John Doe's Jeans

by Randall Stickrod

How the fuck did they expect me to get home from the hospital? Pumped full of morphine, a cast on one arm, bandaged like a damned mummy. They cut all my clothes off so I'm down to a hospital gown and my shoes. In the panic following news of my motorcycle crash, my honey fled the house without coat or wallet, rode in the ambulance with me, and now, nearly midnight, we don't even have cab fare home.

While an orderly vanishes to find me “something to wear,” Cassie goes searching for a telephone. She comes back looking as wiped out as me. “None of our friends were around. I called Judith. She said she'll pick us up.”

Judith. My ex-wife. Part of the reason she was “ex” was her insistence that I couldn't have a motorcycle. I could see her expression now. Fuck.

The orderly appears, with a tan work shirt and a faded pair of jeans in my size. Cassie dresses me. The jeans are perfectly worn in, surprisingly comfortable. It occurs to me to ask, where did these come from?

He shrugs. “Fatal crashes. Homicides. Homeless guys. Whatever. They go to the morgue, no one ever asks for the clothes back. Comes in handy at times like this.”

Cassie braces me as I limp toward the entrance, wearing some dead guy's clothes. Judith is waiting by the door, trying not to look I-told-you-so. She's been crying. Suddenly I am too. Fuck.

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