

Chapter One

The bikini-clad blonde on the large billboard looked down on me with a smile that said she loved me, and some uncontrollable part of me had the gall to convince my middle anatomy to get alert for action.

That, as a full body numbing buzz came and filled my total awareness with razor sharp pains in all parts of my disabled bone and flesh.

First, though, I needed to remember why the hell I was lying in this ditch some fifty yards from what looked like a state highway. The area was too isolated to be a major road. At this point I saw no traffic at all.

Uh-oh, another sharp jolt just sparked my brain, letting me know where the pain was coming from. Just when I figured the pain was coming from the right side of my body and figured it was time for me to move, the left side of my head near the eye urgently warned me, 'do not move quite yet'. I closed my eyes tightly as though that might offer some sanity to the moment, but it only added to the pain.

After softly touching my rib cage, carefully moving my feet and hands, after touching a spot above my left forehead, I felt the large wide lump with a long gaping valley running along my forehead. I let out a sharp cry when I touched bone some centimeters down, a half-inch above the

eyebrow. The exquisite pain threw me back, slamming my head into a boulder I did not know was there, and one more yell came. With the yell came more pain, and some part of the engine inside me was fit enough to allow me some self-pity.

Self-Pity? How did I get to self-pity when I did not even know my name? For whatever the stupidity, that thought had a consoling effect.

I lay there, not moving because both sides of my body were denying that simple task. So, I lay there, thinking. How the hell did I get here? That thought was swallowed up with the previous jarring truth. I did not know who and what to call me. I did not know me.

Oh, my God.

The panic now lodged there in my crowded brain made me try again to get up out of the ditch, but I only fell back to my earthen bed of the moment – dusty earth, gravel, and the afore-mentioned boulder. Some knowledge bade me take long deep breaths and not try to figure it all out. I guess some ruling gene from the cranial pool was trying to settle me down with the fact that my mind and body was going through a totally awesome shut-down, and, again, how do I get ‘there’ when I don’t even know my name and how and why fate put me here?

I lay there, taking deep breaths until sharp stabbing ouchies hit me. I tried to calm my thinking.

All events have reasons, good and bad. It would come to me. 'Just relax', I kept telling myself.

Lying still there, the pain was not so bad, and that bikini-blonde beauty was still trying to get me erected. In this state of pain, how the hell can that be? Smiling lamely and with pain at my silly thoughts I kept my gaze on the billboard.

At some point, I felt like I was going to pass out, a slow swooning sensation, not pain so much. That is when I heard movement among the dirt and gravel. The thoughts came hard and fast. What can I do? I can hardly move. Then I screamed at what I saw within ten feet of me.

It was a Mojave Rattlesnake. Once again, how the deuce would I know about Mojave rattlesnakes when I do not even know my name? Then, another weird thought hit me, a movie I saw – Harrison Ford in Temple of Doom. Indiana Jones hated snakes, and he ran like hell from them. That thought came at me from Hell's murky furnace, and, hating snakes with good movie company, I rushed on 'auto-pilot' to get up, and the excruciating pain took me back to sudden darkness on my earthen bed of dirt and gravel.

Thoughts can be obnoxious – my last bit of thinking as the pain took me again to the nether world of abject unconsciousness: at least I will not see the wiggly bastard finish me off.