

Weakness and Strength

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2009

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Preface

The following narrative is true insofar as everything told here has happened as it is told, except perhaps for some minor details that might have been mixed up in my memory. However I have done my best in order to tell the truth. Sometimes there are different truths to different observers and I am still close to two of the persons, whose lives have been changed by these events, but I am confident that it can pass through as an adequate report of what provided the main stuff to talk about in our small town for some time. In order to present it as a continuous story line I have deliberately added some parts I came to know later. Additional information has been added to provide the reader with the necessary background.

This story is also a work of fiction, which does not need any justification, insofar as all names appearing in this story have been changed. My name is not Cin(dy) and there are no Julie, no Sam Jefferson and no Maggie or Erik T. Olson in the real world. But the person addressed by these names, will know, who is who. In order to protect their privacy exact dates and geographical terms have been deliberately omitted or changed appropriately.

1 Caught by surprise

The most convenient point to start my story is a phone call I received from Julie. She told me that she would be in town and asked me if I could give her a stay. Of course I agreed and that call started a line of events that should change the fate of severable people in particular hers.

To explain our relationship, Julie was – and still is – my best friend since our common high school time. When she called, I had not seen her for almost a year.

Of course we stayed in contact by phone and via email, but that's not the same as seeing us in person. Maybe Julie and I are so close, because we are very different. Julie is tall, about 5'10", blond with slight red touch, indicating her sometimes hot temper.

She is very sportive and always had (and still has) a stunning figure, I could never match. With her bright blue eyes, that mostly looked a little bit too serious for a woman of our age, she was the kind beauty most men look after and then turn away, knowing they will never get a chance to come close to.

In her case this was a reasonable assumption. Although Julie was an attractive girl by common standards, even without makeup, she never had a boyfriend. As long as I know her I have never seen her with makeup, she even refused those little things, which give every woman the necessary touch of exquisiteness and help so much in impressing a man. No doubt, she is straight,

but somehow dealing with boys was always a difficult matter for her.

In upper classes in highschool there had been lots of guys, taller than Julie, more grown up than us, who would have been willing to go out with her, but she never managed to say the right words at the right time.

It would be more accurate to say she had a talent to find the wrong words at the right time and this scared of most guys, at least the ones she might have been interested in. As close as we are, love-matters were something Julie rarely talked about and if she did, she never mentioned any names.

Vice versa it was not difficult to anticipate, which type of man she disliked. I don't know why he did so and don't want to speculate about his reasons, however once Erik, T. Olson III, two classes ahead of us and the uncrowned king of the George Washington High School in presence of his complete 'yard state' came to Julie and offered her the favor of becoming his date for the annual wellfare dinner. "I am not interested," was her dry reply. A more diplomatic character than hers would have said something like, "I am awfully sorry, I have really no time, that day," but saying it by the flower had never been Julies strength. Not being used to such a reaction, Erik T. made the mistake to ask her for the reasons and you could hear a needle fall, when Julie said, "I am not interested, because you are not my type of guy." Two hours later the whole school

knew that Erik T. got the first (and to my knowledge only) bloody nose during his high school career.

Well he wasn't my type either, but hey, if I had had the chance to date the most popular guy in the whole district, this was the least I would have cared about. Soon after this there was a nickname floating around. The boys called her 'Ice-J' and it became a popular joke to invite a new student to date 'Ice-J'.

In summary this is the short but complete description, I would have given to Julie's relationship to the other sex before the events I am going to tell about took place. It is not entirely correct, but this concerns fine points I had to learn about my friend during the following events.

I never had these kind of problems. I always was the head of the cheerleaders. That required to stay in good shape too. My hair color – the real one – is black and maybe my figure is not so striking as hers, but I always knew how to get the guys I wanted. These were admittedly not in the league of Erik T. Olson III – I know my limits – but still very respectable ones.

Apart from that, I was never able to compete in anything with Julie. She is the only woman I know who was never afraid of anything, at least she never showed fear. Sometimes she was a more than adequate replacement for the big brother I never had. I could always count on her.

Julie was not good but excellent in school. She was always on top of our class and I have to admit, that I passed one or

two exams only, because she deliberately allowed me to copy her solutions.

Mentally and physically she had always been a lot stronger than me. Although her mother couldn't afford it – her father died so early, that she had no memory on him – Julie got a fellowship and went to college. In just three years she got a degree in criminal justice, while I stayed in town and became an internet designer. As far as I know and I think that I know it well she still had no relationship at least none lasting long enough for me becoming aware of it, while I had several more or less serious ones, that all passed by.

The last ten weeks, she had spent at the State Police Academy in the state capital, which is operated like a military one. She had just graduated and was about to fulfill her duty to see her mother. Julie and her mother were not so close as mother and daughter usually are. Her dad had died, when she was less than four years old and that had made her mother on one hand harsh and unforgiving and on the other hand very much focused on Julie, who was her only child. She never married again.

Although she loved her daughter and Julie was a good girl their relationship was let's say difficult. That was the main reason why she had asked me to give her the stay I was looking forward to.

Julie showed up the next day – it was Friday – at half past four. She looked virtually the same as I remembered her. I was a little bit jealous about her good shape. When she hugged me, I could feel that she had worked hard on it. She was

always stronger than me but her grasp was harder than I remembered it.

We left her luggage in her car and proceeded to the sofa immediately. Being separated for one year, we had to share a lot of stories about my boy friends, old times in school, our jobs and the really important things.

“Do you have a friend at the academy?” I know it was meant to ask this question, but this was the most important topic.

“That’s not so easy,” she sneaked around, “if you are a cadet, you have to treat the opposite sex in a professional way – there is no room for romance. If you cross that line, it may become dangerous if you see more in someone than a colleague or partner...” It was not difficult to guess that ‘Ice-J’ had screwed it up again.

“You have scared the guys off.” Her face showed, that I had scored a hit.

“No, I...,” she made a weak attempt to object, which I cut short.

“Come on Julie, this happens every time you meet a promising looking guy. You scare him away faster than a horde of morons could do.” That was not mean, but the plain truth. No guy likes a girl, who is proud to show him, that she’s tougher than himself and I don’t know a guy who is tougher than her. Well maybe there was an exception back in our common high school time.

“The only appropriate guy in school, who was not afraid of your temper, was Sam and he was just a year ahead of us. You should have tried to get him.” This was a spontaneous idea. I had nothing

particular in mind, when I suggested it. Sam was the only guy around she could not beat, neither in intellectual matters nor in physical abilities and he had sophisticated means to bring this to her attention. The result was that Julie had had more arguments with Sam than with anyone else during our high school time, for a couple of which I would attribute her a victory by points, maybe a few more went to Sam, but by far most of them were a draw. Sometimes it was playful and funny, sometimes she was really furious, for me as a more or less neutral observer it had always been fun – these controversies became never personal and if I remember it correctly, she had never said anything mean about Sam behind his back.

“Sam Jefferson? You mean Sam Jefferson, who was a class ahead of us and went to the Army?” She made it sound so damned innocent, but knowing her better I felt that there was more behind it, than she wanted to tell.

“You know, very well, whom I mean, you had at least one argument with him every week, as long as he was in school.” Of course she knew.

“Cin, a man like Sam Jefferson is not interested in a girl from the southside. Also his father was in charge when the accident happened that killed my father.” Julie’s father was an Army sergeant and general Jefferson was Sam’s father and long time commander of the local Army base.

“But that was not Sam’s fault.” If there was something I would bet every cent I owned on, it was Julie’s sense of

justice.

“No as far as I know it was not even his father’s fault. His father convinced mine to stay in the Army for another term and then he was at the wrong place at the wrong time. However an officer’s son can never go out with a sergeant’s daughter, that’s an unwritten law in the Army. And before you further pursue this idea, I know for sure that HE WAS NEVER interested in ME.” This left me with more questions, I had bargained for. However right now I wouldn’t get an answer to any of those. She had made clear, that she considered the matter to be closed and I knew her well enough to know, that it was useless to dwell deeper right now.

Besides at that time I was convinced that she was right in some sense. Sam was a handsome man and I had tried to get closer to him a couple of times. Contrary to Julie I did not attribute this to his personal attitude – Sam was not this kind of guy – but he was definitely not interested in me and if I could not attract his attention this was surely even more difficult for Ice-J. My impression was that Sam preferred to do the first step, as I do, but if he would have tried to date Julie, I would have known.

We changed topics and talked about our jobs. I consider mine more or less as a necessary inconvenience while she really loved hers and was hoping to be stationed right here in town and to work on criminal matters for the local state attorney. A few years ago I would have taken any bet that Jule would become a scientist – she was interested in everything

concerning science and technology and mastered physics and mathematics better than any other girl in school. In fact, after Sam’s farewell she was far ahead of anyone else in school’s math-circle. But somehow her interests changed during our last year in high school.

From some point on she was determined to become a police officer and pursued this track with her own unique way of longing for perfection. When we met she told me about the rough training she went through at the Academy. Workouts, running, classroom training, gun training, more running, more workouts and so on.

“That sounds like torture to me. You are smart, you could have got a better job than this. Even with your degree at a certain level you will need political support to reach the position you deserve and who will give that to you, Erik T.’s father?”

“I know, but I like this job, it can be very demanding and you can only find out, what you are able to do if you try.”

“But it’s badly paid and occupies a lot of time. You would have made a fine mathematician, which is less dangerous though not well paid either. If I had your certification I would have become a lawyer or a doctor.”

“Presumable one who does cosmetic surgeries.”

“Why not, these guys make a lot of money and they have a lot of free time.”

“And that makes them better people?”

“No, but they have a good life.”

“A senseless life. No, Cin, I would

hate myself if I had become something like that and to answer your next question in advance, I don't want to marry someone like that." We are a lot different indeed.

"Come on Julie, we are living in the U.S.A. You are smart, don't tell me you are waiting for a knight in shining armour, who kills dragons and saves poor girls everyday. These guys died out long ago." It was a practical joke, nothing more, but Julie smiled softly, and then she said something that really surprised me: "Believe me or not, I once met such a guy."

Was there a touch of romance in her voice? Suddenly this smalltalk had become VERY interesting.

"And, why didn't you catch him?" She shrugged her shoulders.

"Because I am not a princess and he did not fall in love with me."

"Do I know that guy?"

"Maybe, I don't know." That was it, Julie never mentioned any names.

"Was it at high school?"

"That's not your business."

"Come on, Julie, I always told you everything."

"No! What's going on at the east-side? I saw the old Crighton building was scrapped..." As close as we are, that was a point beyond which I wouldn't get anything out of her.

Our hometown is small, compared to America's big cities it is completely insignificant. However in many respects our little world is still, as it should be. The crime rate is low and people know each other. Even more important they

also talk to each other. Well sometimes they also talk about each other occasionally even behind each other backs. That are the disadvantages of our life here. But apart from that, it's perfectly okay and I don't want to live anywhere else.

There are no slum's and no private palaces, poor people are not miserable and rich people are not really wealthy. However as in every however small community there is an upper class and a lower class, although the differences are not so big as let's say in New York. The people who had more money and the more important jobs lived north of the main street up to the hill's and look down to the south side, which is more or less flat. A few miles away there's the army base, the biggest employer in our town and in the west there is an industrial area. There is no really big company, but some of them make enough money to allow their owner's a carefree life.

Separated from the city by the latter there is a small entertainment quarter. Well there are a few fast food restaurants and bar's where some of the workers used to spend their money. In Joe's bar there's even table dance on Saturdays but in general the night life is very poor in our hometown.

It occupied some time to keep Julie on track, what was going on. Soon, it was late and we hadn't eaten or taken her stuff out of her car. I offered to order some pizza from a delivery service and we made our choices. I was told, that it would take longer than usual due to personal shortage right now, but we ac-

cepted.

I helped Julie to carry her stuff into the guest room. She did not want to leave it in her car, because part of it was state property and it would get her into big trouble if this was stolen. Incidentally I grabbed the big canvas duffel bag, which had stamped PROPERTY OF STATE POLICE on it. I was barely able to lift it. After carrying it into the bedroom, I tossed it onto the bed with a bounce. Julie sorted out the clothes that needed to be hung, and we simply plugged the other stuff in drawers.

She did not pay any attention to the heavy bag, I had struggled to take in, although it had been her main concern before. That made me curious. She went to refresh herself and with Julie busy in the bathroom it was a good opportunity to find out, what was inside.

It contained her police equipment, a rather heavy bullet proof vest, a pair of bulky black boots, a gun belt, without a gun but with several partially filled cases attached to it – an almost complete police officer's equipment. I hung it next to the vest into the closet.

In the bag remained three black wooden boxes without inscription. They were surprisingly heavy, but there was no hint, what might be inside. Julie was still out of sight. I took the opportunity and opened the smallest of these and saw a pair of polished steel handcuffs accompanied by a matching pair of keys. I couldn't resist to take them out. They were surprisingly heavy. It would be impossible to escape once my wrists were in those. That thought was fright-

ening but in a strange way also attractive. I squeezed one cuff a little bit and it closed even further with a series of audible metallic clicks.

"Hey, what are you doing with my stuff?" Unnoticed by myself Julie had reentered the room and caught me with the matter of evidence still in my hands. I was too buffed to reply. She took her handcuffs out of my hands.

"In our civil right classes I learned, that it's a crime to dig around in other people's stuff," she said with an indefinite expression on her face.

"I..., I... was just about to put your stuff away... really," I stuttered, still a little bit embarrassed about her catching me snooping in her belongings.

"Well," she continued, "I am a police officer and as such I must not tolerate any violation of the law, therefore I am duty bound to arrest you."

"But Julie, I..."

"SHUT UP and turn around." She raised her voice and said that so officially that I automatically followed her order.

"Place both hands on top of your head, miss." I did, what she had requested, and that was a big mistake. Cold metal touched my right wrist and I heard the familiar clicking sound. Before I realised, what happened to me, she had pulled my arms together behind my back and closed the other cuff around my left wrist.

I pulled at the unforgiving steel bands that imprisoned my small wrists, but there was no way to get rid of them. I was stuck.

"Julie, take these things off, this is no

fun!" I objected. "I promise to keep my nose out of your things, but let me free."

"Try to get these," she teased, dangling the keys in front of my nose. She spun on heels and left for my living room. I had no choice than to follow her with my hands bound behind my back. She made me feel like an animal at a circus. Julie took a seat on the sofa and looked very comfortable with the situation. She picked her glass and nipped on it.

"Let's talk about YOUR actual lover or should I say lovers?" I turned my back to her and stated, "As soon as you let me out of these, I'll be happy to talk to you!"

"Okay," Julie said. "I was mean. Come here and I'll undo them." I approached her and turned around to give her access to the handcuffs in order to free me. She did something to both handcuffs I could not see and produced a single click. But they seemed to be tightening, instead of coming off.

"Now, it's okay" she announced innocently. I pulled, but the tight grip on my wrists did not fade away. I twisting my arms up to my side and looked at my hands, which were apparently still locked together.

"No it's not okay, they still don't come off, JULIE, and I want these off IMMEDIATELY." Anger started to bottle up my throat.

"I double locked them so they will not tighten themselves anymore," she explained professionally.

"Whatever you did, it did not make them come off!" Demonstratively I pulled the short chain between the

'bracelets' taut.

"You did something that deserves some punishment. I'll set you free after an appropriate time," she announced firmly. Knowing her better, I saw that she was working hard not to giggle.

I turned my back to her and said, "that's kidnapping, unlock me NOW!" But I couldn't help and started giggling myself. She laughed and pulled me onto the couch. I screamed as she dug her fingers into my sides and started a horrible tickling! With my hands bound behind me I could not do anything to stop her. I could hardly breath and promised her everything just to quit tickling me.

"I'll quit when you quit complaining about the handcuffs!" Julie told me.

"Okay, okay." She clearly was in charge right now. "I'm your prisoner, 'till you let me go, but no more tickling."

"Good. I'm glad we settled that." Julie leaned over and picked up her wine glass. She held it up and looked at the wine as she swirled it. "Tickling makes thirsty."

"So is being tickled!" I laughed. "I could use a drink myself." I reached for my glass, but the handcuffs did not allow me to bring it up to my mouth. "Can't you let me free just to get a drink?"

"No," she insisted, "you have to stay cuffed until... let's say until our meals arrive, okay - I think that's fair, isn't it?" I nodded agreement.

"Until then I will assist you to get some wine." She took my glass and brought it up to my lips and tilted it slowly until I was able drink. Unfortunately she kept it that way, when I tried

to stop and I was forced to swallow the whole content. She refilled my glass, but I refused.

Usually I could take a lot of this stuff, surely more than Julie, but it was hot and when I raised myself, hampered by the silly handcuffs, she had refused to remove, I felt a little unsteady on my feet.

A ring at the door put an end to this discussion. It must have been the pizza service. I looked at Julie quietly indicating my handcuffed hands.

“Don’t you want to open the door?”

“LIKE THAT???” I pulled at the steel bands. “You promised to take them off!”

“When the pizza is inside, I’ll let you go, but you have to get it in before.” Julie can be mean sometimes. She dangled the keys in front of my nose.

“No,... You are serious?” She nodded. The doorbell rang again. I was mad on her, but the guy wouldn’t wait any longer and then she would have a reason to keep me like that for an indefinite time. I took a deep breath.

“Okay, but that means revenge, and I mean bloody revenge!” I went to the door and looked to the peephole. There was just the delivery guy, a boy of sixteen maybe seventeen years. I reached around my hips and opened the door with both hands, carefully trying to conceal from him that my hands were confined behind my back. Of course he wanted to handle the box to me.

“Put it on the desk please,” I gave him a winning smile and he complied. It was not easy to get a \$20 bill out of my purse with my hands behind my back. I was fast but not fast enough. I had just

confirmed the value of the note and put it on the sideboard next to the door, when he turned around.

“That make’s..., ah, ...\$17.50, ma’am,” he could not have overlooked the irremovable steel bands on my wrists. I was terribly ashamed and blushed.

“The rest is for you,” I managed to say, indicating the bill, I had placed on the board. “Thanks, mam,” he said and if I would have needed any confirmation his face was red too, as he headed for the door. I closed it behind him and called for Julie to take the pizza, still red like a ripen tomato. Julies devilish grin was not suitable to rise my mood.

“He saw your bracelets?” It was no question. I turned my back to her.

“You had your fun. Now let me out of them!”

“Okay, that was punishment enough, now we are quit,” she said, barely able to suppress a laughter, while she finally removed the cuffs from my wrists.

I rubbed my wrists, not because they were hurt, but because everyone on television does. “We are FAR from quit, fellow. I have never been so embarrassed before!” I yelled and that was the plain truth!

“You have to admit, it was fun! I never saw someone so red in the face before!”

“The fun depends on who’s the one who wears the cuffs,” I bursted out, “I have never felt that humiliated before and YOU wouldn’t have done any better than me.”

“I would not have opened your lug-

gage,” she stressed her point of view. We made temporary peace and talked about other things before we went to bed.

To be honest, I was not so humiliated as I pretended to have been. The way the guy looked at me when he saw the handcuffs was also stimulating. But

of course I did not consider us even. I thought how these bracelets might look on Julies wrists. Unfortunately this seemed impossible to happen, but even in this world sometimes fate is on the side of justice.

2 Revenge can be sweet

I hate to admit it, but apart from feeling angry about her this experience had also made a deep impression on me: I dreamed all night about wearing those handcuffs – being helplessly locked in them and the feel of the cold and inescapable steel bands on my wrists.

So I still was curious about the other two boxes in the bag and what they might contain, maybe two other pairs of handcuffs? One was notably bigger than the other two. However I was not very fond of getting caught again with my nose in her stuff. I had to wait for the right opportunity and luckily it should show up earlier than expected.

When I woke up, I went into the bathroom and showered and got ready for the day. We had decided to go to the local waterpark and get some sun and play on the waterslides and just be silly. Julie was still in bed, and it was almost nine, so I stuck my head into her room and told her it was probably time to get up if we were going to make it to the park within time to do anything. “I did not know that your academy supports long sleepers.”

“Oh damned, sorry Cin, I will hurry,” she exclaimed. She jumped out of bed

and went to the bathroom. When I heard the shower going, I took the opportunity to check out the bag. I sneaked into her room paying attention to the sound of the shower.

Looking into the bag, I saw the handcuffs she had used on me the night before lying in the bag. Carefully I opened the big box. It contained a pair of oversized handcuffs with more than a foot of chain between, actually they were leg irons. The middle-sized box contained a different type of handcuffs. An ordinary pair of cuffs was not joined by a chain but by a massive semirigid connection so that they would not swivel and could be moved only in one direction. Later I should learn that they were called hinged handcuffs. My immediate impression of incapability was enforced by the fact that the case contained an additional pair of keys, which looked like the ones on my front door. This seemed to be the kind of restraints to be used on dangerous criminals.

I admit that the thought struck my mind, that it would be particularly satisfactory to put these items on my dear friend. Although I tortured my brain I could not think about a way to make this

happen. The shower stopped and I was still glaring at those items, which might as well owe me the privilege to wear them. However I managed to put them back, leave unnoticed and pretended to have been busy in the kitchen preparing breakfast for the two of us.

Julie got herself dressed quickly, we had a small breakfast and left for the park. It was a lovely day and we had a lot of fun. It was like a remedy of care-free high school days. Watching Julie run on rollerblades with her long legs, with her well trained body made me a little bit jealous, when I saw the guys turning their heads around after she had passed. I don't know why, but again I caught myself, wondering, what she would look like if she had those handcuffs on – well there was still this open bill between us.

In the evening Julie invited me for dinner at little Italy – as small as our hometown might be, it even has a quarter, which is known among the local people under that name. We had spent the whole afternoon and early evening walking around and digging up bones from our common past.

It was about nine in the evening when we got back my place. We were both light dressed with t-shirts and shorts and this was definitely too cold for an evening in spring. I offered her to get something to warm us, while Julie went for changing her dress. I fetched a bottle of port wine. When I passed the guest room door she had not bothered to close, I noticed, that Julie, was about to go through the pullovers, I used to keep in another wardrobe in the guest

room, in order to find something warm of appropriate size. She had removed her sport shoes, pants and t-shirt, which revealed a blue bikini suit, she had worn under it. A sinister plan struck my mind. I sneaked in behind her put my hands on my hips and cleared my throat. She turned around unconscious to have done something wrong – well it would have been okay, if she would not have “arrested” me the night before.

“Hey, fellow,” I, said in my most authoritative voice, “what are YOU doing in MY stuff?”

“It's cold so I thought to borrow a sweat-shirt or something else from you.” The opportunity to pay her back had come sooner, as I could have hoped for.

“A close friend of mine has told me very recently, that it is illegal to snoop around in someone else's stuff – and as a future police officer, you should know that there is a penalty for that!” She looked at me, laughing and replied, “hey, that's not the same. I am not snooping in your stuff. It's really cold and I have nothing appropriately to wear, besides it was you who offered me something to warm up.”

“That's in the bottle I was about to fetch. If you wanted something to wear, you should have asked me first. Now you are in big trouble.”

“You are serious? You want to arrest me? I don't want to be arrested.” Julie is a lot stronger than me. Forcing her to do something, she did not want, was out of question, but there was some weakness to exploit.

“So, the law applies only to others?”

When you caught me for snooping in your luggage I had to be arrested but when you get caught snooping in my laundry this is an entirely different. That is a very convenient point of view in particular for someone who ought to serve and protect us.”

“Okay, but I was NOT snooping, I just misunderstood your offer and I ask you now: Is it okay, that I might borrow something out of your closet?”

“No, it’s not okay,” I insisted, “it would have been okay, if you had asked me before. Since I was punished for snooping, now it has to be your turn.”

“You are serious. You insist on your little revenge?” She made it sound like she was dealing with a little girl who insisted on getting the promised ice-cream. But I nodded firmly.

“Okay, Cin, put me under citizen’s arrest then. It will be interesting to watch, how you are going to do this.”

“May I use your handcuffs,... I mean, I have nothing appropriate myself. I am not a police officer after all.”

“I don’t think, that I want to wear my own handcuffs. I am supposed to use them on bad guys, not to play silly games...”

“But yesterday it was different. You used them on me. Just becoming a police officer does not give you the right...”

“Okay, okay, they are still in the bag over there.” I opened the bag and tossed the three boxes onto the bed. Julie had her arms crossed and observed me sceptically.

“You are going to do this?” I nodded again and she accepted the unavoidable.

“Okay, fellow, turn around and put your hands on your head,” I told her as sternly as possible. She dropped her arms and shrugged, but complied and faced the wall.

That was the opportunity to take the more formidable looking pair of hinged handcuffs out of their encasement.

“On your head, I said!” She complied again and did as I had done the day before. I opened one of the cuffs – they worked and sounded the same way as the ones I had worn – reached up and snapped it onto her wrist, clicking it shut.

“Ow, Cin, that’s too tight.”

“Don’t whine about it,” I pulled her hand down, “See I can still put my finger inside.”

“Nevertheless it’s too tight.” But she did not resist, when I pulled her other hand down, and locked the second handcuff in place. I stepped back to admire the result of my work. The cuffs held her hands together behind her back, which made her stand upright, with her breast stuck out – for me this was a splendid sight. She turned to me, holding her joint hands out to the right and noticed immediately that her hands were fixed in their parallel position.

“Cin, these are my personal high-security handcuffs,” she complained, “they are for handling dangerous criminals.”

“But you are a dangerous criminal, after all you are a police officer and know how to escape from those things.”

“Cin I cannot escape from the other ones as well, at least not without a key,

these ones are a lot more inflexible, I even can't twist my wrists." She demonstrated this fact to me, but I was not in the mood to give in.

"They don't look much different than the ones I wore, I will bet you have a trick to release those, which does not work on these."

"Okay, Cin, if you insist I will wear these, but handcuffs are not for fun. As tight as these are they will hurt my wrists and cut off my circulation. Please take the keys and give me a few notches more."

"So that you can pull them off."

"You can give me at least five notches without any risk."

"Two, no more."

"Okay, Cin, two, and can you double lock them too? I don't want them to tighten themselves later." I questioned her with a view.

"That's actually a little bit different with these. They are Hiatt's HSS9. You may open them with the standard handcuff key, but they are double locked with additional little safety-keys from their box. They go right into these cylinders at the base of the cuffs. To meet your concerns, this also adds to security. Once double locked you have to use both keys in order to release them. Almost nobody can pick those safety locks and you can't crack these cuffs even with a bolt cutter. However for me on the receiving end it is important that locked this way they cannot squeeze my wrists accidentally. That can be really dangerous."

"Okay, I will fetch those keys. But first turn back to the wall and don't

move!" She shrugged her shoulders but turned her back on me and steered to the ceiling.

I had those keys already at hand, but this was the opportunity to try out the rest of her 'jewelry'. So I opened the big box, which I knew to contain the leg-irons and grepped the latter carefully not to produce a treacherous noise. I silently knelt down behind her, pretending to have lost the key and quickly snapped the big cuff of the leg-irons around her left ankle.

Julie knew immediately that I had fooled her and turned quickly. But before she managed to finish that move, I had taken a hold on her right ankle and snapped the cuff around it.

"Damned, Cin, these are no toys. First hinged cuffs and now the irons too. Take those off." My authority was on stake.

"You are my prisoner, and everyone will agree that you are a much more dangerous prisoner than I was, so these leg-cuffs stay on as long as your term will last."

"They are called leg-irons and not leg-cuffs. And they are used only to transport REALLY dangerous criminals. Cin, I tricked you and maybe I deserve the handcuffs maybe even hinged ones, but those irons are too much, that is humiliating." She carefully moved her right leg, making the connecting chain jingle to emphasize her point.

"I also did not want to wear your handcuffs yesterday. Especially not, when I payed the pizza boy." I took hold on the cuff on her right ankle and pin-

pointed the little hole, which produced a click. Interestingly the key for the leg-irons was almost indistinguishable from the ordinary handcuff keys.

“Is that right?” I asked and after she nodded unwillingly I repeated the procedure on her other ankle, before I raised myself and carefully took hold on her wrist, when I released the locks with the standard key to give her the promised two notches more on both bracelets before I applied the safety key in order to double lock them. A short try with the standard key convinced me, that the latter indeed did not work as long as the double locks were applied.

“Is that okay?” I asked after completing my work. She nodded unwillingly. It was a fairly comfortable fit, but far too tight, to slip her hands out of them.

Julie has really strong wrists and ankles for a woman, and I knew, that without this steel jewelry in place, she would have easily overpowered me. I observed, that she almost unconsciously pulled at the cuffs, holding her wrists, where I wanted them to be and also stretched her legs carefully to test her limits of movements. Obviously she was not pleased with the results. The presence of these ‘adornments’ made her unusually insecure. She turned her eyes down away from me.

“Come on, Julie, let’s have some wine.”

“You wanted to borrow me something warmer to wear, do you remember?”

“I will ignite the fire in the living room, I replied. I like you the way you

are. Come on!” I grabbed her at the joint of her bikini to and she had to follow me closely in order not to loose her top. I would have shuffled, but she managed not only to keep up with my pace, but to do it graceful without loosing her balance. Nevertheless she complained, “damned, Cin, you rip my top, I can’t run in these irons.” Needless to say that I would not have dared to handle her this way under normal circumstances. Being in charge can be so much fun.

“Don’t cry like a little girl,” I teased. That was a term Julie hated as hell and her face went red, her fists were clenched together, which made her cuffs rattle. But she was well aware that her movements were very limited and swallowed a sharp reply. I laughed to myself revenge was sweet indeed.

“Make yourself comfortable, while I ignite the fire.” I watched her, how she took a seat on one of the armchairs with her hands behind her folded her long legs over each other and was stopped by the leg-iron chain which looped around one foot. She looked down in chagrin sighed and disentangled it.

I poured some wine into her glass and raised mine, leaving hers just out of her limited reach, just to watch her raise herself with chained feet jingling across the floor. I giggled, when she had to triple in order not to trip over the chain dangling between her bare feet.

“What’s so funny about seeing me suffer?” Julie was clearly not amused.

“I just thought that this turnabout is only fairplay. Yesterday it was me, who was hampered.” She grasped the glass

with her joined hands, only to find out, that it is impossible to bring a glass upright to your mouth when your hands are cuffed behind your back.

“I give up,” she said after three fruitless attempts. “Could you please help me get a drink?” I took the glass from her cuffed hands and guided it to her lips.

“Sure, Julie, you are guest.” I tilted the Glass and when she started to lean forward and sip it, I tilted it a little bit further, so she had to swallow it. With her hands secured behind behind her, she couldn’t do much to stop me.

“Stop it, Cin, You’re going to drown me!” I tried to pull her head further around and put the glass up to her mouth, but had to admit, that she was still a lot stronger than me, even handcuffed.

“Okay, if you don’t need my help,…”

“I just would appreciate to take my drink in smaller doses, I don’t have your constitution.” She tried to make herself comfortable but could not find a comfortable position for her cuffed hands. Finally she struggled a little bit with the nasty chain joining her ankles and folded them on the armchair in an Indian’s seat. In the mean time I had served myself with some whine. Occasionally I offered her some, which she accepted in rather modest quantities. She was obviously not comfortable with the situation, but determined to convince me that it didn’t bother her. After half an hour in chains she unfolded her legs with a clanking noise, raised herself approached me as grateful as someone barefoot and in leg-irons can do, turned her back on me and

used a small child’s voice I had never believed her to be capable of to say: “I have been your willing prisoner for half an hour by now, I think you agree that this is more than enough for snooping in your wardrobe. What about freeing me?” She rattled her handcuffs in order to catch my attention.

I took a hold on her cuffs, as if I would be going to release her stood up and whispered into her ear, “You are my prisoner and I decide, when your term is over,” I gave the rigid joint between her cuffs for emphasize, “and these beautiful bracelets stay on as long as I decide, you deserve to wear them.” I was not ready to let her come away that easy and was prepared to counter either a physical attack or the more expected argument.

“It was worth a try.” She shrugged her shoulders, shuffled back to her chair and sat down pretending that she she would not care.

We chatted for another half an hour, in which she did not mention her restraints. She wanted to distract me and it almost worked. I admit that I felt a little bit dizzy from the strong whine. When I returned from a visit to the toilet, a few minutes later, Julie was gone. I was instantly sober. She couldn’t be very far in those chains, but her disappearance meant, that she believed to have found a way of getting rid of them. A quick check revealed that the safety-keys for her handcuffs were gone too. Hell knows how she managed to reach the board, I had put them on before I had left. My little revenge was on stake. She was neither in the kitchen, nor in my bedroom.

That left the guest-room. A logical decision since a few standard handcuff keys were still laying around there.

Fortunately the door wasn't locked. I prefer no keys inside my house. When I entered, Julie was sitting on the bed. The leg-irons were still in place and her hands behind her back as they should have been. What alerted me, was the open box containing the other pair of handcuffs lying next to her.

"Give me the keys." I demanded.

"Which keys?" She made it sound very innocent.

"The ones for your handcuffs. You are hiding them behind your back."

"Try to get them." With these words she tried surround me. Julie was fast, but hampered by the leg-irons and the handcuffs, she luckily had not managed to unlock yet. I was successful in blocking her way like a football player and we ended on the floor.

Up to that moment, I was convinced that those handcuffs made my prisoner helpless as long as they were in place, well this is what handcuffs properly applied are supposed to do. But before I knew what had happened, Julie sat upright on me with the chain of her leg-irons pressing on my belly and her knees pinioning my elbows to the ground.

"This is an escape attempt," she announced, while she fumbled, in order to turn the safety key she had indeed obtained and somehow inserted into the tiny keyholes of one of the handcuffs around.

"Number one," she announced when she managed to do so and immediately

tried to get the standard key into the tiny lock of the same cuff. Luckily Julie was no Houdini and needed some time to do so and her efforts were not enforced by the fact that I did my best in order to prevent this. At first she had easily kept me under control, but when she turned her joined hands to one side in order to get a look on that hole, I managed to free my right arm.

"That's useless, Cin, you have to learn a lot about fighting." She countered my movement by putting even more pressure on my left arm while she turned sideways in order to protect her face from my free right hand. Instinctively I knew, that I could not stop her from freeing herself by fair means. Instead I dug my fingers deep into her left armpit and began to tickle her.

She was so surprised, by this unforeseen attack, that she lost balance. I used my other hand immediately to assist in tickling and she lost the keys. Desperately she tried to get away from me, but with her hands locked behind her back and hobbled by an ankle chain, this was a hopeless task. Soon I was on top of her.

"I give up, Cin, no more tickling please." I had her on her belly and managed to climb on her back, which made her joined hands almost useless and must have caused her some pain, because her wrists were still imprisoned by the inseparable steel rings, while my full weight pressed on her arms.

The ring with two standard handcuff keys lay on the ground just a foot away. I turned the safety key, which still stuck in the left bracelet around and removed it.

I also grasped the standard keys she had dropped without giving her a chance to improve her position and joined the two keyrings. I was in charge again.

However she had been very close to freedom. I needed something to control her more securely. My eyes caught the box with the second pair of handcuffs – the ones I had worn the day before – just two feet away and that sight gave me a sinister idea. She winced under the pressure I had put on her restrained arms but kept struggling in order to get me off her back.

“You have been, a bad girl, will you behave now?”

“Sure, Cin, and I promise to be good again. Just let stand me up. You are pressing the cuffs into my flesh.” I lifted myself a little bit and grabbed for the box, which she could not see, because she was still on her belly. This provided her with some more freedom to move, but before she was able to raise herself, I pinned her down again. It was a matter of seconds to open that box and take the cuffs out of it.

“I don’t believe you.” I took a critical look at the acquired pair of cuffs and estimated the circumference of her elbows. It was indeed worth a try.

“Cin, this really hurts me. I will do, what you say, as..., hey, what are you doing?” I had closed one of the cuff around her left upper arm right above her elbow.

“You bitch, I don’t want any more cuffs on.” Her sudden violent struggle almost threw me down from her back, but somehow I managed to retain balance. The cuff was not even tight, but

certainly could not be slipped over her elbows. The problem was to get its counterpart around her other elbow. I solved this problem, by putting my full weight on her upper body, which forced her to straighten her arms long enough to snap it shut. She immediately resigned and lay still. But when I raised myself, she immediately rolled on her side, still lying on the ground with her arms now forced to stay in parallel behind her back. Her eyes flashed.

“Cin, unlock these cuffs immediately or I will...”

“What are you going to do, sweetie? Unless, you should be able to break this steel,” I grepped the short chain between her elbows, to emphasize what I meant, “you should accept, that it is me who is in charge. Since you tried to escape and an escape attempt is a crime as well, these cuffs – and I mean both pairs – will stay on as long as I want them on you. Come up, raise yourself.” I waved her to stand up and she proofed her flexibility, by raising herself gracefully to full height, despite the tight steel fetters that pinioned her arms together.

“Cin, when I get out of these,” she rattled her chains a little bit, “I will...” I cut her speech.

“Don’t forget, that you need these,” I raised the full set of keys in front of her nose. “And maybe a little help from me, because I don’t see how you will unlock those cuffs on your elbows even with the key at hand.” I took an artificial break to give her time to think about it before I continued. “And before you raise this point you are by no means a captive in

my home, you can leave any time you want. There is just the tiny little problem that you have to take your own cuffs with you, while I keep these keys. Do you want to leave?" She shook her head.

"So you want to stay here under my terms in order to be released under my conditions, when I say so?" She nodded, but not very enthusiastically.

"You don't look very convinced, shall I call you a taxi, maybe the driver knows a locksmith on emergency duty. Don't worry I will pay for it." Her eyes widened.

"Cin you can't do that."

"Well I had to pay a pizza boy yesterday, while I was handcuffed. Up to now everything stayed between the two of us, and it will stay so, if you commit yourself to stay under my terms."

"Okaaay?"

"No, say it explicitly, I don't want to hear any false accusations later."

"I will stay under your terms and released to your conditions when you say so."

"So since this is settled, I want to remark that you already earned some demerits with your escape attempt and that it will be a long evening." Julie looked into my eyes and did not see any mercy, but impressed by my previous words she swallowed a sharp reply. It was time to celebrate my victory.

"Didn't you say, that you will do, what I say." I looked at her sternly and she finally nodded. I had never seen 'Ice-J' that docile. "You can prove this right now. Kneel down." Surprisingly she swallowed another protest and complied. I

moved around her taking a close look at my prisoner – a satisfied look I admit.

"Any comments?"

"You should double lock the cuffs around my elbows too, because I might end up in hospital, if they tighten themselves."

"Good point, turn your back to me." I did as she suggested, and continued, "Any further comments?"

"No, you are in charge and I am your prisoner."

"Well since this is settled, let's watch some TV. No – I have another idea. Stay there and don't move." I went to the basement and fetched an old dog-collar, a useless item I had inherited from my grandmother. When I returned, I found her in the same position as I had left her. Her eyes grew wide, but she did not object, when I fastened the collar around her neck and attached the corresponding leash to it.

"Now we are ready to go, you may raise yourself," I said and tugged on the leash. Julie complied and followed me. I tossed a cushion to the ground, ordered her to kneel on it next to my feet and kept a hold on the leash, while we watched a TV-show. She was obviously very uncomfortable in that rôle, but soon, she made the best of it. I made her follow me, when I fetched another bottle of wine and three other times in order to fetch some not strictly necessary things, because I enjoyed pulling her around. After all she deserved it. If someone were watching us we must have looked very funny, because my obedient prisoner was noticeable taller than me.

When I had to visit the toilet again, I ordered her to kneel down and tied her leash to the knob of the bathroom door, pretending that I had to keep an eye on her. Julie could not longer hide her chagrin but still did not dare to question my orders, because there was little she could do to prevent me from making her do, what I wanted.

Although I was really in charge now and admittedly enjoyed this, apart from this teasing and keeping her on the leash, I did not treat her badly. I served her, when she could not get something, fed her with crackers, some wine and everything else she wanted. Julie was smart and as she did not suspect me looking at her I could see her smile despite her predicament. It went late that way and if I wanted or not, I had to release her soon.

A quarter past two in the morning I was really tired. So I finally announced, "Since you behaved well over the last few hours, I think it is appropriate to put an end to your sentence soon, of course only under the condition that there will be no retribution. Do you accept?"

"Do I have a choice?"

"Not, unless you prefer to sleep in your 'jewelry'."

"Cin, I am much too tired to even think about retribution, I promise to be good, if you just unlock all this."

"But you look like you need a shower first. Do you object?"

"No that would be nice." I took her by the leash. She offered mild resistance and turned her back to me.

"Cin, don't you want to release me

first?" I had a last surprise in store.

"No, I always loved these prison shower scenes and since I have a prisoner..."

"Cin, the handcuffs on my wrists are mine, but the ones on my elbows and the leg-irons are property of the State Police and they are not stainless."

"I will dry them later." I pulled on the leash. She offered mild resistance and turned to the side to emphasize her tightly fettered arms and raised her left leg, causing her hobble chain to jingle.

"You like to have me in these chains don't you?" Well, to be honest, she was right, but I lied: "No, this is just what you deserve, after embarrassing me, now we are almost even."

I led her into the bathroom and made her kneel one last time which she did without objection. I adjusted the shower to a comfortable temperature and removed the collar. "Do you want that bikini off?"

"No!" She shook her head and I put the soap into her cuffed hands. "There you go."

"Cin I can hardly use the soap trussed up like this." She rattled her cuffs and irons to strengthen her point.

"Make the best of it." She shrugged her shoulders and stepped into the cabin, while I close the curtain. I could see, that she turned a few times around. Not surprisingly since that was all she could do. It came to my mind that her rattling leg-irons might cause some damage to my shower. So I opened the curtain again, interrupted her shower and ordered her to stand still. I took the soap

out of her hands and removed the leg-irons as well as the pair of handcuffs around her elbows and put the soap back into her joint hands.

“What about those,” she said before I could close the curtain again, indicating the hinged handcuffs that still adorned her wrists, “I still cannot use the soap with my hands behind my back.”

“I know, but this is all you get, the bracelets stay on, that’s for the ‘bitch’, remember. I will fetch your clothes. Call me when you are ready.”

I closed the curtain, took the restraints, dried them carefully and stored them in their boxes. It lasted almost fifteen minutes before the shower stopped and another five minutes before she called me. Her hands were still cuffed together, but somehow she had managed

to switch them to the front back and wrap a towel around her body.

“Your prisoner is very eager to be released,” she said offering her cuffed wrists to me.

Unfortunately there was no reason to keep her any longer in these beautiful bracelets, therefore I unceremoniously produced the key and unlocked them. Julie rubbed her wrists, there were red marks on her wrists and elbows indicating her predicament. I dried the wet pair of cuffs, while Julie switched to her pajamas, and gave it back to her in order to make “proper use” of it. Judy did not react on my teasing, but when she left the next morning, she whispered into my ear. “Cin, you rat, someday I will get you for last night.”

3 A lucky Turnaround

Julie became a police officer and got a job in town, although she had to take a job at the badged force. Nevertheless she was pleased with it, because the chief had promised her to become a detective in at most a year due to her excellent degree.

We had a lot of fun together. She never mentioned the evening she had spent in her own restraints and so I did not suspect anything when she invited me for a dinner in her flat and offered to fetch me after she had finished her day shift. She showed up in uniform with a police cruiser and when I left my house I was arrested.

“What for?” I asked, when the hand-

cuffs ratcheted close around my wrists behind my back although I knew the answer.

“Well there is a recent speeding ticket, which is not paid yet, but mostly for abducting and humiliating a police officer, putting her in handcuffs, leg-irons, elbow cuffs and pushing her around on a leash, do you remember that? Now it’s your turn!”

“But you arrested me first,” I objected, “I just closed that bill.”

“I put you in handcuffs for half an hour, that was just a joke.” She said and fitted me with leg-irons. “I did not treat you as my ‘personal slave’.” I looked around. Luckily nobody visited my hu-

miliation.

“But you made me pay the pizza boy in handcuffs.”

“You can be glad, that I spare you the elbow cuffs, they were awful,” was her answer while she led me to her car and placed me in the back seat. I was stuck, these doors can only be opened from outside and even if I somehow managed to get out of her car, where should I go to in handcuffs and leg-irons.

She ignored my complaints, threats and pleas and headed for her flat, where she had prepared a dinner, I was condemned to attend as her personal slave for the evening.

But things didn't come out as planned. There was an emergency call on the radio. A little child had climbed out of a roof window with the parents absent. Passengers had observed it on the roof and called the police. Incidentally we were just a few blocks away, when that call reached us.

Julie reacted instantly without hesitation. She turned the car around, answered the call and headed for the place. The building was not too high, but three floors were enough to break anyones neck. The whining child was on the gutter at least four yards away from the window, it had escaped from and more the three yards away from the fireladder, which terminated on the level of the third floor. On the top of the fireladder was a guy who tried to reach for the child with a stake which was fortunately not long enough to reach it. He tried to convince the child to crawl in his direction, but the little bundle was too frightend

to move.

“Sorry, Cin, please wait for me,” Julie said and jumped out of the car, as if I could do anything than wait and watch, locked in the back of a police cruiser with my hands cuffed to my back and my feet in leg-irons.

I pressed my face against the window in order to see what happened next. Julie exchanged a few words with one of the passengers. Then she gave the guy an order to climb down immediately and as soon as he was on the ground she headed upstairs. She talked to the child with a calm voice while she climbed up to the top rung of the ladder without any other support than the house wall. From there she was able to reach the gutter and tugged on it to test its fixing. My heart stopped beating, some woman cried, when she swung herself up to gutter away from the child. Well I had seen her doing something like this in the gym, but forty feet above the ground without a safety net or anchor line this was an awesome stunt.

Next I saw her crawl along roof with her boots on the gutter 'till she reached the child, which she carefully lifted up, petting it, while she turned to the open window. With the wining child on one arm, she ascended the roof like a cat, 'till she reached the open window the child must have fell out earlier and put it through before she disappeared herself. The people, who had watched this with disbelieve cheered.

It was only then, when the next police car arrived, the Sargent, who was now in charge was immediately told

what had happened, before Julie who had found a spare key to the corresponding flat inside was downstairs with the child – a little girl of about two years – on her arms. He congratulated Julie for her brave action, before she got an advice, that it was too dangerous to take action without backup. However the fireworkers who were on the way were called off, the mother of the child, who had been shopping around the block was first shocked and then more than happy when she heard what had happened, while I was forced to watch all this imprisoned on the back seat of Julie's car.

When Julie finally returned to me, she was eager to release me from my handcuffs and irons. She whispered, "please, Cin, tell the Sargent, that you wanted to be arrested by me for fun, because this is, what I told him. I will be in REALLY big trouble, if you don't." I understood. The Sargent headed for us.

"Okay Julie, but you will have to pay for it!" I whispered back.

"Whatever you want." That was an offer, I could not reject.

"So you are the lady who likes to be arrested?" The Sargent addressed me and dismissed Julie.

"Not really, I just wanted to know how it works, so I asked my friend Julie to show me. I did not know, that it would take that long." I lied without hesitation.

"Normally it is forbidden to give civilians access to police equipment, and if your friend would not have done, what she did right now, I would file it. However you have been hold under restraints

without proper reason. So it's my duty to ask you if you want to press charges against the arresting officer?" I gave him a winning smile and convinced myself, that Julie could not hear my answer.

"No, it was entirely my fault, I talked Julie into this and when she refused I even claimed a favor she owes me"

"You are sure, that you have not been mistreated?"

"Absolutely! However may I talk to her right now?"

"Why not? That's not my business." I went to Julie.

"What did you say?"

"Nothing, which does not conform with your version of the story, yet."

"Thanks, Cin, I could have been fired, if you told him something different."

"You said, that you wanted to pay for it."

"Yes and I will do what I can do."

"Well there are just two things, which are quite easy for you to do."

"What do you want?"

"First, you tell me, who was the knight you talked about, the whole story and don't omit any details."

"I haven't told it to anyone, but you shall hear it – and second?"

"Friday in four weeks it's Halloween, you will accompany me to a costume party."

"That's not worth to mention, we did this many times."

"That's not all, I will prepare the costumes for the two of us and you will go as my sidekick in whatever I put on you. You have to promise this right now."

"That's your revenge. You want to make me a fool out of me in public. That is a very hard condition."

"I can still tell the Sargent that it was not my idea to spend this evening chained up in the backseat of a police cruiser."

"Okay, I promise!"

"And I want to hear the story about that 'knight you met once' this evening."

"There is still a lot of paperwork to be done."

"I can wait, besides you promised me a dinner and I need a ride home anyway." It took an hour 'till everything was finished. Julie got a headline in the local papers and was the hero of the weak.

We went to Julie's home, with me on the front seat this time, and had the dinner she had already prepared for us. It was a fine meal and we had a lot to talk about.

"I met Sam Jefferson a couple of weeks ago, when he was on a weekend visit to his parents." I started a balloon.

"Really, how was he doing?" It should sound like a rhetoric question, but I knew her better than others and did her the favor to provide her with some additional information.

"Well the latest news are from Liz. She told me, that he graduated from West Point last week, cum laude, she said. He should be in town right now. I guess he is assigned for the base for some time. He might make a big career in the military."

"That nice for him." She did not show any reaction.

"He is a handsome guy, not married

and pretty tough. I bet not even you can scare him off."

"Cin, I am REALLY NOT interested in Sam Jefferson, and as I told you HE was NEVER interested in me!"

"Maggie Olson would do almost everything to get him."

"Maggie Olson is a stupid goose and Sam ought to be smart enough to know that." Maggie Olson was the younger sister of Erik T. Olson III and Julie's personal enemy. Their dad was and is the mayor of our hometown. No one knew why, but she hated Julie as hell. Who claims, that this might have been so, because she had dumped Erik T. once, cannot be an insider, because Maggie hated Erik T. as well, and probably had cheered, when he was dumped. Although brother and sister these two were too selfish and self-centered to care about anyone than themselves.

Of course Julie was smart in school and attractive, but she was not popular among the guys. Taller than average and always ready to compete with everyone any time in sports as well as in scholar ratings, she was not, what most guys expected from their girl friends.

Maggie on the other hand was always well dressed and styled up to the latest standard – she would not have set her feet in a gym if it were not absolutely necessary – and changed her friends faster than other people their underwear. She did not spend much effort on school, because she rightly assumed, that her father's influence would open her the doors that were usually bared for people like Julie and me.

Looking back it was clear, that they could not have been friends: From Maggie's viewpoint, Julie's background was not adequate to be acquainted with and Julie could not stand Maggie's attitude. But as different as their characters were, there also were no obvious collision points. Nevertheless for some reason I could never figure out, Maggie tried to pick on Julie at every opportunity and as you might have guessed Julie by now was not very good in forgiving this and always stroke back. The tension between them reached its climax, when Maggie, well dressed as always, collided physically with Julie, who had volunteered together with me and others in preparing a school party. Julie was carrying a table alone and ran right into Maggie, who just surrounded the wrong corner at the wrong time. They both went down.

"Sorry," Julie muttered, having not realized, that it was Maggie, who presumably just wanted to take a look at a few strong guys at work on a sunny day. "You dirty bitch, see what you did," she yelled at Julie, who was half buried under the table, she had carried. "You ruined my dress." Unfortunately the collision had taken place so that one of the table legs got caught into one of the cuffs of her blouse and ripped it off. "That will teach you a lesson." She took her purse and smashed it heavily directly into Julie's face, before Julie who was half buried and the table had any chance to react.

Another girl would have cried out, but not Julie. She hit the table with both

feet and smashed it against Maggie, who immediately cried. Later it turned out that a sharp edge had sliced her forearm, which had to be sewn by a doctor. Before she could get away Julie was above her and hit her with her right fist directly above her left eye. Julie was able to fight like a guy and even tougher than most of them.

Maggie would have taken more hits, but it was Sam who stopped Julie like I had never seen anyone stop her before. He had also volunteered for preparing the school party and was about to carry something neither me nor Julie could lift off. I remember the scene as if it happened yesterday. Fortunately he was just a few yards away, when the fight started and pulled down his burden immediately. Before Julie could score a second hit he had reached her, gripped her with both hands around her hips and lifted her up, as if she weighed nothing. He did not take any risk and carried Julie away from Maggie's shattered form immediately, as if she weighed nothing.

"Sam, let me down, she smashed me in the face." Julie struggled, but did not manage to wriggle herself out of Sam's arms, who had manoeuvred her above his shoulder. As strong as Julie might be, there was not much she could do against it. Sam was strong like a bear and equally determined.

"I know Julie, I saw it," he replied calmly while he carried her further away.

"Let me down then, I am not finished yet."

"Yes you are!" His tone made clear, that he would not discuss this point, but

Julie was too furious to give up easily.

“Let me down.” She started to attack Sam. At that moment she was really mad at him, but her violent struggling remained completely fruitless. She could as well have tried to damage an army tank tank with here fists. Sam simply lifted her buttocks higher over his shoulder, in order not to be kicked and ignored her fists hitting persistently at his back, which was all she could do in this position. He carried her even further away from Maggie and I followed them.

“The fight is over, Julie. You won, she lost.” Sam’s voice was still calm, but as firm, as Julie’s was furious.

“You are on her side.”

“No I am not, but her father is the mayor. If this is investigated do you think they will blame it on her?” He kept his grip on her and waited one or two minutes still Julie stopped her fruitless attempts of freeing herself.

“Julie, if you manage to behave like a mature woman, I will let you down, but you will NOT go back to her – I will go back and talk to Maggie.” She did not answer but also did not move anymore and he finally let her down. Julie fumed, but he stood between her and her target. Sam played football and knew how to tackle guys of twice her size. There was no way of getting around him.

“Cin, make sure, that she stays here,” he demanded and left us alone. Julie wanted to follow him on heels and It was very difficult to talk her out of this. However I managed to do so.

I still don’t know, what Sam told

Maggie, but they declared it to be an accident. Maggie had to visit a doctor and could not attend the school party. She had to wear sunglasses for two weeks. After that Julie had a real enemy.

That was all I knew ’till then. So although it would be an exaggeration to call Sam a close friend, we were nevertheless well acquainted to each other. But my seventh sense and my recent talk to him told me that there must have been more between Sam and Julie. So I continued: “You told me you liked Sam, but you always picked on him. Maybe you might still have chances, if you can give up that old habit.”

“I did not always pick on him. I admit that I did it a couple of times, but this was not my fault. Sam and the guys he used to hang around with sometimes treated us as babies and a few times HE was particularly fond of demonstrating this to me. I could not handle this so well. That’s all.” That sounded to be the truth, but she did not look into my face, when she gave that reply.

“Well, despite your claims, that he never took a closer look at you, he asked me about you when I met him last time.”

“You mentioned already, that you met him.”

“Yes, he stopped his truck, to greet me, but I think, he just wanted to know, what you were doing. If you were married or still engaged – a silly question, if I think about it – and things like that. However it was him, who saved you from being thrown out of school after that fight with Maggie Olson.”

“You don’t give up? That fight with

Maggie Olson was not a big deal, it was her fault not mine.”

“But there was more, between you and Sam,” I insisted.

“Yes, but that is a VERY private thing.” She looked away.

“And it has to do with this knight-story you promised to tell me, right?” I was sure that I was on the right track right now.

“I kept it secret from everyone.”

“Nevertheless I want to know it now – everything – and you promised to tell me.”

“There is not much to tell. I owe Sam Jefferson more than I might be able to pay back: One night when Kelly and I were out to Joe’s, you know, that cool bar next to the station, where the older guys used to hang around, we were attacked by three bad guys, probably day laborers which hung around there. We yelled for help, but it was dark and its a bad neighborhood around McNally Street. Nobody seemed to have heard us. One of them had a knife and he cut Kelly’s blouse. They were about to rape us, when Sam appeared. He had ripped off a stake from a fence or picked it up somewhere and knocked two of the guys out – you know he can be like a tank, if he wants to be – and the third ran away.” Sam Jefferson was a mountain of a man even in his late high school time and I had no doubt, that he was able to do this.

“And you claim he was not interested in you! I never met a guy, who would have messed up with three others on my behalf.”

“If Sam had ever had the slightest in-

terest in me, he would have taken advantage of that situation, but he did not. I mean which time is better to win the heart of a girl, than right after you have rescued her? He did something very brave and honest for us, admittedly, like a knight, if you like to call it that way, but he was neither interested in Kelly nor in me and after all I cannot blame him for that. His dad is a general and the commander of the local army base, and neither Kelly nor me were daughters of the local high society.” She made it sound as if everything was said, but knowing her better maybe even better than she knew herself in this aspect, I understood that she was not quit with it.

“Sam never treated anyone according to his heritage. He has always respected me. And he’s respected you even more.” Sam was not shy and could be very direct. I remember him telling Maggie Olson, that she was not his type of girl as straight and direct as Julie did, when she dumped Erik T. When I tried to date him he made it more conciliate, but I definitely met with a rebuff. But when Julie picked on him, and she definitely did it more than a hundred times, he had never been rough on her.

“Maybe you are right, but that’s all I know. When the fight was over, he said ‘glad to serve you ladies’s, everything okay?’ and when we nodded he said ‘I have no time to stay, I will see you sometimes’, tipped at his head with two fingers and walked away with his long stride like the lonesome ranger in the old trash-movies. The three guys got away

with it, apart from a headache, maybe one had a broken nose and the other lost a few teeth. But neither Kelly nor me were fond of initiating a law suit. Well I kicked the thrashed ones in the groins before we left.”

“Yeah, and if I count one and two together, this was the reason, why you suddenly wanted to become a police officer, right? Have you met Sam after that?”

“Yes and no. Yes, I wanted to do something against people like these guys, who take advantage of others, just because they can do so, and no, I haven’t seen Sam ’till then and I haven’t heard from him either. The next evening I went to the army base, where his parents live. I wanted to say something like ‘thanks for rescuing us’, maybe also ‘sorry for picking on you sometimes’, but he had left for West Point just that morning. It had been his last day in town and from their reaction I concluded that he had not bothered to tell them about that fight. What should I do? Tell his parents, what he had not wanted them to know? I got his address from one of his friends and wrote him a stupid letter, but I never got an answer. That’s the whole story. I have never told it to anyone else before and I would appreciate it, if you will keep it that way.”

“But you fell in love with Sam.” It was not a question, I saw it in her eyes.

“Although I did not promise to tell you this, it doesn’t matter anymore, that I had been in love with Sam long before, for almost the whole high school time. I

was very jealous, when you tried to date him and glad that you met a rebuff. And before you ask, I was still in love with Sam for some time after this incident. But although I hate to admit it, I was a little girl then and it was finished when I went to the academy.”

“And you never told me about it, while I shared everything with you. Why didn’t you try to date Sam? I would not have tried to date him, if I knew, that my best friend was in love with him.”

“Oh yes, you would! I was not good in dating any guy. You would have told it to everyone and I would have been the fool of the class.” These days must have been kind of hell for proud Julie. First the guy she was in love with and too shy to talk straight to for five long years, did for her what every girl wishes a man would do for her once in a lifetime and then he disappeared without giving her a chance to explain anything.

“Who else knows about this?”

“If Kelly hasn’t told the story, just you, her, Sam and me.”

“Are you really through with him?”

“Cin, it was a girlish romance.”

“That was not my question.”

“Yes I swear, he means nothing to me anymore, except that there is a debt I would like to pay back if I can someday.” Maybe, no probably she believed to tell me the truth, but I was not convinced. It would be worth to confront her with Sam and observe her reaction. A marvelous plan formed itself in the back of my mind.

4 Showdown at Halloween

It was Friday and the day, I had been waiting for. This evening I would attend a halloween party with Julie as my sidekick. I had elaborated a perfect scenario. I would go as police officer – old fashioned style, modern uniforms were too functional for my purposes and Julie would have to attend me as my prisoner. Of course she did not know about it yet.

During our high school time we had visited a couple of Halloween parties together and usually I had been her sidekick. Our costumes had been simple papermasks or something like this. Today would be different. It had cost me a lot of bucks to prepare everything for the two of us, but it was worth every cent.

I would wear an old fashioned but very stylish police uniform, with a fake gun and fake handcuffs attached to my belt. I am the uniform type of girl, I knew I would look great in it. I intended Julie to wear a fake prison uniform – white cotton with black stripes, but more sexy than real ones. Narrow panties and a sleeveless top, that outlining her figure and the ID-No 4275 on her back. I had bought cheap costumes and changed them according to this concepts in homework. They were not expensive. However the work occupied a lot time.

But considering that Julie would have to accept what I put onto her, it was fun to do it. Although I had taken precise figures, figures that made me a little bit jellies, I made her top a little bit smaller than necessary – she would look very sexy in it.

This was not nice, in particular, since Julie was the cop in real life, but by no means extraordinary. She had arrested me for false reason and locked me into her car. God knows, what she intended to do with me, if that emergency call would not have reached us. That cried for retaliation: The real trick and that was the expensive part of our outfits were a few additions, she would be committed to wear.

Her costume was not to be complemented by the usual fake cuffs or a lightweight ball and chain. Instead there was a steel collar with welded rings at front and back, secured by an integrated safety lock, to which I had attached a massive chain of appropriate length by a quality padlock. It would provide a stylish look dangling along her spine, but the the most important object of her outfit, was a pair of old-fashioned looking handcuffs, which could be affixed to its elongated terminating link, I had learned that those were known as Darbies in common slang. They looked like the ones in old Sherlock Holmes movies, but were brand new of fine craftsmanship, something like tempered stainless steel, twice as heavy than her “high-security-cuffs”, woman-size with no ratchets just large enough to accommodate Julie’s comparatively strong wrists with an inescapable fit.

The company, from which I bought these items for an astronomic price assured me that they were even more inescapable than any other model on the market, for a number of reasons I

don't want to repeat here but in particular because of the unique materials used in their fabrication. The final product, I received just in time, was indeed very impressive: Everything was smoothly grinded and the surface was so hard that I couldn't scratch it with anything in my household.

There was no need to double lock them, they opened and closed with one click as precise and secure as a safe-door and would not open without a proper key. There was no chain connecting the swivels instead they were directly interlinked, which should allow her to twist her wrists against each other but would keep them next to each other with not much more than an inch of separation. The cuffs themselves were much stronger and heavier than the police ones she had used on me, but thanks to their smooth rounded edges also much more comfortable to wear. The custom tailor who had offered them on the internet under the brand name 'supreme quality slave-bracelets' praised them as ideal for long-time wearing featuring unique safety-locks, which were of the cylindrical type encased by a thick layer of metal. And the corresponding keys indeed looked like the ones of Julie's high security cuffs I had the opportunity to try out on her or the ones I use for my front door.

The thick chain with the large terminating link connecting these cuffs to the collar came from a local hardware store. It was long enough not to impose any further restriction on her movements and therefore merely served decorative

purposes. I had added it to her outfit, in order prohibit the trick she had used in my bathroom to turn the cuffs from back to front. As flexible as Julie might be as long as the handcuffs were affixed to the collar that way, there was no chance to get her joined hands around her buttocks and that meant during the whole evening she would not be able to drink or eat without my assistance.

Julie has a great figure, but she is not busty, her cup-size is not larger than mine, but with her hands joined in the small of her back even without elbow cuffs – an alternative I considered shortly but abandoned as unsuitable for a public event – she would be forced to stretch her breast out. The tight fit of her blouse combined with her flat stomach ought to compose an eye-catcher.

This well designed ensemble of restraints was complemented by a pair of leg-irons connected by a thick but comfortable fifteen inch chain. They would limit her stride considerably – well I did not want to be outrun by my prisoner and anyhow, since she was not accustomed to small ladylike steps, they would serve her as a useful reminder about that. Apart from this they were a perfect match to the handcuffs in design, quality and last but not least security.

There was no escape from these restraints without the keys and of course I did not consider to let her get even near these, after they had been affixed on her. I had prepared two keyrings with one key for each different lock of this ensemble and locked one of it into my small

private safe as a backup. Needless to say that I had spent a lot of time in planning and imagining all this. So I was very excited, when Julie showed up. It was four a clock in the afternoon. A little bit early for me since I had some work left on my desk, I had intended to finish, but this was no problem.

“Hi Julie, ready for the big night?” I greeted her.

“As a ‘sidekick’ to what? You made it a big secret and I still don’t know what to expect.”

“You will find out soon, I hope you will not be on duty tomorrow.”

“No, I guessed, that you would not like to leave a party before noon.”

“That’s right – believe me – it will be great fun.”

“That sounds like great fun for you.”

“I have prepared great costumes for both of us.”

“I know that I promised to accept your choice, but I don’t want to go as a chicken or a playboy-bunny.”

“No, no... it’s nothing like that, I promise that you will get a decent costume, but maybe it’s not so comfortable...”

“What is it, Cin, King Kong?”

“I’ll change into mine, then you may guess.” She looked to the ceiling and I went to my bedroom and switched to my fake police uniform.

“What do you think?”

“Very original, you go as a Victorian police sargeant and I am your stooge. But you have to turn the gadgets around, before you close the belt. It’s against regulations. And that badge belongs on the

other side.”

“Well, thanks, but you are not my stooge, look at this.” I showed her the neatly folded prison uniform, I had created. She swallowed.

“Cin, I am a real police officer, I can’t go as your prisoner.”

“You promised to wear, what I choose for you and it’s neither obscene nor uncommon for Halloween.”

“But Cin,...”

“Didn’t you promise?”

“Well yes, but it is simply not fair to dress me as a prisoner.”

“It’s my choice and I have nothing else in store.”

“And you also did not have anything else in mind.”

“Do you wear it without complaint or are your promises meaningless to you?”

“Well you blackmailed me to give this promise and I hate to do it, but I have kept all my promises up to now and I am not going to change this today.”

“That’s fine with me. It will be a perfect fit, trust me. Do you want to try it on?”

“Sure Cin, but not right now, the party starts at eight, I think?”

“Half past eight actually, most parents want to accompany their children for the ‘trick and treat.’ Trust is good, but observation is better. But since you haven’t tried it at all, I might have to make some final adjustments on your costume, so do me the favour and put it on.” I tossed her the garment. “You know the guest room.” She took it without comment and came back with her clothes over her arm.

"You put a lot of work in it, Cin. It looks great, really, but the blouse is a little bit too small for me," she complained.

"It looks good on you, but it's not complete," I said and before she could react I snapped the collar with the attached chain around her throat.

"Cin, that's metal and heavy, I am going as a prisoner and not as a galley slave." She fingered the padlock. "And it is locked"

"But, it's sexy and you look gorgeous." Take a look at it. I opened the bathroom door and offered her the mirror.

"Not bad, Cin," she admitted after a turn. "Nevertheless this is too sexy for halloween, I hope you have the key to this collar."

"Sure Julie, but it's not sexy enough, did you remember to bring high-heeled shoes with you."

"You reminded me about that, yesterday. Yes, I have a pair of high-heeled shoes."

"Take them on then, you will make the queen of the evening." She got a pair of modestly heeled, black lace shoes out of her bag, took off her sport shoes.

"Take off that socks too, no one wears this kind of shoes with white socks."

"If you insist, but I don't know, if I can bear these shoes the whole evening without socks." The shoes were not new, but barely worn.

I never saw Julie in something else than sport shoes over the past years. Well if her bare feet should become sore, that was her problem.

"Then you will have to go barefoot." She finally gave in, removed the socks and stepped into the shoes.

"They are not really high, but they will do," I criticized. Julie is six inches taller than me and these modestly high heels added another inch to that difference. Despite my well designed uniform I felt small and pale beneath this stunning beauty in her prisoner dress.

"Now comes the finishing touch, close your eyes." I turned her collar, so that the chain was on the back and saw that she looked through her eyelids.

"You are cheating." I maneuvered the handcuffs through the terminating ring of the chain, carefully not to produce a traitorous noise. This was well hidden from her sight, but she was suspicious.

"Put your hands on your back." Her back went stiff.

"Cin, if you think that I will wear plastic handcuffs, for the whole evening..." It was crucial that I could convince her, even if I had to bend the truth a little bit.

"It's just for effect, Julie, I have put a lot of work in it. This is my surprise and you spoil it. Just two matching bracelets, that look really great. If you keep your hands where I want them now, it will look as if you are chained. We can omit them, if you don't like them, but give me at least a try. You promised to let me make your outfit."

"I know that I will regret it," she said, but moved her arms backward hesitantly. When her wrists were close enough together, I made short work of it and clicked both cuffs around them.

“Now you may open your eyes.” She opened her eyes and turned her joint hands sideways to get a look on the cuffs.

“Fine Cin, I always buy my bracelets lockable and welded together.” She gave them a strong tug only to find out that they inseparably connected.

“They are not welded together, you can turn them against each other. This provides much more freedom than your hinged handcuffs. Besides they look like genuine Victorian manacles, take a look at them.”

“That’s fine, Cin, but how do I open these things?”

“They come off with a key, similar to your handcuffs.”

“Damned Cin, they ARE handcuffs, I will not go with you like this. Take them off.” She tried to pull her hands out of the cuffs, but without success.

“They are called ‘slave-bracelets’ and they belong to your costume.” She investigated the bracelets only to find out that there was no way to open them without the proper key.

“Cin, you have planned this whole setup, just to put me in chains. FORGET IT! The collar might be okay, but I will definitely NOT accompany you as long as I am forced to wear these handcuffs, give me the keys,” she demanded firmly, extending her right hand as far as her restraints allowed.

“They are well hidden. You can either come with me like this and I will take them off, when the party is over or...”

“What else, do you want to kidnap me?”

“No, but I lied to a police officer on

your behalf, and you promised to go in what I choose. However I will go to the party and if you don’t want to join me, I suggest that you take the phone and call a locksmith, because it will be along night and I might forget where I left the keys like you forgot your promises.” She was not amused about this proposition.

“You cannot do that, Cin, I know what I promised, but no one goes to a Halloween party in chains, please take them off,” she pleaded using her small children voice.

“Many people do, they belong to their costumes.”

“But they wear plastic chains not real ones.” She jingled the chain to emphasize her point.

“Some people wear real ones and you would have ripped them off if they were from plastic.”

“But these are heavy, I can hardly move in them.”

“You just have to keep your hands at your back and they are much more comfortable than the handcuffs you put on me!” She pulled with all her strength, but without success at the cuffs in order to tear them each other. Then she grasped both bracelets on after another with the opposite hand in order to pull the corresponding hand out of it. But finally she had to admit, what I knew already. She was not able to free herself. “You don’t give me a chance, do you?”

“I just insist that you keep your promise.”

“Okay Cin, I give up and will do what you want, but you must take the keys with you, for safety reasons, and you also

must release me, when I have to go to the toilet or when you leave me alone. Otherwise I prefer to call a locksmith.”

“That’s fine with me, besides your costume is not complete yet.”

“What else do you want?” I showed her the remaining parts of her ‘costume’.

“Just a minor thing. I also have a pair of leg-irons and a leash.”

“No!” I simply pointed to my phone.

“Then I suggest that you call a locksmith.”

“Okay I will take that also.” She did not say a word when I attached the leash to the front of her collar and the irons to her ankles, but if black looks could kill someone, I would have been dead immediately. I slept her lightly on the buttocks.

“There you go. I suggest to make yourself comfortable. I have to finish some work.”

“Cin someday I will take bloody revenge on you,” she promised.

“You have tried once, do you remember? Besides, I have a task for you. There is a bag full of sweets next to the door. Distribute them among the kiddies that will ring. I don’t want to be called a Scrooge. You may serve yourself too.”

“You don’t expect me to open the door, like this.” She turned sideways to give me a look at her hands, securely confined by the cuffs.

“You made me pay this pizza boy that way, do you remember? And it was not halloween and I did not wear a costume.”

“What if I don’t open the door?”

“Nothing special, but its a long evening and you will be my prisoner for

quite awhile. If you are nice to the kids, I will be nice to you too, if you are not...”

“That’s blackmail and kidnapping.”

“Call it, what you want, but it is entirely up to you, you can still call a locksmith. In case you are thirsty there is some ice tea with a straw on the kitchen table.” I left for my business room, and opened the window. It did not take long, ’till the door rang.

“Wait a minute, I am not completely finished with my costume.” I heard her voice. Half a dozen times she went through with this trick, but then I heard, a thrilling voice. “Wow are these handcuffs real?”

“No they are not, they are just part of my costume. If you don’t tell it to anybody I will go as a prisoner tonight.”

“I bet, you can’t take them off, may I touch them.”

“Of course I can take them off.”

“They are real, and you are in leg shackles too. You are a real prisoner.”

“You got enough sweets by now, I won’t give you more.” Julie fumed and closed the door louder than necessary.

“Mum, mum, the lady had real handcuffs on, and leg irons too, she’s a real prisoner.” I giggled imagining Julies face right now.

The next customers were pleased, although one of them dared too ask. “How do you get these handcuffs off, please show me the trick, I want to learn this too.”

“They are not real, they are just trick handcuffs. They are part of my costume.”

“But how do they open?”

“That’s the secret no escape artist

tells her audience.”

“You are a real escape artist then?”

“Yes I am and you interrupted me in practicing for my performance this evening.”

“Can you show us just some minor trick, please.”

“No kids, not now, I am late already, I have really no time.”

Altogether she did a better job than I had expected in concealing the true nature of her ‘jewelry’. At half past seven I joined her.

“I am ready for taking Miss Houdini to her audience,” I teased.

“Cin I don’t know if this is right.”

“I thought, you are going to keep your promises always.”

“If you insist, I do, but Cin usually there may be some people, who know the two of us, in particular since I am a police officer. What if some of my colleagues show up.”

“Tell them that you lost a bet, I don’t think that their costumes are more tasteful than yours.”

“Nevertheless it can be very humiliating to appear in chains. If Maggie Olson sees me like this I will have to leave the country.”

“I doubt, that Maggie Olson will show up. Sam Jefferson is back in town and that will keep her busy.”

“Don’t mention Sam, Cin. He MUST NOT see me like this, that would be worse than meeting Maggie Olson.” That sounded really anxious.

“Why? I think he is was never interested in you and you don’t care about him anymore?” She blushed.

“No, but..., damned Cin, I just don’t want him to see me like this.”

“Anyway have you ever met him on a halloween party? And since he will not go there, Maggie Olson won’t do it as well. If you don’t tell them most of the people won’t realize, that you are in real chains. Prisoner costumes are selling well this season.” The latter was true, but I was not so sure about, what I told her about Sam and Maggie. What I held back was, that I met Sam a few days ago and that I had told him, that I would go to that particular party. He said that he was not the halloween type, but asked me explicitly if Julie might join me.

Although he covered it by some small talk, I got the impression that he had a strong interest in meeting Julie. Maybe it was, because he felt guilty of not having answered her letter, maybe there was another reason behind it. Anyway my friend Julie had also repeated a little bit too often, that she had no interest in Sam anymore. It promised to become an interesting evening.

I admit, that I did not feel good, but I had not lied to her. Julie is my best friend and usually we talk about everything, but since she had not told me anything about Sam, I did not consider it unfair to treat this matter the same way. If I would have told her, that there was a the slightest chance to meet Sam, eventually with Maggie on his side, even trussed up as she was, ten horses wouldn’t have been sufficient to get Julie into my car.

Unaware of these facts she allowed me to help her into the front seat of

my car. She only complained as expected about the discomfort of having her hands on her back.

"I assume that it is useless to promise you anything to let me out of these handcuffs during the ride. If we will have an accident it can be very dangerous to be trapped in the car." I closed her seat belt.

"How do you transport your prisoners?"

"Well mostly the same way you are treating me now, except for the fact that we rarely use leg irons and never fix their handcuffs to a steel collar."

"Stop whining Julie, it's just, five miles, but if you insist, we can take the bus and walk the rest of the way." That proposition kept her quiet for the rest of the journey. We arrived in time. Some people might have noticed, but no one asked about Julie's chains and she warmed up after a while. I stayed next to her, formally keeping her on the leash, but in practice to provide her with any assistance she might need, for taking a seat, eating drinking and so on. She even chatted with some of the girls and joked about her outfit. I remember her talk to a lady of limited brightness.

"Cindy told me into this. She got these fake chains," she rattled a little bit, "they sound almost like real ones. I could not compete with my pirate outfit and that's why I am her prisoner."

"They look very real in contrast to mine, may I touch them." She wore a prisoner outfit too, but here shackles were fake. Just two plastic bracelets with two plastic rings on each of them. It was so obvious that not even a ten year old

child would have considered them to be real.

"Wow are those heavy."

"Well, I got used to them, they don't bother me at all."

"How do you get them off?"

"Very simple, they are magnetic, I just pull on them and they separate."

"Can you show me that?"

"Actually it is very easy to take them off, but very difficult to get them on. Cindy fumbled more than ten minutes, to get me into them, right," I nodded. "and if I take them off it will spoil my costume."

"And those leg shackles work the same way."

"That's true, except for the fact, that it is even more difficult to put them together. That's why I put them on before we drove here and now I have to make tiny steps like this," she tripped to demonstrate it, "not to rip them off."

"But they look very real, where did you get them and how much did they cost? Shackles like those would improve my outfit drastically."

"Doubtlessly, ask Cindy, she did not tell me, I am just the one who has to wear them." She talked very convincingly without blushing and those girls believed her as well.

"I got them from EBAY. They belonged to a former escape artist, who used them in his show. Presumably they are unique. Don't ask about the price." I could not help teasing Julie. "but Julie, who is a police officer, claimed to be able to find out the difference between fake shackles and real ones anytime. She

failed and that's why she is the one who has to wear them today. If she takes one of them off, we will have a lot of fun, because she will have to strip at Joe's tonight, so take care that she is not sneaking out."

"Wow cool, you have to stay like this all the time."

"Unfortunately, yes"

"Cin, you rat," Julie whispered into my ear, "some of these chicks will stick to my heels like patent glue, if I could get my hands on your throat I would struggle you."

"But you can't raise your hands against me. It will be interesting if someone finds that out."

"Hi Julie, hi Cindy, how are you doing." I recognized the voice immediately as did Julie, although she had claimed not to have heard it for more than four years. She stiffened and tugged desperately on her handcuffs. If there would have been the slightest possibility that her chains could be broken by human power that would have happened, but they did not break. She breathed heavily, before she turned around and smiled.

"Hi, Sam, hi Maggie, it has been quite a while since we have been in school. You look both great. Excuse me, that I can't give you a hand, but I lost some stupid bet and Cindy insists, that I keep my hands on my back."

Sam did not respond immediately, his eyes met Julie's 'till she looked away. "Let's shake hands anyway," he closed his big right hand carefully around Julie's right one and noticed her handcuffs with interest.

"Looks like she has made quite sure, that they stay there." Julie blushed. She must have wished to sink into the ground, in particular when Maggie, who did not shake hands with Julie, said louder than necessary, "These bracelets suit you so well, you should wear them everyday."

Sam was a big guy with hands big enough to span my neck. Maybe five inches taller than Julie, his shoulders were almost twice as broad as that of an average guy of his height. He had been a legend in high school football and every college would have taken him with grace, but his father, grandfather and grand-grandfather had served as high ranking officers in the United States Army and so it was natural for him to follow that path, although there might have been other possibilities.

"Hi Sam, it seems, that we are colleagues." I welcomed him, with respect to his outfit. He wore the uniform of the Texas Rangers, with cowboy boots, a white stetson, a big six gun at his side and the lone star of Texas at his chest. He caught the ball I had unintentionally thrown immediately.

"Yeah, Cin, nice to meet you. May I ask you a favor under colleagues?" I swear that I did not know what he was up to and replied, "Sure Sam."

"Could you temporarily handle this prisoner of yours over to my custody, there is an old thing between us, I would like to clear up, at a slow dance maybe," he said, while he took hold on Julie's leash. Julie stepped back and shook her head violently, so that he could not see

this, but I showed no mercy.

“She’s all yours,” I announced, ignoring her black looks. It was not easy to get Sam on the wrong foot, to my amusement he was not sure what to do with a chained girl.

“Could you also release her, I mean just temporarily for the moment?” He obviously did not like the idea to deal with her while she was in shackles, and Julie used the opportunity to extend her wrists in my direction with a demanding gesture, “please, officer,...YOU promised,” but I refused my assist.

“That’s not a good idea, Sam, it was very difficult to arrest her and she can do a slow dance very well and I have to insist that you guard her intently.” Julie’s eyes looked like daggers right now.

“You can dance like this?” He faced her and she nodded reluctantly.

“Did you do this before?” Julie shook her head, but did not say a word, which was not typical for her. I still don’t know, if she speculated, that he would retreat from his intention because it was too weird for him or if she really wished, that he would lead her to the dance floor. Presumably she did not know it herself. However Sam was now determined to go through with it.

“Well, it is the first time for me too. I mean dancing with a girl who is in handcuffs and leg irons.” He saw Maggie’s face, noticed that he was about to commit a faux-pas and addressed her: “Excuse me, Maggie, but Julie and I are old friends and I have not seen her for more than four years. The next dance will be yours, I promise.”

“No problem, Sam, I will take a seat right her, see you later.” Maggie replied with a sweat smile, but I knew her better than that. She was fuming and Julie would better not cross her ways tonight. I was not in the mood to chat with her and announced that I would get myself a drink at the bar, which gave me a better look on the development on the dance floor. Unfortunately I left my jacket at our table in order to keep my seat – this should turn out to have been a big mistake.

Sam dragged Julie, who offered only weak and half-hearted resistance, to the dance floor, where they had just started to play a slow dance. He guided her gently but firmly on her leash and she could not do anything than follow him right into the center of attention. Some people stared at Julie, who was in handcuffs and leg irons, but managed to keep up with the music. I observed that she tried to keep some distance from him but he left her no choice. With her feet in medium high heels she was not used to and her hands not available for counterbalance she had enough to do to take care, that she did not lost balance or got trapped by the shiny chain, dangling between her ankles. However at first I noted, that she repeatedly stamped on his feet obviously on purpose which he ignored.

Although Sam held her gently, I saw that he forced her to follow his lead. Those hands that guided her on the dance floor were strong enough to crash steak-bones between two fingers. During a public grill party an older boy from

outside picked on Tim Brannigan, who was in our class. I don't know for what reasons, he threatened Tim to break his bones like one of the T-bones he crushed with both hands. Sam took another bone from the plate with one hand and cracked it with his thumb. "You mean like this. How many friends did you bring with you?" The bully went red, but did not dare to threaten Sam, who looked like a bear. When he felt that his companions were about to leave the battlefield, he muttered something like "we will remember you." but his immediate retreat made him look ridiculous. Our gang laughed and we had fun. Well almost all of us. Someone and I think it was Julie muttered something about the caveman behaviour in modern civilization, just loud enough that Sam couldn't avoid to get the message? Well I don't remember the precise wording, but it would have been typical for their non-relationship at those days.

Now he held her with those hands and she couldn't do much about it. I saw that he whispered something into her ears to which she strongly reacted by struggling against her chains, but he controlled her easily and she calmed down. Sam did not let her go, when the song was finished and kept her on the dance floor. They played the old Casablanca classic, "As time goes by" and I got the impression that she relied more on him in her movements and that this was not entirely due to the music, in particular since she did not stamp on his feet even once. After another round accompanied by Don Williams' "In love

with a rodeo man," her pretty head actually rested on his shoulder.

I was not the only one who was watching with interest. Unaware that I observed this, Maggie clenched her teeth. If black looks could harm people, hers would have cut right through Julie like a bolt of lightning. This was about to go terribly wrong. I had to warn my friend.

Two weeks later Julie briefed me, what had happened on the dance floor that night. While she complained about and fought against his guidance, according to Julie Sam began to talk to her about as follows.

"Julie, I know, that you are mad on me, because you wrote me a love letter and I did not answer, but believe me that this was primary in your own interest."

"It was no love letter, I just wanted to express my gratitude, that you saved us from being raped."

"It's still in my briefcase, shall I quote it?"

"I know what I wrote!"

"You are a smart girl, you should know why I could not answer that letter immediately."

"Simply because you did not care about it, maybe you did not want to hurt me by making this explicit. You are a gentleman, you have always been and that's okay with me."

"No, because it would have been a very evil thing, to take advantage of your temporary feelings."

"What feelings?"

"Well before you wrote that letter you had been mad on me most of the

time, like now.”

“I am not mad at you, as far as it concerns me, we are talking to each other as mature rational beings.”

“I know you well enough, Julie. I snubbed Maggie which was by no means gentleman-like and taught you to the dance floor because if you had managed to get out of these handcuffs and leg irons in time you would be miles away right now. And don’t tell me that you do not curse that ‘jewelry’, because you can’t get out of my embrace without embarrassing yourself.” She shrugged her shoulders which was all she could do and tried to argue in a different direction.

“I admit that I was occasionally mad on you because you and the other guys treated us like babies. Maybe Cin did not see it that way, but you and these guys you used to hang around with, treated my friends and me like little children, sometimes like little sisters, but always with an implicit degradation. Sometimes I was angry about that.”

“Mostly you were angry,” he insisted correctly, “although on that rare occasions you were not, you were well to come along with. Whatever, Julie, I would have chosen the wrong profession, if I had problems to talk straight and we don’t have much time, so let me explain my reasons: I never said to a woman ‘I love you’ and that was what I wanted to say to you, well maybe something like this, before this unfortunate incident happened. I wanted to ask you, if you might consider to wait for me as long as I could get out of Westpoint the first time. To be honest, I was not very

confident, that such a proposition would be welcomed – you had a certain reputation – and I had been about to ask you that three times before, but each time you were so mad at me that it would have been useless to talk to you. I did not want to make myself look like an idiot.”

“And why did you run away, after you saved us from these guys? I would have taken any time you wanted, to listen to you. But you just tipped at your head and disappeared for four long years. If you had not done, what you did, I would have added ‘like a coward’.”

“What I had been forced to do, was the problem, Julie. You would have mixed up love and gratitude. Maybe you would even have married me, if I had seized the opportunity to take you in my arms that evening, only to find out after a few month, that I were not the guy, you wanted to spend your life with. I have no doubt, that it would have been easy to get the answer, I wanted to hear from you that night, right?” she nodded unwillingly, “but I would have never known, if it was a free decision of your heart or an expression of gratitude for something every other guy would have done in my place.”

“I don’t know many guys, who could do this.”

“Let’s say every guy, who could do so. The point is, it was by no means a heroic act, Julie. I am a strong man. That doesn’t make me a hero. It is just a gift, that is occasionally very useful. When I got involved, I had not even realized, that it were you and Kelly, who were in trouble. I was on my way to Joe’s because

I knew that you and some other girls too young to get in legally had made it a sport to sneak in there. I was less than a hundred yards ahead of you two and ran back when I heard Kelly screaming. To beat up these guys was not a big deal.”

“For Kelly and me it was!”

“What you did four weeks ago, was much tougher, I read about it.”

“There was a two year old girl on that roof, I climbed up to fetch her. It was not difficult for me.”

“And did you do it, because you expect this child to pay something back some day?”

“No and I got your point. But if you really were in love with me, why didn’t you wait a suitable time before you answered, what you mistakenly call a love letter?”

“When a young girl, sorry, a young lady, who has picked on every guy around including myself more violently than Shakespeare’s Kate, writes, that ‘it was the most heroic and honorable thing anybody had done for her’ and that ‘her heart belongs to me forever’, then, she is either overwhelmed by temporary feelings, she can’t control – that’s nothing you have to be ashamed of, Julie – or she has been hit on her head by something hard and heavy.” Julie’s face went dark red.

“I know what I wrote, in general, but I don’t remember that part. Was it that bad?”

“It was by no means bad, Julie, these lines were the most heart-fully ones I ever got from someone, but your emotional state must have been completely

distorted in order to write that. I could not accept an offer made under these circumstances for some selfish reasons. Please forgive me, that I also did not reject it.”

“Nevertheless why did you wait four years before you tell me all this, while you are close with Maggie Olson.”

“Dear Julie, first I am not close with Maggie, I have never been. She is not even a friend of mine, just my date for this evening and second although this might have been a long time, I waited three month and not four years before I wrote you.”

“I never received a letter from you. Sam, you must believe me.”

“I know. However after another three month I drew the conclusion, that you did not want to be remembered about what you had written.”

“But, you should have known, that, whatever I might have been thinking three month later, I would have given you an answer, if I only got that letter of yours.”

“That was, what I expected you to do – just to say sorry for that letter, maybe that we should stay friends or something else without obligations. But I could not believe, that you simply should have ignored it. That’s not your style. So almost a year after my move to Westpoint I got the first opportunity to visit my parents for three days and I used this stay to visit you, well that was my intention at least. Unfortunately, you were not at home. I met your mother and made the mistake to introduce myself.”

“She threw you out? Damned Sam,

she hates your father, because she thinks that he is responsible for my father's death, and I never told her, what you had done for me."

"Well she made clear, that she did not wish to see me again, that you had found someone you were happy with and wanted to share your life with and that I should not dare to molest you."

"My god, Sam, I honestly did not know that. She even told you that I was engaged? You must have thought that I am the most selfish and ungrateful woman on earth."

"Julie, you may be the most complicated woman on earth, but as long as I know you, you have been neither selfish nor ungrateful. However after that I was sure, that you never got my letter. But I also thought, that you had found GTE right guy in the meantime. I did not doubt it, until I met Cin a couple of weeks ago."

"Well I thought, that it had been uncomfortable for you that you received a letter from someone like me and that you did not consider it worth an answer. I don't want to reflect on it after such a long time, but since it was addressed to me, may I ask, what you wrote?"

"Well basically, what I tried to tell and ask you today, that you are by no means indebted to me, that I would nevertheless be glad if I could meet you and take you out for a date, if you still consider me worth of such a favor."

"Sam, up to a few minutes ago I was absolutely sure, that you were the last man on earth, that could have been interested in me. How could my mother do

this? She never mentioned it to me and she really told you, that I was engaged?"

"Yes she did. But it's not your mother's fault, Julie. She was determined to protect you. It's ours, mostly mine. I should not have waited 'till the very last day and if you would have given me the slightest hint, that you would not bust me, I would not have done so."

"Sam, you were not the easiest guy to date either. Since even Cin or Maggie could not convince you to go out with them, how should I do that?"

"In your case it would have been sufficient if you had given me a smile now and then instead of jumping up to the ceiling about the slightest tease."

"You mean, I simply could have asked you to go to this party with me, like Maggie did?"

"Do you really need an answer?"

"I guess not." He gave her a warm smile.

"Well, since you are very well secured, and definitely not able to hit me in the face right now, I might dare to ask, if you are still mad at me right now, or if you might consider to go out with me, maybe tomorrow evening?"

"What makes you so sure, that there is not someone else, who might have older rights? It has been a long time 'till those days."

"Because, Cin, told me that last week and if there's someone in the meantime, I think I can face the competition."

"And she also told you that you can meet the two of us today at this party?"

"I admit that I asked her explicitly if there could be an opportunity to meet

you, and before you rip her apart, I also urged her not to mention this to you. Blame it on me. So what about tomorrow evening?”

“Your Westpoint education pays off: precise reconnaissance, locating the weak spots, positioning your troops around the foe, utilization of the moment of surprise, and finally proposing the defeated enemy a honoring surrender – Clausewitz would be proud on you – and I tapped into that trap like a complete fool – bravo Julie.” He wanted to interrupted her, but she continued. “No Sam, don’t say anything, I am completely defeated right now. A woman with friends like Cin doesn’t need enemies. I surrender and if you insist I will go out with you tomorrow, but only if you can convince her to let me out of these damned chains, she has locked on me.”

“You don’t have the keys?” She shook her head, but did not answer and he took a closer look at her ‘jewelry’.

“That hardware looks very solid altogether. She has really chained you up like a dangerous criminal.”

“Even worse,” she wriggled her hands in the unyielding steel cuffs, “I can’t drink, eat or go to the toilet without her assistance.”

“But you are the cop, Julie, and Cin isn’t that dominant. May I assume, that you are not completely innocent about your outfit?”

“Maybe I deserve some punishment – a few month ago I made her wear a pair of normal police handcuffs behind her back, just for fun and I made

her pay the pizza service, while she had them on. That’s all, I swear, and it got me into all this.” She turned sideways to give him another look at her ‘jewelry’. In the meantime the music had changed to faster rhythms, Julie would not have had a chance to keep up with.

“It would be a lie, that I am sorry about it, since it gave me a chance to tell you, what I had to say. However I will take you back to Cin and talk to her about your chains,” he promised in order to continue, “I should attend the next dance with Maggie. She’s my date and this evening should be hers. I can’t change it, but if you agree I will pick you up tomorrow, let’s say at five,” to which she agreed

I had a drink at the bar, when Sam put Julie’s leash back into my hands and said, “Cin, I kept my promise and return your prisoner, but guarding her I had the opportunity to learn that she is a fine young lady, which deserves a release from these shackles.”

“I was sure that she could turn every male warden into a sakeless puppet in that outfit,” I replied in accordance with my rôle.

“Cin, I am serious, you would do me a big favour, if you would free Julie from these chains.” He formulated it politely, but made it sound like an order and I gave in.

“Okay, come on fellow, you don’t deserve it, but you are off the hook.” I announce generously and tugged on her leash, “the keys to your bracelets are in my jacket over there.” Sam gave Julie a last smile and turned to Maggie, who

had raised herself from the stool next to mine and went straight to Sam.

“That ‘jewelry’ is a really nice touch, Julie,” she whispered in passing, “maybe it’s a little bit too bulky for a lady, but for someone like you...” Julie took that poisoned arrow without comment, which was a sure sign that the talk with Sam had occupied her much more than she was willing to admit and remained silent ‘till Sam and Maggie could not hear us anymore, but then she exploded.

“You are a fine friend to give Sam and Maggie an official invitation to this party and to handle me over to him as if I were your private property and before I forget it, thank you very much for telling him that I don’t have a boy friend. Get me out of these chains immediately or I will make you a scene you will never forget, and don’t pull me around like a dog!” I dropped the leash immediately. However the following search for ‘her’ keys remained unsuccessful.

“Damned, I was sure, that I put the keys it into the right pocket.”

“Cin I am not joking, I don’t care about this stupid collar, but I want these cuffs off and these irons too, NOW.”

“But the ring with the complete set of keys for your restraints is gone.”

“Are you crazy, Cin? You take me out chained up like this and loose the keys. Cin, I even can’t go to the toilet and that’s what I need very badly. You should make sure that you are miles away, when I get my hands out of these cuffs, because I might kill you.”

“I can drive home and get the spare keys.”

“They will arrest you for drunk driving. Besides that will take half an hour and I can’t wait that long, I have to go to the toilet soon.”

“I can only have lost them between my car and this place right here. I suggest, that I look up the floor and you ask at the entrance, if someone has already found them.”

“You are right, let’s do it, although I have another suspicion, maybe it’s not your fault...” Neither my search nor Julie’s questioning were successful, the desired keyring seemed to have been swallowed by the ground.

“Did you find them?” was her first question, but I could only shake my head.

“Damned Cin, I have to get out of these chains.” She tugged desperately on the steel bands holding her wrists on her back.

“I am really sorry for that. But what do you mean, you had another suspicion?”

“Maggie! She took the seat next to yours, when we left and that gave her plenty of time to go through your pockets.”

“Maggie may be a bitch, but she is not a thief.”

“I don’t know, Cin, it was a spontaneous suspicion. However I have to go to the toilet soon and fettered like this I cannot even lower my pants.”

“I can accompany you to the toilet and help you.”

“I don’t like the idea. we will look like a lesbian couple.”

“Do you have a better plan?”

“Unfortunately not and it may be too late soon, lets go.”

I joined her in the cubicle. I managed to get her panties off and back on. We got embarrassing looks from some woman, when we got out together, with Julie still in ‘her’ chains, but apart from this we came away with it. The real trouble should follow immediately. The toilets were a little bit away from the gym, where the party took place and hallway was sparsely lighted. So it was no problem for Maggie, who had finished her dance with Sam and pretended to visit the toilet, to hide in the shadow. She grasped Julie rudely from behind at her ear and dragged her into a dark narrow sideway. She dragged her further around a corner and we were practically out of sight.

“Stay out, Cin, and you won’t be hurt, it just between this bitch and me.” She threatened me with the whip that was part of her cowboy costume, while Julie winced in pain, because her nails cut deep into her right ear. Julie struggled but hobbled and with her hands securely fixed behind her back there was not much she could do. I wanted to catch Maggie and pull her away from Julie, who was unable to defend herself. But before I could get my hands on her I caught a heavy blow cross over my breasts, almost ripping of my costume. I screamed in pain and went down.

“Quiet, Cin, or she will take it twice.” She pointed at Julie who fought a fruitless fight against ‘her’ chains, while her eyes teared from Maggie’s painful grasp.

“Don’t waist your powers, bitch, the keys to your ‘jewelry’ are in the drains.

You will have to call a locksmith to get them off, but maybe you could get used to them.”

“I will... ouch” Maggie clenched her claws deeper into Julies ear and made her wince in pain.

“You will keep your hands off Sam, bitch. I don’t know, how you always managed to drag him on your side. But now he belongs to me, do you understand?” Julie nodded and she raised the whip and slept her on her buttocks as strong as she was able to do. Julie is much tougher than everyone I know maybe except for Sam and she did not scream, but I saw tears of pain in her eyes.

“I want to hear it!”

“Sam belongs to you.”

“And that will make you remember it.” She released her grip on Julie’s ear in order to get the proper distance for a heavy blow directly into her face. There seemed to be nothing that anyone could do to prevent this. I closed my eyes, when I heard her scream. But it had not been Julie, it was Maggie who screamed in pain. Unnoticed by me, Sam was there. He caught Maggie’s arm just in time before her strike could reach Julies face and he had not been gentle. Maybe he had even broken Maggie’s arm. He had gotten worried about his date missing to long. I don’t how he managed to find the three of us in that sideway, but he was there just in time to prevent Julie from being marked forever. He had ripped the whip out of Maggie’s hand and threw her down to his feet.

“I suggest you go home now, or I will

take this whip and teach you a lesson you will definitely remember. I never belonged to you and I would prefer to see you never again!" She trembled and wanted to say something, but a look into Sam's face made her turn and run away. Sam's first concern was about Julie. "Are you, okay?"

"I am fine." That was a strong understatement, because some blood ran down from her left ear where Maggie had clenched her claws, "but Cin took a heavy blow from that whip." He noticed me still sitting on the ground and helped me up.

"Sorry Cin,..."

"I am fine, she was after Julie." I pretended to feel better than I really did – I also have my pride – and he produced a clean handkerchief in order to wipe the drying blood out of Julie's face.

"I am very sorry, for what happened to you, ladies and don't get me wrong, Cin, but she would never have dared to do that, if you would have freed Julie from her chains, why is she still fettered?"

"Because Maggie has stolen the keys from my pocket and thrown them in the drains."

"Damned, do you have spare keys?" I nodded. "But I left them at home."

"Sorry, but I think the party is over for you, ladies." It was my impression that for a second or so he was not sure, what to do next. He did not say a word, but I think he was about to leave us alone, when Julie took over.

"It was not your fault, Sam, but it seems that it is your destiny to keep

your hand over me." Her voice lacked the usual self-confidence, and she made it sound shy and insecure. With a charming amount of coyness, she continued, "I hope you will not run away for another four years." Sam looked at the two of us, but I felt, that he had only eyes for Julie.

"No, Julie, I won't. You are not a teenager anymore." She did not answer but her eyes melted into his. That was something I had never observed on Julie. Normally she would have straightened her back and looked right into his eyes. Instead she turned a little bit sideways and looked at him as if she were in love with him? Was she? Anyway no Hollywood actress could not have looked more attractive in this moment. 'Ice-J' had learned her lessons damned fast. She did not give him a chance to get away.

"Sam, you told me some things, I will have to think about, but I have to make a confession too, even if it does not strengthen my position. There's something you should have known, before you asked me to go out with you."

"If it is okay with you right now, I will have the time, you want," and to my address he continued, "Cin, if it is okay with you, I might take care of your prisoner again?" It was not a question. They wanted to be alone.

Julie was not completely happy, when he took her by the leash, but if I would have done so, we would have had a discussion. While HE did so, she kept her mouth and stumbled behind him. It is definitely not easy to walk in high heels when your feet already sore from unused shoes and the leg irons together

with the fact that she was forced to keep her hands in she small of her back did not improve her balance, but she had done that a lot better a few minutes ago. When Sam realized that it was difficult for her to keep his pace he carried her on his arms. Her protest was so small, that I was sure, that this was, what she had in mind.

I felt like the spare tire on a car, mumbled something like “don’t let her escape, see you later” and cared for my own business. I met two or three promising looking guys. Occasionally I watched for Julie and Sam, but they did not have eyes for what was going on around them. Sam had put her on a chair in the corner and ordered something to drink for him and his ‘prisoner’. He cared gently for Julie, who really could not do much with her fettered hands. She had slipped off her shoes and slept her chained, but very attractive legs over each other, while she kept her joined hands at her side, subtly indicating “I am helpless, protect me.” Sam is not stupid and I was sure, the she did not get away without some teasing, but obviously he had decided to play his part in her game. The following account of their talk is also based on Julie’s report and might not be complete.

“It seems me that you were not unprepared for battle too. You certainly know, that you look damned good in this costume. It looks like, if it was made for you.”

“Cin sewed it and I think, she made the blouse a little bit tight on purpose.”

“She definitely did a good job. I think, most of the guys here wish, they

could exchange their place with me right now.”

“But some fake chains would have been sufficient, I am quite helpless in these.” She twisted the cuffs against each other and indicated the chain that held them in position, to emphasize her point. “In particular I would have been able to take care of myself.”

“I know, you have beaten up Maggie before, but according to an ancient philosopher sometimes weakness can be turned into strength.” She understood but did not react to the latter remark.

“You still remember this?”

“Of course, you were mad as hell on me as usual. It was not so easy to drag you away from her. You even tried to beat me up.”

“I am sorry, about that. You were right to pull me away from her. But when this bitch, who had picked on me at any opportunity slapped me in the face I wanted to pay it back and you picked me up like a child and carried me away from here. I admit that I was angry about you that moment, but that was the only time.”

“I remember at least a dozend events, without thinking, when you were equally nice to me. Although your mind is usually very sharp, you misinterpreted every ironic statement and jumped up on every tease, but only if it came from me.”

“But I was never serious about it, well, except for this one time.” She slightly blushed and looked away from him.

“Well if you were not mad on me, then you should have become an actress

instead of a police officer. But anyway, we are not here to fight a rhetoric battle, but because you said you wanted to state a confession.”

“Sam, I told you, that it was not a love letter, I wrote you, after you had rescued Kelly and me.”

“You said so.”

“You were right, I lied. But I did not mix up love and gratitude. I was in love with you during my high school time from the first year ’till graduation, maybe even longer – but I couldn’t tell you.”

“If this were true, you were quite good in concealing it.”

“It is. I swear. You were not the only one, who had difficulties in saying ‘I love you’. And you were so damned superior. You treated Cin, me and the others like,... well like little sisters. Like someone you would protect and care for, but not like someone you could meat at equal height or respect. It was my way of catching your attention.”

“I had more discussions with you than with anyone else during my high school days and I always treated you with respect, while you called me ‘cave-man’ and other names.

“Maybe I once said that you choose a ‘caveman solution’, but I never called you ‘caveman’.”

“You know what I mean. You don’t deny that that was definitely not an invitation to date you and I can still cite you a dozend incidents of similar quality.”

“If you would have asked me just once to go out with you, I would not have hesitated. But you did it only in my

dreams. I don’t consider myself as ugly, but there were others, I could never compete with. Maybe you just fell in love with me, because I was the only one, who dared to pick a little bit on you.” He shook his head.

“No, Julie, I am not into that. It’s difficult to tell, what makes a man fall in love with a woman, but I truly admired your straight way of talking and acting. Nowadays many women do only care about their makeup, their outfit and who is going to arrange the next party. That’s not important to me. You were different. You never painted your face and screwed around, instead it was never boring to talk to you. And you were the only girl I ever met that I considered to be able to handle a real problem.”

“Sam, that’s something, John Wayne could have told his leading ladies in a dozen movies.”

“Well, I am dressed like John Wayne today, but if you prefer it I could formulate it differently. However this would not change the meaning: I cannot predict the future neither yours nor mine. There MIGHT be happy times and there WILL be hard times. My mother loves my dad ’till today and I guess she ever will. But sometimes it was not easy to be a soldiers wife. My dad was a lucky man, because Mum could handle these situations. You are a VERY pretty woman and I think you know that. But this was NOT, what made me fall in love with you. It was some admiration of your mind and especially what I just told you that attracted me to you not because, but despite of your nasty picking at me.” He

looked her directly into the eyes and they both remained quite. After a while she whispered.

“We really messed it up, didn’t we? I became a police officer here in town and the army will sent you, God knows where.”

“That’s right. I will be in town, for another three month, before they sent me to Germany. That does not mean that I have plenty of time. My father expects more from me than from other officers in his unit and that’s quite okay.”

“Sam, I don’t know, if this is right. If you date me I might fall in love with you again only to loose you forever. It would be more reasonable for both of us to bury old memories and face the future.” There was an indefinite amount sadness in her voice and he laid his big hands on her shoulders.

“I cannot hold you by force, Julie, when Cin let’s you out of these chains you are free to do what ever you want. But you promised, to go out with me tomorrow.”

“We are not from the same sides of town, Sam. What would your father say, if you were dating someone like me?”

“He would probably congratulate me to my choice. Maybe you do not know, but my Mom’s heritage is not much different from yours.”

“And if he would not?”

“Julie, it is entirely your decision. I will not allow anybody, and that includes my parents as well to question my decision whom I should date – or marry.”

“I don’t want to get you into trouble.”

“Nonsense, Julie, you think that I

will have to go to Europe in three month and that nobody can change this.” She nodded. “So far you are right. But you also think that this will put an end on our relationship, however it might have been developed ’till then.” She nodded again. “Well, you are wrong about that: In case we should still believe in each other, there will be a way. It will take some efforts by both of us and we will both have to make a few painful decisions, but on my behalf I consider it worth, whatever it cost’s. However if you don’t want to see me again for these or other reasons I may leave right now and I promise not to mollest you anymore.”

“You can’t do that, I am still in these chains.”

“You know what I mean, Julie, of course I will take care of you ’till you get out of them, but that wasn’t my question.”

“Sam, I lost you and I found you. I do not want to give you a promise, I cannot keep, but right now, I don’t want to loose you again. Nevertheless it is only fair to warn you, that I am not so easy sometimes.” He smiled at her.

“That is an understatement, but you can be sure, that I know what I want and what I might get.” With these words he took Julie into his arms and kissed her long and passionate. At first she was a little bit hesitantly but then she responded and kissed him back. Their kiss was long and intense.

“Sam, you should not have done this.”

“Why not. I have waited many years to do it and I was not disappointed.”

“You came here with Maggie Olson

and now you kiss me. People will talk about that.”

“I don’t care. Maggie Olson’s goal was to finish up the football team, I was the only one missing in her collection, didn’t you know that?”

“And you never went out with her before, not even for a movie?”

“She wasn’t my type.”

“Which other girls were your type? I mean in general after high school.”

“Well it was mainly you. After your mother told me, that you were engaged, I took a few others into consideration. To be honest there were three ladies with sad blue eyes and long blond hair and I took each of them out for a single date. But that was it. They were not what I wanted, and I think I also did not meet their expectations.”

“I think, I was the most stupid girl in school.” He smiled at her.

“No quite the opposite, but like you said not the easiest one to deal with.”

“Sam, I seriously hope we won’t mess it up again. Let’s continue our talk tomorrow, I really enjoyed it, but I had the early shift today. Besides these cuffs kill my shoulders, I have to get rid of them. Could you try to fetch Cin, wherever she might be? I would do it myself, if my legs were not also chained together.” She rattled the chain between her legs.

“I will see, if I can catch her.” Julie stretched her arms to the limits allowed by her restraints in order to reduce the tension in her shoulder blades. It worked and she repeated it several times. Then she looked at the cuffs, gave them a last, but useless tug and resigned to her fate.

It took longer than she expected, ’till Sam came back and he was alone.

“Where’s Cin, Sam? I REALLY want these off.”

“I know, but I couldn’t find her. The guy at the bar said, that a woman matching her description left on unsteady feet a few minutes ago with a guy in Frankenstein costume.”

“Oh god, Sam, if she’s drunk, she might have forgotten that I am still chained. I can’t go home like this.” She was really in despair and surely did not act anymore. She tugged again at ‘her’ cuffs with all her strength, but they did not slacken.

“We WILL get them off somehow.” He lifted her on his arms and she let it happen. “Do you have a key for Cin’s home, that we may be able to fetch the keys?” She shook her head.

“Shit – sorry Julie. A close friend of mine is at the local police. Incidentally he is on duty tonight. They should have some keys, that fit, or do you prefer to call a locksmith?”

“No Sam, not the local police. All colleagues will know about it, and a locksmith will inform them as well. I would prefer to stay in these chains, ’till Cin shows up.”

“But she may not show up at all and you cannot stay alone like this. Mike is an old friend and he owes me a favor. He won’t talk about it, and he will handle me out a bunch of keys without asking questions, so that you don’t have to show up there. Is that okay?” She nodded.

“It’s worth a try, but I doubt, that any standard key will fit to these. They look

quite escape-proofed.”

“We will find out only if we try, let’s go.” He carried Julie on his arms and realizing that she would not be able to climb in with those irons on her ankles he lifted her into his pickup truck, and closed her seatbelt as well.

That must have happened a few minutes, well at most half an hour before I returned. I had met a guy I was particularly interested in. He was tall and handsome and he seemed to have some interest in me too, although he wore a Frankenstein outfit. With his mask put down, he was quite acceptable. Presumably we were both drunk, when he offered to go with me to Joe’s and I said yes, without thinking about poor Julie, who was still in my chains. I remembered too late and when I returned in a hurry they had already left for an unknown destination. The guy was gone and I took my part in finishing up, what was left at the bar. Later that night someone called a taxi and I got home somehow. When I woke up the next morning, I was still in my police costume and my headache was bigger than the Everest.

In one aspect Sam and Julie were out of luck too. They could not obtain a matching key. As I could have told them, those handcuffs came with a unique key and the same was true for the matching collar and irons. Only skilled experts can pick such locks and neither Sam nor Julie had any experience in lock picking.

“Sam, you have tried for almost half an hour. I doubt that any of your keys will help. Cin, that rat, has made sure,

that I cannot escape.”

“The only alternative is to cut them off by force. But I don’t have the necessary tools here. I could either wake up my parents in which case it will be difficult to explain, why you are in this condition or I could carry you to the workshop at the base, but that means the whole garrison will know, because there is no way to avoid the guards.”

“So I am stuck in these chains.”

“It seems so, at least ’till tomorrow morning, when Cin ought to be available.”

“Sam, I simply need a place to rest. It will be a little bit uncomfortable but I think that I can get some sleep even in these chains, but surely not at the army base. I suggest, you may take me to my flat as quiet and stealthy as possible and fetch me tomorrow.”

“That’s out of discussion, I will not leave you alone, Julie, as long as we cannot get you out of these chains, I insist that you stay in my ‘custody’. This may however be not so difficult at all. I am not officially assigned for the base. Up to next week, I am going to take care of George Barnes house – he’s out of town. He and his wife are on holidays and they offered me to stay there, if I would keep things going. You know mowing the lawn feeding the cat and so on. If you don’t feel compromised, I could take you with me.”

“That will be fine, Sam, not many things are more compromising than to run around in chains in front of my neighbours.”

“Let me bring these keys back then

and don't run away."

"I don't know if I can get off the seat-belt and how far do you think I could get on my bare feet with Cin's irons on my ankles?" He brought the keys back to the

police station and took her to his temporary home. Julie refused to tell me more. So I still don't know if they ended up in bed together.

5 Aftermath

The rest of the story is told very fast: I expected Sam and Julie to throw me out in the early morning, but it was late in the afternoon when they finally showed up. I had the spare keys for Julie's restraints at hand. Sam got out of his Pickup and wanted to open the door for Julie, but she had undone her seat-belt and was out, before he was around the car. She was still in her prisoner outfit and my steel jewelry still adorned her wrist and ankles.

But Sam had found a suitable tool and cut off the chain, connecting the handcuffs to her collar, the one which I bought in the local hardware store. This had allowed her to switch her joined hands from back to front, which gave her much more freedom of movement, although she was still severely restricted.

To Julie's disappointment – at least that was the way she formulated it – Sam's efforts to free her from the rest of my 'jewelry' were a complete mess due to their extraordinary strength and fabrication. According to Sam the stuff they were made off ought to be some cermet like they use on the armour of the Abrahams Tank. He was not able to even scratch it with available tools.

Amazingly Julie was not really mad at me, because of this. Actually she

looked quite comfortable in her restraints, when Sam closed his arm around her shoulders.

"Hi Cin, sorry for molesting you, but Julie wants out of your chains. We will visit my parents for dinner tonight and they might get the wrong impression, if I drag her behind me in that outfit," he greeted me.

"Of course, Sam. Julie, I am very sorry for what happened, I have the keys right here."

"You have any reason to be sorry," she said, while I fumbled with the locks of 'her' leg irons, 'till they came off. She extended her joined wrists and I took her handcuffs off too. I knew that this was critical. She rubbed her wrist long and intensively.

"I should kill you, Cin, for locking me in these things for almost two days."

"That was never intended, Julie, believe me, it was really an accident or a chain of unlucky incidents."

"If I wouldn't think so, I would kill you right now. Where's the key for that collar." I tossed it to her and she fetched it and made short work of the last remnant of her bondage.

"Wow, free at last, I have never been humiliated like that before. You admit that you planned to chain me up and

push me around like a dog on public display?" She addressed me.

"That sounds very much like the old, Julie, longing for revenge, right after we have set you free." Sam objected, before I could give her an answer.

"No Sam," she turned to him, "but you can't imagine, how it feels, to be totally helpless with your hands locked behind your back. If you would not have cut off these damned chain, my shoulders would be dead and I wouldn't even have been able to go to the toilet or brush my teeth."

"But you admitted yesterday that you were not quite innocent about it, right?"

"Yes, but..."

"Didn't you put Cin into handcuffs first?"

"But I didn't put her in a collar and irons and after all it was just for half an hour."

"And you made her pay a pizza boy in them."

"But I did not leave her totally helpless on a public party."

"She handled you over into my custody, and you weren't totally helpless either."

"Why not, my hands were tightly locked behind my back and I was in irons." Sam smiled.

"You bit me like a little dog, when I..."

"SAM!" She yelled, "I will make my peace with Cin, we are good friends. I just need a shower and I want out of this prisoner uniform too." Her clothes were still in her bag. I offered her to use my bathroom and when she came back in

blue jeans and a fresh white blouse, only two red stripes on her wrists showed that she had been handcuffed for a long time.

I had folded her costume and handed it to her. "Keep it as a souvenir, Julie, I made it for you, maybe you will have another opportunity to wear it."

"Keep it. You can be sure that hell ought to freeze over, before I will go as a prisoner again."

"You were not bad in this role." Sam teased her and took the costume, what brought him a black look from Julie.

"If you think, YOU can put me in these shackles again, we are quit before we even started!" Sam smiled.

"I prefer you the way you are. But you have to admit, that those were quite helpful to get this date with you." That was something she could not deny and they took off.

I learned later that Sam introduced her to his parents the same evening. What he had not told her was that he had told his parents behind her back, that he intended to ask her to marry him. Nevertheless it went quite well. Sam's father had read the newspapers and recognized, what Julie did, but he was even more curious about her last name and asked if she was related to the Sargent, who had served in his unit. When she admitted, that she was his daughter, he told her that her father had once saved his live and been his friend. He even found an old photo that showed him holding Julie and Julie's father holding Sam at the visitor day, when Julie was three years old. He stated that Sam had

made the best choice he could imagine and that his friend's daughter would be always welcome in his house, if she were engaged to Sam or not – a phrase that alerted Julie.

In her opinion things went on too fast, but after three other dates with Sam she even dared to introduce him to her mother. This was the real problem. She did not want to accept Sam even after Julie told her that he had saved her from being raped. It was hard for Julie too to give her the choice to come to terms with Sam or lose her daughter. The old lady had to swallow, but she finally gave up her resistance and before they married she even managed to forgive Sam's father.

Yes they finally married, in January, not even three months after their first date. It was a big wedding and I was invited too – in fact I acted as witness and I fetched the bridal bouquet, but I am not married yet. It was a long night with a big wedding dinner many speeches, dances and everything which belongs to a wedding. Julie looked wonderful in her white bridal dress and Sam in his ordnance uniform had only eyes for her.

That was what I originally intended to tell, however since it fits into the line I may also mention, how I got rid of those restraints I had originally bought for my little revenge on Julie: It was on their wedding night almost at three o'clock in the morning – the older people had left and just a bunch of close friends of Julie and Sam were staying around – when I asked someone initiated to my intentions to lead Sam outside for the fi-

nal probe. I took my bag and addressed Julie.

"A marriage is a grave and holy thing, in order to prove that your husband will keep up his promises and do whatever necessary to protect and rescue you, we will kidnap you and impose some severe tasks on Sam in order to get you back." That was quite customary then and I bet Julie expected something like that. What she definitely not expected was the following.

"Give me your hands," I continued and took the handcuffs she had worn at Halloween out of my bag. I had acquired a new chain at the hardware store, which was already affixed to them as well as padlocked to 'her' collar.

"Cin you rat, you won't get through with this!" she whispered so that only I could hear her, but did as I requested and let me snap the cuffs on her wrists in front. "Yes I will," I whispered back, "and there is nothing you can do to stop me!"

"As most of you might know, Julie went to a Halloween party as my prisoner, when she met Sam and everything turned the way up to this event we are cheering now," I continued my speech. "Since they brought them luck, I intend to give these 'fake' chains to you as an additional wedding gift. You may put them on the roof later or wear them if you like it, but today they might serve us one last time." With that I took the collar and snapped it around her throat.

"One more thing," I continued, knelt down and fixed the leg-irons as well. "Now you will go through as a kidnapped

bride.”

Julie fumed, but had to pose for a Polaroid, showing off her restraints in order to convince Sam that his bride had been kidnapped and might suffer severe harm, if he would not perform the tasks, we imposed on him. It was nothing serious, but thoughtfully planned by the whole gang. Sam did well, although it ruined his shirt and shoes. He got a lot of laughter while Julie was committed to sit on a stool in her wedding dress and chains and watch her husband’s performance. Occasionally she could not help to laugh too.

After the final task was completed, I raised myself and handled the complete set of keys ceremonially over to Sam. “Be careful, it’s the last set.” I whispered, when I took him in my arms.

“I know,” he replied and smiled, but made no move to release Julie, who was immediately alerted.

“Hey, didn’t you forget something?” She made a try and extended her joint wrists to him.

“No, darling, not yet,” he replied, “since I had to perform all these task in order to rescue you, while you had a good time and laughed about me, it is only fair that you do not get off the hook for free. We will see what you can do for me in order to be released tonight.” With these words which brought him a lot of cheers he put the keyring into his pockets. The bunch including myself finally left, wishing them all the best and

basically that was it.

Of course I do not know in detail what happened that night, but years after that Julie accused me on the phone that I was responsibly for her being the only bride to be carried over the threshold in chains.

“And did you regret it?” I asked her.

“Not a second,” she had to admit. They did not have much time for their honeymoon, since they had to move to Europe soon after. The influence of Sam’s father got Julie a job in the Army’s civil services. Sam made a steep career in the military, not the cheap way however, he got a lot of medails for bravery, mostly in secret operations, that did not catch public attention, but were important for the national security. He and Julie were invited to president’s dinner twice. His parents and by now even Julie’s mother are very proud of him. Despite the distances Julie and I are still in contact. They have three healthy children and they are still in love with each other.

If you ask Sam, he will say that he conquered Julie, if you ask Julie, she will say, that she caught Sam that night, but I say that it were the chains, I had put on Julie, that transformed ‘Ice-J’ temporarily into a ‘damsel in distress’ and forced her to face Sam at the right time in the right place and that from that moment on nobody could prevent the rest to happen.

THE END