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I welcome all comments from readers (wiseguy35@hotmail.com).

Zebu

by Mark Wiseman

Zach approached the hotel room door in a mild quandary. His hands were full of Chinese takeout food, but his room key was in his shirt pocket. *Oops*, he thought. *Hope Cole didn't decide to take a walk.*

With the tip of his foot, he tapped the door in the familiar shave-and-a-haircut rhythm. The beats seemed quiet and muddy, so he added the two bits with his head.

His efforts were rewarded when his roommate, Cole, opened the door for him. "That's using your head," he remarked, seeing the red spot above Zach's eyebrows.

Zach groaned. "You want to eat or dodge flying egg rolls?"

"Eat," Cole responded. "But first..." He dug through the bags until he found a bottle of rice wine. "Excellent!" Taking the bottle, he flipped open the cooler he'd brought with him and plunged the bottle into a fresh load of ice to chill.

The guys laid out their dinner on the writing desk in the hotel room they shared. Zach wolfed down his food, eating first one thing then another directly from the cardboard carton. Cole spooned out a bed of rice on his plastic carry-out plate and then carefully topped it with Hunan beef and vegetables. He held the plate in his lap steadily and nibbled, using his chopsticks adroitly, while his eyes looked off into the distance.

"So what's the plan?" Zach asked, gulping down the last of his sweet and sour chicken.

"No elaborate plan," Cole responded. "Amy and Regina are coming over to practice indirect suggestions with us."

Zach grinned slyly. "I can't wait to slip them a few indirect suggestions, if you get my drift."

"You and every other guy in the class." Cole's eyes rolled up toward the ceiling briefly before they fixed again on his friend. "This is serious, Zach. You heard Wes and Sherri -- if we're going to pass this unit, we have to master these language patterns. The class time isn't enough to do that."

"I got that," Zach allowed. "But you can't sit there and tell me your pants don't get tighter when those two walk by."

The corners of Cole's mouth creased upward slightly. "I'm alive, aren't I? Of course they do. But that's not what tonight is about, okay? At least, not at first."

Zach looked closely into Cole's face. "You've got something up your sleeve, don't you," he challenged, studying his expression for hints.

Cole remained impassive. "Let's just say I noticed a few things in class that merit some independent study."

"Is this too dressy, do you think?"

Amy paused in the act of tying back her long golden hair and looked at her roommate. Regina was wearing black stretch pants and a yellow boat-neck top that left her midriff bare. "That's the idea," she replied. "Casual and comfortable." Amy wore a powder blue warm-up suit.

"My mom never told me what to wear to go get hypnotized," Regina joked.

"We've been getting hypnotized all week," Amy pointed out. "No matter what I wear, it's getting so that as soon as I sit down in that classroom I start to zone out." Her eyes went glassy for a moment as her mind revisited that state, then she shook it off. "Anyhow, that's not really the point of tonight."

"Then what is the point?"

"To practice giving indirect suggestions. We're going to sit around playing cards and slipping each other embedded commands until we're all fluent in the patterns."

Regina frowned a little. "I see. Are you sure these guys are okay? I mean, you saw what a pushover I was in that classroom today. What if the suggestions start getting, well, suggestive?"

Amy grinned. "I'd say that depends on how we want to handle it. After all, two can play at that game."

At 7:30 the young women left their room, 244, and made their way to room 227. The door opened before they could knock, and Zach ushered them in.

The room had been rearranged to accommodate the activity plan. Cole and Zach had pushed the twin beds slightly farther apart and slid the nightstand between them, leaving the lamp and alarm clock on the floor near the wall. On the nightstand were four short plastic cups, freshly stripped of their Red Bird Motel wrapping, and a deck of cards. "We don't have enough good chairs for four," Cole explained, "so we thought this would be more comfortable than sitting on the floor."

"That's fine," Amy said, looking out the window at the parking lot. "Nice view."

"I know," Cole replied. "After paying tuition and buying books, there wasn't a lot left in the budget for accommodations. I guess that's why so many of our classmates are staying here, too."

"Is anyone else coming?" Regina asked.

"I invited Bob and Donna, but they said they had other plans. That leaves the four of us."

"Sounds cozy," Amy remarked while pulling the shade across the window. "How does this work?"

Cole gestured toward the beds. "Have a seat and I'll explain." Amy and Regina sat on the edge of Zach's bed, facing the window. Cole grabbed the cooler and set it on the floor at their feet before joining Zach on the edge facing them. He opened the wine and poured some for each of them. While they took an initial sip, Cole removed the cards from their box and began shuffling. "Have you ever seen Zebu cards before?" he asked.

Everyone shook their heads no.

"They're a deck of normal playing cards," he explained. "Except that instead of having pictures or pips on them, these cards have Ericksonian language patterns. The pattern is on both the top and the bottom of the card, and an example of how to use it is written in the middle. To practice using embedded commands, we play a simple card game using the cards. During each turn we take a card from our hand and practice that language pattern with someone else in the group. For example..."

Cole stopped shuffling and took the top card from the deck. "Six of diamonds," he announced, showing them the card. "If I had drawn this card, I might turn to Zach and

say, 'You are able to *enjoy playing this game*, because you know it will make you better at using embedded commands.' That's the pattern on this card."

"I get it," Regina said. "So the idea is that we sit around playing poker, and whenever we get a new card we use the pattern on it?"

"That's it," Cole agreed, "except for the poker part. Poker requires skill and concentration, and people tend to get very into it. The inventor uses a variation of Crazy Eights because it's simple and fun. For our purposes, I thought of another game that should work just as well or better."

"And that game would be?"

Cole smiled. "Go Fish."

Three puzzled faces looked back at him.

"Think about it," he urged them. "Each turn, you get to ask someone for a type of card, say kings. If the person has one or more kings, they give them to you and you get to practice the pattern on each card. If not, you draw a card and use the pattern on that one. When you get a full set of kings, you can lay them down and use each pattern again in a combination. We keep going until somebody runs out of cards."

"Or until we're all too zoned out to keep track of the turns," Amy suggested.

Cole shrugged. "The possibilities are endless," he said with a smile.

Cole shuffled the cards some more, offered Regina the cut, and dealt seven cards to each player. The rest he placed in the center of the table to make the draw pile.

Regina, being to the dealer's right, went first. "Before we start, can we make a house rule?"

Everyone nodded.

"I found out in class today that I'm very susceptible to indirect suggestions," she said. "So let's agree not to make any racy or embarrassing suggestions, okay? I'd like to keep things simple and innocent."

"Fine with me," Cole agreed, noting the flash of disappointment on Zach's face.

"You got it," Zach concurred, a little grudgingly.

"Agreed," Amy chimed in, smiling knowingly at Zach.

Regina looked at her hand. She had a pair of kings and a pair of fours to start with.

"Amy," she opened, "do you have any fours?"

"Nope," her roommate replied. "Go fish."

Regina drew the top card from the pile. It was the five of hearts, and the pattern on the card was *Sooner or later you'll* _____. Regina looked at Amy. "Sooner or later," she said, "you'll take another sip of your wine."

Amy's hand started toward her wine glass, then stopped. "Damn," she said, "that was good. I wasn't even thinking about it before you said that."

"Don't overthink," Cole urged. "We'll all have a lot more fun if we can agree now to just go with the flow."

Amy finished her sip and looked at her cards. "Good point," she said. "So, Cole, do you have any jacks?"

Cole checked his hand. "Sorry," he told her. "Go fish."

Amy drew the ten of clubs (*You may* _____) and looked back at Cole. "You may twitch your nose now, Cole."

Cole felt an odd itch in his nose and the muscles twitched. "Good one."

Zach had a poor starting hand, without so much as a pair of anything. But he did have a king and a decent short-term memory. "Regina, do you have any kings?"

"Argh!" she groaned, and handed him her two kings.

Zach looked to Cole. "So now what? I do both of them?"

"Sure," he replied.

Regina had surrendered the king of hearts (*You might notice the sensations in* _____ *while you* _____) and the king of diamonds (*Will you* _____ *now, or will you* _____?). Zach made eye contact with Regina. "Regina, you might notice the sensations in your back and shoulders while you relax and take a deep breath now. Will you close your eyes and enter a light hypnotic state now, or will you take another breath first before your eyes close?"

The girl felt her shoulders loosen as he spoke. Before she finished processing his words, her eyes closed and she felt the slight buzz that, for her, signaled the onset of hypnosis. Surprised at how easily she'd reached that state, Regina shook her head quickly and came out of it. "Very impressive, Zach."

He shrugged modestly. "You did say you were easy."

"Only in some ways," she corrected with a wink.

Cole had a pair of queens. "Got any queens, Amy?"

She snapped her fingers and handed over the queen of hearts (*What happens when you ____?*).

"What happens," he asked her, "when you feel comfortable enough to let your guard down completely?"

"I'll let you know," she replied, smiling.

They went around the table again. Regina became the first to complete a book, on her third turn, when she obtained from Zach the four of clubs (*Maybe you haven't ____, yet*). Remembering the effects of the pair of kings earlier, she arranged the cards and looked closely at Zach. "It's easy to slip into a trance, is it not? Maybe you haven't let yourself relax and let go, drifting along on the sound of my voice, yet. Don't close your eyes too quickly. I could tell you that you're going deeper into hypnosis with each word I say, but you already know that because you can already feel it happening."

As she spoke, Zach's eyes glossed over and his shoulders sagged. At the words "close your eyes," Zach's eyes closed and he began to pitch slowly forward. Cole and Amy each reached out a hand to steady him.

Regina squirmed in her seat, her face pink and beaming. "I did it!"

"You did," Amy agreed. "Now wake him up so we can continue, please."

Zach's eyes fluttered open on Regina's command. He looked around slowly and sat up again. "Wow," he sighed. "That was cool." Then, to Regina, he added, "You're getting really good at this."

"I will use this power only for good," she promised.

A few turns later, Amy asked Cole for twos unsuccessfully, but drew the two of spades (*Maybe you'll ____*) from the deck to complete her first book. With a knowing smile, she locked eyes with Cole. "I'm wondering if you'll look deeply into my eyes," she said. Seeing that he was already doing so, she continued. "Maybe you'll find yourself breathing more deeply and slowly as you fall into hypnosis. People don't have to, Cole, go deeper and deeper with each word I say, with each breath, with each heartbeat. I wouldn't tell you to close your eyes now and go way, way down, because you know how good it feels to let yourself go into the deepest hypnotic trance all by yourself ... now."

Cole knew it was coming and committed himself to going along, but still felt a touch of surprise at how quickly the conscious world seemed to recede. Then Amy told him to wake up and he realized he was leaning heavily on Regina's arm. He looked into Amy's face and saw it had been a rush for her, too—her nostrils were flaring and there was a light of excitement in her eyes as she watched him.

When Cole's next turn came, he drew a three of diamonds (*You may not know if ____*) to complete his first book. Amy put her cards down and faced him, ready to be hypnotized, but reading the patterns on the cards gave Cole another idea. "Girls," he

said, looking quickly at both of them, “you may not know if you can trust us. You probably already know that we’re all getting more comfortable with each other the longer we play.” They were both listening intently to his rhythmic, hypnotic tone. “How would it feel if you felt totally at ease with us, able to give and receive any suggestion your imaginations can think of? People can, you know, feel much closer to each other as they keep playing this game.”

All three players were now looking into space, absorbing his message. Cole smiled to himself and nudged Zach. “Your turn, buddy.”

Play continued for a while. Regina assembled a book of eights and used the opportunity to induce Zach to pour her another glass of wine. Zach completed a book of fives and gave Regina compound suggestions that caused her to drain her glass so he could refill it again. Amy remained quiet, directing single commands to Cole when the opportunity came. Late in the game she drew the queen of spades (*I don’t know if ____*). Her eyes flicked over to Cole nervously—he’d asked her for queens several times recently.

Cole spotted the look and took a guess when his turn came around. “Amy, have you got any queens now?”

She hung her head and growled. “I guess I need to work on my poker face,” she said while handing over the card.

Cole looked at the patterns on the queens, which he’d been holding for most of the game. While Amy waited for his suggestions, he noticed her toying absent-mindedly with the zipper on her warm-up suit top, something she’d done frequently as the game progressed. *Here goes*, he said to himself. “I don’t know if, Amy, you’ve noticed how much warmer it is in here now than earlier. What happens when you feel your body becoming uncomfortably warm? A person may choose to take off her heavy, long-sleeved top because you know how much more comfortable you would feel without it. When you feel comfortable in a group like this, then it’s okay to let yourself be physically comfortable, too, is it not?”

Amy blinked once, then blushed. “You cheated,” she said as she unzipped her top and slipped it off, revealing a plain white camisole top. “You could tell I was getting too warm and used that.”

Cole smiled mysteriously. “Perhaps,” he allowed. “Is it cheating to use whatever the environment offers?”

Regina’s face took on a mischievous expression. “Of course not,” she offered. “For example: Zach, do you remember those kings you got from me a while ago? I’d like them back now, please.” She took one card from her hand, a newly-drawn king of spades (*You might notice how good ____ feels, when you ____*), and showed it to him.

Zach groaned and clutched his chest in mock agony. Then he gave Regina the three kings from his hand and watched, waiting for her to assemble her quartet of instructions.

"You might," she told him in a slow, soothing tone, "notice the sensations in your arms and legs, how they relax and become heavier, as you close your eyes and let yourself slide back into hypnosis for me. You might notice how good your whole body feels when you listen to my voice and let each word I say take you deeper into trance. You don't have to think about how much this game is turning you on, Zach. Will you notice the erection taking hold in your groin right now, Zach, or will you remain unaware of how very much this turns you on until you open your eyes again?"

This time Zach opened his eyes to the sensation of blood rushing to his groin and an urgent need to make room for his expanding member. He became aware of everyone staring at him and suddenly felt self conscious. Lowering his cards to his lap, he turned to Regina. "I think you just broke your own rule."

"Oops," she said. "My bad. I guess I owe you one next time around."

"Okay," he replied. "Got any nines?"

"Ahem," Amy interrupted. "It's my turn first. And I'd like Cole to kindly hand over any sevens he might be holding."

"Sorry," Cole shrugged. "Go fish."

"Grrr!" Amy's frown turned to a smile when she drew the seven of clubs (*You could ____*). "You could let me go again, since I drew the card I was looking for," she suggested.

Cole laughed. "I could," he agreed, "but that isn't how we've been playing so far, so Regina and Zach would have to agree to it first."

Regina and Zach exchanged glances and nodded.

"Thank you," Amy said. "Zach, you're not sitting on any sevens, are you?"

He grinned. "Nope. Go fish."

This time Amy drew the six of diamonds. "You are able to take your turn now," she said to Zach in disappointment.

Zach looked to Cole. "Any nines?"

Cole grinned. "Now that you mention it..." He flipped over the nine of diamonds (... *once told me*, "*____*") and passed it to his friend.

Zach captured Regina's gaze with his own and adopted his hypnotist's voice. "You might not have noticed how very aroused you've become by giving me a hard-on," he told her, "Professor Stevens once told me, 'It's perfectly natural to be turned on by the feeling of power that comes from seeing someone follow your indirect suggestions.' A person could, Regina, feel your inhibitions dropping away. You might even show me your

breasts because you know how much you enjoy turning me on, and you did say that you owe me one.”

Cole and Amy watched, fascinated, as Regina focused on Zach’s words. Her arms toyed with her clothing as he spoke, and her body wiggled slightly. “Okay.” Her hands pulled at the bottom of her shirt and lifted it off, exposing her white lace bra. She slipped the straps off her shoulders and pulled it down. Leaning forward toward Zach, she waggled her upper body with a grin and said, “Ta daaaaa!” She kept it up for a good five count before sitting up again and replacing her bra. “That’s all you get for now.” But she left the yellow top beside her on the bed.

It was Cole’s turn. He had three cards left, all of them aces. He could see that Zach had only one card left, and Regina only three. Amy had a full hand, though. “Aces, Amy?”

“Go fish.”

There were only three cards left in the draw pile. Cole took the top card: ace of clubs (*You may or may not ____*). Smiling broadly, he arranged his four cards and looked at Regina. “I’m wondering if you’ll take Zach back to your room,” he said carefully. “Will you continue to seduce him with embedded suggestions, or just talk to him for a while, or will you just decide to get him alone with you and see what develops naturally? One doesn’t have to, Regina, feel a strong connection to Zach as a result of having shared this game with him. You may or may not want him as much as he obviously wants you, but it’s okay to find out now because the game is over—I’m out of cards.”

Regina and Zach were staring into each other’s eyes. “I think someone wants some privacy,” she said. “What do you say we take the last of the wine and finish it down at my place?”

Zach picked up the half-full wine bottle and scooted across to the foot of the bed. “I’m with you.”

Still smiling, Regina put her top back on and led Zach by the hand. “Goodnight, all,” she said with a wave.

The door closed behind them with a loud click. Cole looked across the table at Amy, who still held ten cards. “Looks like I got the short end of the stick,” she observed. “Three jacks, three tens, three sevens, and the last six that Regina was looking for.”

Cole pointed to the draw pile. “Would you like one more turn, for the practice?”

“Don’t mind if I do.” She drew the ten of spades (*You can _____, because*). “You can,” she said to Cole, “start a new game, because you know we both want to continue this. Some people enjoy the challenge of a one-on-one game, especially when there’s something at stake. You may even want to get more comfortable before we start, perhaps by taking off your shoes or something.”

Cole stood up, slipped off his shoes, and sat down in what had been Regina's spot, on the same bed as Amy. He scooped up the cards, shuffled them, and set the pack down for Amy to cut. She split the deck near the middle and placed the lower half on top.

"Let's make this simple," Cole suggested. He dealt five cards face down to each of them. He picked his up, arranged them quickly, and then looked Amy in the eyes. "When you hear my voice, Amy, then you know you can relax and let yourself go for me. Can you imagine what we might do at the end of a game like this, becoming more and more aroused by the suggestions we give each other? Try to resist a deepening sense of desire and relaxation as your inhibitions fall away for a while. Will you decide to take off your shirt, or will you imagine me lifting it off for you while you relax into my arms? You may begin to feel the warmth and wetness between your legs as you imagine me making love to you tonight."

Amy's eyes were closed and her body was swaying gently. Slowly, her hands took hold of her camisole and lifted it off her body, revealing her breasts for Cole. His eyes fixed on them immediately, taking in the sight of her swollen nipples. Amy looked at the cards she'd been dealt. "You can feel yourself getting harder by the minute as you look at my body, can you not?" she said softly. "What happens when you look at my breasts, Cole? You might imagine yourself kissing them, caressing them, becoming so aroused you can't think of anything except how good it would feel to make love to me. You can take your shirt off, Cole, because you know how much you want to."

Focused as he was on Amy's chest, Cole almost didn't realize she was speaking to him. He felt his cock turn to iron as he pictured himself tasting her nipples and fondling her, preparing her to receive him. Then she was waving five more cards at him, holding them out for him to take.

He sifted through them quickly, half his mind still mapping Amy's body. "You might notice how good your body feels when you take off all of your clothes and just lie back on a nice, soft bed. Maybe you'll take the rest of your clothes off now. One could just slide your pants and underwear down your legs, because you're getting so aroused that you'll need to feel me inside you soon. You probably already know that I want to make you come over and over, as often as you want to. I'm wondering if you'll undress and lie back on the bed now."

Amy smiled a lazy smile as she stood up and stripped off her remaining clothes.

Regina led Zach into room 244, putting out the Do Not Disturb sign as she closed it. "Welcome to our humble abode," she joked. It was, of course, identical to Cole and Zach's room in size and décor. She waited for Zach to make eye contact. "Well?" she said softly. "Any suggestions for me?"

"Maybe one," he replied.

Amy lay back on the bed and stretched, arching her back seductively while Cole watched, half entranced. One hand idly traced circles on her lower belly; the other held her last five cards from the deck. "How would it feel if you came over here and went down on me right now, Cole? Don't make me come too quickly. Can you really enjoy exploring my body with your lips and tongue, bringing intense pleasure to us both? It's easy to become so aroused, so completely hard and ready, that you can't remain in those clothes one minute longer, is it not?"

Cole was scarcely aware of Amy's words; his focus was on her body, and on the things he could picture himself doing with her body. Within moments of her final question he was out of his pants and kissing his way up Amy's inner thigh, letting her scent fill his nose and shut off most conscious thought. He found the holy of holies and parted the curtains carefully, probing to find the sweetest spots.

Amy felt his tongue exploring her and let her head fall back, relaxing herself into a light trance. Her mind focused on the pleasant sensations Cole's attentions brought and intensified them. The first orgasm snuck up on her, catching her by surprise and throwing her into bliss. The second built up more quickly and intensely, aided by Cole's skillful teasing of her clitoris, and left her babbling incoherently.

Cole sensed his moment and stood up, pulling Amy to him at the edge of the bed. He lifted her bottom and slid his tempered shaft inside her. He leaned back and flexed his hips, pulling up with his groin muscle, and worked himself in and out in short, deliberate strokes.

Amy felt him pressing against her upper wall. *Oh, shit, he found it*, she thought to herself, and prepared to have her bells thoroughly rung. Her G spot quivered with each change in pressure, sending little shockwaves up and down her nervous system. She heard Cole groan and felt him lean forward as his cock jammed itself all the way in, twitching and pumping with the force of his climax. He pressed the magic spot one more time and Amy lost herself in a hard, shuddering G-spot orgasm that sent all of her muscles into ecstatic spasms and left her thinking of nothing except how incredibly goddamn *good* it all felt.

Regina had Zach sitting upright on the side of the bed. Her legs curled around him and she sat on his lap, making contact from head to groin. He fit inside her easily this way and she could tease him by rocking up and down, working his sensitive head back and forth inside her entrance. She had already come once, quickly and intensely, when he had fingered her button while feeling her from behind. Now she was in control of the pace and could keep him on the edge for as long as she wanted.

They stared into each other's eyes, too close together to really focus but seeing nothing but the other's face. Their hearts beat together, their lungs moving in unison, as they felt the energy building inside them and around them.

Zach felt the change first. Regina's movements became faster, more pronounced, and her muscles clamped down tighter against him, increasing the sensations he felt. His hands cupped her bottom, pulling her closer in. They kissed for a long time, tongues dancing together, until he could hold it in no longer. His cock strained and then gushed, sending pleasure signals out to every part of his body.

Regina held him and milked him until she felt him begin to soften. A gentle push sent him down onto his back and allowed her to slide off to one side, tucking herself inside his arm so she could go to sleep to the sound of his slowing heartbeat.

The foursome assembled again for breakfast at Daisy's, a moderately priced diner next door to the motel.

"So," Cole opened as they sipped their coffee. "What do you think of my studying technique?"

"Brilliant," Zach commended.

Regina giggled. "It was certainly an effective way to practice the language," she agreed. "I'm not sure Professor Stevens would entirely approve of the application, though."

Cole grinned. "That can remain our little secret, I think. But we're not done practicing yet. One might, everyone, meet back at our room after dinner for some more practice."

Amy smiled at the embedded command. "Indeed," she agreed. "One could even keep the same sleeping arrangements we had last night for the rest of the week, might one not?"

"One might, indeed."

They clinked coffee cups and toasted the cards.

-wg
4/17/03

Author's note: Zebu cards were created by Robert Anue to help teach his classes in Ericksonian hypnosis. They were available through most major bookstores, but are currently out of print. There is, of course, more to using the patterns than simply reading the cards, and results vary from person to person. ("Zebu" is copyright 1992 by Robert Anue.)