

Something New Every Day

The secret of the Garntuoas

Kin Asdi

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CHAPTER ONE.

Everyone on the street was desperately fighting to keep their umbrellas under control to prevent the slashing rain from penetrating their clothes. The wind was unpredictable and every gust of wind could cause an umbrella to flip over rendering it useless.

I didn't care if I got wet. I liked the rain; it was refreshing, sparkling on my skin and making me feel more awake on those dark days. I always had an urge to break out into fits of laughter, whenever I saw somebody fighting with an umbrella trying to turn it back to its original shape.

I was not a geek who went out just because it was raining, but I didn't mind when I was on my special mission. It made my mission a bit more exciting, because of the extra danger involved and the results were far more spectacular. I had been waiting for this opportunity for at least two months, and I knew that if I made the tiniest mistake it would result in disaster. Timing was crucial and on that day, in particular, I was counting on the dark clouds and heavy rain to hide and rinse away the evidence as quickly as possible.

I had counted the days and had everything neatly out down on the table in my workroom. Every day I checked to see whether I needed to adjust my planning, but it was still a profitable opportunity with a very low risk.

Now the moment was there, and I double checked to see whether my specially designed blob gun was still functioning. It had failed me once before at a critical moment and this time I was taking no chances. In the nick of time, I managed to conceal my weapon from a passer-by who nodded in a friendly manner, clearly not suspecting anything.

After the last incident, it had taken me more than a month to fix the bloody thing again, and I had to undergo another dangerous trip to the crash site.

I still couldn't believe how lucky I had been in finding the place. I had been hiding in the wasteland because the authorities were far too interested in me, and it was then when I found the crash site of a strange vessel. The vessel was burned out completely, but there was a strange looking metal case that seemed to be pretty undamaged. With sheer brute force, I managed to gain access to the content of the case where I found a few weird looking devices. I came to the conclusion that they were of alien make. The blob gun was one of them.

At that moment, I didn't know what it was capable of but after a dozen experiments I figured it out. The only real challenge I had was in replacing the drained alien power pack with an ordinary battery pack. I nearly lost the bloody gun when the first converter caught fire. However, I am a quick learner, and now the blob gun has been my friend for many successful adventures.

The wind was howling above me when I turned into the small corridor between the two shops. I still didn't understand why the jewellery store didn't have this window reinforced. It was a piece of cake to make a nice big hole with the blob gun and take the beautifully crafted pieces of jewellery. I was grateful for the darkness as I aimed the blob gun at the window.

Looking around to make certain that no one was looking into the narrow corridor, I was startled by a woman standing in the window. Her beauty shook me. She had raven black hair that contrasted her pale complexion and I was reluctant to fire the gun. She looked at me with her grey-blue eyes as if she didn't believe what I was going to do.

I suddenly felt a charge of electricity shoot through me. My hair stood up on end as a sizzling thin strand of bright light shot up in the air from the blob gun. Lightning,

surely!

I immediately threw the gun away as far as possible.

My heart was in my throat as I felt the static pull on my hair becoming bigger. I knew I was in deep shit, and the girl's eyes got bigger just before I saw the blinding flash.

I felt the shocking, intense, painful heat, and I blacked out completely.

As pieces of different fluffy pastel tinted strands flowed through the sky, I heard a male voice asking, "Why did you bring him here? His whole nerve system endured an enormous blast. You can't expect him to recover from such severe damage."

A young female voice answered, "I just couldn't leave him there suffering that badly. Can't you use anything else to fix him?"

The person sighed before saying, "I will take a look, but I honestly, fear the worst."

The strands started to hum loudly, and the sky thickened by the second as the voices overwhelmed me. The darkness descended rapidly as a peaceful nothingness brought order to the chaos.

~

My leg was twitching.

It stopped.

There! It was twitching again! Now it was my other leg making a forceful uncoordinated move.

Even though I couldn't move my arms, I felt remarkably relaxed.

Now both legs were trembling which was strange. The prickling sensation began to fade as I felt myself drop back into the nice warm darkness.

~

I was lying in the grass looking at the sky. I blinked my eyes to be sure that it was the sky I was looking at. The

colour was slightly off because the sky was more yellow than blue. I tried to look around but was unable to move my body at all.

The face of a girl appeared in my field of vision. She smiled, and her two ponytails at each side of her head swung a little as she giggled.

With a soft voice she said, "I like the way you look at me."

I tried to say something, but my lips and my vocal cords stayed as they were. I was scared that I would be paralysed for the rest of my life. Her expression changed into a caring smile and said with a melodic voice, "Don't worry you are doing well. Have patience. You'll be fine."

As she disappeared from my vision, I started to feel lonely for the first time in my life. I was not sure for how long I had been staring at the yellow sky before I fell asleep.

~

The sky was green the next time I opened my eyes, and I noticed that my lips were extremely dry. I moved my tongue trying to moisten my lips and after a few minutes I had reached each corner of my lips with my tongue.

I heard footsteps in the grass, and I was amazed to hear the little crunching noises when the long stalks were trampled down. The girl's face appeared in the field of my vision again and with a pretty smile she said, "Hello."

Taking a deep breath, and I tried to reply with great and painful effort, "H...lo."

I was shocked to hear my extremely croaky voice. She chuckled softly as if she had some compassion, but then she touched my cheek with her extremely soft and warm fingers and said, "I know it's hard, but you're doing extremely well. You've exceeded all expectations."

I needed a drink of water, and I tried to say the word, but my mouth and throat were too dry. I squeaked a little, and the girl said, "I know you want water, but you need to heal a bit more before you can drink fluids."

She dabbed my lips with a wet cloth that felt nice and cool. The burning sensation on my lips disappeared for a short while. Her fine beautiful face and her blue grey eyes were bringing me joy, and I just wanted to lose myself in her.

The girl looked away as if she had been called. With a somewhat sad face, she caressed my hair and said, "Try to sleep. You'll heal much faster if you're sleeping."

When she disappeared, I felt empty, and a choir of voices were bringing me down to the darkest fear I ever had experienced. The paralysing feeling of helplessness and the revolting dark was horrible. I was incapable of screaming, no matter how much I tried and tried.

When I next opened my eyes, I noticed that the sky had a hint of turquoise, and I briefly wondered why the sky changed colours every time I woke up. I had the feeling that I was not on Earth but a different planet. It was strange how I could remember the different colours the sky had had, but I couldn't remember anything else.

I felt strange as if something in my mind was fighting against a blockage. However, I wasn't disturbed by this. I felt comfortable and at ease even though something was nagging in the back of my mind, and I was pondering what it should be.

I was frustrated by the speed of my reasoning, which right now was incredibly slow.

I must have a name!

The fact I knew I must have a name gave me the feeling that something was off. But I didn't know what.

I longed to see the pretty girl again. She was curiously familiar to me. She had been changing as well. Subtle changes as if she was getting older much faster than..... Faster than what?

Her face looked so familiar.

What was going on?

I heard the soft crunching of the dried grass being trampled down, and I smiled when I saw the girl again. She had her hair in a ponytail, but there were two little strands of hair hanging down next to her ears. She looked me straight in the eye and said softly, "Hello."

This time my throat felt less dry, and I could say nearly without any effort, "Hello."

My voice was still harsh but not as bad as the last time. Her voice had changed as well, sounding more mature as if she had grown older in a very short period. "How do you feel?"

This question suddenly forced me to focus on me, and I had great difficulty feeling anything. I stammered, "I, I don't know."

Her face looked confused, and she asked, "Do you have any pain?"

I was shocked by her question. Why should I feel pain? As far I could feel anything I could feel no pain, except for my sore throat, and I answered her question placidly, "No I don't."

I was not happy that I didn't feel anything else, and I tried to focus on her because she was real. I asked, "What's your name?"

At first she looked shocked before relaxing and saying, "You're not supposed to ask someone's name. It's considered very rude."

"Sorry."

I was shocked that I just said sorry. Why should I say sorry? She smiled and said, "It's fine. You didn't know so no harm done."

She looked up staring at something above my head and put her hand on her mouth and exclaimed, "Oh no! No! No! How's that possible!"

She looked at me with an extremely guilty look and exclaimed, "Hold on. I'll get the healing master right away. Hold on!"

Before I could ask what was wrong, she disappeared from my view leaving me wondering. I hadn't finished that thought when an excruciating pain shot through my shoulders. I cried out as the burning sensation slowly spread to the upper part of my arms. It felt like hundreds of glowing needles were making their way down to my arms. I couldn't do anything else than screaming the place down because of the torturing pain. It felt like ages until I heard footsteps and the sound of shouting echoing in a corridor.

A warm bronze voice shouted, "Why did you wake him up? Didn't you see that I've just started the next batch?"

The girl's voice was hoarse when she said, "I failed to notice that you have started the sequence. I'm so sorry."

The man said with a soothing voice, "Never mind. I've restarted the sequence; he will feel nothing within a few moments."

I wanted to say something, but suddenly I felt little drops of rain falling on my skin that took me by surprise and the burning changed into a dull bearable pain. I relaxed a bit and I again I thought I had the opportunity to say something but the darkness surrounded me completely.

I woke up with a start, and I opened my eyes hoping to see the girl again. The sky was orange, and the grass looked dry as if it hadn't been watered for ages. I right wrist felt itchy, and I tried to lift my arm. I could tense my muscles, but I was too weak to lift my arm. The fact that I could move my fingers just a little felt strange. Unfortunately, my left arm seemed to be not there or at least I couldn't determine if I still had a left arm. Strangely enough I couldn't turn my head to have a look. I couldn't lift anything; neither my head nor my upper body. I felt like a rag doll lying on the grass.

I heard footsteps and within a few seconds the girl's face appeared in my vision. She wore a serious expression on her face as she said, "I want to apologise for what I've done to you. I seriously didn't know that another sequence had started."

I remembered the immense pain, and I winced a little. I said, "Yes, it was very painful."

Something was not right here because I couldn't get angry. A tear rolled down her cheek, and she whispered, "I'm so sorry."

I cleared my throat, and I said, "Don't cry. Please don't cry. You look much nicer when you don't cry."

She sniffed before saying "I've been so stupid."

I tried to smile, "Everyone can make a mistake. You're not stupid. I'll bet you won't make that mistake ever again."

She wiped the tear from her cheek and asked, "Bet? What is that?"

Her question was unsettling because I realised that I couldn't give her an explanation, and I had to rephrase the sentence. "I mean I'm sure you won't make that mistake again."

Again I had the feeling I wanted to say something but I couldn't put my finger on what. My body felt restless as if it wanted something else to happen, but I hadn't a clue what.

She shivered and said, "I didn't sleep for days."

I looked at her eyes, and I was surprised that I hadn't seen the dark lines under them before. I felt sorry for her, and I said, "I'm sorry, but I'm glad you're here now."

She blushed, and it looked like that she didn't know what to say.

My uneasiness was growing as well, and I tried to defuse the situation by asking, "Can I ask you a question?"

She smiled and said, "Of course, ask. But I can't promise if I'll answer it."

I couldn't put the real question in words, so I asked,

“Do I still have two arms? I can't feel my left arm.”

Her warm smile gave me the hope that everything would be fine soon. Her hand moved a strand of my hair away, and she said cheerfully, “Don't be silly! Of course, you have two arms. Have patience, it will be fine.”

“Why can't I feel it?”

She frowned and shrugged her shoulders when she said, “I don't know. I'm not the healing master, but he assured me that you would recover just fine.”

I sighed, and I said, “If you say so.”

She sighed as well and then she suddenly asked out of the blue, “Do you still want to know my name?”

I was totally surprised by her question. I didn't understand why she suddenly wanted to tell me her name. It made me feel special, and I stammered, “If, if you don't mind telling me.”

Her cheeks blushed a little when she said softly, “My name is Estrella.”

Her name was beautiful; it had a real nice ring to it. I tried to remember my name but realised that I must be suffering from amnesia because I was unable to remember anything before the time I first saw Estrella. I decided not to mention that I couldn't remember my name, so I smiled, and I said genuinely, “Estrella. You have a beautiful name.”

“Thank you,” she said a little embarrassed.

She looked away momentarily, and when she next laid her eyes on me, she whispered, “See you next time. Thanks for not being too upset.”

I reassured her by saying, “I'm looking forward to our next meeting. Goodbye, Estrella.”

At the moment she was gone I knew what I wanted to ask; why am I here? What happened to me?

I wanted answers, and I shouted, “Estrella!”

I felt my eyes getting droopy again, and I knew I was too late. But this time the darkness wasn't that scary anymore; the beautiful blue grey eyes of her were

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accompanying me to the abyss.

CHAPTER TWO.

The sky was purple and to my huge relief I noticed that I had regained the feeling in both of my arms. I was able to clench my fists, but it seemed that I couldn't lift my arms. It was as if they were restrained in a certain way. I couldn't move my head either, and I could clearly feel that something was keeping my whole body from moving. There were no straps, but it felt like that every part of my body was pinned to one place. If I didn't try to move, I couldn't feel the restraint at all, and it was as if I was lying freely on the grass.

I heard footsteps and looked forward to seeing Estrella again. "Hello, Estrella, nice of you to visit me again."

A woman appeared in my field of vision, and her stern expression made me feel very uncomfortable. I was shocked by her appearance. The shiny layer of powder made her face look puffy and gave her face an unnatural, even colour. Her lips looked too large for her face because they were painted in a fluorescent pink colour. Her eyes were done up with thick layers of metallic green eyeshadow, and her fake eyelashes were long. A drag queen would be extremely jealous because of the hideous amount of makeup she had used.

She huffed and said with an annoyed voice, "I can't believe she gave her name to this pathetic looking creature."

I was surprised to hear the healing master reply softly, "With all my respect Your Highest, he is practically the same as we are. His DNA is one-hundred-percent compatible with ours."

The idea of having sex with her made me shiver, and I noticed she had more or less the same reaction. She grunted, "He looks so ugly, so barbaric. I can't show him

like that to anyone.”

I had to bite my tongue not to make a sarcastic remark. This so-called “highest” woman looked hideous, and I didn't want to be her trophy to be paraded in front of her pompous friends. However, I knew I had to be careful because she might be a powerful person capable of eliminating me in an instant.

For the first time, the healing master appeared in my field of vision as well. I was not surprised to see him wearing an immaculate white jacket. His old wrinkly friendly face had a relaxing effect on me, and he asked, “How do you feel?”

I cleared my throat, and I said, “I feel fine. Thank you, healing master.”

His smile met his eyes, and he said, “Good, I'm glad. Your body is responding very well to the treatment, and it seems it's adapting faster after every new batch.”

The woman looked bored and while she inspected her hand, which was covered with huge kitsch rings, said, “When do you think he will be up to any activities?”

The healing master looked at her with a concerned expression on his face as he said, “Well, he needs about two more batches and after that the preparations of the regeneration can be started, Your Highest.”

The woman sighed and asked, “How many cycles?”

“It depends on how long the healing process takes, Your Highest, but I would imagine at least fifteen cycles.”

The woman moved closer to me, and I was shocked to realise she had the same blue grey eyes as Estrella. Her necklace was as pompous as her rings, and the huge diamond-like stone was dangling right in front of me when she sneered, “You are only alive because of her wish. Don't think you can use that for anything else. Do you understand?”

I blinked because I hadn't anticipated her sudden sneer. I was happy that I had kept my calm, and I said softly, “Yes Your Highest, I understand.”

She looked at the healing master and murmured, “All right fix this creature and see if you find a way to speed it up. You're spending too much time on it.”

He bowed a little when she walked away and said, “I'll do my best, Your Highest.”

After I was certain she was gone, I asked, “Where is Estrella?”

He looked sad, “She isn't allowed to visit you anymore.”

“Oh no, why not?”

“She made her mother cross.”

I almost cried when I heard the last sentence, and I whispered, “Please don't tell me that this woman is her mother.”

He sighed. “I'm afraid she is. Now, are you ready for the next batch?”

I wasn't ready for the next batch because I needed answers, and I said sternly, “No, I'm not ready.”

His voice was very calm when he said, “Oh?”

“Why am I here?”

The healing master replied instantly, “Because Estrella brought you here.”

“What are you doing to me?”

“Saving your life.”

Damn! That was serious! Even it was not really what I wanted to hear, but it made me realise that his work was necessary.

I was starting to get tired of those short lived moments and as I looked him straight in his eyes I asked, “Why don't you do all the batches in a row without waking me up?”

He looked away at something I couldn't see when he said, “It can't be done like that. You need to recover from each batch. It will kill you if we give you them in one go. I have already tried to keep the number of times we wake you up to an absolute minimum.”

I was shocked to hear that, and I asked him, “What are

you doing that is so severe?”

“I'm afraid I don't have time to explain it right now. I've already started another batch, and you'll go to sleep in a few moments.”

I was starting to get pissed off because I was not at all pleased with his evasive answers, and I practically shouted, “But, I want.”

That was all I was able to yell before I felt the sudden rush going to my head. The choir of voices started to chant, and the darkness was inevitable.

The sky was bright red. It was too bright, and I closed my eyes trying to keep my eyes from being hurt. I heard footsteps reaching up to me, and I knew the steps were too heavy to be Estrella. I opened my eyes just enough to see the contour of the healing master and I felt strange but also quite at ease.

I knew I had shouted at him, but I had the feeling something was not quite right, and I asked, “How am I doing?”

His bronze voice was always pleasant to hear. “You're exceeding all expectations. Your recovery time has been reduced by seventy percent.”

I was relieved, and smiling said, “Good, can you tone down the light a little? The red sky is too bright.”

He sighed. “I was afraid that might happen.”

His remark made my heart suddenly beat a lot faster.

I knew it! “What is wrong, healing master?”

“Her Highest ordered us to speed up your healing process, and now you're suffering the consequences.”

Oh shit! That bitch had caused me trouble! My heart was now beating like crazy, and I hardly dared to ask the question. “Am I going to die?”

The healing master laughed and said, “No, no. Don't worry. You're doing extremely well, but your vision has

been affected by the treatment. It's a feedback system to give me an indication as to how the treatment has been received.”

I sighed with relief, and I said, “So red means a little too much.”

He huffed, “The amount administered would have killed a normal person but apparently your body can endure extremely high concentrations of this medicine.”

Bloody hell! What was he using? I wondered what he was trying to say, and I sincerely hoped I would get a confirmation. My voice sounded feeble when I asked, “So you're done for now?”

Because of the bright red sky I couldn't really see the expression on his face but I could hear the uncertainty in his voice when he said, “For now, we are done but you need to recover from the treatment.”

I was glad to hear that, and I said eagerly, “So no more blackouts from now.”

He chuckled and waited for a few seconds before he revealed, “Not really. It is better to sleep off the after effects unless you want to be severely nauseous for two cycles. And trust me the next time, you wake up, will be quite revealing.”

My heart sunk knowing I was going to face the darkness again I asked, “Can we just wait for a few hours?”

“Do you want to see Estrella again?”

Damn, I realised he got me by the balls, and I said, “Yes, of course!”

“Then let me put you to sleep. I promise you'll see her the moment you wake up again.”

Reluctantly I admitted to myself I had no other choice and the thought that I could see Estrella again was very exciting. I sighed, and I said, “All right, let's do it.”

The healing master chuckled. “I knew you would go for that, but I must warn you; it will be a quite different experience when you wake up.”

I still couldn't see his face because of the environment

that was too bright and I asked, “What will be different?”

“Everything.”

I wanted to ask more, but I already had the feeling that the sleeping drug was doing its work, and I sincerely hoped that the next time I fell asleep it would be without any drugs. The choir of voices was extremely loud before the darkness took me into a scary nothingness.

CHAPTER THREE.

I woke up with a start, and I instantly knew I was freed from the drug. My head was clear, but I still felt a bit woozy. I heard a soft humming and a regular ticking noise echoing in the small room. I still had my eyes closed because I wanted to take it easy. There wasn't much light in the room because I saw no light through my eyelids. My body felt weird as if I was lying in water because I couldn't feel I was touching any surface, and I was sure I was lying on my back. I carefully moved my index finger, and it felt funny as if I was stirring in a bowl of runny jelly. When I tried to lift my arm, it took a huge effort but eventually I felt my skin getting cold when it reached the surface. Now I was sure my body was floating in a basin filled with warm jelly.

I opened my eyes.

I closed them again.

I opened them again to be sure that it didn't make any difference, but then I saw a little red light in the corner of my eye. The room was just totally dark except for the little red light. I tried to turn my face towards the light, but I noticed that my head was strapped in. Presumably to preventing me from slipping down into the jelly.

The healing master was right: it was completely different.

It was quite sobering to find yourself floating in a basin full of warm jelly. I'm not sure what kind of drugs the healing master had used to keep me at bay, but it had some serious hallucinatory powers!

I was not sure what to do.

I could shout to see if someone came to my assistance or just wait until they came and checked on me. I decided to wait and use the time to contemplate what had

happened to me. I was startled to realise that this was the first time that I had been alone and not under the influence of drugs.

I wanted to know what the purpose of the regeneration ceremony was, and of course, what they had done to me.

Why this jelly basin?

How long have I been here?

Where was here?

Why couldn't I remember my life before I met Estrella and why did I have the feeling that I had led a completely different life previously?

It troubled me that I sensed that I had seen Estrella before and was unable to remember where.

The door opened, and a woman dressed in a slim fitting white suit entered the room. She was tall and as she moved her well-toned body graciously to a panel she cheerfully said, "Good morning, a splendid day to get you out of your support unit."

The room lights started to glow softly and for the first time I saw I was in a small room. Except for the huge basin I was floating in there was nothing else.

The nurse was stunningly beautiful. Her hair was done up in a bun, and her almond shaped brown eyes made her round face look magical. Her bright red lips turned into a smile when she saw me look totally flabbergasted. She chuckled and said, "I think you need a proper bath."

Not really understanding what she was going to do I said, "Well, it seems I'm in a bath already."

She giggled and walked to me and checked my eyes with a little flashlight. She behaved like the healing master when she asked, "How do you feel? Do you have a headache?"

"I feel a little strange, but I don't have a headache."

"Good. Now *this* is going to feel a bit strange."

She reached above me, and I heard a little beep. At that moment, I felt something tucking at my privates but before it started to feel uncomfortable, it was over. I

realised that I had tubes in me which prevented me from fouling the jelly. I was glad that she didn't do that by hand. It would have been very uncomfortable, and it made me blush just thinking about it.

She noticed that my cheeks were red and asked as if that was normal for me, "No pain?"

My voice was suddenly a bit hoarse, "No, no pain."

Her smile was back again, and she said, "Perfect. I'm going to loosen the restraints on your head. I know this will feel weird but please try and keep your head as still and straight as possible. After that, the jelly will be pumped out of the basin, which can be a bit uncomfortable but I'll get you out of there as quick as possible."

I knew that my muscles were weak, but I still had some strength, however, was not certain that I would be able to stand. I asked, "What can I do to help?"

"Act like a dolly."

"You mean like a forgotten string puppet that is lying in a corner looking sad because the strings are tangled into a knot?"

Her laugh was genuine. "Yes, something like that."

I murmured, "Piece of cake."

She smiled at me for a moment before murmuring, "Ready?"

"When you are."

"Right, here it goes."

A humming noise made the basin tremble a bit and within a few moments I felt that a part of my chest was exposed to the air. The level of the jelly dropped with a fast pace, and I started to notice small surfaces that were supporting my body. The more jelly was pumped out; the more weight was pressed on the small surfaces. It felt uncomfortable, and I had a vague idea how it must feel when you were lying on a bed of nails.

At the moment it became unbearable, the nurse said with a smile, "Hugging time."

She quickly took my arms and put them on her

shoulders one on each side of her neck. Then suddenly the whole basin turned towards her, and I felt myself falling onto her body. With one gracious movement, she lifted me up against her body while she had one arm under my bottom.

My head rested against her neck, and I smelled her delicate perfume. It was something precious: it was the first nice experience that was real.

I still felt like a rag doll, but I liked the feeling of helplessness. The delicate sensation of lying against her warm and soft body was marvellous.

She said with a little strain in her voice, "That went smoothly. Now the fun part will begin."

I couldn't resist saying, "This is fun already. Can't wait to find out what you're planning to do with me."

While she was carrying me through a door, she said, "Haha, you'll see. There will be a few surprises."

I liked our daring conversation a lot, and I said excited, "Bring it on."

She chuckled as we entered a much warmer room, and I heard water plunging into the water.

She turned around slowly to show me where we were, and she said, "Bathing time. Let's make you a bit more human again."

I couldn't believe my eyes!

The room consisted of a huge bath that was constantly filled by a waterfall. At the end of the room was a small stream where the excess water flowed away. The nurse walked down the steps into the bath, and I was surprised by how warm the water was. I released a sigh of contentment; I enjoyed the gentle flow of the warm water caressing my body.

She put me down on a spongy surface which completely supported my body and asked, "What shall we do first? Wash your hair, wash your body or shave your beard?"

I moved my hand to my chin, and I was shocked to