

# ICE STORM

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## Chapter 9 - New Surprises

Denny and Andrea were there at the entrance nursing station when I arrived and insisted I have that large room again. Denny even had my box of clothes. The police said they were stationing a larger stake out at the house. A nurse put a yellow patient's band on my wrist which I really wish they hadn't been so official about it.

Denny with that box followed me right into that room. She pushed the door closed with her foot. "Get used to it Sandy. You are my great big hero, but you are emotionally a two year old who needs special care. I'm claiming intern privileges for changing your diaper. My excuse is monitoring your skin condition, but the truth is I have to build this relationship because you haven't a clue. Right? Sorry to be insulting, but that's just the way this is. You'll have to learn how to fight fair, and when you do we can be equals. Until then, this is an FLR. Look it up on the Internet for a Female Led Relationship. Hold still." She ran her hand up my skirt checking my diaper. "Get mad, have an orgasm, but I have to go. Let's talk when I can return. OK?" She dashed out leaving the door open.

Lunch had to be as delicious as before.

I started that course suggested by Rick.

At dinner time Dr. Cezanne authorized I could go to the cafeteria and the library if accompanied. Denny, of course arrived quickly. Before we went out she changed me whether I liked it or not. She also refreshed my lipstick and brushed my hair.

We did have a nice time together at dinner. She had to split when I returned at my room.

Three days went by quickly as I took courses on the Internet before they sent me home. At work the next morning Sam met me between the time clock and the crane base. "The beer was great."

"I have no idea what you're talking about, Sam."

We both grinned.

The entire site hustled with catch up work which kept the crane going nearly all the time. A night operator arrived making my day only twelve hours.

Denny arrived at Andrea's every night. They never said but Andrea must have known what Denny had been changing me every evening and frequently in the morning. I picked a fight which Denny let me win to sit on the toilet when that seemed needed.

Friday late morning Sam called up to me with both pride and envy in his voice. "Crackle Sam. Boss man Rick wants you at a function Tuesday evening. Better take a break and call him."

I did. He wanted me to come with him, girl's clothes and all, to an evening event of a Construction Companies' sub-group of the Chamber of Commerce. "You ever been to anything like that?"

"No, sir. My gut is tight already. I have no idea what to do."

"I understand Sandy, but it can't be helped. They are all abuzz with speculation, and most of it is bad wrong. The bank loan officers on all these projects want to meet you. I'll come with you and find a way to carry as much of the speech as possible. But, they will want to hear it from you. Do you have a friend who would be a comfort to come with you?"

He took my breath away with understanding me so fast. "Sir, I'm terrified. I'll do my best, but coach me, please."

"I guess I'm your mentor. Did you ever have one? Such as for confirmation at church?"

"No, sir. We never went to church."

"Religion isn't required. It's having friends and a community that gives people stability. You follow your own inner ethical self better than anyone I ever met. Keep it up, but that will get you into just as much trouble as those dresses you wear. Time to meet the world. Find a friend to come with you."

"Yes sir."

Andrea and Denny were thrilled.

I told them I hurt.

They dashed right over that, and even more wanted to take me shopping for a really good business skirt suit that Saturday.

They found a terrific royal blue one at Nordstroms, and they altered it themselves that evening. They also took two women's business blouses and added snaps at the bottom. That served to hold everything down there in snugly when I wet too much making things too heavy.

I told them they embarrassed me. That they honored, but made me cry which I disliked.

They bought me stockings and an expensive pair of shoes called flats. Finding those large enough for my masculine feet seemed a trial, but Nordstroms emphasized their customer service. Andrew and Denny had me shave my legs for those stockings.

They wanted me to have a good purse. I wanted one big enough for two new diapers, but didn't tell them the real reason of hiding my revolver. They took me to a department with big shoulder bags. We bought one big enough for a business woman to carry file folders in.

They made an appointment for me at a beauty salon for Monday evening. They pierced my ears, too, after using ice cubes on my ear lobes. Denny gave me a pain pill from the hospital. She bought my first earrings in turquoise, and had their approval.

Rick had Sam run me off the crane about 3pm in the afternoon of that day of the evening meeting.

Denny dressed me complete with a bra and inserts filling out these new clothes just right. She came with me, of course, also dressed to the nines as she said.

I'd never been to a country club, and felt tense walking in from the parking lot. Denny looked perky and happy, but told me later she had been just as scared.

My experiences did not include the big expensive hall at the Country Club. There was a table at one end staffed by several girls about Denny's age and a little older than myself. They were all joy and welcome. Denny introduced us. They had name tags for both of us. Denny's had her name with her hospital intern designations. When she handed me mine I almost choked up with its reading 'Sandy' and on the next line 'Crane Operator'. Below that in even smaller letters 'Wyndham Construction'. It took me weeks to stop choking up about that.

I became so unsure of myself I let one of those girls clip that badge to the lapel of my suit jacket. The back of her hand touched my bra at my prosthetic breast which scared me with what she might say. She didn't say a thing about that.

Inside a big room three women in their thirties pounced on us. They were nice about it, but clearly had been lying in wait.

One of them took charge. "Oh! You're **THE** Sandy we have been hearing about. Are we ever surprised Wyndham has a woman up in one of those cranes! And quite a heroine we hear."

"I have a low voice. Scared me to death if you'll let me say so. This is the first time I have ever been at anything like this. Scared all over again."

One of the others touched my arm with a hand making my stomach clench again. "We'd never admit this, but each of us were scared out of our wits the first time here. Ask people what they do and ask for their business cards."

I gave myself away totally. "Business cards?"

"Kick your boss in the ankles for bringing you here without cards. Here." All three of them dug in their purses and gave both Denny and myself their business cards. "We're the bank's loan administrators who are here to hear what happened. But that's later. Let's take you around."

Which they did introducing us to an amazing number of people all of whom gave me their business cards. At the bar someone gave Denny a glass of wine. I refused and had a glass of water instead. They didn't push me into saying my age and being underage for drinking alcohol. We ran into Rick and they teased him about making business cards for me into a loan requirement.

Rick smiled. "Good point."

I finally revolted with all this stuff new to me. "Pardon me, I'm just the young crane operator. What the dickens is a loan requirement?" I barely avoided using a swear word.

Rick and those bankers did a good job of explaining the loans needed by the land owner and the construction company for erecting these big buildings. They helped me feel I had a fit in the room.

I had wet my diaper more than once when an older woman arrived at the podium welcoming everyone. Rick drifted that way, and signaled for me too. "I know there has been much speculation on the recent attacks on the construction cranes. Before we carry ourselves too far, Rick Blanchard of Wyndham Construction is here to set the record straight. Please welcome our good friend Rick."

I didn't have the experience to register the strength of the applause. They seemed to like the idea.

Rick moved to the podium. "We have a very young and capable crane operator in the middle of all of those violent incidences except the first. She will surprise you. She also has disabilities. It would be totally unfair to ask her to make a presentation on her own, so I have asked her to come here to answer questions. She has won the hearts of the job site crew chiefs and their teams just by being the best she could be. Please help me with a gentle welcome for our very young and very special crane operator, Sandy."

Denny slapped me on my padded butt which did get my jelly legs to find their bones and walk.

Two of the he-men in the room whistled as I walked to Rick. He said. "Hey there, be nice." He shook my hand which also enabled him to draw me with him behind that Gawd Awful podium.

"Welcome Sandy. For the record, how old are you?"

"Twenty, sir."

"Wow; there are going to be a lot of broken hearts out there."

A light chuckle rippled across the room.

"Folks. Can you just imagine what our site boss, Sam, had to do for the crews to keep focused on safety? That is when this beauty climbed two hundred feet up the steep stairs with her skirts blowing in the breeze. Chalk that up as a reasonable accommodation."

They laughed.

"Sandy. Why in the world did you take that emergency crane operator's course?"

"I had to have a job, sir, and I wanted one where my low voice and my dresses didn't drive everyone nuts and fire me. Up there, that crane kept me out of sight with a guy's voice." Somehow the way he asked that question about me comforted me.

"I see. Why did you start calling down to Sam whenever you saw an unsafe

condition?”

“Honestly, sir, I had no idea what you call an unsafe condition. I saw something, and asked Sam over that automatic radio-phone. He said to keep the comments coming. I slowly sorta maybe figured out what he would react to and tried to be as good as I could be.”

Rick told a story about the concrete truck that almost went over the wall. He talked about my asking Sam for coaching.

Then he got down to brass tacks of the first man who died. He didn't say that I had shot that man.

Just as soon as we were in her car Denny told me how magnificent I had been. I told her how clenched my stomach had been.

Within the week, a letter arrived for me in the office trailer inviting me to be a member of the construction group. Inside was a note from Rick asking me to agree and the company would pay the dues.

That evening Andrea and Denny were thrilled. My stomach became sick.

The very next Saturday I used my new money to visit a plastic surgeon's office for removing my facial hair. When they asked why on the phone I responded. “You'll see”.