

At your service

by Carolyn Patterson Sidd

At Your Service

Dan's car idled, waiting as a crane swung an enormous I beam across the road. From the looks of things, this project, a new drawbridge over the St. John's River near St. Augustine, Florida, was way behind schedule. The county promised voters if they approved the funds, construction would be completed within nine months-just like a baby. Well, that promise was about ten months overdue. More like an elephant, which has a twenty-four month gestation.

Dan glanced around at the waiting vehicles. Some drivers were impatient and paced up and down between the rows of cars. Others tapped on their phones. Texting. One of Dan's pet peeves. He grappled through the glove box for a pen and notebook. If he saw anyone obviously sending text messages while driving, he wrote down their license plate number. He hadn't reported anybody, but maybe if they saw him watching, it would scare them into paying more attention to the road.

It was a good thing he still had his note pad handy. He jotted down her number. His heart was pounding. He had to meet this woman.

Dan was a divorced fifty-two year old accountant. He kept the books for several small companies in St. Augustine. He was friendly, and had a nice circle of friends, but he hadn't had a date since his wife, Karina left him two years ago.

His five-foot eight frame was lean and fit. He ran at least four miles a day, rain or shine. Accounting was stressful, and he felt his tension melt away as he kept pace with the music on his iPod.

Available online at «<http://fictionaut.com/stories/carolyn-patterson-sidd/at-your-service--2>»

Copyright © 2013 Carolyn Patterson Sidd. All rights reserved.

Karina complained that his running took up too much time, and that he was just plain boring.

Rhinestone-studded chrome spokes sparkled as the pink trike sped away. Dan forgot his no texting while driving rule, and thumbed a message.

Are you Lily Jean?

Who is this?

You just passed me.

Honey, I'm at your service.

Dan wondered what she meant by that. Surely she didn't think he was looking for a prostitute? He was intrigued by this woman, but he didn't mean it that way. He clicked off the cell phone and drove home.

Days went by, and Dan obsessed about the lady on the pink cycle. Visions of her voluptuous body tormented his sleep. He wanted to call her, but lost his nerve every time he started to dial. What did TUTU mean? She sure didn't look like she'd ever been a ballerina. Dan fantasized.

He spotted Lily Jean's pink motor trike parked in front of the Winn Dixie, CVS, and the ABC liquor store several times over the next few weeks. He thought about going inside and introducing himself, but couldn't gather enough courage. He saw her in the checkout lane at Walmart, but quickly abandoned his shopping cart and hurried out through the garden department. Most unnerving of all, however, was the sight of her in her turquoise motorcycle finery exiting the local erotica shop, Adam and Eve.

Dan happened to be next door at the seafood market. He watched her stow a package in the small compartment on the rear of the cycle. He wondered what she had purchased. His mind wandered, and the clerk had to ask twice what kind of fish he wanted. Lily Jean was already gone by the time his grouper was weighed and wrapped.

That night, Dan picked up the phone and dialed the number. Two rings, a few lines of Petula Clark singing "Call Me," then the sweetest Southern drawl. Dan was glad she hadn't answered in person.

"Thanks for callin'. I offer any number of delivery services: groceries, prescriptions, and flowers. I provide entertainment to shut-ins of all ages. My greatest pleasure is to serve you. Leave a message, Hon, and I'll catch you later."

Dan hung up.

The next afternoon, Lily Jean came into the dry cleaners while Dan was picking up his dress shirts, medium starch on hangers. The clerk handed Lily Jean a bundle of clean laundry and gave her an address for delivery. Dan nodded a greeting, and Lily Jean gave him a beautiful smile. She had even teeth and dimples on either side of her perfect moist lips. She held out her hand. Dan took it and looked up into shining hazel eyes. Lily Jean was at least six feet tall.

"Hi, I'm Lily Jean Vaughn. You're the guy from the accounting office. I've seen you there"

Dan had never seen her near his office building, but didn't say so.

"I hear your wife left you," she said

How did she know that? Did they have friends in common? He doubted that. He decided she remembered him from the text and had him investigated. He wondered what else she knew about him. He winced.

"Oh, I didn't mean...well, would you like to get a cup of coffee?" asked Lily Jean.

Dan's palms were wet. He hoped his armpits wouldn't betray him. Why was he so damn nervous, when he'd been trying to meet her for weeks, and she was doing the asking?

"Well, okay."

"C'mon, hon."

She headed for the door and Dan rushed to hold it open.

“Hey, how ‘bout I stow this laundry in your car and give you a ride to the coffee shop?” she asked.

Dan hesitated. What would people think? He, a smallish man, riding behind an Amazon woman on a PINK three-wheeled motorcycle!

“It's only a couple of blocks. You'll be fine.”

Lily Jean patted the seat.

“Sit here,” she said and handed Dan a glittery silver orb.

“You can wear my helmet.”

“Oh, no thanks. It's only a short ride,” said Dan. No way in hell would he wear that alien globe.

She shrugged her shoulders, gathered up her claret curls, and eased the silver shell over them. Lily Jean swung her ample leg over the saddle and revved the motor. He grabbed her waist as the machine jerked into motion.

It felt good to have his arms around her. Comforting, somehow. He knew he was in for more than a ride on a pink motor trike. Dan tightened his hold, and wondered about Lily Jean Vaughn.

