

Row

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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.

This is an old story. It's about starting at a new school and making new friends. It's also about rowing and sex. If you're just interested in sex, go read something else. Rowing is no more than sublimated sex -- or is it sex is no more than sublimated rowing?

After a summer of floundering, I decided to return to school and complete my graduate degree. It was pretty easy getting accepted to a good school in the Northwest. After an initial written exchange, I flew out and visited for a few days. I was impressed with the campus and the faculty; the school was impressed that I wasn't asking for money. I liked the area and picked a real estate agent to find me a house. Things looked promising as I headed back East; I figured it would take a few months to work out details.

I was back on the West Coast five weeks later, a wild combination of push and pull. The moving van with my worldly belongings was on the way. When I found out it would cost me more to ship my car than it was worth, I gave it away. Nancy, my realtor, found a nice place for me to lease, giving me the flexibility to make an informed and leisurely build-or-buy decision. She also set me up with a used-car finder who got me a great deal on newer, better wheels.

I signed up at school the last week of October. While the semester was underway and the next one didn't start until mid January, I paid my money anyway. Signing up and sitting in a seminar once a week got me access to school facilities, better insurance rates, things like that. It also gave me a while to get used to things.

My routine quickly fell into place. I found a local gym; the facilities at school were okay, but I wanted better hours. My rowing machine and related gear went into one of the bedrooms in the house. I'd get up in the morning, loosen up, and do my high-intensity rowing workout. Then I'd shower and head to school. I'd spend the rest of the morning in the library, reading and studying. I'd have a light lunch, and spend time with Carl, one of my advisors, or the other grad students, sitting in on seminars.

About two thirty I'd head to the school gym and indoor track. That was one of the things that sold me on the school, a great indoor running surface. Considering how much it rains, you'd better be able to run indoors.

The first week I ran during the "open" hours in the early morning, or I tried. What a pain that was! The track was full of idiots, fashion models, and pears. I bitched to one of the powers-that-be: I'm serious about this; isn't there a better way? I need to carry a shovel to get the damn pears out of my way! ("Pears" refers to body shape -- think about it.) The staff jock looked me

over. I was wearing my favorite gray sweats (old) over my rowing stuff, and my indoor track shoes (not so old, but not new either). He looked at the track; it was empty as free-for-all time was over. "Okay," he said, "give me a mile." He held up his stopwatch. I smiled. "Five even." I stripped off my sweats and took off running.

I paced myself for a five minute mile -- fast but doable. It was great to be able to run on a clear track. I was also loose enough so it felt as if the track was propelling me forward. On the last lap I looked at my watch; I was going to come in under five. Oh well; I sprinted.

I trotted over to my inquisitor with a big grin. Running on an empty track is a lot more fun. "Four forty seven. Not bad," he said as he reached up to take my pulse. I held out my wrist, with the Polar heart rate monitor on it. He nodded with a smile and we talked through a cooldown lap. He told me 2:30 to 3:30 every day would be a good time. We shook hands.

So my afternoon starts with a few miles on the track when it's occupied by hard-core track rats. I occasionally do sprints with them, but mostly it's miles. It's a great way to loosen up body and mind.

After the run comes the fun part. I go to a small room off the main gym and plop down on one of the rowing machines. I love these machines. I hate these machines. The machines don't care. They're more accurately called "rowing ergometers," or "ergs," and contrary to opinion, they were not invented by Torquemada.

Rowing on open water is wonderful. It can be relaxing, or it can be the most intense physical effort imaginable. Tranquility or pain, tranquility and pain, take your pick. It's harder to row in the winter or when it's dark; that's why some sadists invented rowing machines. Now you can experience the same agony in the gym or in your own home as on the water, except when you throw up you have to clean up the floor.

I'm giving you the wrong idea; I love rowing. I love the challenge, the exhilaration, and even the pain. I rowed for three years in college. Looking back, I enjoyed it, although I might not have thought so at the time. Rowing challenges all of you -- spirit as well as body. To excel you have to push beyond aerobic, beyond anaerobic, and beyond the searing, burning pain.

Well, I think I've done all I can to convince you to try rowing! But I do love it. I do my "hard-core" workout at home in the morning. Afternoons at school I put in half an hour or an hour of steady rowing: no sprints, no show-off, concentrate on form and make the numbers.

After that, two or three days a week it's off to the gym for weight work. I'm only there about an hour. I go to the gym to work, not to socialize.

So early December, I'd been doing this routine for almost two months. I recognize people, and people recognize me. I'm a regular. I run, I row. After I row, I pull the notebook out of my bag and write down the numbers. I rest for a few minutes and then take off. If someone says "Hi" to me, I say, "Hi." If someone says something more complex, I usually say, "Ug," or something equivalent and get to work. I'm not a conversationalist when training.

Back to that day in December, a Tuesday -- I finished rowing and wrote down the numbers. I got up to sit by the wall and recover for a few minutes. There standing behind me (for how long I don't know) were four beautiful women. I'd call them Amazons, but I wouldn't want to offend them; they might get upset and damage me. The tallest of the bunch, a few inches taller than me, and I'm a shade under six foot, smiled (a very predatory smile -- I guessed she's a rower) and said, "Hi. I've been watching you. You've got good form."

I smiled back as I looked her over. Her shoulders were almost as wide as mine. I'm about 8 percent body fat -- pretty lean, although you can't really tell from the baggy sweats I wear. She looked like she was about 14 percent, which is really ripped for a woman. I said, "Thanks. I'm done for today."

Her arms were well muscled, her legs trim and ripped. If I saw her back, I told myself, I could tell how much she's into rowing; rowers have very well developed back muscles. She gave me a more predatory look and said, "Do you know who I am?" as she extended a hand.

I don't know why I did it, but once I saw her flashing gray eyes it was obvious. I went down on one knee, held her hand lightly, bowed my head, and said, "You are Minerva, Goddess of wisdom and war. How may I serve you, Goddess?"

Her entourage laughed. She raised my hands, and I looked up. I had a great view from that angle. She had a great chest, musculature and otherwise. She was smiling and laughing as she looked down at me. "That's good. Would you be interested in a little competition?"

"How could a mere mortal compete against a Goddess?" I was getting into it. So were her buddies.

She laughed again, then pulled my hand up; I stood in front of her. Yup, she was at least two inches taller than me. One of her compatriots was about the same height, and the other two were a few inches shorter. The shorter oriental-looking gal was a real knockout.

Minerva, still holding my hand, said, "How about a race, say 2k?"

Oh ho! Have I been taken for a sucker? "Okay, when?"

Her smile got wider; her fangs showed. "Friday?"

I thought about my schedule; no problems. "Friday morning would be fine. What time?"

"Nine o'clock?" She asked.

I went back to one knee. "I will serve my Goddess Minerva at nine Friday morning."

The oriental gal laughed and applauded. The others laughed as well.

Minerva asked, "What is your name, mortal?"

I smiled; she was getting into it as well. "Paul, Goddess."

She gave me a haughty look and said. "Very well, Paul. I will meet you here a little before nine on Friday."

I kissed her hand, which surprised her a bit. She walked off with her entourage. I got a look at her back; she was a rower. They all were.

After they walked out one of the staff jocks, who had seen the whole thing, said, "You know who she is?"

"Nope, I figure she's captain of the women's crew though."

He snorted. "No shit -- NCAA record holder. You're dog meat."

"Oh? What's her name?" I asked.

He told me her name. "Thanks," I told him. "She has a wonderful voice and personality." I figured she'd hear anything I said.

That day wasn't a gym day. I went over to the library and looked for her on the World Wide Wait. An interesting offer; I was impressed and disappointed at the same time. She thought I was good enough to challenge, but also must think I'm mediocre. World class times for the indoor 2 kilometer are 5:39 for men and 6:15 for women. That's a big difference. Of course, the 5:39 mark is by someone that I'm not sure is human. The best time I saw for her was 6:30, which is world class. My best time, a year ago, was 6:10. I knew I was in better shape; I was training to break six minutes in the opens coming up. For Friday, I should have a 20 second edge, quite substantial unless I break form or have a problem. I'd have to row a clean 2k. Luckily, I've been focusing on form for the last two months. This should be a good test.

I knew what I needed to do to prepare for Friday. Eat a little different, sleep a little more, train a lot differently, get a massage. The first thing I did was call Rachel and set up massage appointments for that afternoon and Thursday evening. The rest of the day was stretch, massage, light dinner, stretch, and early to bed.

I did my modified routine Wednesday morning. I reviewed my numbers and was surprised. I just might break six minutes; I hadn't done a real push for time in a while. I knew I was more flexible, so my stroke was probably a few inches longer. Mentally I knew I was in better condition. If she was flexible and her form as good as she looked, I could be in for a race. Nah, I should beat her, unless I screwed up.

When I got to the track that afternoon, I saw the oriental gal talking to one of the track rats. I walked up and offered my hand. She had a stopwatch -- a spy, and a beautiful one.

"Hi, I'm Paul."

She shook my hand. "Wendy." She looked me in the eye. Rowers have balls, even the women.

"I'm doing three 6-minute miles, trot a lap, then go row," I told her. I put my bag down and headed to the track, leaving my sweats on.

I did my miles, keeping the lap times even. As I walked my cool-down lap, I saw her leave. The staff dude she'd been talking to came over.

"What she want?" I asked.

He looked to be sure she was gone. "She wanted to know what you usually ran; distances and times. She wanted to know your last name; how good I thought you were. What's up?"

I laughed. As far as I knew, I hadn't told anyone at the gym my last name. I'd gotten very good at being careful with my identity. "What did you tell her?"

He shrugged. "I told her you were good, you ran strong and steady, but I didn't know how fast you were because I don't think I've ever seen you go all-out."

I laughed again. "Thanks. I agreed to a 2k against her captain, Denise, Friday morning."

His eyes got wide. "Ooh... That should be good."

I smiled. "I'm looking forward to it. It should be a lot of fun. Come watch."

I clapped him on the shoulder as I walked off laughing.

I went to the rowing machines. Wendy was there. I told her, "I'm doing 30 minutes, working on form. Nothing fancy. You're beautiful and I love the sparkle in your eyes."

She blushed a little. I sat down in my sweats and did my thing.

After about ten minutes she asked, "Do you do sprints?"

I looked over at her. Was I imagining things or were her nipples showing tight through her top? She had a great figure; narrow waist, good hips, very tasty looking breasts, and the musculature of a rower. Her hair was short and dark. She had green eyes and a wonderful smile.

"Some times," I said, "Are you free for dinner tonight?"

She looked me in the eye and grinned. "What were you thinking of?"

What I was thinking of had little to do with dinner. "Your choice. Anything you'd like."

She put her arms around her legs and rocked. It showed off her bottom and her waist, as well as strong shoulders. "Let me think about it. How can I get hold of you this afternoon?"

Oho. Nice try. I told her I'd be doing errands and gave her my cell phone number.

She smiled and said, "Okay, I'll give you a ring later." Then she left.

I finished rowing, recorded my numbers, and headed for the gym after a little rest.

I was cooling down after a light workout when my phone rang. I got it out of the bag. It was Wendy; she couldn't make it tonight. I asked about Saturday. She paused for a moment, putting her hand over the phone. She returned, laughing. Yes, that would be wonderful. Okay, I told her, we'll figure things out Friday, unless I see you tomorrow.

We chatted a bit longer. As I put the phone back in my bag, a gym rat pointed to me and said to his buddy, "Look -- it talks!"

I laughed and let them live. That's how social I am in the gym. I'll spot for anyone who asks; I'm just not a talker.

Wednesday night was another early night to bed. Thursday morning was a light workout. I ran a little Thursday, more to loosen up than anything else. Wendy was there. I put in another half hour rowing, slow and steady, concentrating on form.

Wendy quietly watched me row. At one point she said, "Your form is beautiful. You've done this for a long time, haven't you?"

I smiled and looked at my watch. "About twenty three minutes, seven to go."

She sort of snorted and gave me a lopsided smile. That was the kind of smart-ass answer she'd expected. "How much do you weigh?" she asked.

At school, very few had seen me in anything but baggy gray sweats. What a good happenstance that had been!

"Around 180," I said, "... and you're just under 135." That's the weight limit for "lightweight" women in rowing competition.

She laughed. Then she said, "I think you can do it. I think you're going to beat her tomorrow. We still don't know what you can do."

I told her, "We can do whatever we put our minds to. You know that. I'm looking forward to dinner with you."

She was hugging her knees again. "So am I," she said softly.

I had to resist the urge to do an all-out sprint. Instead I really concentrated on form, settling into my rowing trance. I needed to make sure I brought my earplugs tomorrow. It's a setup; it should be fun.

I finished the day with a good long massage and a race dinner. I didn't figure out until my last year of competition how much help a massage could be, both mentally and physically.

I got up early Friday and spent a good bit of time loosening up and stretching. I had some water to drink, nothing more. I checked the contents of my bag; all there.

I got to the gym about a quarter to nine. I had my race gear on under my sweats, my championship shoes were in the bag. I stopped in the men's room for a good sit. I walked into the rowing room about ten to nine.

With nobody there, I plopped down on the floor and stretched some more.

A few minutes to nine, Denise walked in wearing her racing outfit. She looked stunning. I know my mouth fell open. I went up on my knees and said, "Goddess, I am here to please you."

She laughed and extended a hand to help me stand. I grabbed my bag.

"Ready?" she asked.

"Yes, when you are."

She looked at me, head tilted a little to one side, smiling slightly.

"Care for a little bet on this?" she asked.

"Winner on the bottom?" I suggested, looking her in the eye.

She gave me a low laugh and said, "Come on."

I followed her to one of the smaller basketball courts. I was right; it was a setup. Two rowing machines and about forty people were present, a few more gals than guys. I recognized a bunch of the track rats, Wendy, and two other gals from Denise's mob. Most of the gals and some of the guys were obviously rowers; there were a few I was glad I wasn't racing against. Even though at 180 I'm considered "heavyweight" for men, the top world-class men are 240 and heavier -- as were a bunch of these gorillas. That's what it takes to pull eights.

I put my bag down by one of the rowing machines. I looked at one of the older guys; I thought I recognized him. He gave me a puzzled look and walked over to me, extending a hand.

"Hi, I'm Don, the crew coach. Do I know you?"

I smiled, remembering him, and his voice. I'd beaten the shirts off his folks two years ago. I fondly remember the veins standing out in his neck as he screamed at them afterward.

I walked to one corner of the court, away from the crowd; he followed. When we were appreciably out of earshot of the group, I said quietly to him, "Remember the blue boy?"

He looked at me for a moment and then laughed loudly and clapped me on the back. He'd never seen me with hair on my head, let alone the moustache.

Row

I'd shaved my head for competition that season, head and eyebrows. Would have clipped my eyelashes too, but my pre-med roomie convinced me that was a bad idea.. Rowers will do anything they think will give them an edge, even if the edge is having others think you're out of your mind. For one meet I painted my shaved head blue, our school color, and just prior to a race I chugged a quart or two of blue-colored water. I won the race, and after crossing the finish line, in front of the judges and the crowd, I threw up all this blue water. I thought it was cool. They thought I was crazy. They were probably right.

We returned to the rowing machines, Don still laughing. Denise was talking to her friends, flexing her muscles, starting the intimidation thing.

Denise walked to one of the machines. I walked to the other; our rituals started.

I looked them over to make sure both were set the same; they were.

I sat down on the court and took off my gym shoes. I pulled my "lucky" shoes out of the bag. They're old and beaten up, but they've NEVER lost a competition. They weren't going to start today.

Denise was wearing a spandex/lycra racing suit. I pulled off my sweats and the crowd noise changed as I showed skin. I looked at Wendy. She had a look of surprise on her face. As I flexed and stretched Denise started to look concerned.

I was in great damn shape. I was wearing my tight racing trunks and an old crew tank top with "PAIN" emblazoned on the front and back. It showed off great arms, shoulders, and upper body. I took the piece of chalk out of my bag and wrote "Frank" on the rowing machine seat.

Denise put her talisman on top of the rowing machine's small display. It looked like a rock of some kind. I got my talisman out of my bag, a very bent and misshapen oar lock, dating back to when I was learning that victory required both strength *and* form. The oar lock holds the oar to the shell. I bent the shit out of it. I lost that race, but haven't lost many since.

Denise sat down, tightened the foot straps, and took her handle.

I spit on my seat, then sat down. I tightened the foot straps and slid the seat back and forth a few times. I was edgy; that's good, but I'd have to watch the initial sprint and row my own race, control my adrenaline and use it wisely.

Then Don walked up with a microphone as I was putting an ear plug into my left ear. I looked around -- two video cameras. Great; just what I need.

"Good morning," Don said to one of the cameras. "This morning we have a timed 2k between our own two-time NCAA champion, Denise, and ..." he put the microphone in my face.

"Paul," I said, "Ph.D. candidate in Mathematics."

He pulled the mike away; Denise looked confused; the degree didn't quite match the physique.

“Also remembered by some as the blue boy!” added Don as he stepped back. Denise all of a sudden looked surprised; hell, she looked shocked. I smiled at her and showed my fangs: you’re in for a race, honey, and you’re going to lose!

“Racers ready!” Don shouted out.

Eyes front, I moved for the catch, blew out a quick breath. The crowd started making noise. I heard the buzzer.

A 2k is a race of skill and strategy as well as strength. You start with a sprint for the first few hundred meters, drop back to a slightly slower pace for a kilometer or so, and then finish with an all-out sprint. Done properly, you die just AFTER you accelerate across the finish.

I watched the display in front of me through the opening sprint. The crowd noise was there but not bothersome; I hadn’t had time to put in the other ear plug. I dropped back to mid-race cadence; Denise was still in her opening sprint but dropped back a couple of strokes afterwards. She was a bit ahead of me, but I caught and passed her, my strength and longer stroke paying off. Yoga is not for sissies, I told myself. Longer and stronger wins the race.

I was feeling strong, feeling good. I watched our distances, pulling away with each stroke. When should I go for the finishing sprint? When would she? Would she try to outlive me in the sprint? Focus on form: catch, drive with the legs, finish with shoulders and arms, release, recover. Feel the pain build like fire.

As I was getting ready for the end sprint, I heard her blow out air; she’d started her sprint; she’s way too early! I looked at my distance. I know I smiled; I went for it. I went maniac, full strokes, strong strokes, making lots of noise. I could hear the crowd yelling; I thought I heard my name being yelled out as well.

I was in my racing tunnel; the only thing in the world was the rowing machine and the distance display in front of me. Six strokes, harder; five, pull harder; four, full extension. Fast return for three, power legs, arms, back. Two, faster and harder, enjoy the burn. One, legs, back, arms, power, I heard the buzzer again and saw my display kick over 2000. It’s over.

I pulled up and released the handle, gasping, burning. I felt it from one end to the other, glorious pain. I raced my best, gave it my all. The crowd noise came back. After what seemed like a long time, I heard the other buzzer. I looked up at the big displays. I beat my own best indoor time by eleven seconds, breaking six minutes for the first time in my life: 5:58. Denise finished sixteen seconds after I did. I’d won.

I turned to her, extending a hand. She was still panting; we both were. She was shaking her head; she couldn’t believe it. She smiled and stuck out her hand; we shook and squeezed.

Someone helped loosen the foot straps and I got my feet out. I was still a couple of minutes from standing up. I picked the earplug out of my left ear. The crowd was still making noise. Some people clapped me on the back.

I swung around on the seat to face Denise. She was facing me, still shaking her head. “Blue boy... I can’t believe it,” she panted. “I beat my best by almost twenty seconds.”

I tried to laugh. “First time under six,” I told her, panting as well.

She started laughing and held out her arms. I stumbled forward on my knees. We held each other, there on our knees between the rowing machines, laughing. I could feel our hearts pounding as we panted, still recovering.

Eventually we sat back. I took one of her hands and kissed it. “Thank you, Goddess,” I said. “I hope my effort pleased you.”

Then Don was back in our faces with that silly microphone. A gorilla grabbed my right arm and pulled me too quickly to my feet as Don said, “Our winner, Paul, is also an NCAA...”

I didn’t quite hear the end of what he said because I passed out from trying to stand up way too soon. The next thing I knew I had got smelling salts under my nose. I waved them off and opened my eyes. Don and some others were around me.

“I’m okay,” I protested. “Some idiot pulled me up too soon.”

I sat up, with help. “Where’s Denise?” I asked.

“Right here.” She was to my left. She had her sweats back on.

I reached out for her hand. She took mine. “Thank you for a great race,” I told her.

She smiled. “Thank you.” She stood up and walked away.

I felt hands on my shoulders, from my right side. I looked over; it was Wendy. “You did it. I knew you could do it.”

I smiled and was about to say something.

Don interrupted. “So, who’s Frank, and what do you have against him?”

I laughed. He’d seen me writing the name on the seat. “Just someone I like to think of as *kissing my ass*.”

He laughed. “You have any eligibility left?”

I was being recruited. I looked up at him. “Later, coach. We’ll talk.”

I swung around on the floor. Denise was walking off the court, friends on each side, her head down a bit.

“Denise!” I shouted out. She stopped and turned. “You are beautiful! You are a Goddess! You are a champion! Thank you! Thank you! THANK YOU!” I shouted across the court to her.

I heard applause. She laughed, then bowed. She turned, head now high, and walked out with her entourage.

Don was on one knee next to me. He looked me in the eye. “That was class. If you’re not going to compete, you’re going to coach.” He gave me a hug, then stood up.

Wendy leaned over and gave me a big hug. I hugged her back. When we broke apart I thought I saw tears in her eyes. She turned away from me quickly.

I reached for my bag and took off my shoes, kissing each as I took them off. One of the remaining gym rats gave me a funny look.

“These shoes have never lost a race. NEVER!” I yelled as I held my victorious shoes aloft.

One of my track rat buddies said, “I thought WE were crazy...”

Wendy held up one of my arms, clapped my muscles and shouted, “We’re crazier, and a whole lot stronger! Don’t mess with crew!”

I laughed, as did the rest of the dwindling crowd. Her remark got applause and loud hoots from our fellow crew crazies.

Don and Wendy helped me with my sweats and my shoes. One of the guys was fingering my talisman. I guess I growled; he quickly handed it back.

“I’m Tim -- Don’s assistant. Nice souvenir you’ve got.”

“Yep, that was before I learned form was as important as strength.”

He put out his hand. “You put on a hell of a show. I’m looking forward to working with you.”

I shook his hand. “Good to meet you, Tim. I’m sure we’ll talk.”

Wendy put her arms around my waist and grabbed me suddenly. “Are you okay?”

“No, I feel a little dizzy.” And it was her grabbing me that did it.

“Let’s sit down,” she said. We sat on one of the bleachers that had been pulled out for the crowd. We watched Don, Tim, and the gang move the equipment. Tim came over and told us Denise had set a new Women’s record for the school. I hadn’t done too damn bad, either.

“Well,” I asked Wendy, “are you going to rejoin Denise and tell her?”

Wendy looked at me, a little sad. “Not right now.” She sighed. “I told her I thought you were a champion, your form was so good. I told her I thought you could beat her.”

I put a hand on hers. “That sounds like something only a good friend would tell you. She needs good friends like you.”

She smiled and put her other hand on top of mine. “Okay, but later. I’d like to be with you for a while. Head over to the student lounge?”

“That sounds great. I could use something to drink.”

We walked to the student lounge together. She had an arm around my waist and I had an arm around her shoulder. She didn’t need to hold me, but I wasn’t complaining.

We sat in the lounge, in a quiet section. After a while I sucked down a can of 7-Up, producing a belch that probably had my dear mother spinning in her grave, and my dad laughing in his. I was hungry, but it would be a while before I could hold anything down. I more or less flopped back on a couch still recovering. Wendy leaned on me. That was nice. Hell, it was wonderful, and something I’d missed for too damn long.

We got up and wandered around for a bit, ending up at the main cafeteria for lunch. We were carrying our trays and looking for a place to sit when we heard some whistling. I saw some waving hands, and headed that way. It was some of the crew, and Denise was sitting with them.

I put my tray down, then went to her on one knee. I took her hand. “Denise, thank you. You are and always will be my Goddess.”

She looked at me and laughed. It was good to see her smile.

I looked her in the eye. “I mean that.”

“I guess I had it coming,” She said.

“Yes, it was time for you to set a new school record. You’ll do better in competition.”

She shook her head at me and smiled. “No... I thought you’d be easy.”

“But I am...” I said with a smile, looking into those flashing gray eyes.

She laughed. “You are too much. I know Tim and Don talked to you. You’ll be great on the team.”

“I’ll do it for you,” I told her.

She sighed and stood up. I stood up as well, slowly, enjoying the view.

She gave me a hug, a STRONG hug. "I've got to go. See you later." She picked up her tray and left.

I sat down next to Wendy and we ate lunch. I was very hungry; I'd been careful the last day and a half or so.

As we were finishing, I heard some crowd noise behind us coming through the room. Wendy said, "Oh no..." I turned around to look.

We were descended upon by a mob of crew crazies, including a pack of the real healthy types -- six foot six 260 pounds and bigger. A couple of gorillas picked me up and tossed me in the air as if I was a pillow or something. They tossed me in the air a few times while roaring out a crew cheer. I was being officially adopted. If they didn't drop me, I'd be pleased. They held me up in the air for the final cheer, which was joined by most of the folks in the room. I held up my arms in victory, and to grab something to break my fall if they dropped me.

I was deposited back on the ground and clapped on the back. I got a whirlwind introduction with a lot of "good job" and "great time" comments, then they left as quickly as they had arrived; probably to pillage a small town and devour all the livestock.

I sat down again with Wendy. "I guess I'm accepted."

She laughed. "Yes, you've made a number of friends today."

I took one of her hands. "I hope you and Denise are among them."

She stood up. "Let's go. I need to get to class."

I picked up both our trays; she smiled at that. I dropped them off and we went outside.

"How about dinner this evening?" she asked.

"That would be wonderful," I replied, as she put her arm in mine.

"You know, you and Denise have a lot in common, at least I hope you do..."

I stopped and looked at her. "Oh?" I was puzzled.

She got closer, our noses an inch apart. "Yes, you both enjoy going to bed with women."

I smiled and chuckled. "Well *I* certainly do," I admitted.

She looked me in the eye, noses touching, and said, "Good."

I laughed and gave her a gentle hug. She gave me a very good squeeze.

"Where do you want to go for dinner?" I asked.

“You like Japanese?” she asked.

“Sushi? Sashimi? I love it. My treat.”

She smiled and squeezed me again, a bit more hip this time. “I get out of class at five.”

“Why don’t you make reservations for us at six, or whatever you think best. Will you have time between classes, or should I do it for you?”

“Oh? No problem -- I’ll have time. I need to change clothes, though...” She poked at my sweats. “and so do you.”

“Okay. I will.”

It was her turn to laugh. “Where should we meet?”

“How about the library by the main desk.”

“Okay, see you at five.” She leaned over and gave me a quick kiss.

I stood there in the path, watching her walk away. I took a deep breath; what a day!

I went to the car and drove to the house. Luckily, it was pretty clean. I’ve gotten somewhat lazy; winning the lottery will do that to you. I’d gotten a weekly cleaning service. I picked up a bit and changed clothes, then headed back to school. I had champagne for tonight, and stuff for breakfast -- if I was lucky. I put two champagne flutes in the fridge to cool and stacked wood in the fireplace.

I spent a few hours not really reading in the library. I figured I had one remaining year of eligibility, maybe two if this was an NCAA Division II school; I almost rang up Don, but decided to wait until next week. I remembered him screaming, the veins standing out in his neck; did I need that? Had he cooled down? I headed downstairs to the main desk at five.

Wendy was there as I came down the stairs. She was smiling, and gave me a hug as if we hadn’t seen each other in years.

I took her hand and we walked out to my car.

“Where to?”

She gave me directions and we drove to an apartment building near school. Hers was small and full of stuff, including signs of a female roommate. She told me, “Don’t mind the mess,” and whirled off to change. I sat down on the couch, leaned back, and closed my eyes.

I was wearing a sports coat, shirt, and dress pants. When she reappeared at about five thirty she was wearing a short skirt and a sweater. She looked delicious, and I told her so.

It took us about fifteen minutes to get to the restaurant. I opened the door, and the staff recognized her and treated her like family. She spoke with them in rapid-fire Japanese. I caught “Paul” and maybe “Denise” in there. The man Wendy was talking to laughed and reached up to clap me on the shoulder. I bowed a bit and smiled.

We had a very nice table for two in a quiet corner. Wendy ordered for us; plenty of sushi and sashimi, Miso soup, seafood tempura, and rice. We split some hot Sake.

When the Sake was poured, Wendy raised her cup. “To a great race.”

I raised mine. “To a great competitor, a new school record, and many new friends.”

We drank our toast and had a wonderful meal. Afterwards, the weather was cooperating; we walked around that section of town in the cool evening air and back to my car.

Wendy stood in front of me, arms around me.

“Paul, I hope you don’t think I’m too forward... Denise told us about your bet...”

I smiled.

She looked me right in the eye again. “... and I want to pay it off for her.”

I looked at her. “Wendy, are you sure?”

She smiled and kissed me. I guessed she was sure. She pulled back, with kind of a puzzled look on her face.

“What’s the matter?” I asked.

She smiled again; “Nothing is the matter. You’re the matter. Ph.D. in Math; I can’t believe you’re so polite!”

I laughed as I opened the car door for her. “Hard to believe I’m crew, huh?”

“Yes!” she said, laughing as I closed the door.

I got in and she kissed me again. “Paul, Could we go to your place?”

“I think that would be best. Would you like to stop and pick up some things?”

“Yes, please.”

We went by her apartment again. I waited in the car as she rushed in and out again, carrying a couple of gym bags. She wasn’t gone too long; I suspected they were repacked.

We drove to my place, located in a well-to-do residential section just on the other side of school. I pulled into the driveway and hit the garage door opener. I parked in the garage.

Before I got out. I turned to her. “Wendy, I live here alone. I’m a grad student. I’ll answer any questions you have, but for some of them I’d prefer to wait until we’ve been together for a while. Okay? If you want to go home, just tell me. You don’t have to do anything you don’t want to do. Understand?”

She nodded her head.

I asked her “Wendy, please tell me. I need to hear you.”

She put a hand on mine and said “Paul, I understand. Believe me, I want to be here. If I want you to stop, I’ll tell you, and I know you will.”

I sighed. “Thank you.” I leaned over and kissed her. I meant it to be only a brief kiss, but she had other ideas.

We finally got out of the car and went into the house. It was still pretty barren; I didn’t have a lot of furniture. I’d moved from a small two-bedroom apartment to a three-bedroom house, a big jump.

I gave her the quick tour. She was impressed by the room with the rowing machine, and ran a finger over the workout charts taped to the wall. “She didn’t stand a chance,” she told me.

I laughed. We went back to the living room. I started the fireplace. “Will this be okay for a while?” I asked her.

She smiled and sighed. “This will be wonderful. I’ll be back in a few minutes.”

I took off the coat, shoes, and socks. I hit the downstairs bathroom, then got the champagne and flutes. When I returned to the fireplace, Wendy was sitting on the floor with a pile of cushions and pillows around her, room lights dimmed.

I sat down, putting the bottle and glasses between us. As I looked up at her, illuminated by the flickering light of the fire, I caught the perfume she’d put on. My head spun. I steadied myself; I probably wobbled a bit.

“Are you okay, Paul?” she asked, putting a hand on my shoulder.

I looked up at her again, taking a deep breath as I looked in her eyes. “Beautiful women and sexy perfume do that to me.”

She put her other hand on my shoulder and pulled me closer. As she closed her eyes she said, “Good.”

We kissed. I don’t know how to describe the sensations; the touch, taste, smell; hands caressing and exploring, holding; sighs, moans, murmurs over the crackle of the fire.

When we stopped to catch our breath I opened and poured champagne for each of us.

“I usually don’t like champagne,” she told me as I handed her the glass.

“Try it for me. If you don’t like it, that’s okay.”

We clinked our glasses together and sipped.

“This is great!” she said.

I smiled at her. “Most people that say they don’t like it have never had real champagne.”

We finished off that glass. I reached for the bottle to refill our glasses, but Wendy picked it up and put it behind us on an end table, and put both glasses next to it. She moved some cushions around on the floor, then lay back. She took one of my arms and pulled me to her. “Now, where were we...”

I lay beside and slightly on top of her as we kissed again. We explored each other’s bodies through our clothing. She felt delicious. I was hungry for her. I wanted to taste her, all of her. I loved the feel of her hands on my body. I felt her nipples through the layers of material, felt them hard and demanding attention. She’d taken off her hose; her legs felt great as I ran a hand over them, feeling the muscles under the skin. As I moved my hand up her thigh she moaned through our kiss. I paused.

She opened her eyes and looked at me. “Some times you’re *too* polite.” She pushed me back and unbuttoned my shirt. I laughed and said, “I can do that, unless you want to.” She pulled back a bit. I took off my shirt, then reached over to her. “May I?” I asked.

She smiled and softly said, “Please.”

There was a collar button in the back of her sweater. I undid it with one hand, then helped her take it off over her head. As I did I imagined what she would feel like in cashmere. She was beautiful. I kissed her breasts gently through her bra; she shivered. “May I?” I asked again. She nodded her head; I reached behind her and unhooked her bra. I ran my hands up to her shoulders and slid the straps down her arms slowly, caressing her arms as I slid off her bra. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath; I could see the goosebumps form over muscular shoulders and arms. I stopped with my hands holding hers. “You are beautiful.”

She opened her eyes and took another deep breath, then lay back on the cushions, smiling. I leaned over to kiss her breasts. As my lips touched her, she slid her hands around my head and hugged me to her. I moaned; what an incredible sensation. I sucked on her and she held me; so delicious.

After a while I slid a hand up her thighs again under her skirt. Surprise, no panties! As I touched her warm curly thatch she moaned and squeezed me tighter. As I explored, feeling her heat and moisture, she moaned more. I paused briefly and she let go of my head. I sat up.

“What’s wrong?” she said.

I smiled at her, “Nothing, absolutely nothing.” I grabbed a cushion with one hand, and swept her legs together with the other arm. I lifted her bottom off the floor a bit and put the cushion underneath her. With a surprised squeak and a smile she let her legs fall apart; I lifted her skirt and moved down for dessert.

I kissed my way up her thighs to her crotch. I put my hands under her bottom and inhaled her perfume. She moaned. I slowly let my head down, eyes closed, and started kissing and licking her.

My head was soon locked between her hot, strong, thighs. I could hear muffled moaning and feel her move underneath me. I teased her button with my tongue, and slipped a finger into her when I sensed she was at the edge.

She let out a long, low moan. I felt her quivering beneath me, squeezing the fingers I had inside her, then relaxing.

With her legs fallen away from my head, I kissed her mound softly, working my way up. I was about to descend once more on her breasts when she reached up.

And flipped me onto my back. “I’ve got a debt to pay off...” she growled. She grabbed a small pillow and put it under my head. She undid my trousers and slipped them off, taking my boxers with them, raking the outsides of my legs with her short fingernails in the process. She slipped off her skirt with one hand, squeezing me gently with the other.

I started raising up to get a better look at her. She swung a leg over me and pushed my shoulders back to the floor. I started to say something when with a sigh and a moan, we slid together. I closed my eyes and grabbed her hips.

She moaned and rocked; I picked up my knees, sliding my feet closer and cradling her. This wasn’t going to be a 2k -- this was a sprint. I took deep breaths, holding her waist, taking in sensation and trying to hold off the inevitable; this was one race I wanted her to finish first!

She moaned, holding my shoulders as I pulled on her waist.

“Oh God,” she panted.

It was going to be a photo finish. Just a few more strokes, hold on for a few more.

She cried out and her hands moved from my shoulders to my neck, squeezing me, almost strangling me. I pulled on her waist as she rocked, and lost it, pumping into her. She moaned with delight.

“Oh God, I’m sorry,” she panted, pulling her hands away from my neck.

I opened my eyes and took her hands in mine. I drew them apart, bringing her closer to me. I closed my eyes again as we kissed, wrapping my arms around her.

She started falling to the side. I grabbed my boxers and slid them between her legs as we separated. She ended up partially on the cushions, and I quickly slid down and attached myself to a very tasty nipple. Her waist needed to be held.

She wrapped her arms around my head and started laughing, rocking us back and forth. I snuggled closer and held on. She kissed the top of my head and let go of me.

Slowly I sat up. "You look delicious," I told her. The flickering light from the fireplace played over the curves of her body.

"More champagne?" she asked.

"Of course." I turned and refilled our glasses.

"I think you've discharged your obligation," I told her, handing her a glass.

She went from a chortle to a laugh, almost dropping her glass. She gave me a steamy look, took a big sip, and set her glass back on the table. She leaned back and opened her arms. "I don't think so. Not to my satisfaction, anyway."

I took a sip and put my glass next to hers. I slid one arm under her. "Well, we'll just have to keep trying," I whispered in her ear.

She slid her arms around me. "Oh yes," she agreed, and pulled me into a kiss.

FIN
2004/04/24

Row

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