

Chapter 1 – Renee

Some time ago, I went into a local jewelry store, to have a battery replaced in a watch and was struck by the sales woman who waited on me. Renee was her name and she was no youngster. In fact, I think she was a even a little too old to be my daughter and certainly not my granddaughter, which in itself was a change. But, she was one hot lady and it verified for me that this kind of heat is not limited to the young. She was very different from the twenty and thirty somethings I recently encountered that you will read about later.

This particular time, I needed a band for the watch I was wearing and for obvious reasons, I went out of my way to go into the same jewelry store. Renee was there and remembered me, which was not a surprise. Good sales people remember many of their customers. I'm sure it wasn't because of my good looks.

“You were in here for a battery some months ago, weren't you?” she said, without waiting for an answer because she knew.

“I'm surprised you remembered.” I said.

“I remember some customers, not all. Did you remember me?” she asked.

“Why do you think I came here?” I added, “I needed an excuse to visit you.”

“Don't give me that BS,” she said. “If you wanted to visit me all you had to do is call. I'm the only one here and I'm the one who answers the phone.”

“It takes a little courage, particularly for an old guy like me. Besides, I don't know your name and I couldn't be sure it would be you on the phone.”

“I'm Renee. Now you know you don't need a phony excuse to come to see me. Let's see the watch, Solomon. That is your name right.”

“Most people call me Sol. My mother called me something else. But I won't go into that.” I said, trying to be funny.

I gave her the watch which she looked at and agreed, “You weren't kidding. It really does need a band. Wait here, Sol.” She went into the back room and came out with what looked like a small aluminum suitcase. She opened it and there was a display of what seemed like an infinite variety of watch bands, all types and sizes. “What kind do you want? Same as the one on there now? Black leather? Or do you prefer a metal band?” she asked.

“Leather is good, I prefer a leather band.”

She looked at the watch again. “This is a very old Rolex. I haven't seen one like this in a long time.”

“It's vintage. I got it when I was in the Air Force, in the PX overseas.”

“How long ago was that?”

“You really want to know? Then you'll know how old I am.”

“So?” She said with a questioning inflection.

“So, I think if you know how old I am, that will finish the conversation. I won't be able to hit on you.”

“Ha! I'm no kid either, you know. Feel free to hit on me. I could use the compliment, maybe even the hit. FYI, if I really want to, I can find out how old the watch is and do the math. Although, I don't do math on Thursdays,” she said with a straight face.

“Come on, let the age question go. If we become friends, I'll tell you myself. But for now, as a courtesy to me, I'd like you to drop it.”

“Why are you so sensitive to this age thing? I'm 64 and I don't give a shit who knows it.”

“When I was younger, I didn't care so much either. But people have a prejudice and I would like to be judged without age being a factor. I don't like to lie. So I just don't tell.”

“OK. I promise. I will respect your wishes.” She held up a watch band and said, “This is pretty close to what you have. Is it all right?”

“It's very close. Will you put it on for me?”

“Of course. We offer full service. I will even wind it for you, even though it's self winding, difficult as that is,” she said while she was working with the band.

“Do you train for that?” I asked, trying to match her quick wit, but she was too sharp.

“For the winding? Sure, I do three sets of twelve thumb twists, every morning with each hand when I come into the store. That is except Sunday.”

“Why not Sunday?”

“I'm very religious.”

“You're kidding?” I replied, wondering if she was serious.

“Yes. I'm a doomed Christian. I play on Sunday. I do not respect the Sabbath.”

“What do you play?” I asked. “Sports?”

“Sometimes. I never know in advance. Why don't you call me Sunday and I'll tell you. I'll text you my phone number. I have your cell phone number on your last bill.”

“Do that.” I said, as she handed me the watch.

“You're good to go, duly re-banded and unnecessarily wound,” she said as she wrote out a bill.

I looked at it and gave her a credit card, which she took and ran through the machine without saying anything. She put the receipt down for me to sign, looked up at me with a smile and said, “Call me Sunday, I'm serious, but not too early.”

I laughed but I didn't take her seriously for some reason. Then, Saturday afternoon, I got a text message with her phone number and address. I suppose it was also meant as a reminder.

When I returned from the gym on Sunday morning, I called Renee, a little nervously, I don't know why. You would think that by now these things wouldn't make me nervous. But for some reason, I was a little jumpy and was not really up to the give and take of the man-woman game today. But you have to take opportunities when they come. The Don would have done so.

“Hello,” she answered. I could tell from her voice that I didn't wake her up.

“Renee baby, it's Sol. What's up?” I sort of forced myself to sound up.

“Oh! Sol. I'm happy that you called. I wasn't sure you would.”

“I said I would.”

“It wouldn't be the first time a guy said he would and didn't,” she answered. “Anyway, I have a small problem. I hate to work on Sunday but for some reason my boss asked me to open the store today

at noon and stay until 5:00. I get there about 11:00. You want to hang out with me for a while at the store before I open? I'd like the company. Then I wouldn't feel so bad about working today."

"Sure, why not? Should I bring the coffee? Something to eat?"

"Just coffee would be great. Milk, no sugar."

"See you around 11:00, then." I relaxed a little because the pressure of the game seemed like it was off. Coffee and a little chat would be without strain. She was easy and fun to talk to and very quick witted, but a time constraint would eliminate anything more serious. I don't know why but I felt thankful for that.

I stopped at Starbucks, got the coffee and when I got to the store she saw me through the window and opened the door, which had a CLOSED sign showing. "Boy, am I glad to see you," she said and gave me a friendly kiss on the cheek. "How are you with zippers?"

"What? Zippers? What are you talking about?"

"Let's go in the back and I'll show you," she said as she locked the door. When we got to the back, she turned around and pointed to her crotch. "The zipper's stuck and won't zip up. And the top won't disconnect so I can't get either into or out of my jeans."

I looked at the zipper. "You mean you want me to try to fix or remove it so you can get your pants off? Why don't you cut them off?"

"Then what? I don't have another pair of jeans here. Can you try?"

"You mean there, on-site?" I said pointing and laughed raucously.

"It's not funny," she said firmly, then lightened up. "Well I guess it is a little bizarre for me as well as for you."

"Sit down and spread your legs," I said sternly, stifling more laughter.

She smiled, did as I ordered and said emphatically "No funny stuff, y'hear me?"

TO BE CONTINUED

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