

Whipping Post

You could hear him coming from a mile away, the baritone exhaust notes announced that something powerful, and maybe even dangerous, was lumbering along and would be here any minute. As he approached, you could see the gleam from Greg's mirrored sunglasses contrasting the shadow of his dead-serious expression. He was slim, around 6'4", with shoulder length blonde hair and a bushy matching beard, looking like he just stepped out of *Easy Rider*. A deep scar through his right eyebrow and one across his left forearm told of a violent past. His vibe was perfectly echoed by the gleaming black and chrome, customized '55 Harley Panhead. It had seen some rough times too, but was now one bad-ass bike. He pulled into the nearly empty parking lot and slowly headed for Suite 200 in the Smokey Hills Medical Center.

A familiar figure dressed in a business suite was just walking out of the door. As he passed by, they both cast their eyes downward, as if to deny that they had this place in common. Greg reached the end of the hallway, and opened the door to Doctor Zane's empty waiting room. It was only 9:00 AM and he was her second appointment, following Mr. Executive. "I'll be right out, Greg. Have a seat." came a soft voice from the adjoining office.

I been run down, I been lied to,

He hadn't even reached the sofa, and he was already dreading their session. Dr. Ruth Zane entered the office from her private bathroom. Although she was a natural beauty, she felt the need to touch up her make-up so she'd look her best. Dressed in a flowing light blue sun dress, her long black hair set off her almost iridescent green eyes. A pale complexion enhanced her long, dark eyelashes. Her dream-like beauty and sophisticated demeanor made Greg feel even more unworthy and depressed. He was only good enough for one type of girl.

I don't know why I let that mean woman make me a fool.

As usual she had a pleasant smile and relaxed tone "How was your week?"

"Oh, I've had better." he replied looking down at the floor. Greg always had trouble looking the Good Doctor in the eye for about the first ten minutes. "I'm still having those dreams, but we both know why."

"It's Lisa again, isn't it?"

Greg uneasily adjusted his position on the couch and slowly shook his head. Yea, and she's getting worse. I really can't take much more of her bullshit."

She took all my money, wrecked my new car. Now she's with one of my good time buddies, They're drinkin' in some crosstown bar.

"Like we discussed last week, you could do so much better. Once you believe that, it'll be so much easier for you to tell her to take a hike. She's really not worth the torture." The session was off to a fast start.

"What was it this time?"

"I don't even want to get into it. I'm done with the bitch." Ruth could tell by his tightened lower lip, that it was only wishful thinking. "It's like I'm being punished for my screwed-up life or something." Greg's eyes were red, as if he had been up all night- maybe even crying.

***Sometimes I feel, sometimes I feel,
Like I been tied to the whipping post,
Tied to the whipping post,
Tied to the whipping post,
Good lord, I feel like I'm dyin'.***

"Greg, you're still young and a very smart guy. You couldn't have made all of your drug money if you weren't. All you need to do is redirect your talents towards a more positive direction. With your looks, you could have your pick of lots of worth-while girls."

***My friends tell me, that I've been such a fool,
And I have to stand by and take it baby, all for lovin' you.
Drown myself in sorrow, and I look at what you've done.
But nothin' seems to change, the bad times stay the same,
And I can't run.***

Greg looked up for the first time. The complement almost made him smile. "I've got to get some new friends, or I'll never break loose from this life. But then I'll have nothing! It's like I'm stuck in a vicious cycle."

They went back and forth discussing Greg's best way forward. It was a tedious process, because he really wasn't ready for a life changing move. As macho and brave as he wanted to appear, it was clear to Ruth that he was scared. "This is going to be a long process, but he's worth it." She thought as she uncrossed her legs and noticed Greg's eyes involuntarily following her calves.

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"It looks like our time's up. Next week, let's get back to the dreams. It really does sound like you're trying to punish yourself. Give it some thought."

"Thanks Doc. Next week then." As always, Greg felt once again like he was back on the right track. Kicking the bike back to life, he imagined Doc on the back. He didn't notice Ruth peeking out between the blinds of her office.