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#25

by stanley lieber

Muted colors shifted slowly, or maybe it was just the light. Red and silver tones on nothing. Stan wondered if storks (or ibises) could even see color. Somehow, *he* did. Cy-bra lay next to him, still asleep. How had it come to this?

The Chief had put them together, working side by side on various jobs, and one thing had led, improbably as it might seem, to another. He liked to wake up this way, with no need to dwell on the things he wanted to avoid. Instead of himself he could talk to her.

But she was still asleep. He had to work out the reasons why she could be there, why he wasn't just crazy. He couldn't come up with anything convincing. She hadn't just walked out of his guitar... but how *had* she arrived in his bed? He scratched himself, wishing he hadn't finished off that last bag of Doritos. Presently, Cy-bra awoke.

"We shouldn't have done this."

Stan was taken aback, but of course he'd wait to hear her out.

But, that was it. Cy-bra climbed out of bed and stepped purposefully into her clothes. Without another word she left the apartment. Stan figured he'd see her at work.

Work was less satisfying when he knew what he was missing. All along his mail route he could think only of Cy-bra, and his other job. he probably put some envelopes in the wrong mailboxes. This kind of preoccupation wasn't like him at all. Pretty soon customers would start complaining.

In the evenings he would sit and plink away at his guitar. Frustrated by his inability to resume the Chrysler Building, he would thrash about randomly, not even really trying to play one of his songs. He felt old and ridiculous. Underemployed. Didn't they still need him out in New San Francisco?

The answer was not forthcoming. He hadn't expected much, but this was... nothing. In the weeks that followed Stan went through a lot of Doritos.

"Oh, there you are," the Chief said, late one evening just as Stan was about to give up. "We thought we'd lost you."

Stan didn't know what this meant but he took his guitar out of the trash can and got back to work.