

Faux-pas, Doc

Don't toy with affections.

Janett L. Grady

I'm in Paris, on my way to Boston. My insides are all screwed up and I'm on my way to see if I can get things fixed. If I can't get things fixed, the conservative types in World Congress will order me taken apart and I'll be fed to the hogs, piece by piece. I'm three hours early for the transfer and I've already been scanned and labelled. I'm killing time, wandering back and forth, when I suddenly spot her, or think it's her. She's in one of those ancient hoverchairs. I wave, catch her eye and she waves back, hovers towards me, a quizzical, surprised look on her face.

"Well, well," she says with a smile. "What a surprise."

I smile in return. "Doc," I say, "it is you. My God, you haven't changed at all." It's almost true. She's in the chair, a few pounds heavier, a little older-looking but the same Doc Tan who turned me on back in 3010. "How have you been?" I ask. "It's been — what — 20 years?"

"At least that long," she says. She hovers back a little and looks me up and down, her blue eyes crinkling at the corners. She's gorgeous. Even after all these years, I still want to give her a great big kiss. "Damn, T-3," she says, "you're looking fine." She sighs and then frowns prettily. "I never thought you'd last this long," she says. "Is it all still working?"

"Still working," I tell her, and hesitate, unsure about telling her what's wrong. "I'm at the Capitol," I tell her. "I've been there for nine years."

"Men, women or what?" she asks. "You're wired for both, or at least I tried." She laughs. "But with all the women in World Congress these days, I wouldn't be all that surprised if you've been rewired to prefer women."

"You're right," I tell her. "I still do men, but I've been tweaked to prefer women."

"I figured they might do that," she says. "But, hey, no big deal, right?"

"It is a big deal," I shoot back. "When I do men, it hurts like hell. There's something wrong. I'm on my way to Mass Tech to see if I can get it fixed."

She doesn't seem interested. She shrugs, looks at her watch. "I've got a few minutes," she says. "You want some wine?" She doesn't wait for an answer. She spins around, waves for me to follow, and leads the way into the French Space. She leaves me at a table, goes for the wine and then joins me. She sips from her glass, settles

back in her chair. "You do look a little different," she says, "but hell, don't we all? Me, I'm stuck in this chair." Her eyes seem fixed on my blouse. "So what's wrong?" she asks. "You look healthy enough."

"I'm not," I tell her. "The penis-pocket is closing shut, not to mention being backed up. I'm not passing the way I should be."

"It's been a long time," she says. "You've been screwing your brains out, and you're scratched and swollen. It's the inside sensors. They wear out." She takes my hand, squeezes hard, then lets go. "Tell you what," she says. "I'm in the lab at Notre Dame. If they don't fix it in Boston, come back and let me know. I'll take a look." She grins a mischievous grin. "If worse comes to worse," she says, "I'll take it all apart and start over. Then you can stay with me, service yours truly for awhile."

I'm sipping wine, biting my lip, trying to keep from looking at her. I can't stop thinking about her being in the chair and I don't want her to see any trace of fear on my face.

"So what's with the chair?" I ask. "If you don't mind me asking, I'd like to know what happened."

"Nothing much," she says. "A transport to Moscow didn't quite take and I lost the use of my legs. It's no big deal, though, I've still got feeling down there ... You'd still be able to drive me wild."

"I'd like that, Doc, but..."

"No butts," she says. "I'll clear it with Congress, let 'em know you're going to be with me." She glances at her watch, says she's got to run. "I'll be looking for you, T-3." She smiles that cute little smile of hers, waves and keeps waving as she hovers away. I assume she's hurrying to catch a transfer. "Doc, wait," I shout, but she's already gone.

My own transport doesn't happen for another hour, so I just sit there drinking wine. I'm thinking about how Doc is in a hoverchair, and figure if she can't fix herself, how in the hell is she going to fix me. True, she's the one who turned me on, but



that was 20 years ago. It's not that I don't want to be at her beck and call, because in a way I always have been. But Doc Tan has always been well connected with the anti-science, anti-sex types in Congress. Besides, if Doc is at Notre Dame, a man's world, it's my guess she'll simply take me apart, have me fed to the hogs, piece by piece, and start over. I'm not going to let her do it, no matter what. While I'm no longer a perfect toy for men, I'm still pretty good when it comes to women. I just need fixing, that's all.

Sorry, Doc, but I just don't trust you. For one thing, the inside of what you first designed and put together is now all screwed up. For another, I'm Tan Number 2, not Tan Number 3. T-2, not T-3. ■

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