

UC Monthly Safety Spotlight, September 2013

Careless Chris Is a Hit

By: Kitty

"Why is it never EASY?" Chastity demanded, her voice edging from outraged irritation into a grating whine of persecuted righteousness. "I used to know how to do this and now they changed the whole stupid thing around and I can't find anything!"

Careless Chris rolled her lips together to suppress her grin, but she still had to turn her face away for a moment to hide her amusement. Chastity's rants about the failings of each new computer upgrade were as predictable and pointless as John's annual complaints about how cold the office got in winter. "Calm down, look, it's not that different," Chris said soothingly, ignoring Chastity's glare with practiced patience. "Try the edit menu, look under formatting, pick the second sub-heading, go to advanced options, click on settings, highlight the default device on port 3, choose the color driver, tell it to apply, there you go. Easy-peasy."

"It's not as simple as it should be." Chastity's grumbling settled into its usual pattern and Chris patted her on the shoulder before turning away. She felt a bit sorry for the technology challenged admin who seemed to be destined to suffer increasing difficulty keeping up with the evolution of technology. For herself, Chris was proud to be in touch with all the new developments, fluent in current trends, and able to figure out each new permutation without the frustration that seemed to characterize the mental fossilization stereotypical of increasing age.

But for now, she was all hooked up with the latest gadgets and as hip as the average student, despite being a lecturer with over a decade of experience. She credited the challenges and rewards of being engaged in teaching with keeping her young – that and regular exercise like her daily jog. "Gotta run," she tossed over her shoulder, and headed toward her office to change.

It wasn't long before she stepped out again dressed in her workout clothes, putting the white earphones on and adjusting the volume before she did her stretching routine next to a tree. Her office hours started just after lunch so she had plenty of time to do the medium-length campus circuit before showering and getting back in, and it was a beautiful day to be out. Once warmed up, she made good time, ponytail swinging with each rhythmic stride as she cruised along the familiar route. The new Etymotic earbuds she had invested in were proving to be worth every penny that level of sound isolation had cost; her Black Keys mix sounded better than ever. By the time she reached the middle of her run, Chris was in that perfect workout groove where every step was in time with the music and her whole body was moving in smooth syncopation.

With a quick look over her shoulder as she neared the next intersection, Chris saw there was only one car approaching the stop sign on the other side of the street. The perfect timing that allowed her to cross without having to pause and jog in place gave her a fleeting sense of pleasure that melded cohesively with the beat of the music, the beautiful day, and the innate glow of being healthy and active. It was an all-encompassing experience of well-being that couldn't quite be described, and the next emotion she felt wasn't shock or surprise so much as pure betrayal when the car struck her.

Spun by the impact, she barely registered the wide, horror-stricken look on the young driver's face, his head still in the process of tipping upward from his phone to look ahead at the road while simultaneously checking a text on the device held below the steering wheel. He hadn't even slowed down for the stop sign and didn't hit the brakes until after his car had barreled past the spot where Chris was still sliding across the pavement to end up against the curb she had so blithely stepped off a split-second ago. The shriek of a bystander sounded far away and almost synthesized, weirdly intrusive as it overwhelmed the now slightly tinny music still coming from the earbuds laying on the roadway nearby.

What could have been that important? Chris wondered to herself, bewilderment momentarily overwhelming everything else. *Maybe I should have paid more attention* was her next thought, and after that the first inklings of pain and rage took the last trace of euphoria away. It was a long time before she enjoyed much of anything again.

<http://youtu.be/BqFkRwdFZ0>