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Fiction

## **DIABETES**

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By

Robert P. Herbst

It was back in the early part of 1986 when I sat in my doctors office and listened to him tell me I had diabetes. It was a shock but I had known something was very wrong for some time. At any rate, the doctor went at length to tell me all about what I was going to have to do if I wanted to go on living, and what I was going to have to give up if I wanted to stay all in one piece.

I had tried my best to do all the things he had told me to do and quit all the poisonous habits he had told me to give up. Yet here I am in a hospital bed encased in a plaster cast from the top of my head to the tips of my toes. There just doesn't seem to be any justice.

After having been diabetic for a little over fifteen years, I had suddenly developed a great pain in my left foot. It felt like my foot was on fire and it just wouldn't go away. This in itself, was odd because it had been years since I had lost all feeling in my feet. It had to be my imagination but it sure did hurt.

The pain was continuous for several days. Finally, desperate for a good nights sleep and a few hours of relief from the pain I went to the hospital for some help. I checked in at the front desk and told the nurse on duty what my problem was. She repeated after me, "You're diabetic and you have a terrible pain in your left foot."

"Yes." I answered, "And it seems to be moving very slowly up my leg."

She instantly dropped the pencil she had been writing with, grabbed the phone and said into it, "Doctor, I have a man here with a terrible pain in his left foot and it seems to be migrating up his leg."

As she hung up the phone, an attendant rushed into the room with a wheel chair and plopped me into it. We then took off on a wild ride through the halls of the hospital to another room where a doctor stood glaring at my left leg. He poked and prodded a few moment before looking deep into my eyes and saying, "You're diabetic and your left foot and leg hurt. I hate to have to tell you this but it looks as if the leg will have to come off. However, in cases like this, I'll need a second opinion."

Instantly I was wheeled into the office of another doctor on the next floor up. This doctor was a lot more cheerful and he looked at the leg, poked and prodded a moment or so before he said, "Well, it looks as if I'll be able to save your leg with extensive therapy and herbal

medicine. However, in cases like yours I think I'll call for another opinion.

Once again in my wheel chair, I was rushed to another doctor a few more floors up in the hospital, who again examined my foot and leg. "Hmmm!" he said, "Looks bad but I think I can save your leg with a new process by which we slowly introduce in to your blood stream a chemical which will open your clogged veins and restore good circulation to your feet. However, in cases like yours I need another opinion."

Immediately, I was put back into my wheel chair and rushed to a small office on the very top floor of the hospital. The doctor looked surprised to see me. "Hmmm." he said, "Your left foot and leg hurts and you've been diabetic since 1986. Interesting. Stand up."

He looked me over from head to toe. Slowly he reached out and stuck his finger under my belt. Then he asked, "Do you always wear your belt this tight?"

I answered, "Yes. I've always worn my belt tight."

The doctor spoke up, "That's your problem, loosen your belt and the blood will be able to flow from your top half to the bottom half of your body."

Hesitating only a moment or two, I unbuckled my belt and let it slip one notch. "MORE!" shouted the doctor, "That's not nearly enough."

Not daring to believe what I was hearing I let the belt slip another notch. "MORE!" shouted the doctor impatiently, "You need to let the blood flow from your heart to your feet."

Oddly enough, I began to feel a bit light headed and the pain in my left leg began to abate. "MORE!" shouted the doctor, "You're almost there, don't you feel better already?"

I had to admit, I was indeed beginning to feel better, the pain in my left leg was almost all gone. "One more notch," said the doctor, "and you'll be ready to go home."

I looked at the doctor in disbelief as I asked, "You mean to tell me all I had to do, all these years, was to loosen my belt and I wouldn't have diabetes any more?"

"Well," said the doctor, "I wouldn't go that far, but you sure seemed to have improved the circulation from the top half to the bottom half of your body, haven't you?"

I was ecstatic with overwhelming joy. Leaving my wheelchair behind in the doctors office I danced trippingly out of the door into the hallway with my arms extended, pirouetting as I went.

I felt so good I danced past the elevator to the seven flights of stairs from the doctors office to the ground floor. I burst through the doorway to the stairway in a grand pirouette, fluttering my arms like a bird as I went.

I suppose it was all this prancing about that caused me to miss seeing the mop handle on the floor at the top of the stairs.

It was a mercifully short but extremely painful trip from the seventh floor to ground level, and I don't think I missed a single step along the way. Now, here I lay in a cast from the top of my head to the tip of my toes, and in traction to boot.

My doctor comes by every day and reminds me how lucky I was to have loosened my belt when I did or I would have also had diabetic symptoms.