

Serenity

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She was a stunner, and clearly was coming on to Arlen. She swung her barstool toward him and made sure her cleavage was illuminated by the overhead light. He stifled a gasp, slugged his beer, set it carefully on the bar, and turned to face her. “Hi,” he said. “I’m Arlen. What brings you to Paddy’s on this lovely evening?”

She gave him a heart-stopping smile. “I’m Serenity, and I’m here because you’re here.” She touched his arm, and her touch sent a flash of pleasure through his whole body. “Why don’t we go somewhere else? We need to talk, and it’s too noisy here for a discussion.”

Arlen started to ask what they needed to talk about, but decided that with any girl who looked like this it didn’t really matter. “I know just the place.” He paid the bartender, escorted her out of the bar into the cool spring night and they walked toward his home, which was two blocks away.

“What should we talk about?” He turned and looked at her perfect profile as they passed a streetlight.

“Let’s wait until we get there.” She smiled without looking his way.

He turned on the low lights in the living room and when she was seated on the couch asked her: “What can I get you?”

“Nothing,” she said. “Come and sit with me.”

This seems too easy, he thought as he sat down close to her. Their hips nearly touched and her warmth excited him.

“Are you past Linda yet?” the girl asked. Arlen’s wife, Linda had died a little more than a year before.

“As much as I ever will be,” he answered. It had been a difficult year and he’d missed his wife terribly at first. But as the days dragged by the pain gradually had lightened, even to the point where tonight he was thinking about coming on seriously to this lovely girl. “Did you know Linda?”

“Yes,” she said. “I knew her well. I’ve come to take you to Linda.”

“What?” Arlen stood up. “Who are you?” he asked, staring down at her.

“Don’t you know who I am?” She paused. “We met at the hospital. We met the night Linda died.”

“I don’t remember,” Arlen said. His thoughts raced back to that night: the soft fuzzy lighting, the muffled hum of voices and the sounds of the machinery trying to keep Linda alive. He also remembered the problems he’d had with his heart that night: “arrhythmia,” the doctor had called it. And he faintly remembered this girl standing next to Linda as her heart monitor flatlined. The image was faint and he couldn’t quite grasp it.

“I’m death,” the girl said, “We must go away together now.”