

Laura

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Chapter 23 - Hospital

Laura's business telephone rang late one afternoon as I and my wet diaper were waiting for her to return. "Hello, Mindy here answering for Laura Hyland. How may I help you?"

"This is Pamela from Dr. Patricia Ratchcliff's office. Can you confirm you are Laura's intimate partner?"

"Yes. How?"

There was a pause. "What is her brother's name?"

"She doesn't have one, and no sister either."

There was a very short pause. "We just received a call from Mercy Hospital that Laura was admitted as an emergency patient from a traffic accident. That's at 345 Saint Paul Street near the intersection with Mulberry. The phone calls are flying back and forth. Dr. Patricia wants you there, and we will set up the procedure for their letting you in. Did you ever change your name on your driver's licence to Mindy Hyland?"

"Yes."

"Hold please."

"Mindy; this is Dr. Patricia. Not to scare you to death and no speeding on the highways, but something has gone terribly wrong. Laura needs you. I want you there. Can you go?"

What the hell? "Yes."

"Pack spare diapers. You may be there awhile."

I blushed, which surprised me. "What should I wear?"

"Your very best. Believe it or not wearing your very best works better than anything when you have to work you will in a hospital. Take books to read. You may be there longer than you think. Now go."

I continued blushing for a moment before putting messages on all the phone lines that we were closed for an emergency. I had rarely changed my diapers myself, but this time I wet first, took off everything, and laid myself down. Creme went on sore spots, powder on everything down there, and I used two disposables with extra

absorbency pads. I made a slit in the inner diaper for moisture to leak through to the outer one. I pulled on plastic pants, artificial hips, and went to the closet.

Laura had bought me a gorgeous apricot skirt suit, but it was at the cleaners. I had to use the royal blue one that needed repair work on a few seams. I selected a peach blouse with pop snaps underneath to hold everything in place when down there became soaked and heavy. I used a gentle color of lipstick, a long turquoise neckless, and matching earrings. I combed my long hair and struggled with a hair clip which Laura had always done on me.

I packed my shoulder bag as a purse with my wallet and that book from the Deacons' meeting. That bag also served as a diaper carrier with new disposables, creme, powder, and plastic bags for disposing of used diapers.

Downstairs at the office a portable computer and a cell phone in another bag filled my other arm.

Out the door I went locking it behind me.

I stood there in the driveway hyperventilating that I was on my own. Anxieties washed down my back like acid. Now I understood why I behaved so much like a two year old wanting someone to take care of me. Laura had become that special person.

I stood tall, took in a deep breath, and went to my older car we had kept as a backup.

The intersection of St. Paul and Mulberry wasn't hard to find. But in my anxious rush I almost caused a fender bender traffic accident outside the hospital's parking garage. That so unnerved me that I had serious trouble parking the car without scraping anything. I prevailed, but didn't feel much relieved. I almost tripped on a joint in the parking lot concrete floor.

At the Emergency Front Desk they already had my name and a guest name badge for admittance to the trauma unit. There was a lengthy e-mail message from Dr. Patricia. I had my baby blue feminine wallet out of my shoulder bag and handed my driver's licence to the person sitting at that desk. Pride welled up in me for having that driver's license with my new name and my picture with my long feminine hair. "I have a low voice."

A woman with a hospital name badge arrived with credentials too small to read, but she wasn't in a nurse's or volunteer's uniform. "Are you Mindy Hyland?"

I nodded. "Yes."

"Follow me." She took me straight to the ICU, and a nurse at their front desk took me down a hall. "We're only letting you in on Dr. Ratchcliff's order. She was quite insistent. Laura arrived with a concussion and went out cold on us. We're testing for did anything go wrong with the medications. Dr. Ratchcliff's orders are for you to sit with her, hold her hand, and speak softly that you are here. OK?"

I nodded.

A loudspeaker blared something I didn't understand. "Oh my Gawd," burst from the nurse's lips. She trotted down the hall and ducked into a room as I followed.

In a patient's room someone in a white lab coat was up on her knees on the bed straddling the patient. She was speaking a language I didn't understand. But her tone was obviously pouring out all the love she could into what she was doing. They were holding a fixture from a flexible tube over the patient's nose and mouth. There were two monitors going.

All this equipment was like some of the stuff we delivered, so I actually understood parts of it.

There was a raucous buzz, and a monitor's graph fell flat to the bottom of the screen.

Someone swore. "Khee-ryst."

People were pushing other people out of the way. The woman I was with backed into a corner as she pulled my hand taking me with her.

Another machine was hurriedly rolled in.

Everyone glanced at a monitor and stuck things on the patient which were connected to wires from that machine.

"Ready?"

"Do it."

One of the med-techs pulled on a big handle. Needles jumped and monitors flashed new numbers.

The patient on the bed jerked arms and legs.

That nurse standing next to me leaned into my ear. "Her heart stopped."