One year later…

by Fred Wilbur

How do you mend a broken heart?

July 25, 2016 – around 2 or 3 am

She was a beautiful black woman. She was around 5 foot two inches, smooth skin, large loop ear rings and her hair cut in a buzz cut, nearly bald. Her skull was perfectly shaped. She carried herself with an aura of pride, strength, and coolness.

Being annoyed at being probed, prodded, and woken up a number of times already that evening, I asked what do you need? Most likely I was fairly abrupt, for I do that without really trying, even before open heart surgery.

“It's time for your bath.” She replied softly.

Wondering how that was going to happen, I asked: “What do I need to do?”

“You just need to lie there and relax. I'll take care of it.” No smile, all business was in her tone of reply.

She went to the keyboard on the computer that was near my bedside, somehow she pulled up YouTube, keyed in something and I heard soft blues sole music started to play.

She proceeded to wet washcloths in a basin of warm water and started at the foot of the bed. She pulled up the sheet and laid it just below my crotch. She removed my socks and proceeded to wash my feet and lower legs. She hummed softly to the music as she worked. The music was some kind of soft blues played by a soul brother.

I laid back and let her work. I wondered to myself: Just how thorough of a job is she going to do?

She was a beautiful sexy woman and I told myself this was not the time to test my ability to get an erection after open heart surgery. All I wanted to do is to enjoy her beauty, listen to the soft music and make her job easier.

After she finished my legs, she then moved to the top of the bed. She helped me sit up and removed the hospital gown, and after washing my back, she asked me to lie down again. She then folded the top of the sheet down over my crotch. With fresh washcloths
and something she squeezed from a bottle she started washing my chest and incision area. The song on YouTube changed. I recognized the song: “How do you mend a broken heart?” by Al Green.

I grinned to myself, thought about it, then said: “Nice, appropriate, selection of music you made.”

As she started to wash the dried blood from my stitches, she replied quietly in a smooth sweet voice: “It helps me past the time.” I could have easily gotten lost in her brown eyes and in another time would have loved to touch her smooth skin.

I laid back and let her clean my incision. As words of mending broken hearts played in my head, I thought of the suddenness of the decision to have surgery and the relief that I was not going to die today.

As she finished my chest, she swapped the bloody washcloth for a clean one and moved to my arms.

Somewhere between her gentleness and the lyrics: “Please help me mend my broken heart and let me live again”, I found myself fighting back tears.

When she was done with my arms, she took a fresh, warm, washcloth and in a single motion, removed the sheet covering my crotch and covered my genitals with the warm cloth, never exposing anything.

I didn’t get aroused and then wondered if that part of me stilled worked.

She finished quickly, covered me with a clean sheet and helped me put on a clean gown. I don’t remember her ever making eye contact, and I think the only other thing I said to her was ‘Thank you’.

Then she was gone and the music stopped. The normal hospital sounds of beeping monitors returned.

She was the most mysterious woman I have every encountered and I wondered if she enjoyed her job or just toiled through it.
Of all the nurses I saw in my four days at Shady Side, she was the gentlest of them all. I only saw her that one time.

Days later, when I got home, I wondered if she were real or was it just a dream.

To this day, one year later, I can’t listen to “How do you mend a broken heart” without fighting back tears. I’m still trying to figure that out.