

The Woman in the Adidas Shirt

During my surgery, I had one of those moments people talk about. The kind that fill surgeons with dread and spikes the adrenaline levels of the OR crew to razor-sharp focus as the patient flat-lines before them.

For me, it was mind-blowing. Drifting up out of my body while looking down at the sorry state of myself and the frenzied medical team, I felt a peace that a week in Bali or a lifetime of devotion to yoga couldn't compare to. Pretty cool! I felt no pain and no fear. I didn't have the slightest concern for the wax-colored, flabby version of me on the table below, no longer lamenting the loss of my Adonis frame so sorely altered from years of pulling up to the drive-through window and working the remote.

I took my adventure a little further and let myself drift, astounded at how easily I slipped through walls with a finesse that would have left Harry Potter stunned and drifted through the hospital ward looking in on some sorry souls in their beds, watching orderlies rushing down the halls, and checked out the nurses sitting at their computers, until I saw a shapely redhead in the waiting area. I hovered closer. She smelled like tangerine and spices, a fragrance more intense than I could ever recall. Could she see me? If she did, she wasn't impressed. Her blank stare went through me, as she seemed lost in her own thoughts, so probably not. This took on a whole new dimension of voyeurism.

I drifted back to the OR and watched the frenzy around my body, still lying there, limp and unresponsive.

Suddenly, I felt a presence next to me and turned to see her—a young brunette with a ponytail and an Adidas shirt. She was a spirit for sure, for there was no woman I knew who could Hoover up under ceilings. But the Adidas shirt threw me off. Even the heavens are subject to mass marketing these days, apparently.

I smiled at her, but she looked at me quite sternly. Today wasn't my day with women, I surmised. I hadn't impressed the redhead either, but at least this one was looking at me.

"Go back now," she said as if no wouldn't be an option.

I looked down; the pasty me wasn't exactly beckoning me back.

She came closer. She smelled of the ocean, and for a moment, I lost myself in the blueness of her eyes.

"Go back," she said.

"Alright, alright, alright," I said with a swagger that would have made Matthew McConaughey proud. As I descended upon myself, the scent of surgical cleansers, anesthetics, and the rawness of my body was enough to make my lofty self puke. Still, I pressed on into my clammy self and endured the pain as my body arched to the jolt of 360 Joules, shocking my heart into rhythm.

So my sorry self survived, landing me in the ICU, then rehab, and back on my couch for a while. Since my surgery, that brunette with the Adidas shirt must have put the fear of God in me. I started cycling. On rainy days, I even go to spin class, and the guys get a kick out of hearing that I stretch and that I've found some inner Zen in yoga classes. Even weirder, I couldn't make myself pull up to the drive-through even if I were towed there, and I still can't even look at a slab of meat.

I convinced the guys that vegan cooking classes were great places to meet women, so we've been dragging our brawny selves into Chef Mario's classes and chop our way into vegan Nirvana.

What happened to me? It's mind-boggling! It can't be all bad since my frame is starting to conform to my inner Adonis, but I did get an answer the other night.

She came to me in a dream, the angel of the OR ceiling, the lovely in the Adidas shirt. She looked at me, smiling and looking at me in a way that would make a man do anything for her.

"You have my heart," she said as she left me.

I smiled, warmed by her affection, but then I bolted up, my heart suddenly racing.

I threw myself out of bed and raced down the hall to my home office, tearing into my file cabinet. I pulled out a sealed envelope—one the doctor had given me but that I had chosen not to open. I looked at the front of it. "Donor Data," it said in bold letters.

I tore it open and skimmed through the page until I came to the statement:

The heart donor was a 32-year-old female, an athletics instructor, who died in a hit-and-run accident while cycling...

I sank into a chair, and my heart beat strong within my chest as if to remind me that she was there with me. Then and there, I vowed to her, as I have vowed to no other woman, I would keep her heart safe.