

## Back in the Saddle

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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.*

What a waste of a morning, I told myself as I drove back to work. I loosened my tie a little. I'd been representing our company in the acquisition of a small outfit. It took over an hour to get the other folks to admit they didn't have the information we needed to move forward. Shit -- and I put on a suit and tie for this?

Ah well, it was only ten in the morning; the day wasn't shot. As I drove down El Camino back to work I had a thought. Sure, I've got time, I told myself. In fact I laughed; I've got the whole damn day now.

I moved over to the right lane; I saw the store up ahead and pulled into their parking lot. I'd only been in Palo Alto two weeks, just having moved. I'd asked around at work, talking to other bike riders about their favorite local store; this was the one most often mentioned.

I walked in; they were just opening up. A kid, probably in his early twenties, was behind the counter. I chuckled to myself -- this should be fun.

"Can I help you with something?" he asked.

"Sure," I said with a smile, "I'm interested in talking to someone who's married and over thirty about a new saddle for my road bike."

He gave me a blank look for a moment then turned beet red. I heard a woman's laughter behind me. As I turned she said, "I'll handle this, Danny. Go get things ready for UPS."

She looked to be in her early or mid 30's, about my age, about a head shorter than me, with a slender biker's build, but a healthy bustline nonetheless. She held out her hand and said, "I'm Meg. I think I can help." She was still laughing a little.

"Hi Meg, I'm Paul. Good to meet you. Didn't mean to fry Danny like that."

She laughed a little more as she walked over to a different part of the store and I followed. "No problem -- he's not old enough to understand, and besides, I like your approach."

We walked over to a display of different saddles.

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“What kind of bike do you have, what saddle, what kind of riding do you do?” she asked.

All good questions. “I’ve got an aluminum-frame road bike, sort of a Frankenstein monster. I do mainly road work -- I like commuting, and riding on the weekends. As to the saddle, I just moved out here and the moving company delivered my bike day before yesterday, minus the saddle and the post.”

“Oh? What kind of saddle?” she asked.

I smiled. She had pretty brown eyes and brown hair pulled back in a ponytail. I liked her smile as well.

“Well, it was an old one. It was autographed by the manufacturer.”

“Who was?”

“Torquemada...” I said deadpan.

She winced and laughed a little more. “Oh, good quality Spanish leather, huh? Good and stiff, and now you’re looking for something softer and less painful?”

“Oh, you recognize the name?” I had worried that reference might be a bit obscure.

She smiled. “I’ve got a masters in history. That’s why I’m running a bike store.”

I laughed at that. She showed me saddles designed to be easier on the male anatomy. It looked to be a choice among widths, ranging from pretty wide for the “comfort” model to a narrow one with Titanium rails. I tossed out extremes, leaving me with the mid range.

She looked at me, looking me over. I was wearing a two-piece suit, shirt with French cuffs and cufflinks, and a tie.

“When could you swing by with your bike? The best thing would be to let you test ride each and make your choice that way.”

I nodded. “A superb idea. I could be back in about 30 minutes.”

She gave me a smile. “That would be grand. What kind of post were you thinking of?”

We talked about posts to mount the seat. I decided on a mid to high-end Ritchey post. I didn’t need anything freak grade. I left to get my bike.

I was living in a very small company-rented apartment near work until I found a better place to live. That was one of the shocks of moving out here; housing prices were unreal, even though they’d supposedly been dropping of late. But I’d been warned.

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The movers showed up two days earlier. Most of my things went right into storage. I'd packed some things for my interim use, the most important being my bike and riding gear. I'd been anxious to check over my bike, and was livid to discover they'd lost the saddle and post! Last I'd seen them, they were attached to the bike! But other than that, I'd suffered no loss or damage, at least in the things they delivered.

It didn't take me long to get out of the suit and put on riding clothes I could wear around the office. I grabbed my Shimano combination shoes -- I could wear them around the office this afternoon, but they still had cleats for riding. I put the bike carrier on the back of my Jeep and put on the bike.

I was back at the store in twenty-five minutes, wheeling my bike in. Meg met me and gave both me and my bike a careful looking over.

I do a lot of riding and it shows; I'm in good condition. With the other exercise I do, I've also got upper body strength, somewhat rare among riders.

"Whose frame is this?" she asked as she looked things over. "Looks custom -- carbon front fork, top end Shimano gear, Rolf Vector Pro wheels. You must like to ride."

Everything on the bike screams "Road." "The frame was made by a friend of mine," I told her, "I can't believe how much I miss riding, even though it's been less than two weeks."

She nodded. "Those shoes look like they've traveled a bit."

I chuckled. I could feel her eyes on my legs. "I tend to wear these to work -- they're comfortable enough to wear in the office."

She raised an eyebrow. "Weren't you in a suit earlier? Where do you work that you can go in like that?"

I turned my right foot a little, raising the heel, both to show off my Pearl Izumi socks and to check my latest road rash. I'd had a minor brush with a hillside just before moving. "I try to wear suits as little as possible. I work up the hill on Page Mill Road. During the summer, shorts and Pearlies are quite common." Somehow I neglected to say just what I did.

She smiled some more. "We get a lot of business from folks up there."

"That's why I'm here -- everyone tells me this is the place."

"I'm glad to hear that. I've got a saddle ready to go. Let's get you set up."

We put on the new post and saddle and adjusted the height. Meg let me out the back.

"See you in a few minutes!" I told her.

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I did a quick loop: California Avenue to Hanover, over to Hillview, to Foothill to Page Mill Road and back to Hanover and California again. As I flew down Page Mill it felt really good to be on the bike again. It even felt good going up the hill. I pulled back in to the shop.

“That was quick,” Meg said, “Where did you go?”

I was still panting a little from sprinting back down California. I told her the route I’d taken. She raised an eyebrow and looked up at the clock. I pulled the cycling computer off my handlebars and handed it to her. She pushed the buttons to review what I’d done. She looked at me and nodded approvingly.

“Not bad. Want to try the wider one?”

“Sure, why not. It feels great to be back on a bike again!”

We swapped saddles and I went out again. I hit the stoplights better this time, and had a better feel for the small hills. I pushed harder, and pulled back to the shop breathing harder, but I also knew I had a huge smile on my face.

“Cut it short this time?” Meg asked.

I took a swig of water from my bottle. “No,” I panted, “I hit the lights better.”

“Well, which one felt better?”

I had to laugh. “I was having such a good time riding again, I didn’t pay attention! They both felt a whole lot better than that old thing; the movers may have done me a favor.”

She laughed with me. “And your wife as well,” she added.

“Oh, I’m not married,” I told her.

One eyebrow went up. “Oh? So what was that line earlier this morning?”

I took another swig of water and checked my pulse; I was back under a hundred.

“I liked the way it sounded, and it is a concern. I had complaints from an old girlfriend, and thought this was the time to address them.”

She looked up for a moment, then smiled and looked me over again before looking me in the eye.

“Well, if you’re interested, a few of us are getting together for a little ride on Saturday.”

“Tell me more. I’d love to ride with you,” I told her honestly.

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“Good. We meet here at ten and ride to Sam McDonald Park. It’s about twenty miles each way with some hills. We’ll meet some other folks for lunch. You can either ride or trailer back. It would be a good opportunity to try out your saddle; I’ll be happy to swap if you like the other one better.”

I didn’t know where that park was, but compared to where I was used to riding, these weren’t hills. It sounded like a lot of fun. “That sounds great. I could do one saddle out, the other back. Will you be riding both ways?”

She smiled. “Oh yeah, I’ll ride both ways.”

I laughed; I recognized that competitive look. This was going to be fun.

“I’m looking forward to it. Write me up for the post and this saddle and I’ll head back to the salt mines. Anything I should bring Saturday?” I asked.

We walked back through the shop up to the counter. My legs felt great, but I knew I’d need to stretch a bit tonight.

“Your legs, your bike, fluids while riding. Lunch will be there. You vegetarian?”

Uh oh... My first challenge and I didn’t know which way the winds were blowing. “I’m an omnivore.”

She smiled and said, “Good,” showing me her canines.

I gave her my office phone number and told her I’d see her at 10 Saturday, unless I decided to swap saddles before then.

I dropped off the Jeep at the apartment and rode in to work. Damn it felt good to be on my bike again! The first thing I did at work was to swing by Bryan’s office down the hall.

“Hey Bryan, want to show me the Portola Loop today?”

Bryan is one of the hard-core cyclists. “Sure! You got a new saddle?”

“Yup. Went to the place you suggested. They’re good folks.”

I went back to my cube and had a brief phone call while I did some thigh stretches. Bryan showed up a while later. “Ready to go?”

I took off my knit shirt and put on a cycling jersey, grabbed my helmet, sunglasses, gloves, and water bottle. “Let’s do it.”

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The Portola loop is around 16 miles and was pretty easy, even after almost two weeks off. I kept up with Bryan without much of a problem. When we got back to the salt mines we sat outside on a bench for a while to cool down.

At one point he turned and looked at me. "Damn, you're in good shape."

"Thanks -- I haven't ridden for a couple of weeks."

He laughed as he panted some, and wiped the sweat from his brow. "Want to do the Skyline loop tomorrow? It's about 27 miles and has more hills."

"Are those hills up or down?" I asked.

"Yes," he told me as he emptied one of his water bottles over his head.

"Sounds like fun. Where's Sam McDonald Park?"

He took a deep breath. "Down La Honda road. We'll go by that cutoff tomorrow. It's a nice ride. What's up?"

"Oh, just curious."

He laughed a little. "It's part of the coast loop -- a half-century. Not this week."

I patted him on the back. "That's okay. Thanks for showing me around."

I made use of the spa in the apartment complex, and did some serious stretching. I'd do a lunch ride tomorrow, Thursday, and rest on Friday so I'd be ready for a longer ride Saturday.

The Skyline loop ride was fun. Still, these weren't hills, not as far as I was concerned. I paused for Bryan to catch his breath at the cutoff for Old La Honda Road. We saw a road sign showing the park 6 miles out. He told me it was mostly downhill, with a little upward slope toward the end, but we'd done the major climbing. I grinned from ear to ear. He shook his head.

It felt so good to be riding again, whipping down the hill back to work, my head down and my butt off the saddle, trimming as much drag as possible and feeling the sweat wick off me.

We went down to the fitness center when we got back and showered. That felt good as well. When I came out of the locker room, Bryan was standing around talking to another guy. I heard him say, "... I'm *dying* climbing this hill, and he's trying to carry on a conversation!"

I patted him on the back. "Hey, thanks for a good ride."

Bryan gave me a strange look.

"Hey, it was good -- I'm not used to this thick air," I told him. We had a good laugh.

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I rested Friday, stretching and eating for the ride, checking over my bike carefully, and going to bed early.

Saturday morning was a ride breakfast, fill up the bottles, get dressed, and head out. I got to the shop about quarter to ten; folks were around the back.

I spotted Meg in her cycling clothes; damn she looked good. I think she was eyeing me as I rode up. I certainly hoped so.

Danny and a couple were going up in the bike shop van; the gal was helping pack things; the guy was sitting in the van already. Meg introduced me to the other riders, two other couples. There was Carl and his wife Kathy, and Doug and his girlfriend Karen. The gal riding in the van was Doris.

As we were doing introductions, Doug asked me an important question. "Do you know how to ride a pace line?"

A pace line is when riders follow each other tightly in a line. When done right, it cuts down on drag. When it's not done right.... You have to be good, and you have to trust your fellow riders. I nodded and said, "Yes, and thanks for asking. I know the two most important signals for pace riding."

He raised an eyebrow and asked with folded arms, "And they are?"

I smiled and wiggled my left elbow. "This means I'm going to drop back left." Then I wiggled my right elbow and said, "This means I'm going to spit right."

With laughter all around, Meg said, "You've got it."

We wheeled out just before ten. All of them were good riders. I felt Meg and Doug were probably the best climbers. I knew the first part of the route now, so I knew how to pace myself. We rode together on the easy initial parts, then started spreading out on the climb. I kept up with Meg fairly easily, even when we got to one of the steeper sections.

On that one, she looked back at me and started moving out. I matched her. I was thinking of doing what had bugged Bryan so much, trying to carry on a conversation, but decided against it. She was working hard. Hell, I wasn't loafing, but compared to climbing in the Rockies, it wasn't that tough. We got to the top of that section and she gave me a funny look. I smiled and said, "Nice scenery."

We waited a bit at the turnoff for the others to catch up. We rested for a bit more when they arrived, then started the downhill stretch.

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I like speed as well as any cyclist, but I also treat downhill with respect. Both my bad crashes have been on downhill stretches. I let myself fall back a bit, controlling my speed. After a while, Meg fell back with me.

“What’s the matter?” she hollered as we whizzed down the road.

“Nothing,” I hollered back, “I want to die in bed, that’s all.”

She laughed and put her head down, coasting away. I tucked and caught up with her.

Bryan had described the route pretty well, except that the last climb was about two miles long at a gentle (for me) slope. As we got to that section Meg and I quickly caught the others and passed them. I went into hill climbing mode and pushed it, passing Meg.

I stopped at the entrance to the park; I wasn’t sure where we were inside. Meg puffed up about half a minute behind me, and rode on by. I followed her in. We rode up to a picnic site; there was the van.

It felt good to get off the bike. I controlled my breathing and stretched some. I looked around to see Meg talking to Danny and the others. The guy I’d seen in the van earlier was wearing a cycling jersey and a cast on his right leg. I walked over to them.

Meg was still catching her breath. “Where did you learn to climb hills?” she asked.

I took a swig from my nearly empty water bottle. “Boulder, and these aren’t hills.”

She started laughing and put her arms around my shoulders, resting her head on me. “I’ve been had,” she said. She introduced me to Bill, the guy with the cast, and his girlfriend Doris, who I’d met at the shop.

We sat down next to each other on a bench. Meg looked at me and said, “I figured from your bike and shoes you were a good rider, but I didn’t think you’d be that good at climbing.”

I shook my head and smiled. “But I’m not, it’s the weakest part of my riding.”

She put her arm around me; I put mine around her and hugged her.

The others started arriving, and the charcoal was started for cooking lunch.

Carl and Kathy arrived last. As Kathy walked over to us, she suddenly cried out and favored her right calf. “I’ve got a cramp!” she called out.

I went over to her. There were a couple of blankets on the ground. I got her on her stomach and started massaging her right calf, coaching her breathing as I went. I got the knots worked out, loosened her other calf for a while, then returned to the errant one.



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Doris came over to help; it turned out she was an ER nurse at a local hospital. She had a bag with her, and checked Kathy's pulse and blood pressure as I worked muscles.

Finished with my massage, I helped Kathy roll over and sit up. She gave me a great smile. The others were watching us. I looked around and said, "Next!"

Everyone laughed, but Meg came over and lay down in front of me. I slipped off her shoes and socks and started working on her calves and feet. After that, I thought about working her upper legs, but instead said, "Roll over."

She rolled over with a sigh and a smile, and I started in on her feet in earnest. Her eyes closed and she sighed as I worked the soles of her feet. Every woman I've met loves to have her feet massaged, and Meg was no exception. I wished I had some oil to use to make it easier. Still, I had her relaxed in a few minutes. She had the greatest smile on her face. I kissed her feet and set them down, and started to stand. She whimpered, "Is that all?"

I laughed, along with the rest of the gang.

"Sorry, I don't have any massage oil," I told her. She gave me a pout.

"Okay," I said, sitting down again, "Sit up with your back to me."

She smiled and sat up quickly. I closed my eyes and let my hands feel where they were needed, breathing slowly and feeling my own neck, feeling for the tight spots. As I worked her shoulders and neck she moaned occasionally. I worked some knots out of her shoulders in the usual spots for a ride such as the one we'd done.

I was on my knees behind her. As I worked I thought about sitting behind her with my legs split, sliding up to her... I was getting turned on.

Danny cried out, "Charcoal is ready!" I gave her shoulders one last squeeze then leaned over and kissed her on the back of the neck. She shivered and I heard an "Oh!" escape her lips.

"Is that better?" I asked softly.

She turned slowly, raising her head. She had a great smile on her face, which turned feral, carnivorous, as she said, "Much better. What would you like to eat?"

I almost said, "You." It would have been wonderful to throw her on her back amongst these redwood trees and eat her. But instead I smiled and said, "What do we have?"

She sighed. Had I disappointed her? "Let's see," she said as she stood up slowly in front of me. Was that deliberate? I saw the look in her eyes; does a bear shit in the woods?

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I unfolded my legs and stayed put on the blanket. "I'd like to stretch out a little," I told her. It was that and the fact that it's impossible to hide an erection when you're wearing skin-tight cycling clothes. I was encouraged to see tight nipples underneath her jersey.

She brought me back one of my water bottles, filled. "You want one burger or two?" she asked, a smirk on her face as she looked me over.

"I'll take two." I told her.

"You like spicy food?" she asked with a raised eyebrow.

"No, I love it!" I told her.

She grinned. "Hot damn!" I guess I'd given the correct answer on that one.

I put my mind on loosening up my legs for a few minutes, then stood up. I checked on Kathy -- she was doing fine, a little sore still. She and her husband were going to ride back in the van. Both thanked me for my help.

There was quite a spread set out on the other table. I got a plate and started building lunch. I did the burger buns with onions, relish and mustard. I'd come back for potato salad later. I snatched some cut up melon while I waited.

I talked a little with Bill; he was at a hi-tech startup. He'd crashed a few weeks ago and broken his ankle and collarbone. Ouch. Doris brought him a plate. He gave her an incredible smile, one which she returned.

"Let me guess, you met in the ER?" I asked.

Bill laughed, and Doris said, "No, better than that -- I saw him crash and scraped him off the road."

I laughed with them. "I hope to never meet you professionally," I told her, and both of them agreed that was a very good idea.

As I was going over to the grill, Karen came up to me and said, "When do I get my turn?"

I laughed, but Meg turned around, gave her a fierce look, and said, "Mine!"

I scooted over closer to Meg and put on a show of cowering; it got a good response.

Meg laughed then asked me "How do you like your burgers?" I saw four that looked as if they had sauce or something on them.

"Oh, if they've stopped moving, they're done. Stunned and seared is good for me."

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“A good man!” she said, grabbing the metal spatula and flipping four over, pressing each to the grill a little. There were also some veggie burgers on the grill, and three other meat patties which looked unadulterated.

I snatched another piece of melon and was about to pop it into my mouth when I noticed Meg had her mouth open. My, this dance was going quickly, I thought as I fed it to her. And, I wasn't minding it a bit. It didn't seem as if she was minding it either. Still, I reminded myself, watch your speed -- don't want to crash now.

Meg served our burgers and we went to one of the tables to sit and eat. We sat with Bill and Doris again. Bill asked what I did and I was cagey, just telling him I worked at HP Labs.

My burger was very good -- spicy. “This is great!” I told Meg. “What's the secret ingredient?”

She was grinning from ear to ear. She went over to the other table and brought back a bottle of hot sauce with a wooden top: Cholula. “Never tried it before,” I told her, “but I like it. This is tasty stuff.” I poured more on my burger. I thought I heard Danny groaning.

We had a good lunch, talking mostly about riding. They wanted to know where I'd ridden so far. I told them of doing the Portola and Skyline loops. Bill wanted to know my times. I told him I'd only done them once, and was just having fun. They wanted to know where I'd been riding, and I told them about riding in the Boulder area, on the edge of the Rockies. Bill asked if I'd ever done Pike's Peak. I grinned and nodded my head; Meg groaned.

We waited a while after lunch for things to digest, and visited the restrooms. When I came back I saw Danny had a bike stand set up and was going over our bikes. Mine got a close inspection, a different saddle, and approval.

To my surprise, and my delight really, Doug and Karen decided to go back in the van as well. That left Meg and me riding, which seemed to suit both of us just fine.

We helped pack things up, and the van took off. Both of us visited the plumbing.

“This is beautiful,” I told Meg, “And a beautiful ride. I've never seen Redwoods before.”

She smiled as she put on her helmet. “It's a great place. Ready to ride?”

“Back in the saddle again...” I said, putting on my shades and my helmet.

She laughed and we headed out.

We had the slope helping us this time, and coasted down. We'd have one long climb, then the rest of the ride would be more or less downhill back into Santa Clara Valley.

She stopped at the stop sign at the bottom of our climb. I pulled up next to her.

“Race you to the intersection at the top,” she said.

I grinned. “What for?”

She showed me teeth. “Winner on top.”

I sighed and shook my head. “Sorry, can’t do that.”

“Why not?” she asked with concern in her voice.

“I want to lose,” I told her.

She laughed and took off. I paced her for what I figured was about a quarter of the climb. Then I hollered, “Left!” and passed her. I put a lot into the climb, really enjoying the effort. I stopped about a hundred yards from the intersection and waited; it had been a good climb.

She was a ways behind me; I didn’t time it. As she pulled up, I got back on my bike and rode along side her. She was panting; she’d really pushed it. As we got to the intersection I dropped back, letting her get there first. She stopped and got off her bike. I rode up and got off, sitting on a log next to her.

“You win,” I said, putting a hand on her leg.

She put her arms around me, still breathing hard. I held her and laughed softly.

After her breathing recovered a bit, I knelt down by her feet, stretched her legs out, and started massaging them. She took off her helmet and closed her eyes as I worked her calves, helping her recover from the exertion. As I started working up her upper leg she took a sharp breath and I saw her nipples tighten. I worked quickly on the muscles. She opened her eyes and gave me a look of unadulterated lust. “Let’s get going,” she growled.

I finished up on her legs and stretched mine out. She warned me about the spots where traffic was likely to be a problem, and where the local police liked to ticket bikes for speeding.

Our downhill ride was good; she’s a very savvy rider. Her advice about traffic was right on. We didn’t see any police though. At one point we were passed on a downhill by some people on mountain bikes; as far as I was concerned, they were going too fast and taking turns too wide. Dummies on expensive mountain bikes -- they’re sure to meet Doris and friends.

We caught up with them on an uphill portion. Meg took great pleasure in hollering out “Left!” and both of us blew by them climbing.

As we got up to the top of the last hill, descending into Palo Alto once again, Meg pulled alongside me and said, “Follow me in.” I nodded; I’ll follow you anywhere my dear.

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We coasted downhill, sitting up to let the air cool us, and went through side streets to a little house a few blocks from the bike shop. We pulled into the driveway and around the back. I'd looked at housing in Palo Alto -- this place had to be worth a fortune.

She reached under her saddle for something, and the door on the detached garage in the back of the property opened. That was a good idea -- mount the opener under the saddle. I'd have to remember that.

I followed her in, leaning my bike up against a wall next to hers.

She took off her helmet and put it on the workbench. I followed suit, taking off my gloves, then my road shoes. They're great for riding, but next to impossible for walking. As I stood up to see what we were going to do next, she put her arms around me and we kissed.

I held her. I could feel our hearts beating rapidly and feel the sweat soaking her jersey. Her lips, her hands, and her body felt hungry. Both our bodies responded to the embrace.

Not surprisingly, our breathing didn't slow by much. We ran our hands over each other, through our sweat-soaked hair down to our cycling shorts. There's nothing like the feel of a fit, healthy animal in heat, and I think that described both of us.

"Care for a shower?" she panted.

I sucked the moisture off her neck, sending a shiver through her. "If it's with you, yes."

She laughed and took a key from the road bag on the back of her bike. She took my hand and led me to the house, hitting the garage door button on the way.

From our walk through the back door to the bathroom, it looked as if she lived in a two or three bedroom bungalow. Hell, it would probably sell for \$600,000 in this neighborhood.

While the structure looked to be forty or so years old, the bathroom was modern and had a large shower. We stripped and got in.

Amidst the feeling and kissing, we managed to wash each other, and stood under the cool water kissing for a while. Eventually we got out and dried off. Mostly dry, and with a towel around her hair, she took my hand. I saw a bottle of massage oil on a shelf and grabbed that as she led me to the bedroom. We kissed again at the foot of her large bed. The room was cool, dim, and quiet. She started pulling me to the bed, then stopped.

"This is serious," she said.

I looked her in the eye. "Okay?" I told her.

"Are you healthy? Are you clean? Anything I need to worry about?" she asked.

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I smiled. "As far as I know, no problems. I definitely haven't been promiscuous."

"Would you be willing to get a test?" she asked.

I nodded my head and sighed. "For you, yes."

She sighed and sat on the bed. "Paul, I'll level with you. I had one boyfriend for many years. I thought... A year and a half ago, I caught him fooling around -- with a man. I've been tested every three months and I'm still clean, but it scared the shit out of me. It still does."

I moved to the floor, hugging her. My mind raced. "Meg, I can't understand why anyone would do that to you. Thank you for telling me." Why would anybody do something like that, and to her? "Meg, I'll be happy to get tested, with you or for you. Do you have reason to believe your ex or his lover were at risk?"

She pulled back and looked at me. I could see the fear in her face. I held her again. "Meg, it's okay -- I'm not going to run screaming out of the house."

She held me and said softly, "Oh Paul, I don't know. It's just so scary. Good friends, good cyclists have died from AIDS in the last few years. They were good friends." She sobbed and I held her, rocking her. Finally she could continue. "Last I heard both continue to test clean." She laughed a little and sniffled. "Actually, they've settled into an amazingly monogamous relationship from what I hear."

I rocked her a little more. What is opportunity without risk? How much was I willing to bet? What did my gut tell me? "Meg," I told her as I held her and rocked her in my arms, "it sounds as it's working out for all of us then."

She looked up at me, giving me such an incredible look. I took her head in my hands and kissed her again.

I took off her towel and put it on the bed. "On your back please," I whispered.

She gave me another lusty look and moved on to the bed.

I pulled her legs gently, pulling her closer to the edge of the bed.

"Now close your eyes and relax," I told her. I opened the massage oil and put some in my hands. It smelled nice. I warmed it a little in my hands and then started in on her feet.

She moaned as I massaged her feet. I stayed with her feet until her arms and shoulders relaxed on the bed, then I started working up her legs, encouraging circulation and working out the exertion.

My first moves on her upper legs were met with a gasp.

“Relax, just relax,” I told her. I worked the outsides first, the illiotibial band that cyclists use so much. Her left side was especially tight. I knew this work was intense. “Take a long, slow, deep breath in as I work up, and exhale just as slowly when I tell you to. Good, inhale...” It took a few passes for her to relax and to get some of the tension out of her legs. The right side was easier.

I knew I should flip her on her stomach and finish her legs and do her shoulders, but I had a problem.

My problem was that she was wet and I was hungry for her. I ran my tongue around the inside of my mouth. I was healthy. She’d tested clean for a year or more, and so had her ex. Do I trust her? She came out and told me. I sighed; such a world. Rational conclusion or not, I felt safe. So I spread her legs gently and started kissing my way up the inside of her right thigh. She started moaning.

She moaned and gasped when I reached heaven with my tongue and lips. Her legs and hands took hold of my head, gently at first, but gradually with more intensity, pulling me to her as her hips moved rhythmically. I slipped a finger into her. She tensed and shuddered from head to toe, going completely quiet. As her motion slowed and stopped, her legs loosened their electrifying grip on my head.

I straightened her legs out as I rolled my head around a bit. Her eyes were closed and she was breathing a little fast. I moved to her head and started massaging her head and neck. She gave me a few more soft moans and her nipples stood up again, gradually relaxing.

I spent a few minutes with my fingers at the back of her head, gently rocking her head back and forth ever so slightly. God how I loved it when Christine did that to me. I wished her well, wherever she was.

I stopped and carefully removed my hands. I sat there watching Meg breathe slowly.

After a few minutes she started moving her arms. She took a breath and opened her eyes, looking back and up at me. I bent over and kissed her forehead. She gave me an angelic smile, which quickly turned fierce.

“On your back!” she commanded, pulling herself up.

I started moving down the bed a little, and was helped along greatly. She pounced on me, kissing me passionately. I held her waist as we ground together. Oh how I wanted to find out how her nipples tasted. I was quickly hard again, and she moved up and over me to reach one of the nightstands. I took the opportunity to move down and kiss her again, grabbing her bottom and pulling her to me.

As my lips touched heaven again she moaned and shuddered. Her weight shifted and she lowered herself on to my face a little more, her hips rocking. I kept one hand on her bottom and reached the other up to hold a breast. As I caressed her breast I felt her moving faster, with more

intensity. I rolled her nipple between my fingers and she shrieked, bucking wildly, then pulling away and collapsing on top of me, my face covered by her belly.

She moved again and I heard a drawer open. "God..." she panted, moving back down me. She took my cock in her hands, and then in her mouth. It was my turn to moan as my eyes closed and my head went back. When my hips started moving on their own she stopped, and I felt the coolness of a condom going on to me.

Then she started stroking the insides of my legs, going from my knees up to my ribs. That was so intense; my body responded strongly to her touch.

She moved on top of me again and we slid together with mutual gasps and moans. She rocked on me, gripping my cock tightly within her. Soon, too soon, I felt the tension build. I opened my eyes and lifted my head, reaching for her beautiful nipples so close, yet so far away.

My lips reached a nipple and she made a low wail. A hand snapped to the back of my head and held me tight as I felt her quiver around me. I moaned and came inside her.

I went limp, drained. She lowered me to the bed. I looked up at her. She was smiling, her eyes slightly glazed, panting softly. I imagine I looked the same. She laughed softly and ground her hips around on top of me. My eyes closed and I moaned again, my head going back.

She leaned down and we kissed again. She pulled up laughing.

"What is it?" I asked.

"We need another shower," she told me. I laughed with her; we did, both covered with sweat and now massage oil.

"I'm glad you won," I told her.

She sat up and laughed. "I think we both won."

She got up with a slurp as we pulled apart. She pulled me to sitting and we kissed again. I got my hands on her shoulders and started working the muscles again, feeling and hearing her moan into my mouth.

"I need to go to the bathroom," she panted in my ear.

I laughed. "Okay."

She stood and scampered out of the room. I got up slowly. My, what a day it had been. I heard the toilet flush and then the shower start, so I went into the bathroom. It was my turn for the toilet. When I finished I asked, "Is it safe to flush?"



## Back in the Saddle

She screamed, “No!” from the shower. I laughed; the plumbing must still be old. I put down the lid and joined her in the shower. I helped her wash, enjoying running my hands over her body again. She giggled and got out, leaving me to wash in unfortunate solitude. A dry towel appeared over the top of the shower enclosure. I finished rinsing off, turned off the water, and started drying. I got out and reached over to flush the toilet.

Then I looked around. “What happened to my clothes?” I hollered.

I heard laughter from out in the hallway. I put the towel around my waist and stepped out. She was walking down the hall, naked and beautiful.

She walked up and put her arms around me, kissing again. After our kiss she said, “They’re in the washing machine, with mine.”

“But how do I get home?” I asked.

She gave me a low laugh and she wiggled her hips. “What makes you think I’m going to let you leave?”

I laughed and held her.

“Actually,” she said in my ear, kissing my neck as she spoke, “I’ve got some sweats that should fit you, and we can go over in the car and get some more clothes, tomorrow afternoon.”

I leaned back and looked her in the eye. “You’re sounding serious about this.” I was a bit surprised.

She gave me a very even and serious look. “Unless you convince me you’re not a dream come true -- why not?”

“Oh?” I asked.

She smiled. “Let’s see. You dress well, you have a sense of humor, you’re a good rider, you look good in riding clothes and even better out of them.” She punctuated that remark with more of a wiggle in her hips. “You give great massages, you’re tremendous in bed, you eat meat and like spicy food. Did I leave out anything?”

I chuckled and kissed her forehead. “How about I’m a lawyer?”

She shrugged her shoulders. “A minor flaw. Do you snore?”

“You are serious. I don’t think I snore.”

She nodded. “Then I think I’ll keep you until I find out if you have any other bad habits, besides being a lawyer.”

“I could try and make a run for it,” I told her.

She raised an eyebrow. “I may have to tie you to the bed then.”

I smiled. “I’ve never tried that.”

She grinned and said, “Ooh, kinky too!” as she wiggled her hips.

I laughed. “I think you could find other ways to keep me on my back.”

“Mmmm... I think so too.”

I kissed her again, feeling her in my arms and feeling her arms around me.

“So what’s next?” I asked.

She sighed and nestled her head against my shoulder. “I need to swing by the shop, you need clothes, and we both need dinner.”

I rocked her back and forth. “I thought I was going to be your kept man for a while.”

She laughed and squeezed my waist. “You are, but I didn’t get a chance to do any grocery shopping, and I’m starving.”

I kissed the top of her head. “So am I. So, my place first so I can get some clothes, then the shop, then I’ll buy you dinner?”

“And then what?” she asked accusingly, looking me in the eye again.

“And then I’m yours to do with as you please.”

She snuggled back on my shoulder. “Ooh, you are a keeper.”

I laughed. “I hope so, God I hope so.”

She looked me in the eye again. “I had high hopes for you the first time I saw you.”

“And?” I asked foolishly.

She chuckled. “You haven’t disappointed me yet.”

I looked in her eyes. “I will sooner or later,” I told her seriously.

Her smile got a little more wistful. “Let’s find you some clothes.”

## Back in the Saddle

We went back to her bedroom. She dug in the closet and found a new set of logo-covered sweats that fit me just fine. “Promotional stuff; I’m glad I saved ‘em,” she told me.

“So am I, even though I don’t care for mountain bikes,” I said, slipping on the pants.

She pushed me back on the bed and took me in her mouth again. I gasped.

She worked me for a few moments, then got up laughing. “I just wanted to see if that new saddle helped.”

I was dizzy as I moved up to my elbows. “And your conclusion is?” I asked her.

She looked over her shoulder at me and said, “I’ll know better in the morning.”

I moaned and stood up, getting dressed. She found a pair of sandals that were only a size too small for me, but they’d work.

We went back to the garage. I got my keys and we got in her car. I directed her to the apartment.

Once inside, she looked around at the boxes crammed into the place. “Good God Paul, one look around here and I’d think you’d be jumping at the chance to be a kept man.”

I hopped over to her, went down on my knees, and hugged her. “How’s this?”

She laughed again, the first time she’d laughed in a while. Then she messed up my hair and said, “It’s a good start.”

In the bedroom I changed clothes and started putting some things into a gym bag. “Pack for a couple of nights. Hell, pack for a week,” she told me as she walked into the room.

“So twist my arm,” I said with a smile.

She came over to me and took me in her arms again, kissing me and pushing me back onto the small bed. “I’d rather do this,” she said, moving on top of me and straddling me. “It’s much more effective.”

I sighed and said, “I’ll say.”

She rocked her hips against me and I moaned.

“I love the noise you make and the way your eyes close when I do that.”

“Do what?” I managed to ask, more than a little dizzy but begging for more.

## Back in the Saddle

She gave me a low laugh and ground against me again, this time squeezing my shoulders as well. I gasped and wiggled under her. "This," she said, then leaned over and kissed me.

I tried to hold her but my arms stopped working. Then she hopped off me and started to pull me up. I wobbled to my feet and threw my arms around her, letting her hold me up.

"What's your hurry?" I asked, nuzzling her ear.

She laughed and dug fingers into my sides. That straightened me up quickly.

"We need to get to the shop. If I stayed where I was much longer we wouldn't make it!"

I started maneuvering her back to the bed. "And what's wrong with that?"

That got more fingers digging into my sides and stomach, pushing me back until I was against the other wall.

"You'll get yours!" she said, laughing as she tickled me.

I was laughing as well from her tickling. "Promises, promises," I managed to say.

I grabbed a box and started loading in clothes. I opened the other side of the closet and started getting out a few jerseys for riding.

"Jesus, got enough jerseys?" she said, moving next to me and looking through my collection. Half the closet was filled with jerseys -- about a third of the ones I had.

I laughed and put an arm around her. I did have quite a few; I guess I was collecting them. She looked through them, stopping at one in particular.

"Did you do this ride?" she asked, holding out one from the Tahoe Century ride a few years back.

I looked at it. "Nope, a birthday gift. Only worn it a couple of times. Is it a good ride?"

She gave me a look and grunted. "A piece of cake for you." Then she smiled. "Paul, serious question. Are you attached to this?"

"Why?" I asked.

"Remember Bill from lunch?"

"The guy in the cast?"

"Yeah, that's him," she told me, looking over the jersey then turning back to me and putting a hand on my shoulder.

“He did this ride, for one of our good friends. He was wearing one of these when he crashed. They cut it off him in the E. R. It was very special to him.”

I grimaced. I know how I’d feel if that happened to one of my favorites.

“I understand. We can give it to him,” I told her.

She smiled and threw her arms around me. “Thank you. Oh, this will mean so much to him. When we get to the shop, you can have anything you want.”

Sounded good to me... I started walking her back to the bed.

“When we get to the shop!” she hollered, laughing, “And that means a jersey!”

I let go of her and stuck out my lower lip in a pout. She laughed and helped me pack up clothes. We loaded them into the car and headed back to the shop.

We pulled into the back. We parked between the van and a very nice looking Mercedes.

“Hide the jersey,” Meg told me.

I turned to make sure it was under some clothes. “Okay, why?”

As she got out she nodded to the Mercedes. “That’s Bill’s car. They must still be here.”

I grunted. Life must be hard, driving a car like that. Something told me I’d moved to Silicon Valley a few years too late.

I walked in the back door after rearranging clothes in the back of the car. I saw Meg up in front talking to some other people, then saw her pick up something and walk out of sight. I looked around the shop area a little more.

There was a cot in one corner. Doris was sitting at one end with Bill’s head in her lap; he was on his back. She was drawing little circles on his head with her fingers. He looked sound asleep; she looked as if she was enjoying too. She gave me a blissful smile and I nodded.

I saw Danny muscling a large box; I went over and picked up the other end. He said, “Thanks,” and led me out front. “Hey, thanks for the lunch,” I told him.

Meg was behind the counter with someone’s credit card in her hand. Ah, the joys of running a business. I helped Danny carry the box out to the parking lot and lift it on a station wagon.

When I went back inside, Meg gave me a quick squeeze and whispered, “Thanks -- I don’t know where the mob came from.”

I told her, "I understand. No hurry."

I was looking around when a gal asked about clipless pedals. What the hell -- I helped her as best as I could. She didn't have any experience with them, but had been riding with toe clips for a while. I told her the pros and the cons, showed her different models, and asked about her riding. I showed her the adjustment stand near the door and explained the importance of having shoes set up properly so as not to damage her knees.

Another guy came over and listened as we were talking. She asked me what I rode and why, so I showed her and told her. I suggested the Shimano combination pedals would probably be good for her -- you could ride with cleats or regular shoes. She really liked that. She told me she'd take a pair.

Uh oh... Now what do I do? But the guy who had been listening to us stepped around behind the counter and opened a drawer, pulling out a box with the pedals. He asked if she had her bike here, and if she wanted them put on. She lit up and said yes, her bike was out on her car. He patted me on the back and said, "Paul will help you with your bike. I'll write these up at the register."

I gave him a smile and followed her out to her car. I got the bike off the top and wheeled it in. As I went by the register, I was handed the box with the pedals.

I laughed and took them back to the shop. I put the bike up on a stand and took a pedal wrench off the wall. I found the thread sealer and the Allen wrench I needed and swapped out the pedals. Since I had it up on the stand, I gave her bike a wipe-down and a quick check. I tightened the cables and brought the tires up to the correct pressure. I also loosened the release on the pedals. As I was adjusting cables, the guy that helped me walked back.

He extended a hand. "Paul, I'm Ted, Meg's partner in crime."

I laughed and shook his hand. "Thanks for bailing me out. She's all set."

He gave me a questioning look. I reviewed what I'd done in detail. He nodded in approval. "Good job," he told me, "just wanted to check. Meg said you were good, and Danny was impressed with your bike."

I chuckled a bit and took the bike back out. I showed the owner her new pedals, and told her I'd adjusted the brakes and put air in the tires. I emphasized again the importance of having shoes properly adjusted, and suggested to her that she could probably make an appointment to have her bike tuned up at the same time. I also told her she would need to spend a few hours practicing getting in and out of the pedals before she tried riding with them in traffic, and that the pedals were set to release easily.

She was very happy, and said she'd come by Monday to make an appointment and pick out shoes. She asked my name. I looked over at Ted, who was busy with another customer.

“I’m Paul, but I won’t be here on Monday. Ted, who helped you, is great at this, as are the rest of the folks.”

I felt a hand on my back and turned to see Meg smiling.

I helped the gal out with her bike, loading it on her car.

I went back in and helped Danny some. Then Ted walked up again with a couple in tow. He said to them “Paul is our pedal specialist. He can answer your questions.”

I said, “Thanks, Ted,” and walked with them over to the pedal display. I talked them through the evolution from flat pedals to toe clips to clipless and the different competing designs. I was really glad to hear Meg bellow out, “Closing in five minutes!” I looked at the clock; it was already six, which was closing time. The couple I’d been talking to thanked me for my time, picked up a business card from the display and left.

I helped close up, even taking the broom when Ted handed it to me, and sweeping the aisles. I’d gotten about halfway through the store when Danny appeared with a grin and took it from me. I headed for the back of the shop. When I walked back, Meg was talking with Ted and one of the other store folks. I put a hand on her shoulder.

She spun around mid sentence, put her arms around me, and gave me one hell of a kiss.

When we stopped, Ted shook my hand. “And I’m glad to see you too,” he laughed.

Ted told us things had gone crazy starting at about four that afternoon, and he’d been really glad to see Meg come in. He was very happy I’d helped out.

Meg had her arm around my waist and gave me a squeeze. “I understand you made a sale too.”

I told her I was happy to help, and was lucky people asked questions I could answer.

Doris and Bill appeared; Bill was on crutches with Doris helping. They both had incredible relaxed looks on their faces.

We talked about dinner for a bit. Bill suggested Chinese. I asked if that meant spicy. He smiled and held out his right hand. I shook it and he said, “Yes!” I didn’t know where we were going but Meg did. Ted had to go home to wife and kiddies.

In the parking lot out back, Meg said we’d follow them over. Bill looked up for a moment and said, “If we take your car and my parking tag, it will be a lot easier to park.”

That got agreement. Doris opened up the Mercedes and pulled out the Disabled tag. I got in the back with her after she helped Bill get in the front seat.

It was my first venture to that section of downtown Palo Alto, and parking was crazy. It looked to be a wonderful area, full of shops and restaurants. The parking tag got us a very good spot. I wouldn't have any problems on a bike.

Dinner conversation got a little weird. Once I told him I was a patent attorney, Bill grilled me about patent protection, cross-licensing strategies, a lot of stuff. I almost felt as if I was in an interview. It got so bad that for a while the ladies went off and huddled.

They came back and put up with us for a while. I'd had too much tea; it was starting to back up on me. I excused myself and headed for the little boy's room. As I was crossing the floor I looked back to our table. I saw Doris doing doodles on Bill's forehead again; his eyes were closed.

When I got back, we were ready to go. Bill looked like he'd had a nap and was ready to go for hours. He wanted one of my cards; I dug one out of my wallet for him.

We went back to the shop and got Bill and Doris in their car. I got back into the front seat and we headed back to Meg's house.

"Man! He is intense!" I said to Meg.

Meg chuckled. "You ought to see him ride. I don't know how Doris is going to keep him off a bike the moment that cast comes off."

Then she put a hand on my shoulder. "You were so helpful this afternoon. Ted really appreciated it, and so do I."

I kissed her hand. "I'll let you show me."

To that she said, "Oh shit!" and practically slammed on the brakes. She looked around and turned left at the next intersection.

"What's the matter?" I asked, quite surprised.

She looked at me and grinned. "Only one condom left, and I don't think that will get us through the night."

I let my head hit the headrest. "I'm glad we only did a half century today," I moaned.

She laughed and dug fingers into my stomach. We pulled in to a drug store parking lot. We walked in and headed for the back. As we looked at the multitude of selections, she put an arm around me and said, "Any favorites?"

I bent over, peering closer and said, "Peppermint?"



She laughed and goosed me. She selected a twelve pack, saying "This will get us to Monday." I groaned and put my head on her shoulder. We paid for our goodies and headed back to her house.

We unloaded my clothes. She took the jersey for Bill out and put it in a bag. "He's got a birthday in two weeks. I'll have his bike back together by then -- together but not repainted -- and we'll give this to him as well. I think it will make him feel better."

I was on the floor, stretching and working my thigh muscles. "He's lucky to have such good friends."

She came over and knelt behind me, rubbing my shoulders. "Paul, I'm sorry I don't know how to massage you as well as you did me. That was wonderful. But I do know a great person to send you to."

"You're doing great, and I'd appreciate a recommendation," I told her.

She moved a bit, her knees on either side of my hips as she started kissing my neck and running her hands down my chest. "I think it's bed time," she whispered in my ear.

We made love with a gentle intensity. As we settled in afterwards, she snuggled up to my side. I put an arm around her.

"Mmm..." she murmured, kissing my chest.

Her warmth next to me, feeling her press into me when I squeezed her, was something very special. I kissed her head.

"This is nice," she whispered.

"I think so too," I told her, kissing her head again.

The following Wednesday, I was loading dishes into the dishwasher after dinner. Meg walked up behind me and put her arms around my waist.

I dried my hands and turned to hold her. "You know," I said after a while, "we should figure out how much I need to pay for rent, utilities, and food."

She looked up at me and smiled. "So you're moving in?"

I pulled back a bit. "I'm sorry -- only if you ask me."

She sighed and shook her head. "Oh you silly -- of course I want you to move in with me! And you'll be compensating me adequately." She wiggled her hips.

I smiled and sighed. "You're sure?"

## Back in the Saddle

She looked a little cross, furrowing her brow. “Yes, I’m sure. Let’s get everything moved this weekend. How much do you have in storage? Will it fit in the house and the garage?”

I nodded. “Most, yes. I don’t have that much furniture.”

“Okay, then we’ll make room in the garage, and in the house. We’ll pull the seats out of the shop van and use it Sunday.”

I held her. “We won’t need that -- the place I’m in is furnished, so we can do it with a few trips. Oh, being with you is so nice.”

She made appreciative murmurs, then started running her hands over me. “I feel a rent payment coming due.”

I laughed and squeezed her closer.

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