

(Warning--Jeff and Dianne steam and spice alert!)

Wednesday, February 29, 2068, 8 a.m. Mt. Sinai Hospital, NYC

"Dianne?" Jeff's voice was sandpapery and quiet, but caught his wife's attention right away.

"Yes, love?"

"Am I going to be able to walk again?"

Dianne smiled. "Yes."

Jeff closed his eyes. "You're sure?"

"Absolutely. It will take a while. Your long bones have got to heal and your foot especially will take some therapy. But you'll walk again. Even dance."

"I-I'm worried about this vertebra that they're going to fuse. I'm worried I'll be... paralyzed."

Dianne stroked his hair away from his face. He opened his eyes again to see her concerned look. Then she glanced around to see if anyone was listening and got close to his face.

"Jeff. Everything I saw in my scans on Thunderbird Seven, and all the imaging they've let me see here in the hospital, show me that the fractures are not deep ones. They don't affect your spinal cord at all and they won't, either. The only reason they're doing this surgically is to ensure that the breaks don't get worse. Once that is done, the rest of the surgeries will be easier to deal with. Please don't worry about it. For once, I'm not concerned. If there was trouble they would have taken you into surgery last night instead of waiting until this morning." She reached over and pinched his right knee.

"Ouch!" he said, frowning.

"Hey! You felt that!" she said, a facetious tone to her voice. "And you're going to continue to feel it. I know it."

"Okay. I'll take your word for it. It's just that the thought of being paralyzed, of not being able to be a proper husband to you, well... it scares me."

"You, not be a proper husband to me? Will never happen. Jefferson Tracy, you know damned well that sex does not a marriage make," Dianne said seriously. "Besides," she added slyly, "there are other ways of pleasuring me that have nothing to do with the lower part of your anatomy."

"I know." Now Jeff was smiling, as much as his bruised face would allow. "Hey, what do you say to climbing in here with me and...."

Dianne laughed aloud. "Jeff Tracy, you are incorrigible!"

"Well, a sick room bed is where we first made love. Remember?"

"As if I could ever forget."

"Neither could I."

And he couldn't. He had come to her in the sick room, sore and stiff the day after an afternoon of playing football on the beach with his sons. It wasn't often that he got physical like that with his boys, and he had an ulterior motive: he was trying to reach out to Dianne's two sons by teaching them the game. He was disappointed that they didn't seem to be interested, but he still had a good time with Scott, Virgil, Gordon and Alan.

"You overdid, Mr. Tracy, that's all. You're all tensed up and those tensed muscles are hurting," Dianne said, bustling around in the infirmary. "I think that easing up those muscles is called for."

Jeff made a small moan as he tried to put his shirt back on. "I suppose I'll go soak in my Jacuzzi for a while."

Dianne came around in front of him and looked him in the eye. "No, I don't think the Jacuzzi will be enough. Maybe after I treat you, the Jacuzzi will help. What you need right now is a therapeutic massage."

Jeff's eyebrows rose. "A... massage?"

"Yes. A deep tissue massage. I'm very skilled at it," she said, her manner brisk as she got out a couple of tubes. Jeff looked at them askance.

"What are those?" he asked.

"Creams for lubricating my hands. The massage doesn't feel good without them." She rolled her eyes. "Don't worry. I haven't picked out anything with a frou-frou fragrance. Just a nice spicy smell." She opened the tube and waved it under his nose. "See?"

"Okay. If you think this will help...."

"Believe me, Mr. Tracy. You'll feel so much better when I'm through with the massage. Now, I'll just go back here so you can strip down to your skivvies and lay face down on the diagnostic bed."

"Strip?"

"Yes, of course, strip. Down to whatever you wear to cover your privates. Your leg muscles are just as sore, aren't they?"

"All right," he said reluctantly as she went behind the portable divider that shielded him from her gaze and from anyone peering in from the hallway. Not that it was a real problem; the door to the infirmary was closed.

"Let me know when you're ready."

Jeff took off his clothing, all but his boxers, feeling rather uncomfortable with the whole proceedings. Here he was, nearly naked, alone with a beautiful woman who was going to give him a massage. A beautiful woman who said she was in love with him. He hoped he could control himself, because ever since they had spoken in the games room, it had been increasingly difficult to look at her as just a doctor. He had begun to realize that she *was* a beautiful woman. And more importantly, that she mattered to him, that she had mattered to him from the beginning. Her anger following her discovery that the Tracy family was International Rescue had bothered him, had hurt him. Her admission of attraction to him made him feel good, very good. She meant something to him. She was special.

Why? Why does she mean so much to me? It's not like I'm in love with her... am I?

Jeff took a deep breath, and followed her instructions.

"I'm ready, Doctor."

"Okay. I'm coming."

He could hear the rustling of the divider as she stepped behind it. Jeff could hear her rubbing the cream all over her hands and could smell the spicy scent, not at all feminine, but very soothing and invigorating at the same time.

"Put your head on your right arm while I do your left."

Jeff did as he was told. With his head turned towards the left, he watched as she started with his upper arms near the shoulder and massaged and kneaded his arm all the way down to the wrist. Her warm hands were strong and her thumbs reduced particularly tense muscles to relaxed ones. She massaged his hands and rubbed his fingers, one by one. When she was done, his arm felt heavy, but pain-free.

"Now for the right arm."

Dianne swapped sides and did the same to his right arm. It took longer, as he was right-handed and his hand was particularly tense. But she finally finished. His arms felt so good.

"Now, your head on both arms and I'll do your neck."

The bed was lowered, and he could feel her body brush up against him as she kneaded his neck. His head drooped, and his eyelids, too, as the tension and pain ebbed away under her ministrations.

"You still with me, Mr. Tracy?"

"Mm-hmmm."

"Good. I'm going to do your shoulders next."

This time it wasn't the strong fingers as much as it was the palms and heels of her hands that created the deep relaxing of the muscles in his shoulders. She brushed up against him again and again as she worked, then swapped sides to do the same to his right shoulder. He was nearly asleep when she announced, "Now for your ribs."

Jeff could feel her get a knee up on the bed so she could reach both sides at once. He began to feel a warmth in his loins, one that he had felt infrequently during his 20 or more years of celibacy, a warmth that usually meant an exertion of will over his body or perhaps an embarrassing trip to his private bathroom to deal with the consequences. He tried to stay relaxed, tried to relax that member of his body that was beginning to tense and stiffen.

Her hands moved down his body from under his arms towards his buttocks and stopped just at his hips. The strong movements relaxed his sides even as he felt stimulated elsewhere. Then, without warning this time, Dianne began to massage his mid and lower back. The palms and heels came into play again, and she pulled his boxers down a fraction to finish the job, pulling the waistband back up when she was done. Part of him wanted her to continue pulling them down, but the rational part of him was glad she had stopped.

"Now for your legs and feet. Please turn over."

Turn over? She wants me to turn over? Ohmigod, she's going to see just how... stimulated I am!

So? She's probably seen it countless times. Turn over already!

Jeff gulped as he turned over. He could plainly see what was happening to his boxer shorts in front and he began to think frantically about how he could stop it. She brought him a pillow while he turned and he hoped she didn't notice what was so unnerving to him. Dianne said nothing as she made her way down to his feet and began to rub and knead them as she had his hands. She did each foot, then moved up to the ankles and then to the calves, her back turned to him as she massaged each one. Jeff squeezed his eyes shut trying to ignore the fact that his leg lay on her thigh as she worked, trying to control his one unruly and stubborn organ. But he knew he was in a losing battle. Especially the first moment that her hand brushed his thigh.

Can I control this? Can I get into a cold shower directly from here? God, she is so close! Just a little further and I won't be able....

He sat up suddenly and grabbed her wrist.

"Do you know what you're doing to me?" he croaked hoarsely.

She moved closer, lifted her brown eyes to his intense blue ones, and said, "Yes. Ah know."

He swallowed convulsively. Then he reached for her shirt and undid the top button.

Jeff never did remember how he divested himself of his underwear. But later he would remember the scent of her skin, and the smoothness of it as he kissed it roughly. He would remember the texture of her hair as he ran his hands through it, and the touch of her lips on his and on his face and on his neck. He would remember her arms around him, exploring him, the cries of pleasure that issued from a throat other than his. He would remember the taste of her sweat as she clung to him, willing him, coaxing him to go faster, deeper, harder. But right then and there all he could think of was himself and his need and his own ecstatic, explosive, release!

When he came to his senses, he was lying on his side on the diagnostic bed, sweaty, limp, exhausted, and tangled up in the sheets. He turned to roll onto his back and was stopped by something behind him. His eyes widened as he realized that this was not a something but a someone, and that this someone was as sweaty and unclothed as he was himself. Then the memories of what had just happened flooded into his brain and he groaned.

Tracy, what have you done? You have assaulted your own doctor!

The instinct to flee kicked in and he tried to release the bars on his side of the bed, bars that hadn't been up before.

"How do you open these things?" he muttered to himself.

"With great difficulty," came a voice from behind him. "Theyah made that way to keep th' patients from wanderin'."

He felt her shift, sitting up, moving down towards the end of the bed. He turned back and watched her come around to him, her body bare, her neck and shoulders bruised by his kisses, her hair mussed by his hands. She released the bars with practiced ease and he sat up.

"Doctor, I-I don't know what to say. I am terribly sorry for what has happened here. I-I..."

She cut him off.

"Sorry? What for?"

He blinked. And blinked. He knew his jaw had dropped.

"But... but... I couldn't control myself. I've hurt you and basically... taken advantage of you. To put it mildly."

She put two fingers to his lips to hush him.

"Ah'm th' one who should be apologizin', Mistah Tracy," she said, dropping her gaze. "Ah went into this massage to do exactly what Ah said Ah would: relax your sore muscles. Ah did not foresee the effect it would have on you... or on me. Ah should have, and Ah'm sorry."

He put a finger under her chin and raised her eyes to his. "You mean, you were feeling...?"

"Yes, Mistah Tracy. Ah got out of control mahself there." She moved beside him and scooted up to sit on the bed. "Ah don't blame you if you don't believe me. You know how Ah feel about you. But Ah assure you, Ah had no intention of seducin' you." She looked at him, a small smile playing around her lips. "It's been a long time since Ah had a man like that."

He met her gaze. "It's been even longer since I had a woman... like that," he admitted.

She cocked her head. "Really? Ah would think that a man like you, so virile and handsome, would have had any number of women since your wife died."

"You forgot the 'rich' part," he said wryly.

"'Rich' didn't even cross mah mind," she replied.

"You're the first, then. Any other woman, with the possible exception of Penelope, has seen the dollar signs first," Jeff said, raising a finger to caress her cheek. "You're also the first to really get under my skin since Lucille died. Ever since you came here, what you've said to me has mattered, what you've thought of me has mattered. My life was hell all the time you were angry with me about IR. And, somehow, when you told me how you felt about me, I felt... good. Confused, but... pleased that you were in love with me. Now I know for sure that I have feelings for you as well."

"Th' same feelin's Ah have for you?" Dianne challenged.

Jeff gazed at her steadily, turning over his feelings in his mind and heart. Then he sighed.

"I don't know. I don't know how strong they are. Not yet." He put a hand on one of her cheeks. "It's hard. I've spent half a lifetime mourning the one woman I thought had captured my heart and soul. Ending the mourning and opening my heart to another isn't going to be easy for me. But if you're willing to be patient with me, I'm willing to try. To see if I can love again the way you say you love me. But know this much: I do care for you and care about you."

"That's a start," Dianne said softly, taking his hand and planting a kiss in the palm of it. "Ah don't expect to replace your Lucille. Theah's no way that Ah could. But Ah fully intend to carve out mah own niche in your heart, if you'll let me. Ah'm glad that you're willing to try and love again. And Ah'm honored that you've chosen me."

Jeff stood and took her hand, pulling her gently from the bed. He enveloped her in a strong, warm embrace, and then planted a tender kiss on her lips. He could feel her respond, her arms around him, hands rubbing over his back as she returned the salute, her lips brushing across his, light as a butterfly's touch. He then pulled back and held her gently by her upper arms.

"Before this goes any further and we end up back there again," he indicated the diagnostic bed with a nod of his head, "we'd better get dressed."

She raised an eyebrow and gave him a coquettish look. "Are you sure you don't want to end up back theah again?"

Jeff smiled and kissed her forehead. "I would love to end up back there again. But this isn't the most private place and unfortunately, duty does call. For both of us."

She rolled her eyes and pursed her lips and sighed. "Okay, Mistah Tracy. You win." As she stepped away to find her discarded clothing, he reached out and grabbed her by the wrist again. She gave him an inscrutable look as he kissed it on the inside.

"I think, Doc-- Dianne, that after what we just shared, and in light of what we're about to embark upon, that we should be on a first-name basis, don't you?"

Dianne laughed, a pleasant throaty laugh, and then raised her captured hand to his face. "Ah think you're right... Jeff." He grinned, and let go of her to search for his own garments.

Jeff's reminiscence was broken by the arrival of the osteopathic surgeon and two nurses. The doctor smiled at him.

"Ready, Mr. Tracy?"

Jeff looked to Dianne, who leaned over to kiss him on the lips. "I'll be here when you get back." He was heartened by the lack of drawl in her voice. Then she nodded and stood back.

He looked toward the doctor. "As ready as I'll ever be."

The nurses released the brakes on the bed and began to roll it out. Jeff kept his eyes on Dianne until he couldn't stretch back that far any more. Behind him, Dianne sighed, and went in search of some breakfast.

Post by Tikatu on 11/07/2004
