was feeling very

relaxed, even though I knew I was sitting next to her in a mall full of people. That wasn't important. I tried to count and follow her voice. Finally I heard her say that if I was having trouble counting, I could just take a deep breath, say "zero", and let go and relax completely. What a relief. I took a deep breath, said "zero" as I exhaled, and my mind went blank.

"Tom? Wake up, please." was the next thing I heard. I opened my eyes to find a wonderful person in front of me, smiling gently. I reached over and gave her a big kiss.

When I realized what I was doing, I sat back. "Carol... I'm sorry... I don't know..."

She sighed and took my hand again. "Tom, don't worry. You've wanted to do that for a while, and I've wanted you to do it for a while as well."

I had to admit to myself that she was right. "What happened? I was counting, and listening to you, and then..."

"Tom, I'm a clinical psychologist. I hypnotized you, and very easily; you are an excellent subject. I helped you to relax, and we talked about the things that are bothering you. I wanted to continue, but we were getting into areas that we shouldn't discuss in the middle of a mall."

"I don't remember any of that, just listening to your wonderful voice..." I told her.

"That's not unusual -- you went into a very deep trance, and often times people don't remember what goes on. Did you know we live about two miles apart?"

I laughed. We had both been deliberately cagey with each other on where we lived and our exact occupations. "So you also know what I do for a living?" I asked her.

"Yes, we talked about that. And we talked about the fact that you're concerned about things you can't control, which is not good for you."

"Carol, I do feel much better now. Thank you for what you've done. What do you recommend next?"

She took both my hands. "Well, since we work so close to each other, with practically the same hours, we should definitely carpool -- that will mean less stress for both of us. We should go out to dinner together this evening so we can talk, and then I need to continue the session we started here. I'm still very concerned about you."

"Carol, your concern is wonderful. But don't you get enough of this during the day?"

It was her turn to laugh. "I deal mostly with people that are in need of serious psychiatric help -- far beyond what I can give them, but the system insists on routing them through me first. You're different. I can help you. I like you." She shook my hands for emphasis.

I laughed again, I was smiling, something I hadn't done in days. "OK, You've convinced me. Italian, Chinese, or Japanese -- I'm buying." It turned out that she knew and liked each of the three places I suggested, all within a few blocks of each other and about two miles from where we both lived. We agreed on Japanese, and a time.

As we walked back to my car, as we had done many times, she took my hand. I stopped and turned to her.

"Carol, do you know what you're doing? Are you sure about this?" Now I was concerned.

She looked me in the eye. "Tom, trust me, please. I know what I'm doing."

"I trust you, Carol; it's me I don't trust."

She sighed. "I learned quite a bit about you a little while ago. I know what I'm doing."

"OK, if you're sure."

She said she was; I wasn't going to argue. I hadn't been out to dinner with anyone in too many months, let alone someone intelligent and attractive. We drove back and returned to our respective salt mines.

I went back to my office and barely had time to sit down in my chair when my secretary came in and closed the door. "You're smiling! What happened?"

I laughed. "I had a very good walk. I'm feeling much more relaxed."

"No kidding!" she said. "I haven't seen you smile like that in a long time."

The afternoon actually went well. I didn't pick up any more harpoons, and got a number of things taken care of by the time I left.

We met at the restaurant. I'd reserved a table. "How was your afternoon?" Carol asked me after we sat down.

I looked at her and said "For the first time in quite a while, I left the office without my hands shaking and my head pounding."

She raised her eyebrows a little. "I guess that's quite an improvement then."

We had a wonderful dinner. After I paid the check and we were starting to leave, she said "We're going to your place." I leaned my head down and frowned, giving her look number three: seriously questioning your sanity.

"Look, trust me." she said, "At the end of this session you're going to be in no condition to drive. Besides, you'll do better in your house than in my apartment."

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I sighed and shook my head. "Okay, I trust you. I don't trust me, but I trust you."

She followed me home. I parked in the garage, she parked in the driveway. I gathered the mail from the mailbox and we went in. It was so strange hearing her shoes on the tile floor behind me; the sound echoing in a house that last year had been so vibrant and full of noise, and in the flash of a horrible instant had become so quiet and cold.

I was uneasy; I turned to her as I loosened my tie. "Carol, I don't feel comfortable -- I don't know how much you know about me, what I told you. I don't want you to get hurt. I don't want to hurt you. You don't need to do this."

She smiled, took the mail out of my hand and put it down. Then she put a hand on my forehead, said something, and the world faded away.

The next thing I know I'm on my back on the couch, in my sweats. My face is wet and it feels as if I've been crying. I look for Carol. She's sitting in the chair near the couch, pad of paper in her lap. She's smiling, but it looks as if she's been crying too. I look at the clock; two hours have passed.

She asks "How do you feel?"

I took a deep breath and tried to figure that out. "I feel... Tired... Drained... Relaxed... And like a great weight is gone." I looked over at her. "I hope it didn't land on you."

"No, it didn't." She sniffed a bit.

"Carol, do you still think this was a good idea?"

She stood up, and put the notepad and her glasses on the chair. She turned to me, smoothing her dress, then slowly unbuttoned it and put it on the chair. She came over and lay down on top of me on the couch and kissed me like I've never been kissed before.

She still thought it was a good idea. I wasn't going to argue.

FIN

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