

Mac shook her head. "I can't do this." She threw the sheet back and started to climb out of the bed.

Bill grabbed her before she'd gotten up and pulled her into his arms. He held her tightly against his chest and ran his hands up and down her back, soothing her. When she finally calmed down, he spoke to her. "Sarah, let's settle you back now." He released his hold on her, and she immediately burst into tears. "You can do this."

"No, I can't! I just can't!" she cried.

"And here I thought female lawyers prided themselves on being..." he ran his hand up and down her back as he teased her.

But she interrupted him. "You don't understand. No one will want me when it's over. I'll be repulsive to men..."

"Sarah, there's no way you could ever be repulsive."

"You don't understand," she repeated.

"Then help me understand, Sarah," he prodded gently, thinking she must be having a mastectomy. *That has to be it. But wait... what would they have had to shave for that?*

She shook her head. "I can't," she sobbed. "I just can't." Bill wasn't quite sure what to say; he held her close and rubbed her back. He wasn't used to comforting a crying woman. It had been years since he was close to a woman. *'35 years, in fact.'*

Mac was finally about to speak when the nurse came back through the curtains, startling them. Bill released Mac quickly. "Time to go!" the nurse said.

"No!" cried Mac. "No, I've changed my mind. I'm not doing this." Mac started to get out of the bed, but Bill grabbed her again.

He looked at the nurse and said, "Give us a couple more minutes."

"Yes, Sir," the nurse agreed instantly and left.

"Sarah," he turned back to Mac before the nurse was even gone. "You're going to have this surgery, whatever it is, and you're going to come through it fine. I'm going to be waiting for the doctor to come out and tell me that everything went well, and you'll be waking up in no time." He pulled her close to him.

"Cancer," she whispered. "I have cancer."

Bill nodded. "Kinda figured that," he replied gently, kissing the top of her head.

She put her arms around his waist and buried her face deeply in his chest. "I'll be so ugly. I won't be a woman anymore. No one will want me."

"That's not true, Sarah. You won't be ugly. You could never be ugly," he soothed.

She looked up into his face, tears shining in her eyes. "I wish that were true."

“I know it is,” he assured her, kissing her forehead.
“Now, are you ready for the nurse to take you up?”

She nodded slowly.

“Okay.” He stood up and drew the curtain apart.
“She’s ready now,” he said to the waiting nurse.

The nurse nodded and stepped up to Mac’s bed. She raised the sidebars and released the brakes on the bed, then began wheeling it out of the large room. She got just to the door, when Mac called out, “Bill!”

He walked over to her quickly. “I’m right here, Sarah.” Mac reached her hand out and Bill took it in his.

“You’re going to stay?” she asked him. He nodded.
“And you’ll be there when I wake up?”

Bill leaned over the bar and squeezed her hand.
“Most definitely. And when you’re well enough after the surgery, I’m going to take you dancing,” he smiled.

Mac smiled through her teary eyes. “I love to dance.”

Neither of them expected it, but Bill found himself leaning farther over the rail and placing his lips tenderly over Mac’s. The kiss was sweet and gentle... and lingering.

And as she was wheeled away, a smile remained on both of their faces.