

## **Delilah**

Harry Prichett

I always knew when Delilah was working. The sweet smell of cherry perfume mixed with pungent sweat would fill the van, seeping between the doors even before they'd been opened. Then she would appear, huffing, puffing, snorting and grunting like a wild beast. When a person weighs close to four hundred pounds, the very act of opening van doors becomes a monumental task. I understood why she always looked so miserable. Who wouldn't after an eight hour day of opening and closing van doors and helping people in wheel chairs in and out of buildings? In my mind, I calculated that a person of average weight, at Delilah's height of approximately four foot three, would lose approximately three quarters of a cup of perspiration from a similar day's work. Multiply that by Delilah's additional weight and the result is approximately one gallon of sweat. I further surmised that it would become a costly habit buying and applying so much perfume on a daily basis, that the perfume itself must be cheap. With all that being said it never, at any point, hindered my sexual desire for her.

I first met Delilah when I was being moved from a rehab center to the state operated Haywood Home for the Disadvantaged. I never understood really why they sent me to the rehab center, after making it clear to me that I was paralyzed from the neck down and would never be able to talk or walk again. I guess the bureaucracy thought other parts of my body needed rehabilitation. I'm still trying to figure out what those parts might be.

The people who live at Haywood, including me, are physically and emotionally disadvantaged. I try to be grateful however, and realize had I not had the accident, I most

likely would never have met Delilah. In fact, I could safely conclude that I wouldn't have, nor in my prior state, would have wished to.

On my transfer from rehab to the home, Delilah was in charge of my transportation. The first time I saw her I was a disgusted. The sight of her girth and the stench of her perfume, blended together with all that sweat, deepened the depression I have been battling-with ever since my accident. Then I saw her eyes. Her big brown blood shot eyes. Eyes are always honest, they can't hide behind anything. I saw the burden in her eyes, the struggle. Living itself is a challenge, but then to be saddled with uncontrollable weight and a job caring for hopeless people who can't communicate must be tough. These were my thoughts even before I discovered she was a divorced mother of three. When I saw her eyes I became aroused. I can't explain it. Having and knowing the sensation before the accident, I know what I felt. There I was, experiencing it in the presence of Delilah.

Delilah was the person who would transfer me and some of the other people from the home to various medical facilities. Occasionally we'd take a field trip. We went to the zoo once, but Gerald Slavin had a fit and scared some children. Ever since then, when we did go out, we went to the park. Delilah would find a nice shady spot near the great lawn or the duck pond. We'd sit and stare into space while Delilah sat on a bench smoking, talking on her cell phone and occasionally pausing to apply some hand cream. I wanted to tell her that smoking was going to kill her, but I couldn't. In between calls, she'd wipe our mouths and turn our wheel chairs in a different direction. She knew all our names, but would address us as her "fresh basket of vegetables." Gerald Slavin was her tiny plumb tomato, Burt Lyerly was her little red cabbage and I was egg plant.

Sometimes Delilah would catch me looking at her and say, “What the fuck you lookin’ at, Egg Plant, huh? You want a little piece of Delilah?” Then she would let out a deep, husky laugh which would then turn into a wet, hacking cough. She never would’ve known by my vacant stare, but that’s *just* what I wanted. I didn’t want just a little piece though I wanted *all* of her.

Although Delilah’s demeanor was rather abrasive, I and the other vegetables knew differently. When transporting us on and off the van she was always very careful. She knew exactly how to position her body. There was never any awkwardness. She used leverage like an expert, but had the strength of a bull when needed. I always looked forward to her touching me, whether she was moving me to the back of the van and buckling me in, or draping a blanket over me when it got cold. Sometimes, not often, but sometimes she would rub my neck with some of her hand cream. She had the softest hands I’d ever felt. I cherished the contact.

Every Tuesday I would get a shower. I needed one far more often, but that’s what I got. I guess the state figured no one would ever get too close to me, so what was the point? It was a tedious and time consuming task. When I first got to the home, they had male aids shower the male patients and female aids shower the female patients. Then they figured it didn’t really matter, we were all vegetables, and so shower-day became my absolute favorite day of the week. I would be sitting in my room and I could hear Delilah lumbering down the hallway, singing. She would close the door behind her and let out a low, husky chuckle. “Delilah’s here, baby. Are you ready for Delilah?”

Oh yes I was. Delilah would continue singing while she undressed me, lifting and shifting me without the slightest strain. Then she would start the shower and make sure

the temperature was just right, wrap her big, strong fat arms around my torso, and lift me onto the chair in the shower. I loved the feeling of the warm water on my head. In the past, the other aids never allowed me to enjoy my showers, it was always in and out.

After the water ran on me for a while, Delilah would lather up a mix of soap and cream and then scrub and massage every inch of my body.

Delilah was fired that day for exposing herself to me in the shower. Another aid walked in on us and reported the incident. Had I been able to speak, I would've explained to everyone it was OK. The city claimed it was "inappropriate behavior." The home got a slap on the wrist and I was stuck with another male aid washing me.

That was the last time I ever saw Delilah. Her last words to me in the shower will always be with me. She looked straight into my eyes with our faces almost touching, droplets of water repelling off her cheeks.

"I know you're there, Egg Plant," she said. "Delilah knows."