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Did I Tell my Name?

by Lesley Dawson

“Don’t let me drink too much tonight. You know I have this habit of offering to treat people I’ve never met before.”

It was Saturday night and they were driving to a party in Bradford. It was already late as they had to wait until Match of the Day had finished. Tim could not go out until he knew how his favourite football team had done. This had been a good week, Manchester United had beaten Leeds United by one goal scored in extra time. With this news he was content to get into his car and drive to the party.

Dave grinned at Jan from the front passenger seat as they all promised to keep an eye on Val’s alcohol consumption. It wasn’t an easy job as sometimes all she needed was two glasses of Merlot before she was off. It wasn’t that she got roaring drunk and danced on the table- top. Oh no! They could handle that when it happened. What did happen was that she started to circulate round the room meeting people she had never met before. It wasn’t long before she had them eating out of her hand and telling her all their woes and problems.

The big problem came when she heard about their injuries. She couldn’t resist telling them she might be able to help them as she was a masseuse. It was no good Jan telling people they worked at the knicker factory in Batley, Val always forgot their cover story. Jan had got fed up with hearing about countless bad backs and twisted knees and borrowed the story about her supposed job from a friend in Newcastle who said it worked a treat, people just smiled and moved on to another group.

Tim also needed to be kept under control when his revered Man U lost. He would regale people he had never met before with stories of how Georgie Best was misunderstood.

That was bad enough but at least they didn't turn up at the college the next week asking for a massage.

Tonight they thought they had it all sewn up as they were meeting Pete at the party and he worked with Val and promised to shadow her all night, deflecting all offers of future treatment. The group separated and agreed to meet up every hour to compare notes. This worked fine for the first two hours until Pete started on the gin and tonics and got waylaid by two buxom blondes in the far corner. He looked desperately for help from his mates but they were all busy discussing devaluation of the pound, the state of the first Division and the woes of the NHS.

At their next debriefing session in the corner by the bar they all began to giggle as they recognized the look on Val's face and heard her ask, "Haven't you had staff training on moving and handling?"

"Too late," whispered Jan, "she is already off and running."

They watched the almost scripted conversation they had heard before and reluctantly dragged Val away from a close encounter with a man-mountain who hailed from New Zealand. But not before Val's card had been clutched in his sweaty hands.

On the way home they stopped at the "Karachi" for a chicken curry and sat outside the café eating. As the curry began to modify the effects of the red wine she had drunk, Val looked around anxiously, "Did I give my name to anyone last night?" For a moment everyone looked down and concentrated on slurping up the chicken sauce with the last chapatti. Dave, being the bravest eventually nodded his head and grinned.

"Oh no. Pete's going to kill me when some bloke turns up on Monday morning in the middle of my full body massage class. Why didn't you stop me?"