

## C plus 8 hours

Steve knew he would be going into surgery the following day. What he didn't know was that this meant nil by mouth until the following morning. By ten o'clock, he was feeling very hungry.

He had been given a variety of tests during the day but even at this late hour, there were more to come.

The use of ultrasound to scan for tumours was a completely new idea. Doctor Barr was anxious to try it before Steve had surgery and the cancerous testicle was removed. Doctor Barr had managed to arrange for the use of the ultra sound room after hours, all he needed now was a technician, and he knew where he could find one.

Edward Jerome was from Nottingham but had obtained a first class degree in Physics from a London university and had gone to work for Rolls Royce in Derby. His girlfriend still lived in Nottingham so he had moved back in with his parents and commuted to Derby. Eddie didn't drive and had no intention of learning, so although the distance between home and work was only fifteen miles, Eddie would go into Nottingham by bus, to Derby by train and then walk the extra distance to the Rolls Royce plant. This took him well over an hour each way.

Around this time, Eddie had split with his girlfriend and was spending more time socializing in search of a replacement. The journey had become more and more tedious and he had found a job as a technician in the medical physics department of the hospital which was within walking distance from his parent's home.

He was vastly over qualified, but the job was easy, he was good at it and he had the respect of his peers. He was always open to new ideas and found the job interesting. He was always updating his knowledge of the field and had helped a number of doctors on their research projects. He was seriously thinking of retraining as a doctor and becoming a doctor himself. But for the time being, he was happy as a technician. Although the pay wasn't brilliant, there was little in the way of responsibility and what salary there was paid all of his bills.

Mostly, it paid for his beer.

This was why Doctor Barr knew where to find him.

The Brown Bear was about quarter of a mile way from the hospital and almost half way to Eddie's parents' house. Doctor Barr knew Eddie would be there. They had talked about using ultra sound to detect tumours in the past and Eddie had agreed to come back to hospital to work the machine.

But they had to have a couple of drinks first.

By the time they got back to the hospital, Doctor Barr was feeling a little the worse for wear.

Steve had been brought from the ward and was already in the ultrasound suite when they arrived. Barr had prepared Steve by taping his legs together and covering his testicles in lubricant. It was at this point that the three pints of Scrutock's Zombie cut in and Doctor Barr found himself in need of the toilet and so left Steve to cool off.

Eventually, after his return, the Doctor and Eddie were able to take some scans of the cancerous area and headed for home.

It had been a long day.

It was turning into an even longer day for Steve, who they had forgotten about.

Sarah had come back on duty at midnight. She had agreed to cover for colleague who had a few hours work in a private hospital and had soon realised that the new patient was not in his bed. Investigation found that he had gone for a late night ultrasound and had not been returned to the ward, so she went and found him. Seeing him there, legs taped together, covered in goo and looking the most wretchedly forlorn creature in the universe evoked strange feelings in her. She wasn't sure what these feelings were, but something in the back of her head prevented her from examining these feelings at this time.

She also found it very funny.

She helped him clean himself up and got him back to the ward where he sat writing a letter. She left him to it for a while but eventually came back to offer him something to help him sleep. She was not surprised when he refused, nor was she particularly bothered, they would be giving him a pre-med later so he would be relaxed when he went into surgery.

Steve himself was laid in bed thinking about a conversation he'd had with the anaesthetist earlier in the day.

The anaesthetist had gone through the standard questions and been pleased that Steve was a non-smoker. After he had explained the procedure, a nurse had offered the doctor a cup of tea and he had said yes.

He pulled up a seat besides Steve's bed and decided to have a friendly little chat.

"This is the first castration I've done for a bit," he said.

Steve spat tea and biscuits all over him.

"Alright, we're only chopping one out. It's a sort of semi-castration."

"This is not helping."

"No? I used to have this friend," he said, putting a curious emphasis to the word friend.

"He was an anaesthetist as well and he had a little 'joke'.

"When you inject someone in the back of the hand, they've got 3-5 seconds before they pass out.

"What my friend would do was inject them in the back of the hand and tell them to count back from ten. When they'd get to eight he'd turn to the surgeon and say "So this is the castration is it?"

"The patient would attempt to leap up and try to say no, but of course, the anaesthetic was cutting in and they'd fall asleep

"When you come out of an anaesthetic, you're feeling a bit groggy and a bit numb.

You're not sure what operation they've carried out and you can't really move your arms.

"So the patients would wake up and the first thing they would remember was a doctor threatening to cut their balls off.

"They'd turn to the nurse and say in a groggy voice 'Nurse...nurse...are my bollocks still there nurse?'"

Steve was still thinking of this when they wheeled him into the theatre.

The anaesthetist gave Steve a half wave and smiled before putting in the anaesthetic through a canula in the back of the hand.

"Count backwards from ten," he said.

"Ten...nine..." said Steve.

"So this is the castration, is it?" said the anaesthetist.

"Fuggov..." said Steve.

And passed out.

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Coming round from a general anesthetic is definitely a three stage process.

The first stage is little more than opening one's eyes.

Steve opened his eyes and saw Chris standing over him.

Steve's throat was dry.

"What...you...doin...ere..?" he managed.

"Oh bugger," said Chris. "You're still alive. Your dad said I could have your stereo if you died."

"...fuggov..." Steve croaked.

"You're alright then," said Chris and started to walk off.

"Where...goin...?"

"Have you seen some of these nurses? I'll see you in a bit."

And he was gone.

Steve noticed a vaguely camp looking male nurse talking to one of the older patients.

"Nurse...nurse...are my bollocks still there nurse?" he asked.

"You've had Doctor Green as your anesthetist?" replied the nurse with a slightly German accent.

"Uh...uh."

"Don't worry, it's just his little joke."

"No...castration."

"Yes, I know he says it to all the patients. You've just had..." he paused and looked at Steve's charts. "...a testicle removed. Sorry. I'll find a doctor to come and talk to you."

*Well, thought Steve. They weren't taking it out unless it was cancerous.*

Some part of Steve's brain made a decision and he went back to sleep.