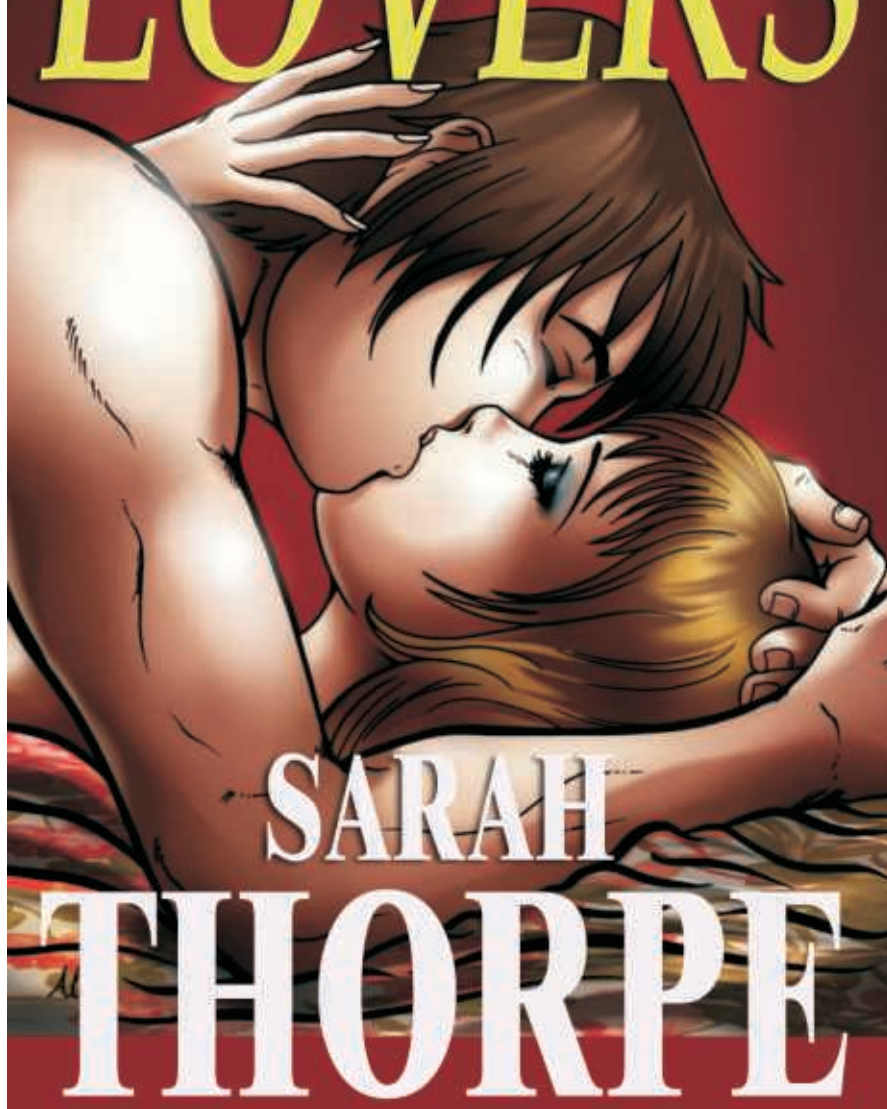


FROM ENEMIES TO
LOVERS



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From Enemies to Lovers

by Sarah Thorpe

Chapter 1

Ross Conway was born with a silver spoon in his hand. He was born into the upper middle class just outside Philadelphia as the oldest child of Betsy and Charles Conway.. His father worked as a manger at the local bank and his mother was a teacher in Senior High. He had two sisters, Donna and Angela, two and four years younger than him, and one brother, Sean, six years younger than him. Their neighbors were Carole and Jonathan Wells. Both were doctors. Jonathan worked as a surgeon at the university hospital, while Carole was a family doctor. They had two daughters, Sheila and Sandra. Sandra was Ross' age, while Sheila was three years older.

Sandra and Ross started hanging together already in kindergarten. It was very convenient, they were the same age and they living right next to each other. That made it easier for their families to being them back and forth every day. Sandra and Ross also went to school together of course. All the way from Grade School through Senior High they hung together. So it was no wonder that people talked about them all the way. It seemed that they were just destined for each other. As the years grew it became clearer and clearer that they one day would become husband and wife.

Both kids were straight A students. Ross soon showed another talent as well, he was a good football player. Already as a freshman he qualified for his school's football team, and his exceptional talent soon paved the way for him to play in the quarterback position. Sandra was also good in sports, but she preferred track running. She was very good and al-

most qualified to represent the US in the Olympics the same year she graduated from High School.

Ross was soon discovered by talent scouts from the National Football League. At least four teams wanted him from the day he graduated. But he said no. He was more interested in getting a college degree than to play football. They could come back after college and talk to him then. Some teams waved a lot of money in front of him, but he stood his ground. The fact that he was a very good football player had also caught the interest of several colleges and universities. They offered him scholarships and lots of time to play football, but he was just as steadfast here. He had decided what college he wanted to attend and he wanted it to be the same as Sandra's. It happened that this college was one of colleges that offered him a scholarship, so he took it. They also gave a scholarship to Sandra for being on their Track and Field team. She would be a great asset to them.

After High School graduation Sandra and Ross decided to take some time off together. They knew that with college just around the corner, they wouldn't have time for any vacation until they graduated. Ross had a car and with their families blessing they toured the US for four weeks. They went to many of the famous places, but the place they liked best, was the Rockies. They had both tried to ski before, but neither of them was very successful. A trip to Aspen or Beaver Creek might help. They would see if they could make it one winter.

Back in Philadelphia they did the final preparations to join college. They had decided to live on campus in order to feel the atmosphere. Staying at home might even be difficult, it was too many disturbing factors there. This was especially true for Ross, having three younger siblings.

In college they had enough to do. Both had classes almost the whole day and with sports activities in the afternoon they didn't have much time for a private life. From day one Ross was a star on the Football Team. Everybody had heard how he turned all the NFL offers down and wanted to play for them instead. This made Ross a very privileged student, he could in fact have it his way all the time. But he never misused his privileges. The girls flocked around him and they all wanted to go on a date with him. But he said no to them all; there was only one girl for him, and that was Sandra. When other students saw them together they knew that these two had a bond that would never break. Ross, 6'2" tall and muscular and a future lawyer, Sandra, 5'10" and a future physician. A match made in heaven.

They hadn't been long in College before they saw the disadvantage of living in separate dorms. Things would have been so much better if they could share an apartment. An apartment on campus was virtually out of reach; they had to be married to get one of those. An apartment outside campus was not a preferred option, they were small, expensive and too far away from where the action was. They talked about getting married, but they both thought it was too early. Around Christmas the issue was raised in the two families and the consensus was that they should wait until after their second year. Sandra and Ross agreed. Their mothers, however, started the preparations right away.

It didn't take long before Ross understood that he had a rival. A guy named Justin Gallagher had laid his eyes on Sandra. He was son of one of the most influential men in the state and didn't take no for an answer. Sandra, however, turned him down every time.

That made him mad, he wanted that woman, no matter what it would cost. It became very vehement one day in May in their first year, when Justin tried to force Sandra to join him. Sandra fought him back, and in the turmoil Sandra managed to scratch Justin's cheek with her fingernails. Blood started flowing down his cheek and he became raving mad. Fortunately three other students saw what happened and managed to hold him back. Sandra ran for safety.

When they met again two days later Ross was with Sandra. Justin stopped in front of them, pointed at his cheek and said: "I'll get you for this. Just you wait and see." Ross was about to do something, but Sandra held him back. "Hold back," she said, "this is exactly what he wants you to do. Then he can press charges against you and your carrier might be in jeopardy."

"You're right. This scum isn't worth anything. Just let him go."

But the incident between Sandra and Justin had been observed by a police officer and he called them both in for questioning. After hearing them out, along with a few witnesses, Justin had to face a judge. The judge issued a restraining order that said that Justin was not allowed to come closer than 100 yards from Sandra. If the order was violated, he would be put in jail, no matter who his father was. This kept him calm for a while. At least until his wounds had healed.

Justin's father, however, didn't take it lightly that his son had to show up before a judge. He went straight down to the judge's office and told him what he meant. But the judge was clear, as long as someone tries to attack someone else, and that other someone felt pestered, a restraining order was issued. Mr. Gallagher just looked at the judge and said: "Be careful with what you do to my son; it might happen that you have to find yourself another job."

Justin held distance to Sandra from that day on. He tried to approach her once, but was stopped by the Campus Police. They kept an eye on him at all times. Justin was also studying law, he needed that background to be a partner in his father's business. Even if his father now was into politics, his still had a strong hand in his company. The company was for the time being run by Justin's uncle and older brother.

The wedding between Sandra and Ross was held in late June, just after they had finished their second year in college. The reception was held in the garden around the Wells family residence. The food had been prepared in the Conway residence with the help of good friends and neighbors. The following day the newly weds went on a four week honeymoon to Europe. They wanted to go to the places where their ancestors came from. The Conway family hailed from Scotland, while the Wells family was pure English. Ross' mother's maiden name was Odegaard which gave her a Norwegian background. Mrs. Wells maiden name was Dietrich and her family came from Germany. These four countries were the main targets for Sandra and Ross' honeymoon. They had made thorough researches on beforehand, and knew where in the countries their ancestors came from. Descriptions from the local communities should help find the places more exactly. They had set off one week in each country.

Back from their honeymoon Sandra and Ross moved into their new apartment. Their apartment was one of many in a row housing complex, and was located in the right end of

a house with two apartments. A garage was attached to the house. It had two stories with kitchen and living room downstairs and three bedroom upstairs. The two small bedrooms were used as office/study rooms, one for Sandra and one for Ross. There was also a bathroom upstairs and an extra toilet downstairs. The basement had some storage rooms and held all the technical equipment required to heat or cool the house.

This was the ideal solution for Sandra and Ross. They could study in peace if they wanted, or they could curl up and watch TV or listen to music if that was desired. The apartment wasn't fit for a large family, but for a young couple in College it was perfect.

But danger lurked in the background. Justin had never forgotten the humiliation from Sandra, and he wanted revenge. The scratches in his face never really healed and he was stuck with a nasty scar for the rest of his life. He wanted to get revenge, it was only to find the right time and place. When he heard that Sandra and Ross was getting married and later moved to an apartment of their own, he saw his chance. He called some of his friends and told them he a job for them. These friends were of the kind that would do anything for him, even commit murder if that was required. Justin always seemed to find a way to get them out of the jam.

Justin gathered the boys one Friday in September, only a short time after Sandra and Ross had started their third year in College. They guys were Abe, Chuck, Bozo and Sonny. Abe was some kind of organizer while Bozo was the real bully. He loved to harass people and do them harm. Neither of these guys were College students, they just worked for Gallagher organization. "I have a plan, guys," Justin opened, " a plan that will give me revenge over Sandra and Ross. I want it to be set to life as soon as possible, but for obvious reasons I want to wait until the football seasons is over. Ross is after all the football player that can turn a match around, so I want him on the field until the finals. If he can help our Collage to win the Championship this season, his fall would be even larger.

"What I want you to do is to get access to their apartment on the day Ross is away playing the final and Sandra is still at home. Break in to the apartment if necessary. Grab Sandra and give her a beating she won't forget, cut up her face like she did to me and leave the apartment in ruins. If you want to steal something, please do, but remember also that stolen property can be traced back to the owner. During the raid wear ski masks and gloves so you don't leave any forensic evidence, and make it impossible for Sandra to recognize you. If there are only circumstantial evidence against you, it will be easy to get you off the hook. If you happen to leave solid evidence, you're on your own and will have to take the heat, I don't know you. Understood?"

They all nodded. They knew that they had to do the dirty work and let Justin leave town while everything happened, leaving him with a solid alibi. They had to be 100% sure they didn't leave any evidence.

They continued to lay plans all through the evening. It was a matter of how to proceed. There were three options to get into the apartment, one was to knock on the door and force oneself in, one was to obtain a key, and finally, break in through a door or a window. Then Chuck thought of a forth option, why not stalk her and get inside at the same time she does. That was considered kinda risky, since it implied that at least one of them had to show his face. So this wasn't considered a valid option. One thing they did agree upon,

however, was that Abe and co had to check Sandra's routines when Ross was away on a game. That might get them the real clue to how to get into the apartment.

Back in the apartment Sandra and Ross were completely unaware about what Justin and his goons were planning. They had been married for a little over two months, they had an apartment they rented and everything seemed like heaven. They had no plans for a child yet, that had to wait until they had graduated and were established in a house they could afford to buy. Fortunately they both would get solid jobs that paid well, so a mortgage shouldn't be too hard to get.

The football season turned out to be very successful for their college. They made it all the way to the finals. This meant that Sandra and Ross spent a rather quiet Christmas with their families, no extra celebrations were allowed. The final took place in January. Sandra had wanted to be there, but she had a pretty busy time in College that period, so she had to stay home. That saddened her; she had so much wanted to watch Ross make sure their College won the match. They were considered underdogs, but miracles had happened before. The final took place on a Sunday, and Sandra sat glued to the TV all evening. When she saw Ross send that final touch-down pass she almost tore the room down. With only a few seconds to go it meant that they had won 28-25 and were College Football Champions. She knew that Ross and the guys would celebrate that night, but that was OK. A victory like that called for a big celebration. And tomorrow the College would do their best to celebrate their heroes. Sandra's turn would come later.

Just as the victory ceremony was about to commence, she heard her front door shatter to pieces. In came four men dressed in all black, wearing ski masks and gloves. One of them grabbed her and tried to hold her while the other three did their best to tear the apartment apart. But more than one guy was required to hold her down and guy number two came to his friend's assistance. Sandra kicked and screamed, but to no avail. The neighbors were with friends watching the game and therefore couldn't hear her. She kicked one of them in the balls and she heard his agonizing scream. A third man came up to her to help his comrades. She managed to throw out her arm and pull off the ski mask. He jumped back and pulled the mask back on again. The fourth guy came to help. This time Sandra got a hold on his trousers and pushed one of her hands down along his thigh. She used her fingernails and scratched him good. This made the man mad, he slapped her face and since the first guy lost his grip on her, she fell backwards and the back of her head hit the edge of a book shelf. The hit was so hard that her neck snapped and she was dead. The goons didn't notice that she actually died there and then, they saw her go limp and laid her down. One of them took out a knife and cut deep wounds in both her cheeks. He was so furious that he didn't pay attention to the fact that her wounds didn't bleed. He just did what he was told to do. They messed up the apartment a little more and left the scene. They took off their masks and, walk one block and picked up their car. None of them had noticed that Sandra had a piece of hair in her hand, ripped off the first assailant when she tried to break out of his arm grip. The hair came from a very hairy arm.

The neighbors came home one hour later. They wanted to celebrate the victory with Sandra, but as they approached the house they saw that something was deadly wrong. One glimpse into the apartment told them that a tragedy had happened. They called 911 at once and five minutes later the police was on site. They made an overview and called in

the forensic team. A dead body was lying on the floor and the house looked like a mess. A serious crime had been committed.

Everybody knew that Ross was away. He had after all made sure that their College won the championship. But he had to get notified right away. But before he could be contacted they had to inform Sandra and Ross' families. A detective took care of that right away. It was less than 10 minutes before both families were at the scene. They couldn't understand what they saw. Who could do such a thing? Was this just a random crime or was it planned. Both families were totally devastated. Sandra's mother had a breakdown and had to be taken to the hospital. Ross' father was the first to regain some of his senses. He called his son right away, no matter what he was up to at the moment. When Ross heard the news an extremely loud scream came from his mouth. A scream so full of pain that it frightened everybody around him. "I'm coming home right away," was all he said to his father.

"Hold it," his father said, "How do you think you can get here in your condition. You can't drive a car; that will put yours and everybody else's life at risk." At that moment a high ranking Police officer came up to Charles and said: "I've contacted my colleagues where Ross is, and they have agreed to transport him here by helicopter. He will be here in less than two hours. Just let me talk to him."

Charles handed the phone to the Police Officer. He presented himself and gave Ross instructions on how to get to the helicopter. An officer would approach him very soon and would guide him through the crowd. The helicopter would be ready in about 15 minutes. And true to his words, a little less than two hours later Ross was at the crime scene. He rushed up to his apartment to see Sandra for a last time. She was still in the same position as the police had found her. "How did this happen?" he asked.

"We don't really know," a CSI said, "but it seems that someone broke into the apartment and grabbed her. She must have put up a hell of a fight. We've found traces of skin under her fingernails; some hair in one hand and some kind of fabric we think comes from a ski mask in the other. She broke her neck falling backwards and hitting a shelf. She died instantly. Someone has also cut up her face to make it a total mess. But since she didn't bleed from the wounds, it was done post mortem."

"I think I know who's behind this," Ross said, "it has to be Justin. It's typical him. Sandra scratched his cheek one and a half year ago, and he never forgets. This was payback. But unfortunately he has a solid alibi. He was at the game. I even talked to him. And he managed to keep his face and voice so straight that nothing could be detected from what he said. The ones who did it must be his four goons."

"We have indication that there only were three persons here."

Ross walked over to a shelf and took out a hidden video camera. "Check this first," he said, "it should contain video footage of everything that took place in my apartment. It is always active and stores data directly on the computer hard drive. It creates a new file every 24 hours, always at 4AM. We have a special laptop for that purpose only. It is located upstairs in our bedroom. Come with me and I'll find it for you."

A detective followed Ross to the master bedroom and was handed the laptop. He gave the detective some quick instructions on how to find the data and went downstairs again.

Just as he came down they were carrying Sandra's body out of the house and to the police station. He stopped by the stretcher, lifted the blanket and gave Sandra a farewell kiss on her forehead. With the body of his wife gone, Ross finally let all his barriers down and he broke down. His mother came over to him and tried to help him in his grief, but did not succeed. Ross really needed someone right now; someone that could give him peace and comfort.

It was his sister-in-law, Sheila that came to his rescue. She was now a fully qualified doctor and had seen situations like this many times. This was her first time with someone close to her, though, but she managed to bring Ross back to himself. It took two days, but it worked. The apartment was sealed off and Ross moved back to his parents for a while.

On Thursday the preliminary forensic results were clear. It was Bozo who had held her almost all the time. His DNA was under Sandra's fingernails and the skin came from the groins area. The hair in her hand was from Abe's arm, it had enough roots to have a full DNA. The person who had lost his ski mask for a short while, was identified as Sonny, and that left only one person who couldn't be identified. It was most likely Chuck, but without firm evidence that he was there, there was nothing the police could do. The video had been very clear and had shown four persons, all dressed in black and with ski masks and gloves. Three could be arrested, one had to go for the moment.

Abe, Bozo and Sonny were arrested rather quickly. They had all left evidence of their presence on the scene of the crime. They were taken to separate rooms and interrogated by different officers. Neither of them knew that the other two were arrested. The first one to be arrested was



Sonny. His face was clearly visible on the video, and when confronted with the fact, he laid all the cards on the table. The officer asked him who the other three were, but he refused to say. That was by advice of his lawyer; it could be used as a bargain point later. The second was Bozo. His skin was all under Sandra's nails and he was identified by DNA. An examination of Bozo's body had revealed scratch marks on his upper right thigh/groin area that was consistent with the use of fingernails. Once again, one of the goons admitted to have been there, fighting with Sandra. Abe feared no better. Hair from his forearm had been found in Sandra's fist, which for the detectives were more than enough to put him at the scene of the crime. All three were asked the same question; who was the forth guy in that room?

Initially nobody wanted to answer. A second question about who was behind this beating that lead to murder, also kept their mouths shut. After three days Bozo broke. He told the police that Chuck was the forth guy, just as the police had suspected. He wanted a deal, and got it. The following day Abe and Sonny broke as well. Since they came later, their deal wasn't so good. The police had seen from the video that Sandra's death was an accident, but they wanted to put Abe on trial for murder. After all, it was he who had let go of his grip so that Sandra fell and hit the shelf. A good lawyer would get him out of that spot, but it was worth trying.

Two days later Chuck was arrested. He was shown the video, and the detective pointed him out from what they saw. It was no definite proof that it was him n the video; but since he always hung out with the other three, he was the most likely candidate. Chuck knew that he might go free, but he was tired of hanging around Justin and his goons. He wanted something better. He decided to gamble. He reached into his pocket and took out his cell phone and started to play back a voice file he had recorded. The Police Officers were stunned when they heard the recording. Chuck had actually gotten himself a 'Get-out-of-Jail-Free-Phone'! It was a recording of everything that had been said during the planning meetings for the attack on Sandra. And it was Justin Gallagher that was behind it all! And here was the proof that he orchestrated the whole thing! And Chuck did this without even consulting his lawyer. The Police Officers deliberated for a while before they said to Chuck: "We will take care of your phone, it's a vital piece of evidence. We will hold you here until tomorrow when we can discuss your case with a judge. We will recommend that we let you go under the condition that you move to another location far away from here. When we arrest Justin and confront him with this recording, you should have ceased to exist. His family will hunt you down from day one."

"I know; but I take that chance. As soon as I'm out of here I will relocate. I know I could have claimed a witness protection program and take it from there. But since I don't trust everybody at the department, I prefer to do it my way. You can pay me what it would cost you to put me on your witness protection program, give me back my cell phone and I will mail it to you when the time is ripe. To where I will relocate I won't tell you. No one will be able to find me. I made plans for this the very moment Justin started talking about getting even with Sandra. The main purpose of our visit to her house was to cut up her face. As you might have found out, Sonny took care of that. He's handy with a knife."

“We’ve noticed that. The only problem is that the cuts were made after Sandra was dead. That’s why the cuts never bled.”

“I didn’t notice, I just left the room when that was done..”

True to their word, Chuck was released the next day with his cell phone intact, the police had only made copies of the recording, just in case. A lump sum of money was transferred to his account and he left town a few hours later and was never seen again.

Justin couldn’t help hearing that his goons had been arrested. He was told that all four were in jail, charged with burglary, assault and battery and the death of Sandra Conway. He felt safe that none of them would say anything, the deal was that if they were caught, they were all for themselves. If faced with charges, Justin would deny everything. He had a solid alibi, an alibi even Ross could verify.

Chapter 2

The death of Sandra was of course a great blow to Ross. They had been together since Grade School and were so happy. They had planned to buy a house, establish a family and live happily ever after. Now she was gone, and Ross had to start life from the beginning.

He heard from the police that they had caught the guys who did it and who had done what. He was 100% sure that Justin was behind all this and told them so. There was no doubt in his mind that this was a revenge for the scars Sandra had given him in his face. It was, however, difficult to pin something on him, he had after all been at the game. Ross had even talked to him. At first he thought this conversation a little out of character, but in hindsight it made perfect sense. Initially the Police didn’t tell him about Chuck’s cell phone, that would remain a secret until Abe, Bozo and Sonny had got their sentence. The fact that Chuck hadn’t been arrested was attributed to the fact that they had nothing on him. It was impossible to identify him from the video. So when Ross heard that he had left town, it was just a sign of guilt to him.

At Sandra’s funeral everybody was there. All her friends wanted to pay her their last respect. The church was absolutely packed with people. When Ross gave his speech there was not a dry eye in the audience, Ross himself had great problems keeping his face straight as well.

After the funeral, life slowly started to come back to normal. Ross moved out of the apartment and took a room at the dorm instead. He could never really forget Sandra, but he wanted to live a life as normal as possible. He concentrated all his efforts on his studies and football. Many of the girls wanted to learn to know him better, but he turned everybody down. It was as if there was no one for him after Sandra. He did go to parties and danced with the girls, but that was all. He missed that woman so much. He vowed he would never be with another woman ever again.

Five weeks after the funeral Ross was called to the Police Station. They had something they wanted to talk to him about, it was said. Ross showed up on time and was taken to a detective’s office. The detective presented himself as Bryan Roberts. He opened the con-

versation by saying: "Thank you for coming, Ross, I have a few things I want to talk with you about. First of all, I'm so sorry for your loss, and please accept my sincere condolences."

"Thank you officer. I assume I'm here because of the tape."

"That's correct, and I have something more for you. You know that we already have arrested three of the guys that broke into your apartment, and neither of them had been released on bail. Nobody wanted to bail them out. You know who they are, and they are three of the goons that always hung out with Justin Gallagher. It was your tape that told us the story that took place in your apartment, and one of the guys was identified solely because of this. The other two was apprehended due to forensic evidence provided to us by your wife. Do you want to see the video?"

"Yes please, I think it will be serve me good to see how Sandra struggled against an overwhelming force.."

Bryan started a video player and the pictures from Ross' surveillance tape came on a TV screen in the room. Ross followed closely what was going on. He saw how Sandra had her hand down into Bozo's trousers and by the silent scream from Bozo he understood that she had hurt her assailant. "we found lots of epidermal cells under her fingernails, and that helped us to identify Bozo," the detective said. Almost at the same time her other hand reached out and pulled off Sonny's ski mask. That gave him away. A few seconds later she grabbed the third man's arm as she was falling backward. In that move she pulled off some hairs from his arm. That's what gave Abe away. The next thing they saw was Sandra hitting the back of head into the shelf which in turn caused her death. Bryan stopped the tape at this point.

"This is how we identified Abe, Bozo and Sonny. They have all confessed, and interestingly enough, they all named Chuck as the last culprit. You can also see that the fourth person is the least active one. We have nothing solid to tie Chuck to the break-in, so we can't arrest him."

"I understand. But I also notice that the tape shows that Sandra's death was an accident. I don't believe they intended to kill her. They just wanted to mutilate her as a revenge from Justin Gallagher. They are his goons. You see, one year ago Sandra had to fight off Justin, and she used her nails to give him that awful scar he has. I believe this is his revenge. He had a solid alibi for the time the assault took place, but it might still put him in the front seat as the man who planned it all. I bet nobody said that he was behind it."

"That's right, no one did. And if they did, no one would believe them. Justin's lawyers would have no problems getting off the hook, and as you know, you can't charge a man twice for the same crime."

"I know, but we must find a way to get Chuck and Justin."

"That's my next point. A few weeks ago we called Chuck to the police station to have a talk with him. We had no hopes that he would say anything, we only had some circumstantial evidence against him, and that's not enough. But we wanted to see if he had something to tell us, and maybe give himself away. What happened is that we got much more than we bargained for. He said straight out that he wanted to make a deal with us. He had evidence that could get Justin to jail for a very long time, and he would give it to us if we

let him go. In this case this means disappear. He would take care of the disappearance himself. I told him it had to be very solid if we should strike a bargain like that. He said it was and took out his cell phone. He started a playback of a voice recordings he had on the cell phone. It gave us everything that had taken place on all planning meetings leading up to the break-in. And this time Justin can't run away from it. Do you want to hear?"

"Of course, start playing."

At the end Ross was stunned. He had listened to Justin giving his goons the task of attacking and mutilating Sandra. "Why did Chuck do this?" Ross asked.

"He did it as an insurance for himself. He knew that if they were caught they would be on their own and Justin would go free. He wanted to make sure that if he got down, so would Justin. He was also dead tired of being one of Justin's goons and he saw this as a golden opportunity to get a new life.

"After I had listened to the recording, I presented the evidence to a judge and he agreed to let Chuck go in return for his cell phone. We have no ideas where he is now. And to tell you the truth, I don't care."

"It's OK with me as well, but why haven't you arrested Justin?"

"That's pure tactics. I want the three goons sentenced first. Then Justin will feel free and not worry about anything anymore. At the moment only four people know that the cell phone with it's recordings exists. That's you and me, the judge and of course Chuck. When the time is ripe, I will receive this mysterious package with the phone, read the data on it and then arrest Justin. Then he can't run from his crime and we can sentence him in a way we seem fit. When it will happen, you will bet the first to know."

"But aren't what you're doing illegal? You're holding back evidence."

"In a way I am, but I have the judge behind me on this. When it happens it will come to the precinct as a package with stamps and everything on it. Maybe I will open it, maybe not. But it will be a sensation. Chuck has even been so kind as to write a note to give us the initial instructions on how to get to the data."

"When will it happen?"

"I don't know, it depends on how long the trials will take. Maybe sometime in September or October, maybe earlier. Cases like this can easily take up to six months."

"I understand, just keep me posted." They talked about the case for another hour before Ross left the Police Station and went back to his dorm. He had promised not to tell a soul, and he kept that promise. Even after the case was out in the open, neither Bryan, Ross nor the judge would ever admit that they had known about the recordings a long time already. The judge had been discreet enough not to mention the case in any papers.

Let's go back to Chuck for a while. He was born into an Irish family as the youngest of three kids and was given the name Charles O'Neil, or Chuck. He was considered as an afterthought, since his sister and brother were 15 and 18 years older than him respectively. This meant that he was only three years old when his sister went to college.

His parents were rather old when he was born, his mother being 46 years old and his father 50. They both had their careers to take care of and very little time to take care of the

boy. He wasn't wanted, but abortion was no solution for an Catholic Irish family. This left Chuck very much to the care of his aunt Laura, his mother's youngest sister who had never married. Laura did her best to help him grow up, but she had once gotten a hatred for men and therefore tried to raise him as feminine as possible. In the beginning Chuck didn't care, but when he saw how other boys his age acted, he understood that something was wrong. He tried to appeal to his parents, but they didn't care.

At school he was bullied by the other boys and soon he started to rebel against his aunt Laura. She replied back by dressing him even more feminine, something that made it even worse for him. One day the headmaster saw how he was bullied by his fellow students and took Chuck to his office. They had a long conversation that ended in the headmaster taking Chuck home to his aunt. To her the headmaster made it very clear that she should dress Chuck as a young boy should be dressed. If not she would be reported to the police. Laura had no other option than to comply, but it made her dress Chuck even more feminine whenever they were out together.

Come adolescence Chuck was so used to wearing girls' clothing at home, that he thought nothing of it. Once during High School he was all dressed up as a pretty princess during a Halloween party. At the party he met another person there, dressed almost exactly like himself. He went up to her and introduced himself and was very surprised that the girl presented herself as Alan McCloud. They hit it off right away, and from that time they spent lots of feminine time together.

After High School they both started College. Chuck took classes in Economy, an area that had interested him since childhood. Not long after he had started College, Chuck was contacted by a guy named Justin Gallagher. He had three bullies with him, and told Chuck that he should join their band of Irish Students. If not, he might have a very hard time in College. Chuck was still somewhat timid and didn't dare to say no. He understood that these guys meant business and that gave him no options. On the other hand it gave him a chance to appear more macho and then gain more respect. He thought wrong of course. It soon became clear that the three other goons didn't do any studying at all, they just hung around Justin. Chuck was also afraid that they might discover that he liked to dress as a girl, and that might be absolutely devastating for him. He managed to keep contact with Alan, though, and he tried his best to help Chuck along. On occasion they even managed to get out as girls together.

Justin was taking lessons in law; he needed that in order to get knowledge on how to ditch as many laws as possible and thereby avoid prosecution. Chuck was allowed to go to class, but had to report to Justin and the others as soon as they needed him. This very much limited his moving around, but he knew he had to live with it. He had once been late to a meeting with the others, and been beaten up quite heavily. No broken bones or visits to any hospital, but the message was clear.

At the first incident with Ross and Sandra he was just a bystander like the other three. They hadn't expected Sandra's reaction and that she was capable to take care of Justin. They had just been prepared to hold back Ross as soon as he intervened. On the second attempt though, he was told to take part all the way. But this time he wanted to have his back covered and decided to record all conversations leading up to the attack. When he saw Sandra die he was sure that he was doing the right thing.

When called for questioning at the Police Station he decide to take the gamble, he would tell all about the voice recordings. His gamble did pay off. He managed to get a deal with Police detective Bryan Roberts and a judge. He let them copy his recordings and he promised to mail them the cell phone as soon as the three goons were sentenced. He also got what he wanted when it came to disappearing. Instead of going on a witness protection program, he received a lump sum of money to help him through the process.

He used the money wisely. He had already laid down a plan; he wanted to become a woman permanently. For that he needed hormone treatment and an operation, and the best place to do just that, was in Trinidad, Colorado. That was were he was heading as soon as he left the Police Station. He had an old car and paid cash all the way to Trinidad.

Once at the hospital he got a room and went straight out to buy some feminine clothes. He was on hormones from day one, and from that same day he threw away his male clothing for good. It would take around one year before he could have the operation, but he had to live with that. The legal office helped him get a new name and new ID Cards. He chose Alison Jansen as his feminine name. He, or rather she now, was admitted to a local college. Her, or Chuck's papers, were transferred to her new College and his identity change was complete.

Alison did extremely well in College, in fact she was doing so well that a prestigious College in New England offered her a scholarship. She accepted, but it had to wait until the summer break the coming year. Then her operation had been done, and she could live a life in freedom. It was a very beautiful blonde woman that came to Harvard that summer.

The cell phone was sent to the Police in Philly as agreed. It was sent from some place very anonymous and the person who did it had no connections with her or anyone in Philly. She also kept Alan updated in the whole process. He was in fact the only person knowing what had happened to Chuck. And Alan kept his mouth completely shut.

Ross continued to focus on his law studies. The football season was over, so all his concentration was on doing good in College. He wouldn't date any girl, he kept Sandra's memory too high to involve himself with other women. In fact he believed he would never be with a girl again. He more or less vowed that he from now on would live a life in celibacy. If Sandra couldn't be mother to his children, nobody else could either.

It happened however, that Ross sometimes went downtown to have a meal and see some shows. It even happened that he went on the dance floor, but only for a maximum of two, maybe three dances with each woman. But then it happened, he was out having a meal on a restaurant with a bar and a dance floor. His table was located in a corner and he was all alone with a beer, after having had a good meal. He was in the mood for some dancing, but that was all.

While he sat there a woman came up to his table; and started to talk to him. He looked at her and saw a 5'8" tall woman with brown hair reaching almost to her shoulders, a perfectly made up face and dressed in a green dress that reached from her neck to her knees. It had a tight skirt and clung to a very feminine body. On her feet she had high-heeled sandals with 4" heels. "Aren't you Ross Conway?" she said in a husky voice.

"Yes, I am. What is that to you."

"I've always wanted to meet you, and here you are all alone. Can a girl sit down and give you some company in your loneliness?"

Ross hesitated, but said: "Please sit down. And what is your name?"

"My name Lillian Larson. You can call me Lily."

"Then Lily it is. And you can call me Ross."

"Thank you for letting me sit at your table. I'm a big fan of yours and what you have done on the football field these last three years is absolutely fantastic. I have of course heard about the tragedy that happened in you home the day you played the finals, and I do understand that you don't want to involve yourself with another woman again. At least not for a long time. I also know that three men are in custody charged with killing your beloved wife. Please accept my sincere condolences."

"Thank you, and what are you doing around here?"

"I'm in college, just like you. I'm planning to become a criminalist, and plan to take some courses in law on top of it all."

At that moment a waiter came by. Ross stopped him and Asked Lily if she wanted something to drink. "A glass of red wine would be nice," she said.

"Bring the lady a glass of red wine and another beer for me," Ross said to the waiter.

The waiter disappeared and came back three minutes later with the wine and the beer.

Lily and Ross toasted and went on talking about their lives and such. Ross soon started to get the inkling feeling that he had seen or met Lily before. There was something about her that made him think it was more to her than what she looked. She came to his table with a purpose, but he didn't know which. Many other girls had done similar things the past months, but he could easily see through them, They only wanted him as a trophy. But Lily was different, she had more serious issues to talk about; but didn't know how or where to start. He decided to take her the dance floor to see if that would help.

Lily accepted Ross' invitation to dance. In fact she had no choice. To say no would raise even more suspicion. She had already seen it in Ross' eyes that it was something with her that bothered him. She wanted to tell him, but didn't dare. She was afraid that he would throw her right out the nearest window.

On the dance floor Ross was an ace. He and Sandra had danced a lot, it was part of their program of keeping themselves in shape. Lily, on the other hand, seemed clumsy and not knowing where to put her feet. But since Ross was so good, he soon had Lily follow his lead. It was still not good, but good enough not to raise suspicion amongst the other dances.

After three dances Ross took Lily back to his table. They sat down and ordered another beer and glass of wine. After the first toast Ross said: "Lily, there's something about you I don't understand. In one way you look familiar, like I've seen you, and talked to you before. But then on the other hand, you're a complete stranger. The way you acted on the dance floor told me that you haven't danced a lot, you seem clumsy. Please be open to me and tell me the real story about yourself. I'm very open-minded and won't pass judgement."

Lily turned pale. After a few seconds her face turned red and then pale again. She cleared her throat and started talking. "Please don't get angry with me. I will tell you my story. In fact, we have met and talked, although you have never met Lily before. The person you've met is Alan McCloud. That's the name I have on my birth certificate and driver's license. Lily Larson is just someone that Alan wants to be from time to time. Alan loves to dress as Lily and walk around as a woman. It's a part of me I can't get rid of. Lily often goes to gay bars and pick up men, and they seem to like women like me. I took the gamble and came here today. I knew you would be here and I wanted so much to meet you. I'm not here for any sexual relations with you, I just wanted to know you better and maybe be a little help in your grief. Please don't throw me out."

"Stay calm. I have no intention of throwing you out. You have intrigued me. A man dressing up as a woman in general public is quite new to me. I've only seen them on stage before. I heard about people like you and I think you're brave. You're lucky; you look good and pass easily. I've met Alan several times in class. He seems like a witty and intelligent guy, and I like him. You had me fooled for a long time tonight, and I give you credit for that. Let me pay up so we can leave quietly and discreetly." Ross paid and they left the place without being noticed.

The walk back to campus wasn't long and soon they were outside Lily's apartment. Because of her dressing, she had rented an apartment of her own just outside campus. Ross was invited in and he accepted. Inside Lily offered Ross a beer and he accepted. They sat down in the sofa and Lily went on talking.

"I've read all about the assault on your wife," she said, "and I think it was a brutal thing to do. They were four in your apartment, and three of them, Abe, Bozo and Sonny, are in custody awaiting trial. We all know they are Justin Gallagher's goons and do nothing if he doesn't tell them first. There is one goon missing, and that is Chuck O'Neil. I know he was there; in fact everybody knows. It just wasn't enough evidence to put him in jail. And now he has disappeared.

"I know this, because I know Chuck. He was some kind of oddball in that company. He joined them just to tell himself that he was a tough guy like the rest of the gang. He escaped into crime and violence. But I know Chuck, in fact I know him very well. Chuck is in fact, just like me. He also likes to dress as a woman, and many times we have been out together as women. But it always happened in places they didn't know us. We had lots of fun together. But he wanted to go further than me; he wanted to become a woman full time. That's why he has now disappeared, nowhere to be found. I bet my last dollar that he is somewhere getting his hormones and finally an operation. So this incident was very convenient to him, he used it to disappear for good. I bet he will come back and haunt Justin for the rest of his life. From what I can see there's no way to get to Justin, he has a solid alibi and his goons won't tell on him. They know that if they do, someone on the inside will make sure that that person won't come out of prison alive. So he feels safe. In my future work I hope I can get criminals like Justin and really let them pay for their crimes."

"As you know, I will become a lawyer myself. Initially I wanted to be a defense lawyer, but after what happened to Sandra I would rather work for the DA's office. Defending people like Justin is not my style. I didn't see it that way before, I saw my job for the defense as a place where I could help people less fortunate to be treated fairly and squarely.

And occasionally prevent miscarriage of justice. And for you, I think your duality can help you as an investigator. You just have to find a precinct that allows detectives to switch gender from time to time."

"I would like so. I like the duality in me."

"Excuse me for asking, but are you gay or straight?"

"I'm bi. As Alan I love to be with girls and have been to bed with them many times. As Lily I often go to bed with men, but it must be men who know what I am. Lily has also been to bed with other women, even women like herself. I love all kinds of sexual activity except one, as Alan I would never go to bed with another man."

"I'm all straight myself. I have never been to bed with another person than Sandra. We planned to have kids as soon as we were established in our new jobs, we hoped to have three or four. Now I will most probably die childless."

Ross and Lily continued to talk through the night and the time was almost five before Ross found his bed in the dorm. He had seen Lily undress and go to bed; that had been something she had wanted to show him. He was also invited to spend the night with her, but he declined, it definitely wasn't the right time.

Over the coming months Ross and Alan/Lily spent a lot of time together. While on their home turf it was always Ross and Alan And people began to see them as best friends. Ross' mood gradually became better and about six months after Sandra tragic death, he was almost back to his normal self. But if you looked closely you could very often see that particular look in his face, a look that spelled Sandra all over. Things indicated that he in fact never might come over her.

If the twosome went out of town it was very often as Lily and Ross. Lily acted and behaved like the sophisticated woman she was, and Ross was proud to be seen in her company. As time progressed Lily also started to look more and more like Sandra. This was on purpose from both of them; Ross thrived better in Sandra's company, and Lily found this as a much better way to get Ross hooked.

The first time they really slept together was in a hotel room in New York. They had been watching a Drag Show, and they both became so intrigued by what they saw that sex seemed to be the right thing. There was no penetration, only soft cuddling very close to each other. On a later date Lily dared to suck Ross' penis until it exploded in her mouth.

In September the trial against Abe, Bozo and Sonny came up before a jury. They had all admitted to the crime on which they were charged, so it was all over in a matter of a week. None had been charged with premeditated murder, so they only received a sentence of 15 years in prison. They all named Chuck as an accompish and Justin as the man behind the plan, but since no evidence had found against them, their case never came to court. Besides Chuck had disappeared and was nowhere to be found. Justin had been in for questioning, but he was clever enough to never come up with anything that could tie him to the crime.

Ross had followed the case all the way, he even had to come to the witness stand. He gave a favorable impression and actually helped the jury in reaching their decision. When the trial was over, he was happy with the verdict, and it was in fact him that asked the

prosecution not to charge the defendants with premeditated murder. He was now only waiting for the mysterious cell phone to show up.

It took one more month before the cell phone came to the police station. It had been arranged that it was sent from a place in Montana directly to Detective Bryan Roberts, the same person that had interviewed Chuck when he was at the precinct. In the package was also instructions on how to get to the voice recording. In addition graphologists verified that everything was in Chuck's handwriting.

The arrival of the cell phone was a sensation at the precinct. Anything like this had never happened before. Detective Roberts took immediate contact with his superiors regarding how to handle the case. A judge (the judge who knew about it) was also called in. They soon agreed that this was more than enough to nail Justin Gallagher. Detective Roberts was given the task to lead the investigation. A warrant for Justin's arrest was issued, and armed with that paper, Detective Roberts went and arrested him for planning the assault on Sandra Conway. He denied everything of course. He told the detective that they been through this before and reminded him of what happened then. But Detective Roberts just read him his rights and said: "We have new evidence in the case and that is more than enough to press charges on you. Just make that phone call and come with me."

Justin picked up his phone and called his father. His father was furious and promised to be at the station right away. Detective Roberts took hold of Justin's phone, put handcuffs on him and placed him in the back seat of a squad car. 15 minutes later they were at the station and in the interrogation room. His father Leland



and the family lawyer Morgan Walker were already there. Justin's father was furious, he demanded the release of his son immediately. Detective Roberts just said in a calm voice: "We have good reasons for arresting your son. You can stay here on the outside and listen to what will be said and done. Only his lawyer is allowed in the interrogation room."

That didn't stop Leland from being furious and, and only Mr. Walker's reasoning words managed to calm him down. The lawyer followed Detective Roberts and Justin into the interrogation room. They sat down and Detective Roberts took out some papers and a cell phone. Justin thought initially that it was his own phone, but soon realized that it was another one. The detective handed some papers to Justin and his lawyer and said: "You are charged with planning the assault and mutilation of Sandra Conway. This phone arrived by mail two days ago and it contains proof that so is the case. Who sent it is not relevant at the moment. It contains some voice recordings, and the papers in front of you represents the exact words spoken. It also tells you who said what. The date and time of the recording is also written down. Please listen."

Detective Roberts hooked the phone to an amplifier and started the playback of the recording. A familiar voice came through the loudspeaker; it was the voice of Justin. He panicked, and the more he heard, the more panicky he became. "You must get me out of this," he said to his lawyer several times. But the lawyer just told him to shut up and wait until the recording was over. Then he would discuss the way ahead.

Two hours later the recording was over. It was very incriminating to Justin, and his chances for getting out of this was very slim. At the end the lawyer just said: "I will raise the question about bail and demand that my client is taken before a judge as soon as possible."

"That can be arranged. What about tomorrow at eleven? In the meantime Justin will spend the night here at the station."

"That's all right with me. I'll be there."

Outside the room Leland approached the lawyer and said: "You could have done more. No way any son of mine is going to spend a single night in jail. Get him out now!"

"I'm sorry, but that's not possible. So far the prosecution has a shut case and can keep him for 24 hours. But wait until tomorrow, I'm sure I can at least get him out on bail. It might be a very high amount, considering the case and the financial status of his family, but I think you can make it. You must expect a couple of million dollars though."

The next day before the judge they didn't fear any better. The judge denied bail and ruled that Justin should stay in prison until his case came up before a jury. And that could take up to six months. The owner of the phone was already released to the defense the day before, and when hearing that Chuck O'Neil was behind this, Leland and his folks started searching for him. They were also given the name of the place in Montana where it had been sent from. When Leland's folks checked with the post office there, they were told that they remembered the package, but the man who had sent it looked nowhere like Chuck. In addition he came with a car with Oregon plates and disappeared in an easterly direction. They didn't see anyone else in the car. So the information Leland's folks got at that the post office, wasn't worth a dime.

The trial against Justin Gallagher took place the coming February. The football season was over and Ross and his team had done it again. He was available to the prosecution. He was after all one of their prime witnesses. The attack Justin had made on Sandra almost two years ago showed him as a possessive and vindictive person. The scar on his left cheek were the result of that encounter. Sandra was never prosecuted for what she did that day, it was too many witnesses around that saw the whole incident. What Sandra did was pure self defense. When Ross was asked by the defense about this incident and why he didn't interfere, he simply said: "I knew very well that Sandra could care of herself in situations like that, so I let her do her thing. If I had interfered too early, it might have looked like I was attacking Justin. Then he would have had a case against me. I didn't want to give him that satisfaction."

The main issue for the defense during the trial was to dismiss the cell phone recording as evidence. Since it came from an unknown source. The prosecution argued that the phone came with a note, verified to be written by Chuck O'Neil, and that it had his fingerprints all over, made it certain that the phone was his. The defense argued further that since the owner of the phone had disappeared and was nowhere to be found, his possessions could not be used as evidence. Despite this the judge allowed the phone to be used as evidence.

Justin, on his side, tried to deny everything. He had a theory that the whole recording was fabricated in order to frame him in the case. Nobody believed him. Abe, Bozo and Sonny was also called to the witness stand and they verified that Justin had planned it all, and that if they were caught, they were completely on their own.

During the trial the jury listened to the voice recording with a printed transcript of it in their hands. To them it all was very convincing. They ended up finding Justin guilty in conspiracy and planning a violent crime, and sentenced him to 25 years in prison. An appeal was sent to the State Supreme Court, but it was rejected. Justin and his goons were out of circulation for a long, long time.

That spring was also the time both Ross and Alan should graduate, but they both decided to take one year extra to specialize in their fields. Alan wanted to take a detective's course, a course that would qualify him to get a job as a detective in numeral Police Districts around the country. In addition he had background from law and forensic science and with some training he would be a fully qualified field operative. Ross wanted special courses in criminal law, allowing him to work in a D.A.'s office.

He didn't play football that year; that was mainly due to an injury he had during the finals. With five minutes left of the game he was stopped very hard by one of the opponents and injured his knee. The injury didn't worry him during daily life, but it could be fatal on the football field.

During this final year Ross was approached by a representative from Bosworth & Co, a law firm specializing in helping those with lesser means than the average people. They received their funding from various donations with one very rich and eccentric person in the background. They had offices all over the country and he could pick and chose where he

wanted to work. Since Alan already had received an offer to work in DC, Ross chose to work there as well. They decided to share an apartment or a house, and it was understood that Lily would come along as well. Alan wouldn't be a whole person without her.

Just after graduation they moved all their stuff into their DC apartment. It had three bedrooms, a large kitchen and a spacious living room. Behind the kitchen was an extra room they decided to use as an office. It wasn't very large, but it was sufficient for Alan. Ross would use one of the bedrooms as his home office. He probably had more use for an office than Alan had. After having earned some money they would install a home movie system in the living room. They wouldn't use the assets they had saved for that; it could easily wait for a year or maybe more. They had also decided to share the master bedroom. After all they had become so intimate now that it felt like the natural thing to do.

It was one more thing they would like to do before they moved in and started to work. That was to take a vacation in Europe, travel around the old world to get a feeling how it is living there. After having read some brochures Ross got a bright idea. "Alan," he said, "I read here that you can travel around most of Europe without a passport if you have a normal ID card. I know your passport is for Alan only, but since you have a US ID-card in Lily's name, why not use it and travel Europe with me as Lily. That would be so much fun. It's only if you want to go to the UK, Ireland and some of the former East Block nations you really need a passport. I would love to travel around with Lily at my side."

"That's a great idea, I'd love to do it. I only have to pack the right things. Most important I need the upper torso with full breasts and something that can squeeze my groin tight. Maybe a lower torso would be appropriate as well. Let's see what I find out."

Chapter 3

Their airplane left Dulles International Airport outside DC on a warm day in late June. They were heading for Brussels and would arrive there early in the morning. They had already booked a room at the hotel at the airport and would use that as their base the first two days. Brussels was conveniently located for reaching most of Europe. Even a trip to the British Isles were easy to reach from there. You could either drive down to Calais and put the car on the train that would take you to UK, or you could take the Eurostar train. It would take you from city center to city center. In both cases you would travel under the English Channel.

They landed in Brussels on schedule the next morning. They picked up their luggage, passed customs without problems and walked across the street from the exit and entered the hotel lobby. They checked in as Ross Conway and Alan McCloud and took their belongings to their room. It was quite spacious and comfortable. They had slept a little on the plane, but since they still were on EDT they felt they needed a little extra sleep. Two hours was considered enough. Then Alan went to the bathroom and put on the two-piece torso and changed himself into Lillian Larson. This included red nail polish on her toe nails as well as her fingernails. It was warm outside so she dressed only in a short skirt, a flimsy blouse without sleeves and white sandals with 2" wide heels. Her bra was clearly visible

through the fabric of the blouse. She used a wig with medium brown color, a color that matched the pictures on her ID and driver's license. She was almost finished when Ross was ready for the bathroom.

They left their room around noon. Downstairs in the restaurant a lunch table was available and they had something to eat before they left the hotel. They had to go back into the airport arrival hall before they could go downstairs and take the train to Brussels center. It only took 15 minutes to get there. They walked around in Brussels the whole afternoon and got to see all the main attractions. They found a nice place at the Grand Place and had a glass of wine and finished off the day with dinner at a restaurant in the area. Back at the hotel they felt dead tired and fell asleep almost at once.

Next day they once again took the train downtown, but this time they boarded a sight-seeing bus that would take them to attractions in the outskirts of town. One of the more interesting places was the fields at Waterloo where Napoleon was finally beaten on June 18th, 1815. At the site there is a monument with the shape of a lion looking in the direction of France, It had 226 steps leading up to the lion, and Lily and Ross walked them all. It was a fantastic view over the Belgian landscape from the top of the monument.

Back at the airport they picked up the rental car and drove it to the hotel garage. This way they saved some time when they were off the next morning.

Next morning they checked out from the hotel. It was only Ross at the desk that morning, Lily was already down in the garage making the car ready. As soon as Ross was down there, he sat down behind the wheel and drove out. Fortunately it was Sunday morning and the traffic was very light. If it been a normal weekday, the traffic would have been a nightmare. The evening before they had studied the maps and found the direction they would take. Ross wanted to go to Bastogne in southeast Belgium where his grandfather had fought during WW2. He had been driving a tank and had suffered major injuries. This happened during the so-called 'Battle of the Bulge', a final German offensive trying to regain control over what they had lost since D-day. They were successful at first, but soon ran out of resources and had to give in. It took place during winter conditions which made it even more strenuous.

To get there they had to exit the airport area, enter the Brussels ring east and follow it until the exit with A4. Then they had to follow A4 all the way passed Namur until it met A26 and then partly backtrack to Bastogne. Any other route would take them on country roads in the Ardennes, and that might be very confusing. With a few stops on the way, it took them four hours to reach Bastogne.

For Ross the visit here brought back many memories. His grandfather had told so much about what happened there during WW2, and it was all firmly fixed in his memory. He saw the tank standing in the middle of town, a vivid memory of what took place in 1945. His grandfather had been in a tank similar to that. In fact it brought tears to his eyes to see it. His grandfather was dead now, but he hoped he could watch his grandson paying tribute to him and everybody else that fought 'The Battle of the Bulge'.

Lily kept her distance while Ross sorted out his thoughts. One of her grandfathers had been in the Pacific during WW2, while the other was too young to be drafted. She knew

her grandfather had suffered a lot, but he never talked about it. He died two years ago with all his memories still in his head. He never even talked about it to his wife.

After Bastogne they set out on their journey through Europe. They had no special plans on where to go, they just picked a route and saw where it took them. They took a trip through northern France and Italy before they turned north again through Austria and into Germany. After Berlin they headed north and took a boat to Sweden. From Sweden they took a northwesterly route to the west coast of Norway and Bergen. In Bergen they found out they could take a boat to Newcastle in England and decided to do that. That meant that Lily had to change back to Alan before they boarded. The boat only had a few cabins left, and they had to settle with a very small one. The change back to Alan was done in a hotel just outside Bergen.

Their first problem in England was that they had to drive on the left side of the road. It was very awkward, but after a few miles they had adjusted enough to master the situation. The biggest problem was every time they should overtake another car, they had to go out to the right where the view from the driver was impaired since the driver was on the wrong side of the car.

They realized soon that they were running short of time. Ireland was out of the question, they had settle with England only. Even a trip up to Scotland might take up too much of their time. Instead they took it rather slowly down to London. They soon learned that driving and parking in that town was a nightmare. But after some research they found a hotel not too far from the city center where they could sleep and park. It was on the south side of town, making their travel on M25 as short as possible. That road could be a nightmare to someone that was short of time.

They spent two days in London. Fortunately their plane back to DC was in the early evening so they could make it to Brussels Airport by leaving early in the morning. That also included the hour they would lose on the clock when traveling from UK to the Continent.

They were able to see a lot during their two day stay in London. They visited many of the famous places and did their mandatory shopping along Oxford Street A boat trip on the river Thames was also included.

On their final day they hit the road very early in the morning. They had to calculate with 2 hours drive down to Dover, at least 30 minutes to wait, 30 minutes on the train with the car on board and up to 3 hours back to Brussels. That was six hours total and one hour extra for the time difference, seven hours total. So by leaving at six they should be at Brussels Airport at one with time to spare to catch their plane.

As the actual times showed, they used less time to Dover, more to wait on the train and more time on the train. The drive to Brussels, however, didn't take as long as scheduled, so in fact they handed back the rental at 1:20 PM. The most fascinating part of that trip was the train ride. They drove the car onboard a train coach, a coach they shared with several other cars. The coach had two floors with cars on both. During the whole journey they sat in the car or walked around the coach between other cars. They saw nothing but the tunnel wall.

At the airport everything went smoothly. They had time to spare before their flight and had more than enough time to get a solid meal. The flight was uneventful and they landed at Dulles International 20 minutes before schedule. They took a shuttle bus downtown and a taxi to their new apartment. They were in bed just before midnight. That was a Friday night, and the coming Monday they both had to show up for work.

On Monday morning they both showed up at their new workplace. Alan presented himself at the Police Headquarters downtown and was taken directly to his new supervisor. His name was Howard Simpson and had the rank of Lieutenant.

It took only two minutes before they knew they were on the same wavelength. They had a few common interests and shared the same sense of humor. The Lieutenant told Alan a lot about how business was done at the station and emphasized several times that Alan came to the station as some kind of oddball. Everybody that worked there had some kind of police training except Alan. He only had a college degree and might be scorned upon by some. But by showing himself what he was made of, he would soon earn the respect of his new colleagues.

After about one hour's talk, Howard took Alan down to his new office. He showed him his desk and what it was equipped with. It was located in an open space environment where only a few people had separate offices. Two interrogation rooms were located close by. Howard called the officers present forward and said: "Ladies and Gentlemen! This here is your new colleague Alan McCloud. Unfortunately for him, he has no police training, and therefore some of you will be tasked to teach him along the way. He is a College graduate from Philadelphia with background in Criminal Law and Forensic Science. An odd combination, but it is true. I have seen his papers and tested his knowledge already. He knows a lot. In the forensic department his specialties being fingerprints and DNA analysis, and one of the updates to our computer systems is written by him. I want you to accept Alan as he was one of you, and come the time I think he will be. Alan, do you want to say something?"

"Not much really, just that I look forward to start working here, I've heard so much about this unit and when I learned that I had been offered a job here, I was so happy. I hope you won't hold it against me that I have no police background at all. The only thing I know about police work is what I've seen on bad TV series. But there must be some kind of truth even from them. There is just one thing I want to mention to you. It's a fact many people, even police officers, are not aware of. It's a known fact that identical twins share the same DNA, but remember, they don't share the same fingerprints. Neither do they share palm prints, prints from the foot, and ear patterns. These things are not genetic, just random patterns developed during the fetus stage. So remember, if you come to a crime scene and notice an ear imprint at a window or mirror, take good care of it, it can give us an intruder or a murder. In the same way it can be used to clear people.

"When it comes to my personal life, I'm single and without a girlfriend at the moment. I share an apartment with a good friend of mine from college. He was a big college football star and I bet some of you knows his name; it's Ross Conway."

This caused quite a stir amongst his new colleagues, but no one commented upon it. They just gave him a short applause and a spokesman came forward and welcomed him to his new workplace. They would all make certain that he soon learned the routines and could be considered a full-fledged member of their team.

Next step for Alan was a trip to the IT department. There he was given a login name, password and e-mail address. He was also told that the system had very tight security and access was through several security filters. So by the end of the day he had had a long talk with his new supervisor, met some of his new colleagues, had a rundown with the IT people and got himself a desk to work from. At least it was a beginning.

Ross had a similar first day. He was taken directly to Stanley Bosworth, CEO of Bosworth & Co. He told Ross to sit down and have a coffee. Ross did as he was told. It was Stan that opened the conversation. "I've heard a lot about you," he said, "both as a great football player, a very good student with excellent grades and I know all about the tragedy that ended in you losing your beloved wife. When I heard about the voice recording that brought young Justin down, I felt great joy and pleasure. It was so good to see a Gallagher go down like that. I don't like that family and what they stand for. Justin had just to cruise through college and then become one of the top notches in the family firm, and he seemed to be the worst of them all. But it was one thing I didn't get, why did he plan such a thing against your wife?"

"Sir, it comes from an incident more than one year earlier. My wife, then fiancée, and I came walking down the sidewalk when he approached us with his goons. He told us he was demanding us that Sandra should be with him instead of me.. She refused of course, and I supported her. Then he grabbed her and tried to kiss her. He obviously thought that he could do whatever he wanted to every girl he fancied. But Sandra resisted, and in the struggle that followed, she used her fingernails on his cheek and he ended up with a nasty scar. As a revenge for that he wanted to give her one of the same. Unfortunately she fell and broke her neck in the fall. It came up during the trial against Justin's three goons that did not have any intention to kill her."

"There was a fourth goon involved as far as I understand."

"His name was Chuck O'Neil and was responsible for the recording. Since the recording gave them Justin, the Police let him go. Where he is now, nobody knows. He wasn't very active in the assault on my wife, anyway."

"He was very brave doing the recording; it's clear that he wanted out of Justin's claws. I would very much like to meet him, maybe even hire him. A man like that deserves to have a good job and be happy for the rest of his life. And you don't know where he is?"

"No idea. Honestly."

"I believe you. But what is and was your opinion of Chuck?"

"As long as he was with Justin, I considered him one of my enemies. That was especially true after the attack on Sandra. Before that he was indifferent to me. Now that I've learned what he has done, he has my full respect. It takes a lot of guts to break free of

Justin's grip. I think he was very brave. He must have hidden himself pretty well, since it seems that none from the Gallagher organization has managed to find him yet."

"Maybe they have and won't tell anyone."

"I don't think so. I have some very reliable sources that claim that he's still alive."

"And now back to you, what can you tell me about yourself that I already don't know?"

"I'm single now, no girlfriend. I share an apartment with a friend from college. His name is Alan McCloud and he got a job at the main Police Station. It's a rather large apartment and we share it to save money. He came to me right after Sandra was killed and was a good help to me in the dark days. He was in a similar position since he had lost his beloved mother just a few days before I lost my wife. We found comfort in each other's sorrows and have been friends ever since."

What kind of background has your friend?"

"Criminal Law just like me. In addition he has a special course in Forensic Science with special interest in DNA and fingerprint analysis."

"I might try to 'steal' him from the Chief of Police one day. I'd love to have a guy like that on my payroll."

"And now we will go and meet your new colleagues. But before we go; we practice a very liberal policy here at Bosworth & Co. We tolerate all races, all religions and all kinds of sexual preferences. We have many so-called strange people working here. We have women who once were men, men who used to be women, men who dress as women, some of them full time, others only on occasion., gay men, lesbian women and many others. In addition many of these so-called odd people are married to some of the others. I won't tell you who these people are, you have to find that out for yourself. You just call them by the name they normally use, and then everything's OK. And now young man, let's take a walk through the premises and meet your new colleagues. As far as I know only two is missing today, so you will have to say hello to them later."

Ross' tour around the premises was very much like the one Alan had at about the same time. They went to meet all his new colleagues that were present and ended up in the IT department, just like Alan. During the tour he had seen where his office would be, and talked a little with the men and women that worked in his area.

Back home Ross and Alan went through the what they had experienced that first day. They were most concerned that they had their story about sharing an apartment straight. Fortunately they had, no one had seen anything odd with two young med fresh from college sharing an apartment to save money.

During the fall Ross and Alan tried to live as separate lives as possible. It happened they went out together, but that was only for a beer or two. They hung out with separate crowds just to keep up the image that they were just friends. It also happened that they threw a party for their new friends in their apartment.

Both went out dating girls. Neither of them were gay, not even Alan. He liked to dress as a woman from time to time and through his actions you might consider him bisexual. When he did he was always in company with Ross, and they never did it in Washington. Normally they went to Baltimore, and sometimes even to New York. On these occasions Alan was Lily from he left the apartment until he returned there two days later. When Ross was out with other women, it was always one-night stands. He was not ready to commit himself yet, the wounds from Sandra's death were still deep inside him. Alan, on the other side, managed after a few months to get a steady girlfriend. Her name was Joyce and she liked Alan's crossdressing. They had even been out together as two girls on one occasion. Joyce also met Ross, of course, and they became very good friends.

When Christmas came along both Ross and Alan was invited to a Christmas party organized by their workplace. Fortunately they were not on the same date. Alan had his first. He took Joyce along and they had a very good time. That same night Ross really understood how lonesome he was. He sat alone at home and got stone drunk. When Joyce and Alan arrived from the party, they saw his sorry state and tucked him to bed. They knew he really needed some help. Perhaps he was jealous and wanted Alan/Lily as his own. He needed female company as soon as possible.

Next week it was Ross' turn to go to a Christmas party. He had announced that he would come with a partner, but one week before the party, he still hadn't found any. In desperation he asked Alan if he could dress up as Lily and join him. Alan complied right away; he would do anything to keep Ross happy.

At the day of the party Alan overdid himself. Never had Lily looked more beautiful. She was wearing a two-piece torso that gave her the perfect figure. The torso was state-of-the-art and left no visible joints between body and torso. Therefore Lily could wear a long dress with very thin shoulder straps that gave others a very good view of her two perfect breasts. It was tight at the waist and reached almost to the floor. The skirt was a little wide, so a split at the side was not needed. It was red, the color of Christmas. On her feet she had red sandals with 4" spiked heels. Her hair was medium brown and reached down to the upper part of her naked back. Her face was made up to perfection and both her finger- and toenails were painted deep red. She would present herself as an old acquaintance of Ross from Philadelphia and say that she worked as a teacher in Grade School there. Ross had made sure that no one else in his new company had any ties to Philadelphia. As they left the apartment to take a taxi, Lily put on a fur coat to keep her warm in the cold December weather.

At the party Lily was an instant hit. Everybody wanted to talk to her and learn to know what kind of person she was. The men envied Ross who had caught such a woman. Some were more suspicious though, they knew that Ross shared an apartment with a male friend, and that he never had dated the same girl twice since he moved to DC. But of course, he could have had her waiting in Philly all these months.

Lily was a good dancer, and though she danced most of the dances with Ross, she was also on the floor with several of his colleagues. Ross had told Lily about the mixed group of people he worked with, so she knew that many of the guests weren't what they appeared to be. She tried her best to figure out who was what, and by the end of the day she

thought she had it right. This was part of the scheme she had with Ross, we wanted so much to learn who was what in the company. Not that it bothered him that people had a different lifestyle, but because he was curious and wanted to know how good he was in finding out if people were who they appeared to be or not. Lily might be better in this, just because she was one herself. "It takes one to know one," they say.

Back home that night Lily didn't change back to Alan. Instead she and Ross went to bed together and had a wonderful night making out as best they could. Alan/Lily was bi, and to Ross Lily was all woman. He thought he was in love with her, and wanted to have her for himself the rest of their lives. He didn't care if they couldn't have children, there were remedies for that. They could adopt or find another woman that could be a substitute mother for their child.

But dreams don't always become reality. Ross knew that Lily wanted to live as Alan and only be Lily on occasion, the occasion lasting from one night to several weeks. On this occasion, however, she had to be Lily until she and Ross returned to Philly for the Christmas holidays. That was no problem, Alan had already started on his Christmas leave and Joyce was on her way to St. Paul to see her family.

On Monday Ross was called to Mr. Bosworth's office for a talk. Coffee was served and Stan opened by saying: "Ross, you have now been here for over four months and I've been very pleased with your work. And I'm sure you will have a great future in our company. As you have learned, we have branches all over the country and they are all run by the same principles. If you should want to relocate, you can choose any of our offices and work there with the same seniority as you have here. A promotion is often followed by a relocation, but far from always. Whenever there's a vacancy somewhere, the position is offered to everybody qualified, no matter where they work. Who will get the job, is a decision between me and the branch manager. Four months is a little short for a promotion, but you have done such a great job so far that I will offer you 10% raise in pay, starting January. Your job will still be the same though, but more load can be put on your shoulders."

"Thank you Sir for the kind words. I promise I will never let you down. At the moment I have no reason to relocate, I'm happy here in DC. As you know, because of my injured knee, I can never play football again, but I would love to be coaching a team of youngsters. If I get the opportunity, I will dedicate most of my spare time to them, no matter where they are."

"That gave me an idea. We are trying to help some people from being exploited by some landowners. They are trying to build themselves up from the bottom, and one of the things they're trying to do, is to get the kids to play football. The only other option they have is hanging on street corners selling or buying drugs. They get good income that way, but it takes them on their way to doom. The landowners are in fact drug dealers and use the kids in the neighborhood to distribute the drugs further down the chain. By getting these kids to play football instead they might lose interest in selling drugs and get some healthier hobbies. The men further up the chain will go berserk, of course, but I know I will get some help from my good friend Jack Mansion, Chief of Police here in DC. In addition I might need an undercover agent to get inside the gang."

"I can do the coaching. All I need is a field and some equipment."

"There's a field near by. I'll take care of the formality there. I also have to deal with the city council. They want to flatten the area to the ground and relocate all the citizens to neighborhoods all over the town. They see that as the only option to get rid of the drug traffic in the area. The buildings are too good to be torn down. Just you concentrate on the coaching and I'll take care of the rest."

"I will. Anything else Sir?"

"There's one thing more. That woman you brought to the party on Saturday, who is she really? Something inside me told me she was not what she seemed to be. She was too perfect. You told everybody that she was an old college acquaintance from Philly, but from I have learned from you, you have stayed single since your wife died. And the two of you seemed very intimate. Have you been lying to me?"

Ross turned pale. He didn't know what to say or where to begin. Finally he mounted up his courage and said: "No Sir, I have not been lying to you. Lily is an old college acquaintance. We met first time a short while after my wife's funeral. She came to my table in a restaurant, introduced herself and was allowed to sit down. To me she seemed rather familiar, it was something with her that said I had met her before. But on the other hand, I knew I had never met this woman at any time in my life. I confronted her with my suspicions and it didn't take long before she told me the whole story. She was in fact a man dressed as a woman and her real name was Alan McCloud, the same Alan McCloud which whom I share an apartment. He/she had lost his/her mother in an accident just two days before my wife died and she told me that she sought me in my sorrow in order to help each other in our grievance. I knew the story was true, I had read about the accident. Alan never knew his father and he grew up as an only child to a single mother. We have been close friends ever since.

"And since I wanted to come to the Christmas party with a partner, I asked if Lily could come along. I wanted to appear here as a straight guy, a famous football player is not gay. I was afraid that showing up with Alan as my partner might ruin my reputation."

"In this company, no way. You would have gained more respect. Nothing wrong with choosing Lily of course, she is a gorgeous woman and very representative. But this gave me an idea; why not use Lily as an inside agent? I'll talk to Chief Mansion about it later today. You can also ask her if you like. I have a feeling she will stay here all the time until you leave for Philly."

"That's right. Alan/Lily still has a house in Philly and he/she wants to return there as soon as possible. Alan also has a steady girlfriend now. Her name is Joyce Hagen and is a colleague of his. They really seem to have found each other. Alan has told me over and over again that he prefers a female spouse. A spouse that can live with his crossdressing. And he has found that in Joyce. The truth is that he's bi-sexual. Living with him has also spurred some bi-sexual tendencies in me as well."

"That's all right. On a place like this; such things doesn't matter. I won't tell a soul about Alan/Lily. Her secret is safe with me. And now Ross, back to work."

"Thank you Sir. Goodbye."

Ross returned to his desk, shaken but relieved. He had to tell Lily about this incident as soon as he came home. He wouldn't tell about the stuff regarding undercover agent, however. That is not firm, and such news should come through Alan's own chain of command.

Chapter 4

As soon as he was home from work Ross sat down with Lily and told her about his conversation with Stan Bosworth. Lily was a little shocked at first, but soon regained her senses and accepted that her cover was blown, at least to one person.

This was Monday afternoon and they had a lot to do. They were supposed to drive to Philadelphia on Wednesday morning, arriving as early as possible. Lily would be taken to her house, where she would change back to Alan and spend a quiet lonely night there. Alan might go out to have himself something to eat, but that was all. On Christmas Day he was invited to the Conway's and would have Christmas dinner with them. This was a token from them since he had been able to help Ross through the traumatic time after his wife had been killed. The whole Conway family would be there, including the partners to Ross' siblings. Ross and Alan would drive back to DC on Jan 4th, being ready to start work the next day. During their stay in Philly they did their best to visit as many of their old friends as possible. The College Football team welcomed Ross with standing ovations. He was still their hero, leading them to two consecutive victories in the College Football series. His spirits had lifted the team many steps, and they were still doing good. They were a team to be reckoned with.

Stan Bosworth hadn't been wasting his time over Christmas. He had talked with the Chief of Police and offered him help in stopping the drug trade associated with the Badlands area. Officially the area had another name, but after the illegal traffic took over, it was renamed, at least in the public eye. Jack Mansion liked the plan and would do everything he could to get rid of the problem. He anticipated some problems in the city administration though; since some officials there obviously were on the gang's payroll. Maybe Alan could be of help there.

Stan had also talked with J. P. Hawthorne IV, the sole owner and CEO of Hawthorne Industries. Even if most of the daily routines had been left to his grandchild J.P. VI, he still had the upper hand come crucial decisions. He normally lived in a secluded villa in Vermont. Only a very limited number of persons had direct access to J.P. IV, and Stan was one of them. He had even paid the Hawthorne's a visit during the Christmas holidays and laid down his plan and vision for the area. He got all the support he required. J.P. VI even told him they too had people on the inside in the administration of DC, and they would now be kept on constant vigil. They had links directly to the Hawthorne main office through a highly sophisticated and secure communication system. When he left Vermont, Stan was convinced that he would get his wish. He even got a promise from J.P. IV that his men would fully renovate the area once the gangs were out, and that wouldn't cost the city a dime.

Alan volunteered to go deep under cover. He had one condition though, if his life was in real jeopardy, they should pull him out. At this time he knew enough police work to know how to handle the situation. Joyce was also involved, she was set out to be the person that monitored everything Alan did and said, as well as everything that was said and done around him. But first they had to find a way to get the gang's attention so that Alan could be accepted as one of them.

Alan shouldn't go there as a man, he would be all woman. He would be equipped with the latest state-of-the-art torso which covered his complete body, including head and face. This would give him a completely new look, in fact he would look like a former female gang member named Rita Maloney whom the gang though had been killed by a rival. In fact she had been found half dead and taken to a hospital. There the police found her and moved her to a safe place. Feeling safe she had given them lots of information, but not enough to bring the gang down. In addition the gang's illegal traffic had increased several times since Rita had disappeared. To get real time information microphones would be placed inside both of Rita's silicone breasts. They also included a recording device that could be played back on command from someone on the outside. The only danger was if someone inside the gang would register the same information. Then it wouldn't help if the info was scrambled, suspicion had been risen and Rita's life could be in danger. To be safe Rita had to go to a very public place in order to have her recordings played back without raising any suspicion. The DC subway system might be such a place.

One important visit for Rita/Alan was to the real Rita. She was held in a safe place outside Baltimore. There she had been given a new name and a new look and felt relatively safe. Before Alan put on the torso, he and Joyce went to see her. They were welcomed in for coffee and some cakes and had a long conversation with Rita. At the end of the conversation Rita was told that Alan should impersonate her and regain her place in the gang, and therefore needed inside information on the most important members. Rita looked sceptical, but said: "I can't see how he can impersonate me; he's a man and I'm a woman. We might be of the same height and built, but his face looks nowhere like mine. I doubt very much that it will work."

"It will," Joyce replied, "First of all Alan is a very experienced crossdresser and with state-of-the-art equipment we can make him look so much like you that your own mother couldn't tell the difference. But before he rejoins the gang, he will show you in person how much like you he will be. He will even have your fingerprints."

"I still don't believe it can be done, but I'm more than willing to see if it can be done. When will this meeting take place?"

"We don't know yet. First we have to analyze the data you have given us and put it into context. We must also compare your data to data we already have, and with date assembled after you left the gang two months ago. By the way, did you have sexual relationship with any of the gang members?"

"Only one, and he is dead. I kept everybody else off my body and was respected for that, strangely enough. I must have been too important for them. They knew that messing around with me might be very dangerous."

“Thanks. That’s important for Alan to know. Being a woman he can’t have any normal sexual relations with any man. They can screw him in the ass, that might work, but I don’t think Alan would like it very much. When we meet the next time, Alan won’t be here. Instead the new Rita will show up. Then she wants to know everything she needs to know to be you, all your habits, good or bad, and whom to watch out for. You probably will have to spend quite some time together. We will notify you on where and when. One thing’s for sure; it will not be here and you will not be picked up at this place. You have to travel somewhere. Is that OK?”

“It is. I feel very safe where I am right now. But can you promise me one thing, once this is over, can you relocate me to the West Coast?”

“It’s not my decision, but I’ll do the best I can to make it happen. We might even be able to relocate you to Canada or Europe if you prefer that.”

“I’ll think about it.”

That was the final words said before Joyce and Alan returned to DC.

Back in DC the preparations for the operations continued at full speed. A makeshift football field was made ready and kids were encouraged to show up for some practice. Not many came the first day, but as soon as someone found out that this was serious stuff, kids began to gather more regularly. Then suddenly their new coach showed up. Most of the kids saw right away who he was, the famous Ross Conway! When they heard that he would be their new coach, more kids started to come to the field. Soon Ross had most of the kids’ attention, and they were slowly drawn away from dealing with drugs. This was so much more fun.

Ross soon discovered that some of the kids had talent and might make it big later. He encouraged them as best he could, but made it clear to them that there was no easy way to success. It soon looked that this part of the plan was going as scheduled. The drug traffic was reduced, but not as much as hoped. It only meant that a few people were making more money than ever, and that encouraged them to continue. Money was obviously better than football.

In the meantime Alan prepared himself for his assignment. He was a little nervous, but he knew also that he could take care of himself. He had lots of training in martial arts and knew how to defend himself. He didn’t believe that would change as soon as he put on the torso. He had also been given weapons training by the Police and knew how to handle a handgun.

So one week after his visit to the real Rita, he put on the torso to become the new Rita Maloney. It took 24 hours before the torso was fully in place, and most of that time he had to spend on an air-cushioned bed without moving a muscle. He was therefore given a drug that kept him in a state of unconsciousness during that time. When he was awoken, he stood up and looked exactly like the naked Rita Maloney. She was handed some clothes which she put on. Joyce had been there all through the awakening process and took Rita to her office. A few minutes later Chief Jack Mansion came through the door to have a look at

Rita. He had seen the real one several times before so he knew what she looked like. The person he saw in Joyce's office was an exact copy of the Rita he had granted clemency in exchange for information on the gang she was a member of. For a minute he thought he had the real one in front of him, but when he heard Rita speak, he knew this was his undercover agent. "You can't use that voice when we let you lose," he said.

"I know, but I did it to make sure that you knew who I really am. I can easily change my voice according to the real Rita." She did so and spoke a few sentences in Rita's voice.

"How do you do that?" Jack said.

"Since I was a kid I've had fun imitating other people's voices. I became so good at it that I even could answer for other kids in my class if need be. And the teacher never suspected a thing. It doesn't matter whether it's a male or a female voice. What my challenge is now, is to keep up my concentration so I don't fall out of character."

"You'd better do that. If not, you can blow the whole operation."

"I know. I have also thought that I can use my ability to my advantage. If I can imitate another person's voice and say something compromising, that person might be blamed and the whole thing can end up in an internal fight. I'll find that out along the way."

"It might be a good idea, but be careful. We don't want to lose you. What else do you need?"

"I need a list, with pictures, of all the gang members that were active at the time the real Rita disappeared. I also need to be locked in a room or an apartment for some time with Rita, in order to suck as much information out of her as possible.. In the meantime I need to be out of sight. And I need to talk to Ross. He needs to know everything about me and where I am at all times. I'm sorry to say, guys, but he's the only person I trust 100%."

"We understand. It will all be arranged. We have a safe apartment in the adjacent building. You can stay there until you have to leave for joining the gang."

"That's all right. What about food and drink?"

"It's enough to last a month for one person. If you like milk we have to provide you with some fresh milk every third day."

"Sounds OK. I like milk."

Then the conversation was over. 'Rita' was taken to the apartment and left there on her own. To reach it she had to go through real maze of corridors ending up in a secret elevator. The apartment was spacious and located on the sixth floor. It had windows to two streets; windows you could look out through, but not in. From the outside you only saw an image of someone walking around doing all kinds of normal stuff. Nobody could see what really took place in that apartment.

Rita's first visitor was Joyce. She came along almost as soon as 'Rita' had moved in. Access was from an elevator that ended in the apartments living room. The apartment had no doors to the outside corridor. For other people living there, the apartment didn't exist. Joyce brought some books and magazines for 'Rita' to read when she was totally bored. Otherwise she would spend her time doing her homework, working on the computer and watching television.

The first thing she did was to check out the apartment to see what was there. The fridge and the freezer had plenty of food and drink. Beer and soft drinks were available, but no hard stuff. She looked in the closets and found lots of clothes, all designed to fit her. She had to sort out the right ones when the real Rita arrived.

Ross arrived straight from work. He took a good look at 'Rita' and had to admit that she looked wonderful. She had flaming red hair and green eyes, very typical for an Irish or Scottish woman. They had a long talk about what had happened so far, and what they were going to involve themselves into. It was clear that 'Rita', or Alan, had the most dangerous job; Ross' was just child's play in comparison. But it was important, it took some focus off the gang mentality, and that was very important in the times to come.

During her first week 'Rita' had many visitors. All came with vital information. She needed to know as much as possible about what was going on. And most important, what happened before the real Rita disappeared, and what had happened afterwards. And 'Rita' had to sort out what information belonged where.

After one week the real Rita showed up in the apartment. She had a new identity now and called herself Louise Randall. So from now on the new Rita is the only Rita. The old one is Louise. As soon as Louise entered the apartment and saw Rita, she was shocked. It was like seeing herself in the mirror a couple of months ago. "Oh my God!" she said, "You do look exactly like me. I don't think that even my mother would be able to tell us apart! How did they do it?"

Rita told her about the process she had been through and at what it was doing to her. There were in fact only two things that could give her away and that was the fact that she couldn't make love to a man the normal way, and that her DNA was not in accordance with the old Rita Maloney. But she sis have the same fingerprints as Louise.

"That's good," Louise said, "They might in fact check your prints. They have a file with prints for all gang members and they will most probably check yours when you come back and claim my old place in the system. Fortunately they don't have equipment to check your DNA."

"That's what we thought as well. And what will happen to you when you leave me on my own?"

"I will be relocated to New Zealand. I've always dreamt about going there and now I have the chance. I already have a place to live and a job. I'll be a secretary at the DA's office in Wellington. It's the kind of job I'm trained to do. As I said last time we met, I had hoped to move to the West Coast, but when the offer for New Zealand came along, I jumped at it right away. It's hard to get further away from the gang than that."

"I agree. New Zealand might be a good place to live. Find yourself a nice man and get a family. I think you will be very happy raising kids."

"I will, and I will try to do so. But let's get to business. What do you know about me and the gang? Have you've been briefed about the various members?"

"I have, and have a lot of papers here I must go through with you. When it comes to your place in the gang, you'd better tell me that yourself. By the way, do you have any time you must be out of here?"

"No. I'm totally flexible. My main task now is to give you all the information you need."

"That's fine. Let's start right away. Make yourself comfortable while I make some coffee. In the meantime I'll find what I've got."

When Rita was back with her papers, she served some coffee and said: "First of all, everything we say here is recorded and might be used in court if necessary. I don't think that will be the case though."

"It's all right with me." She took out a piece of paper and wrote the following: "Is there a place in this apartment where we can speak without being monitored?"

Rita wrote back: "Please come with me."

She took Louise to a small room with lead plated walls and closed the door behind her. "What is it you want to tell me?" she asked.

"First of all, I believe there is someone on your side you trust 100%." Rita confirmed that. She mentioned Joyce and Ross to her.

"Fine. Let this information go through one of them, one way or another. There is a person in your department that is dirty. His name is Joe DiPuglia, and please let him out of all information. Does he know about your cover operation?"

"No, he doesn't. Only two people know at the moment what is really going on, and that is the chief himself, Jack Mansion, and my girlfriend Joyce Hagen. In addition there are two persons outside the police, and that is Ross Conway, my friend from college, and his boss Stanley Bosworth."

"I've heard about them both, and if you trust them, I do. Give me their e-mail addresses and I'll use them as contact points once I'm established in New Zealand. There might be questions you want answers to that only I can give you. By the way, will you be wired?"

"I am already wired. There are microphones, memory sticks and small transmitters placed inside both my silicone breasts. When and where the information will be uploaded, I have no idea. That's completely outside my control. By the way, they go off automatically as soon as we enter this room."

"I understand. Lets go back to the living room." Once back there Rita told Louise about the layout of the apartment. Louise didn't know anything about it, the only thing she knows is that she was in an elevator to reach the apartment. She had been blindfolded all the way from the Police Station. Rita was careful not to give Louise too much information, after all she still could be an informant to the gang; and thereby only playing a game. A dangerous game as a double spy. Rita decided to give her the benefit of the doubt and gave her as much information as she was allowed to. If some of this information came out, it was clear that she was a spy. Some of it was in fact information she only could have gotten from Rita.

After a few more cups of coffee they went to work right away. Rita gave Louise what she had learned about the various gang members. Louise commented on everyone of

them. Rita took mental notes of everything Louise said. Electronic devices inside the apartment were scanning Louise all the time, trying to find out if was wired as well. They couldn't find anything so she seemed to be legitimate.

Rita and Louise spent five days going over all the information. At that time they were exhausted. They needed a few days of rest, but the only place they could do that, was in the apartment itself. No windows could be opened, they had to do with the air condition system. They watched a lot of television, being annoyed by all the stupid commercials they were forced to watch. On the seventh day they decided to check how much information Rita had absorbed. And this day was the first time she used the real 'Rita's' voice the whole time. Louise was amazed to hear herself like that, it sounded just like a replay of her own voice; at least the way it sounded to her when she heard it through a loudspeaker. At the end of the day she decided Rita was ready. She gave her some final instructions on where to show up and what to say when she was spotted. This way the gang would be convinced right away that she was the real thing.

Louise would be picked up the next morning and taken to where she had lived until now. Two days later she would leave for New Zealand. But that last evening the girls decided to have a party, a party for two. They couldn't order take-away food, they had to do with what was available. They found two large pizzas and lots of beer and started partying. Loud music was on all the evening. Fortunately the apartment was 100% soundproof.

Next morning Louise was ready to leave. She packed all her things and when ready, Rita gave her a blindfold and walked her around the apartment for about five minutes. Then she was guided to the elevator door. It opened and a man took over from Rita. He also took care of all of Louise's belongings. When the elevator stopped Louise was taken to a car in what obviously seemed to be a garage. The car left the building and five minutes later Louise's blindfold was removed. She recognized right away where she was, but had no idea where she had been. She was let out at the place she had lived these past months. Two days later she was on her way to New Zealand and a new life, far away from Washington DC.

Back in the apartment Rita prepared herself for leaving the building. She left it as soon as she heard that Louise was on her way to New Zealand. She looked up the place where the old Rita had lived until her presumed death. The place was still intact. Nobody had bothered doing anything to it. No new tenants, no cleaning and washing, it was just a dusty apartment with lots of old food. She started cleaning the place, including the fridge and the freezer. She took out the garbage and went to the nearest convenient store to buy some groceries. She was careful in her selection, it had to be as like the old Rita's as possible. Some of the staff seemed to recognize her, and she gave them a friendly nod.

Back in the apartment she went through all the closets to see what was left behind. It was more than enough to get her started on her new career. In addition she had all the clothes that had been left for her in the secret apartment. She went through the computer and found some e-mails that were non-important. A search through the various directories gave Rita some insight in what had been going on in the old Rita's life. After about two days she was ready to face the world.

Chapter 5

It was a Wednesday night Rita decided to leave the apartment for her first venture. She went to a restaurant/bar named Sullivan's Wake, a place where she knew many gang members hung out. She arrived rather early, so there were not many people at the bar. She walked up to the bar and recognized the bartender right away. His name was Ron Sutton, and was according to Louise, the only bartender she could trust. She walked up to the bar, looked at Ron and said: "Hi Ron, can I have a glass of beer, please?"

Ron looked up and saw straight into Rita's face. "Rita, are you here? I thought you were dead. And so does everybody else. What happened?"

"The rumors of my death are highly exaggerated. I was found in an alley one block away. A passerby saw me and took me to her house. She nursed me back to life without telling anybody what she had found. She obviously knew I was one of the bad girls, but needed me for information about the activity in the area. She was partly dirty herself, and needed to know everything she could about the gang activity in the neighborhood. When I was well enough to travel, she put me in an apartment near Baltimore under close supervision. And now the woman found it safe to let me lose. I expect her to keep an eye on me and pump me for information. I expect you keep your mouth shut about this, Ron. Can I have the beer now?"

"Of course, my mouth is sealed. It doesn't matter if your story is true or not, my lips are sealed. And here's your beer. This one's on me."

"Thank you Ron, you're a darling as always. I think you are a little bit in love with me."

"It might be; anyway I like you very much and I'm really happy to see you back and in good health. I don't think Marjorie will be glad to see you though."

"I don't think so either; but I think I know how to take her now. Just wait and see, I'm sure there will be a rematch."

"I'm looking forward to it."

Rita took her beer and sat down at a table in a corner. From her table she could see all people coming and going to the bar. Some looked familiar, but most didn't. No one seemed to pay her any attention though. A little past nine two men came in. They looked over in the corner and was shocked. There was Rita, the girl they thought had been dead for almost half a year. How come? And what really happened to her. They had a beer each and came over to Rita's table. According to what she had learned, Rita saw that they were Sean and Harry, two men that Rita was on good terms with. "Hi Rita, and welcome back. Where have you been?" Sean asked. He still had a thick Irish accent.

"I've been around. After I was dumped in the alley, someone saw me and took me in. It was an elderly woman and she was helped by a man to carry me into her apartment. There she nursed me for three weeks, at which time I was strong enough to go to Baltimore and move in with a friend there. I lived there until I came back to my old apartment three days ago. It was still intact and with lots of bad food. I'm back now, and I want revenge."

"Don't even think about it. Marjorie is stronger than ever. And this time she will make sure she kills you."

"Don't worry, I have some new tricks up my sleeve as well."

They talked for quite a while before more members of the gang arrived. They were all surprised to see Rita, but happy as well. She was very popular with at least half of the gang. The other half was in strong rivalry with the first half. They were both fighting for control of the drug trade in the area, a trade that brought in lots of money; money that in large parts were sent to the illegal wing of the IRA. At the moment the two halves cooperated, but that was only as long as Calvin Shanahan was in control. As soon as he disappeared, full war would break out. This was one of the things Rita had to try to stop. Both parts were bad, very bad; but within each of them there was a very strong loyalty.



During the evening more members of the gang dropped by. Some were very friendly to Rita, and welcomed her back. Others were down right hostile. From what she had heard from Louise the two parts of the gang had once been more friendly to each other than they were right now. She asked Sean what had happened since she left. The fronts now seemed so hard. "It started right after your fight with Marjorie," he said, "the rivalry between you had blossomed, and people began to take sides. You probably didn't notice it at all, for to the two of you, everything seemed normal around you. It was just you and Marjorie. When the fight was over and you were pronounced dead, everything was turned upside down. The members took sides right away and there we were. You will soon learn who's your friend and who's your enemy."

"I don't see Marjorie around. Where is she?"

"She's in Ireland with Pete O'Hara, trying to make some new contacts. When she learns you're still alive she will be furious, and this time she will make sure you really die."

"As I said earlier, I have a few new tricks up my sleeve and think I can give her the run for her money. I'm ready to fight her any time."

"Be careful, she will fight dirty. And after the fight we will be two gangs for sure. Not even Calvin Shanahan can hold us together then. We're waiting for a large shipment soon, and we need to stay together."

"Whose side is Calvin on?"

"Nobody knows. He favors no one; he just wants to see the next shipment through. Rumors say he will go back to Ireland and fight from there. We might not see him again after that. And the all hell will break lose. Marjorie will not dare to attack you before then, too much is at stake."

"When will this happen? And what will my role be?"

"In a couple of months; we don't really know. Since you are presumed dead, we don't know what your role will be. Most likely you will be doing what you do best of all of us, keep track of where each piece of merchandise is at any time. I'm sure Calvin will give you that job as soon as he learns that you're back."

"Suits me fine. I like to work with numbers." This was one of the things she and Louise had talked about. She had been given a very detailed insight in the meticulous system the gang had used to keep track of things. This seemed to be bigger and more complicated though, but she thought she could make it.

Thirty minutes later they saw Calvin approach the bar. Ron said something to him and pointed at Rita. Calvin looked in that direction and saw her right away. He took his beer and walked to her table. Sean and Harry gave him some room so he could sit down. Right behind came his girlfriend Angela and Harry found a chair so she could join them.

"Welcome back Rita," Calvin said, "someone called me and said that you were back so I had to come and see you with my own eyes. I need you now. We have a big operation going and you're the only person I trust that can keep track of everything that will be in the next shipment. Everything is planned in detail and merchandise will be purchased soon for intermediate storage and later transport. I need you to keep track of every item we get; you're the only one that can do it. You will, together with Marjorie, organize transport to the final delivery point. I know all about the animosity between you, but you must cooperate on this one. Make it out with each other when everything is safely on its way. I can't afford to see any of you dead or injured before that."

"It won't be me that start anything too early."

"I know. You're a much calmer person than Marjorie. Her temper is her worst enemy."

That sat and talked for a long time before they finally broke up and went home.

From another place in the bar someone had placed a call to Ireland, telling Marjorie that Rita was alive and back.; and that the two of them had to work together on the new

shipment. Marjorie was angry, but promised to behave until it was all over. Then she would take care of Rita for good.

Outside in the street a black van had been parked all evening. Inside, and unseen to anyone in the street, were three persons. One of them was Joyce Hagen, Alan's girlfriend and colleague. The three of them had been monitoring everything that was said in the presence of Rita. Her hidden microphones worked fine; Joyce and her colleagues heard it all. To them it was all shocking news. They had thought the gang only dealt with narcotics, so hearing about illegal arms sales to IRA came as a big surprise. On top of that, to learn that Calvin Shanahan was in charge of it all was even more shocking. He was a well respected shipowner with offices in DC, Baltimore, New York and Boston, and had served one term as a US Senator. This was much bigger than they thought.

The threesome stayed in the van until Rita had left the bar. She started on her rather short walk home, holding her arm in Sean's. It felt safer that way. Sean was a married man, so nothing would go on between them. They just happened to live in the same neighborhood. When the couple was about 200 feet away from the car, they lost connection. It wasn't important, they would receive everything later anyway. Their receiver was now quiet and they drove quietly back to the station. There they took out the recorded data and stored them in a safe place until the next day. It was time for a few hours of sleep.

Next morning Joyce and her crew went to Chief Mansion and played back what they had recorded. Jack was just as shocked as them. He gave the case top priority and assigned more officers to the case. He was careful just to pick officers he could trust 100%.

Rita said goodbye to Sean just outside the house where she lived. He continued for another 200 yards before he came to his home. Rita locked herself in and made herself comfortable. She picked up her cell phone and dialed a secret code. A few letters came on the screen and Rita knew right away what it meant. Everything she had heard and said in the bar had been recoded. She sent a short code back, telling those at the other end that she had read and understood.

Next morning she headed off for work. It was in an building just outside the center of DC where Shanahan had his offices. Rita's car was still in the parking lot and as soon as she turned the ignition, it started. It was clear that Rita really had a well paid job. She found her way to the office building without any problems. Everything was just as Louise had told her. She even found her office with out hesitation. It was an office designed for three persons, Marjory, herself and an assistant. Her name was Peggy Lanning. The assistant was already there and welcomed Rita back with a big hug. "I'm so glad you're back," she said, "now I can concentrate on the work I really can, and not bother with the stuff you deal with. Marjorie has tried to do some of it, but she never came close to your skill in keeping records."

"Thank you Peggy, you're a good friend. It's been a long time now, so I might be a little rusty. Could you help me getting started again? I need a few days to get up-to-date. This way I can avoid all the stupid mistakes."

"Of course, I'll just pick up a cup of coffee for us before we start."

With Peggy back with the coffee, they went straight to work. Louise had briefed Rita on her work, so it didn't take her long to recognize most of it. Peggy helped her along, as if she was jogging Rita's memory. Peggy seemed such a sweet and innocent girl. How could she be mixed up in something like this, Rita thought.

At the end of the week it was all clear to Rita. It was a nice set-up with legitimate and non-legitimate cargo on separate drives. Both were removable and kept in different storages. The illegitimate one was kept in a special room inside a wall, impossible to be seen if you didn't know where it was. Smart. Very smart. It all made sense. If there was a raid, the illegitimate drives were removed, hidden and replaced with a back-up legitimate one. All done in a matter of seconds. All Rita had to do was to pass the illegitimate data info to the police, and she found a way to do it.

During lunch on Friday she was all alone in the office. Peggy had gone out to buy lunch for them both, while the guys was over in bar across the street. She took out an 8 GB Memory Stick and placed it in one of the empty USB ports on her computer. With a few clicks on the mouse she had copied all the data from the illegitimate drive over to the memory stick. She took it out again and placed in a secret room in her purse. The job was done and nobody would ever find out. If the news should come out, Rita would not be under suspicion of delivering the data to the police. She was one of the most trusted persons at the office and was beyond all suspicion.

On her way to the car she just said a few words that were picked up by the microphones in her breasts. She passed the Police Station on her way home, and there everything from her breasts was picked up. A little later someone checked in on the data. He knew right away what it meant and gave Joyce the message. Joyce jumped into her car to meet Rita at a predestined point. It was a crowded supermarket where Rita bought her groceries. Once inside she saw that Joyce was already there. She walked up to her and while passing she dropped the memory stick in her purse. Joyce just close her purse and went on as nothing had happened. The switch had been made. Rita had after all vowed to herself that she never would bring things like that to her apartment. That could be very dangerous and compromising.

Back at Police HQ they were overwhelmed by what they got the first week. This was so much more than they had hoped for. They had indications that arms were smuggled across the Atlantic, but that was all. Nothing solid to go on. And now they had enough to bring the top folks down. But they wanted to clean up at street level as well, and there they still lacked lots of information. What Rita had given hem also gave them a good idea of how things were organized. On top was a bunch of Irish people making money on drug sales and using that money to buy arms at the illegal market and ship it to the IRA. Down on the street level a different kind of people were actually doing the distribution. They again handed the stuff to the street gangs who did the actual sale to the end buyer. Lots of money passed through these hands and nobody dared to say a word. Even a small whistle meant death.

Back at Bosworth & Co Ross was busy working. He had a lot to do, and most of it was related to the case. He had lost all contact with Alan since he went undercover. He had no idea what he was actually doing and what he might look like. Knowing Alan he had a suspicion that he portrayed a woman. If any man could do that, he was the one. It was a deliberate police that they didn't have contact any more; any contact would put them both in grave danger.

Ross was also busy coaching young guys' football. The kids seemed to like him and what he did to them. A new training field had been established in the area, a field that was very near to professional standards. He saw a lot of talent in some of the boys, and he urged them to join their high school team as soon as possible. It was after all through those channels most talents were discovered.

If, on the other hand, Ross had an urgent requirement to contact Alan, he had to do that through Joyce. The same was true the other way around. Contacts between Joyce and Ross were considered quite normal and didn't require any special security measures. They only had to be careful what they said, someone might listen in accidentally and then give the information away to people who could take advantage of it.

In March a need for contact suddenly arose. A relatively tall and very elegant woman was visiting Bosworth & Co for an interview regarding a job after college. She would master in Economics and her results so far had been excellent. When Stan heard about her, he wanted to hire her on the spot.

She met briefly with Ross and introduced herself as Alison Jansen. When Ross took a good look at her, she reminded him of his late wife Sandra. He presented herself to her and when she heard his name her face lit up. "So you're the famous football player," she said, "I had a friend once that knew him pretty well. His name was Alan McCloud. Do you know him still? And if yes, do you know how to contact him?"

Ross was perplexed. Who was this woman? He had to think hard to find a plausible answer. "We used to share an apartment her u\ in DC," he said, "but he moved out in early January and I haven't seen him since. I honestly don't know where he is right now. I know he used to work for the police here in DC, but have no idea if that's what he's still doing."

This was half a lie from Ross' side, but he couldn't say anything else.. "Strange," Alison replied, "I haven't heard from him since New Year either. I wonder if something might have happened to him. If you hear from him, could you please contact me. Your boss will have my address and phone numbers."

"I will," Ross said as Alison disappeared into Stanley's office.

As soon as Alison disappeared into Stan's office, Ross called Joyce. "What's up, Ross?" she asked as soon as he had presented himself.

"A woman came to our office a few minutes ago for an interview, and she claims she knows Alan. She asked me about him and I had to tell something that I know is at least is half a lie. Her name is Alison Jansen and she will graduate from College this summer with a degree in Economics. She will most likely start working here later this year. Her looks are very close to my late wife Sandra, and that makes me interested in learning to know her better. So for that reason I need some information urgently."

"I have never heard Alan mention anyone named Alison Jansen, but I will ask him anyway. I don't know when I will have an answer, but I'll let you know as soon as I have it. Your question made me curious as well, you know."

"I understand. I will most probably ask her out for dinner tonight. If that turns out all right, I'll let you know where we will be."

"OK. I'll be in touch."

Ross knew he had to wait for the information he wanted, but that wouldn't stop him from asking Alison if she would have dinner with him that evening. He knew a good restaurant with the right atmosphere, so maybe something might come out of it. Alison reminded him so much about Sandra that it was frightening. All memories about her came back and he wanted so much to relive them. He might be disappointed, but he had to try his luck. He felt ready for a relationship now, and he was sure Sandra would allow it.

Chapter 6

Let's return to Rita and her problems. Her first week back to work had been very busy; she had to get back on speed as soon as possible. Calvin had passed by her office during lunch on Friday and told her that he was very pleased with her being back at work, and expressed optimism for the weeks and months ahead. Things had been somewhat slower when she was away. That told her that she was doing good. It now all depended on how Marjorie would react.

During the weekend Rita paid a visit to Sean and his wife and two kids. She liked Sean, he had a good sense of humor and was quite different from many of his colleagues. He was very good in what he was doing, the only bad thing was that it was all illegal stuff. She also thought that if anyone in the gang would start talking, it would be him. Most of the others weren't married or had wives/girlfriends of the more dubious kind. Harry, for instance, was a nice man in one to one talks, but he was living with a hooker and had a very bad temper. He had also expressed views that told Rita that he would kill anyone that came in his way, if need be.

At this time she hadn't met Marjorie yet. She had heard a lot about her, and from what she understood she had a bad temper and did her best to be the most important female in the organization. That was what the fight with Rita six months earlier had been all about. Her work after that didn't strengthen her hope to gain that position. She had had it for six months now, and things didn't go as smooth as they did when Rita was around.

During the weekend Rita also took the time to peruse the manual for the torso. She wanted to know if there was something in it about what would happen if someone managed to scratch her so bad that it was torn open. Would she bleed like normal people? Or would there only be a scratch on the surface revealing another layer of skin? She had to know. Her existence depended on it. If her cover was blown because of the torso's properties, it would be a disaster.

Then on page three she found it. It said that during the first three months of wearing the torso, one should be careful not to scratch it too hard, it might get damaged in a way that made it difficult to hide the fact that it was made of artificial skin. After that time the torso was so molded into the owner's own skin, that a scratch would appear just like a scratch on normal skin. It would bleed like any normal skin and you could repair it with a band-aid. In addition a special liquid should be applied to hide all traces of a scratch in the artificial skin.

Rita lived a quiet life. She could always blame her condition after her prolonged sick leave, but a few weeks before that she had suffered a great loss; her fiancée had died in a fistfight with another member of the gang. This fight was also over rivalry and internal positions, just like the fight between Rita and Marjorie. It seemed that the other part had won, but since Calvin still preferred Rita doing her old job, things had not settled down. So in order not to stir up things too much, Rita kept in the background while off work. She had visited Sullivan's Wake once more that week, but that was all.

On Monday morning Marjorie met Rita with fiery eyes. Her eyes shone with hate, knowing that Rita had returned and taken back her old position. This job was hers, she said to herself. But as long as Calvin Shanahan was in charge, his word was law. Marjorie only looked forward to when Calvin left the organization, then some major changes would be made. And as rumors went around, it would happen as soon as the last shipment had left the US. So after the hostile formalities were over, they went to work as nothing had happened. They had no other choice. When they left the office at the end of the day, Marjorie said to Rita: "Just you wait til this business is over. Then I'll beat you up again; and this time I will make sure you are dead."

"I will be ready and waiting for you," was all Rita said.

Through the coming weeks there was a truce between Rita and Marjorie. They both focused on the work ahead and didn't let their animosities come between them. Work was done in a very satisfactory manner, and Calvin was very pleased with what they did. In Rita's head she should do all she could do to sabotage the whole project, but that would make it difficult for her and everybody else. Even the police, whom she actually worked for, would be hampered in their investigation. This was a very big operation and the Police didn't want to strike before they had all the evidence and could get hold of everybody involved. Hopefully Calvin and his gang wouldn't even think that Rita was the one that betrayed them.

The job Rita did was very important for the gang. Without her skill and knowledge everything would come to a halt. If she was arrested in the end, she would get a very stiff imprisonment. Her importance to Calvin and his men was clearly visible the six months she was absent. During this time everything went in slow motion.

Her work for the Police was even more important. She gave them everything she came across. Inside the Police HQ the information she gave was known to only a chosen few, and since there was no leakage, she felt completely safe. She had orders to inform Joyce of any signs of the gang believing that information was leaking from the Police. The person

the gang had on the inside was completely in the dark. He didn't even know that something was going on.

Then one day in March Rita received an urgent message from Joyce that they should meet in the secret apartment. They had used the apartment before, always to exchange information that couldn't be exchanged any other way. They both knew the secret entrance and met one Wednesday evening at eight. As soon as they met they gave each other a great hug. "How are things on your side?" Joyce asked.

"As good as it can be. I'm working hard and making everything ready for transport to Europe. I don't think we will be ready before late May. More about that later. But since you called the meeting, what do you have for me?"

"On Monday something strange happened. I got a call from Ross telling me that a woman came to his office for an interview with Stan Bosworth. He had caught interest in her and wanted to learn what she was capable of. She will get a degree in Economics in June.

"But before she talked to Stan, she stopped by Ross' office and exchanged a few words. She told him that she had heard about him, both through various news media and also from a man named Alan McCloud. She seemed to know that person. The woman presented herself as Alison Jansen and she reminded him of his late wife Sandra. Ross was very puzzled, he had never heard Alan mention a woman with that name. So he asked me if I could contact you and shed some light on the story. After all, underneath that torso of yours you're still Alan McCloud I hope."

Rita was shocked. This was very unexpected. How could Alison end up here? These thoughts raced through her head as Joyce were talking, but she managed to keep a straight face. When Joyce had finished talking he said: "Yes, I'm still Alan McCloud on the inside, even if I have to suppress that as much as possible for the moment. Yes, I know about Alison. I came in contact with her even before I met Ross. But the truth is that I haven't seen her since shortly after Ross' wife was killed. We have stayed in touch through e-mails though. Alison Jansen is a male-to-female transsexual who went through SRS one year after Sandra's death. Her name as a man was Charles "Chuck" O'Neil, and he was one of the four guys who attacked Ross' wife. He was also the same person that gave up all his friends, including the man who planned and organized the attack, Justin Gallagher, to the police. For that he was given clemency. In addition he was very passive through the whole attack and didn't do anything wrong but to be there. Ross is fully aware of Chuck's story and what he did and he bears no grudge against him any more. Instead he is very grateful that because of Chuck the Police was able to get hold of Justin Gallagher and send him to prison for a long, long time. I assume that from what you tell me, Alison has not informed Ross about who she used to be. So please, go back to him and tell him the truth, he can live with that. I think he will even reward her for what she did."

"You're right, I don't think he knows. I will tell him gently though. He told me he planned to ask Alison out for dinner that night. I don't know if he succeeded or not. If he did, it sure turns the whole thing into a full circle."

"It sure does. If Ross can find happiness in Alison I'll be very happy for him. He deserves a good woman to have and hold. Please inform me about how he takes the news, and if he volunteers to tell you about his date, tell me about that as well."

"I promise."

They sat talking for while longer, both about themselves and their future, and about how the case was developing. There were so many things that couldn't be said through secret notes and short meetings. They ended up making lesbian love together.

Let's go back to Ross. After having talked with Joyce, wanting her to check on Alison Jansen, he just couldn't concentrate. That woman Alison was so beautiful and charming and he had fallen in love at first sight. He never thought that would happen to him, but that was just what happened. It must have had something to do with the fact that Alison reminded him of Sandra. She was not Sandra, of course, but there was something about here that made him think about her. Sandra was dead, and he had to move on with his life. Sharing an apartment with Alan was OK, even going on a date with Lily was OK, but that could never replace living with a real woman. He was really hoping she would have dinner with him that night.

Alison spent one hour in Stan's office. She stopped by Ross again and smiled. "I got the job," she said, "and I start working here on July 1st. I'm really looking forward to learn to know you better, Alan has told me so much about you."

"Hold on a minute. You say that Alan have talked about me to you; and that might be the case. But he never talked about you to me. How come?"

"I honestly don't know. You must talk to Alan about that. Do I get a chance to see him while I'm in town?"

"I'm afraid that's impossible. He's out of town on police business and will be gone for quite a long time. We don't share an apartment any longer. When he returns he will move in with his new girlfriend. She works in the police just like him."

"What a pity. I bet I will have to wait until summer then."

"You have to, but by the way; will you have dinner with me tonight?"

"I would love to. But I warn you, I have to catch an early flight back to Boston tomorrow, so I can't be late."

"That's OK. What hotel are you staying in?"

Alison gave Ross the name of her hotel and told him to meet her there at seven. "Then we can have a drink before we have dinner. The hotel has a very nice restaurant."

"I know, I've been there a couple of times. See you at seven."

"See you. And be precise. I like men that keep their appointments." Alison took farewell with Ross and left his office.

Ross looked after her as she walked down the corridor. What a beautiful woman! She was tall, slim and elegant. In her heels she was almost his height, 6'3"

Ross showed up at the hotel on time. In fact he was one minute early, but he walked straight up to the bar anyway. He saw her at once, sitting there nipping a glass of wine. "You're on time," she said, "and that is good. I like men who show up on time. Do you want to join me for a drink."

Ross ordered a bourbon and they walked over to a small table. "I like your style," Alison went on, "there's something about you that attracts my imagination. It might be your muscular body, kept in shape even after your career as a football player was over, or it could be that such a young man like you holds such an important position in the country's most well respected law firms. Anyway, I want you."

"And I want you. You're the first woman I really laid eyes on since my wife died. In addition you remind me of her. It's something about your looks and style. You're tall, al-



most as tall as I am; and I like that. You have a fantastic body, a body most men would die for. You're smart, intelligent and articulate. I like that in a woman. I like women who can match my wits. In fact, I want you too."

"Let's have dinner first. I think our table is ready. Besides, it's my heels that make me almost as tall as you; I'm only 5'10" bare-footed."

"And I am 6'3". That makes us a perfect match. Let's have some food."

The meal was excellent, as was the wine. They talked freely about themselves and what their plans were. They were both very ambitious, but they also wanted kids, two or three.

After the meal they were out on the dance floor. When they danced close Alison could feel Ross' hard member against her thighs. She couldn't wait to get it inside her. After only four dances they

walked close together to Alison's room. Once inside they shed their clothes and were soon entangled in hefty lovemaking. Three times they mad love that evening and it was very good for both of them. It was safe sex, Ross had used a condom on all occasions. He left Alison a little after eleven, respecting her need for an early check-out the next day. He walked home feeling very happy, he was in love again. From now on and until Alison started working they would stay in contact all the time, and come summer they would move in together.

It wasn't until Thursday afternoon that Joyce could contact Ross again. She told him that she had talked with Alan and had the answer, but in order to tell him they had to meet for lunch the following day. Ross understood right away that privileged information was about to be exchanged, and accepted to meet Joyce for lunch.

They met as scheduled at a café close to the Police Station. As soon as they sat down Joyce made it clear that she wouldn't talk there. It obviously had to be at a even safer place. So after the meal Joyce took Ross for a walk. They entered a fancy apartment building and went inside. They entered an elevator and Joyce pressed the button to the top floor. Just before the elevator stopped, she pressed on a remote control she had in her pocket, and instead of the normal elevator door opening, the wall on the opposite opened as a sliding door. They entered the room on the other side, the door closed behind them and all that was left was a normal wall. "Quite ingenious," Ross said.

"Isn't it? This is our secret apartment where we keep people we don't want to be found or seen. Alan was here for a while before he left for his secret assignment.

"This apartment has no doors other than the one we used, and none of the windows can be opened. If anyone, for one reason or another; could watch the apartment from the outside, all they would see is just a normal apartment with people moving around. It's all an image on the windows, they can't see or hear us. The apartment is completely shielded from electronic signals and therefore cannot be monitored. We're safe here."

"I understand, but why the secrecy?"

"We want to be very cautious. We have a mole in the department that's feeding information to various gangs, amongst them the one we're fighting now. But before I begin, did you have a date with Alison on Monday?"

"Yes, we were out to dinner together. We had a few drinks, danced close together and ended up in her room, making serious love. By the time I left her we had fallen deeply in love with other and promised to get together again as soon as she started working for Mr. Bosworth. In the meantime we'll stay in contact."

"Have you told her that you're meeting up with me today?"

"I thought about it, but considering the circumstances I didn't. But since she said she knew Alan, I bet she thinks I will try to contact him and asked him about her. She also mentioned that she had seen me in College, but I can't remember her. A girl that hot is hard to forget, even if you're married. And the fact is that she reminds me of Sandra makes it even more a mystery."

Then I will tell you all that Alan has told me about her. It's a strange story, and in fact you owe her quite a bit."

"For what!?"

"You will see. Let me start from the beginning. Alison wasn't born Alison; in fact she wasn't even born as a girl. She was born as a boy and given the name of Charles O'Neil, also called Chuck. She understood early that she wasn't like other boys, and that put a profound mark on the young boy. Come puberty he realized that he wanted to be a girl, but afraid of being ridiculed by other boys his age, he stayed mostly to himself. During this time he met Alan at a Halloween party, both dressed as girls. From that day they stuck together as much as possible. When he started College he was recruited by Justin Gallagher and had to, rather unwillingly, join his gang. If not he would have severe problems. From that time on the gang of five hung together at all times, and all the time they did what Justin told them. At this time he already had quite some items of girls' clothing and he and Alan had been out as girls several times before.. At College they continued to meet as often as they could, and there he even got help from one of the College girls. He and Alan joined a club for transvestites and it was there they really learned how to girls. It was a very satisfying time for them both. In college Alan and Chuck never talked; Chuck was always afraid he'd fall out of the group.

"But as time went on, he wanted out; out of the grips of Justin. So when Justin started to talk about the attack on your wife, he saw his chance. He put his cell phone in record mode and recorded everything that was said when the plans were laid. During the actual attack he was very passive, and he was the only one they couldn't positively identify. He was called in for questioning, but with no hard evidence they couldn't hold him. Instead he entered a plea bargain with one of the detectives, he would give them his cell phone with all its recordings in exchange for him being free to go wherever he wanted. The detective only had to listen to the recording for one minute before he understood that he had what was needed to bring Justin down. How the further arrangements were made, neither I nor Alan knows, but as you know, it ended with Justin being sent to prison for a long time.

"What is known is that Chuck left Philly and ended up in a place where he could have his SRS. He had saved up some money for the operation, and with relocation money from the police, he was able to go on with his plan. it. As soon as he felt safe living as a woman, he went back to college as Alison and continued her studies in Economics. Her grades were so good that she was given a scholarship to go to Harvard and get a degree there. And there we are.

"Alan has never met him or her after Chuck left Philly, they have stayed in touch through letters, phone calls and e-mails. And Alison never sent a picture of herself. Therefore Alan has no idea what she looks like, and if you can give me a description, I'll be happy to tell him what you said. And I understand she was hot?"

Ross was dumbfounded. Alison was in fact one of the guys that attacked Sandra. But he was the passive one, and he turned them all in, even that menace Justin. He didn't know what to say. Could he really date a girl that once were a boy and at that time one of his enemies? Yes, he could. Alison was all girl and hot, and he was in love. "Yes, she was hot," he said, "and despite all you told me, I'm still in love with her. I even think I will

marry her.” Ross went on to give Joyce a description of what Alison looked like. “She actually reminded me of Sandra,” he finished saying.

They went through the whole thing once more, making sure that Ross really understood the issue with Alan. He was given no information about his whereabouts and what he looked like, that was highly classified. Only a few very privileged people knew what Alan was up to, and they couldn't let any information leak out to anyone outside that group. If that should happen, it would put Alan's life in great danger and the whole operation might go down the drain. The way things looked right now, it would all be over in June.

Chapter 7

Back at the office Ross asked Stan if he was willing to have a talk with him there and then. Stan understood the urgency in Ross' voice, and granted him admission to his office right away. “What's on your mind?” Stan asked.

“On Monday you had a job interview with a woman named Alison Jansen. She told me she knew about me, not only from the football field, but from College as well. I didn't understand a thing, I had never seen the woman before. But she insisted and said that she had had much contact with Alan and that he could tell me the story. As you know, Alan is on an undercover mission and can't be reached, so I contacted Joyce to hear if she knew something. At first she didn't, but took contact with Alan, she's one of very few that can make contact with him, and received the necessary information. So during lunch break today she gave me that same information and here it is.” Ross went on telling Stan what Joyce had told him. He finished off by saying: “On Monday I asked Alison out for dinner and we ended up having sex together. She was a very good sex partner and I fell in love with that woman. Alan's information hasn't changed that one bit, but I need to talk to her face to face and tell her that I know.”

“That's only fair. She didn't say anything to me about having had an SRS. Not that I care, if she wanted to hide it, it's her business. I can understand that you fell in love, Alison is a very beautiful woman, and a very bright one at that. I really look forward to have her as one of my employees. And if you two end up as a couple, even better. You will become a very strong team. What I suggest is that you contact her right away and ask if you can come and see her in Boston this weekend. Or even better, I can send you on a two day business trip to Boston and talk with some of my folks up there. You can leave whenever you like during the weekend and come back Tuesday evening. What about it?”

“I have to coach football on Saturday morning, apart from that, it's OK. I'll call Alison right away. After I've talked to her, I'll come back to you and tell you when I can leave.”

“Do that; and remember, be honest with her. One more thing, I know she can't give birth to a baby the normal way, but I know people who can fix that if need be.”

“That reminds me, Sandra had some of her eggs frozen in case something should happen to her and she couldn't give birth the normal way. That happened to one of her aunts

and since this condition can run in the family, she didn't want to take any chances. Maybe they can be used by Alison."

"Maybe. We will take care of that when the time comes."

Back in his office Ross sent a text message to Alison, asking her to call him as soon as possible. He didn't dare to call directly, she could have lectures or were busy reading.

Alison called back one hour later. "You asked me to call," she said, "Have you talked to Alan?"

"No, I haven't, but I've talked to someone who has talked to Alan. I know all about you now, and it's OK. We need to talk, face to face. Can I come and visit you this weekend. I'll arrive on Saturday afternoon and return on Tuesday evening. My boss gave me a business trip to Boston and thought it would nice to combine things."

"That's wonderful! You tell me when your flight arrives and I'll pick you up at the airport. You can stay with me, if that's OK with you."

"I'd love to stay with you. I'll send you a message with flight information as soon as I have them. I love you, you know."

"And I love you. Sorry I have to run, I have a lecture in five minutes. Bye."

"Bye. And take care. Looking forward to see you again."

"Likewise. I can't wait to have you in bed with me again. And say hello to Stan."

"I will."

Ross went straight to Stan and said that it was OK. He gave Stan approximate times he wanted to leave and arrive back home, and Stan gave the information to his secretary who took care of the reservations. It turned out that Ross should fly out of DC National Airport at 3:45PM on Saturday and return to the same airport on Tuesday at 8:30PM. The times were all right with Ross. It gave him three nights with Alison, nights he looked forward to already.

Ross arrived at Boston on time, and as promised, Alison was there to meet him. She threw herself around his neck and gave him a big welcome kiss. Ross returned the kiss, and he felt something growing in his pants. Alison could feel it too, and she smiled. "Welcome to Boston," she said, "care to follow me to my car?"

"I'll follow you anywhere. I have already picked up my luggage. Let's get out of here."

Alison had parked only a short distance away so they soon were on the road towards Harvard. Alison's car was just a small compact car, more than enough for her to drive around in. She had plans to buy something larger once she started working.

They stopped on the way for a meal at a roadside restaurant. It was no gourmet food, but more than enough to keep them from starving. It was dark when they finally arrived at Alison's small campus apartment. Ross grabbed his things and they both went in.

Alison didn't waste any time, she took out two beers from the fridge, gave one to Ross and said: "Please tell what you've heard about me. I can see it in your face that you're not mad at me, deceiving you like that. But I had to learn to know you; in fact I've been in love

with from the first time I saw you. I have always wanted to be a girl, and I hoped that I one day would become one and find the man of my dreams. When I saw you I knew you were the one, but you were already engaged. That almost broke my heart. I joined Justin and his boys just to pay solace to the fact that I couldn't have you. I took the opportunity to turn on Justin and the boys once I heard about the attack on your wife. I'm so sorry she's dead. At that time I had already made arrangements to do the operation and become as beautiful as possible. I deliberately chose a style that was very close to your wife's, in a desperate hope that you one day would come to me. If I've hurt your feelings, please bear over with me, the whole situation makes me so emotional."

"No, you haven't hurt my feelings. When I first heard who you really were; I was shocked. You being a guy and all, and what guy; one of my enemies! Then I realized what you really had done for me, and I felt grateful, very grateful. Getting Justin behind bars was the greatest thing. You have sacrificed a lot, and decided to do the ultimate thing, you not only changed your identity, you changed your gender. Was that part of the deal?"

"Yes and no. The police in Philly said they could help me with a new identity, I accepted. But when they, and the FBI, wanted to have full control over my new identity, I rebelled. I said I wanted to take care of that myself. They gave me a lump sum of money and promised to erase Charles O'Neil from all records. They promised to do so, but I'm not sure they've done it. I know that Chuck was in the files and if I'm brought in and have to give them my fingerprints or DNA, I'm a goner. I might have to pay for Chuck's old crimes. By the way, how many people know who I was and what I have become?"

"As far as I know, only five. You and me of course. Then we have Alan and his girlfriend Joyce, and finally Mr. Bosworth. Do you know anyone else?"

"In fact no. The family I have left don't know anything. To them I'm a lost case."

"How did you pick your name?"

"Before I was born my parents argued over my name. My father said if I was born a boy, my name should be Charles. If I was born a girl, my mother should decide and she wanted the girl to be named Alison. Jansen is my mother's maiden name. She's of Dutch decent."

They talked for an hour more before they decided to call it a day and go to bed. This time their lovemaking was even better than it had been last Monday.

They were up and had breakfast at ten. During breakfast Alison asked Ross if he knew where he was going on Monday. "I have an address," he said, "but I don't know where it is. I've never been to Boston before. I don't even know how to get there."

"You can have my car. Just take me to campus first. My car might be small, but it has a GPS navigation system and will help you find the way. And just in case, we make a test run today. Let's get dressed and get started.

Thirty minutes later they were on their way. The address was loaded into the GPS, and off it went. Alison knew the area, so she did the driving. Ross listened to the voice from the GPS followed closely where Alison was driving. It wasn't too difficult. It didn't take long before they were in front of the building where Ross should meet with the Boston branch of Bosworth & Co. There was a garage underneath the building, and Ross had been

told to drive up to the gate, ID himself and someone would let him in. Piece of cake. Alison took Ross on a sightseeing through Boston and showed him some of the most important places. To Ross it was very special to see the stadium where The Patriots played their home games. He had been offered a very good contract with them, a contract he had to turn down due to his injury. On their way back to Campus Alison let Ross do the driving. It was mostly because he should become familiar with the car.

That night as they laid in bed, Ross asked Alison: "Alison, would you marry me? And would you have my children?"

"I'd be happy to marry you. We can do it tomorrow if you like. But I'm afraid I can't give you any children. I would love to, but it's impossible. Being a mother and giving birth to a child is the one thing I will miss the most."

"Don't worry. There are ways. I will do some investigation and see what I can come up with. I've heard that there are people like you that have carried forward babies, and if you're willing to try, I am."

"How can that be possible?"

"Listen closely. About one year before my wife died she went to a special clinic and had some of her eggs taken out and put in a freezer. She was afraid that she would become infertile at a too early age, like some of her female relatives had, and therefore she wanted to make sure that she had eggs stored away for emergency use. They are still in a hospital in Philly. If we can take one of those eggs and use my sperm to inseminate them and then place the fertilized egg inside your body, there is a great chance that it will develop into a healthy baby. Would you do that?"

"Of course I would. I would love to try. And if it works, no one can accuse me of not being a real woman. Great! I'm all for it. When do we start?"

"I think we shall wait until after we're married. "

"I agree; I was too hasty. Now, let's talk about our future."

They spent the rest of the evening in bed, making love and talking about their future.

Ross was back in the office on Wednesday morning. He reported back to Stan about his meetings and called Joyce to tell her the good news. He wanted her to tell Alan all about his and Alison's plans for their future. And Alison was dying to see Alan again. He had been such a good friend and support during a time she had it very difficult.

Joyce had a meeting with Alan/Rita in the secret apartment two days later. Then she told everything she had heard from Ross and how Alison and Ross now planned to get married and have children. Alan was so happy to hear that Ross once again had found happiness that he couldn't wait to get back to his old self again and celebrate the good news. But he knew he had to fulfill his assignment, an assignment that most probably would end in a fierce fight with Marjorie. After the showdown he was sure there would be a price on Rita's head, a price he hoped nobody would be able to collect. If everything went as planned, Rita might not even be under suspicion for betrayal. She would just disappear into oblivion in the aftermath of the final raid. Then Alan would be back from his secret assignment and go back to his normal work.

The three following months were very hectic for all parties involved. Rita had made life easier for herself by providing Joyce and her colleagues with information on how to get access to the gang's computer system. The police hackers were clever enough to leave no trace that they had been there. This was important to Rita. It could lead to that she was not disclosed as a mole, and could disappear as planned. She would, however, be arrested like the rest of the gang, but taken to a different location for questioning. That was in theory what was planned for her.

During these months everything seemed normal between Rita and Marjorie. They did their work and Calvin was very pleased with what they did. What Peggy did was just to run errands and provide coffee; she was never really involved in what was really going on. The police knew that and would therefore go very easy on her.

In early June things really started to happen. All kinds of weapons were transferred to special warehouses in Baltimore, ready to be loaded on a ship bound for Ireland. It would arrive with lots of narcotics, planned to be distributed on the US market. Various customs officials had been paid off to let the cargo in, and let the illegal cargo out. It had been expensive, but it had been worth it.

Baltimore Police had a special task force assigned to take care of operations in the harbor. At the same time Police forces in DC, New York and Boston would raid various offices and warehouse in order to break this gang for good. It would all start on a signal from Baltimore, and would happen when the drugs had been unloaded and before the weapons were loaded. That way they did not need to board any ship looking for contraband. A task force would go on board, however, in order to take care of the crew and what evidence they could find.

During this time Alison and Ross continued to visit each other, Their love for each other just grew and grew and they couldn't wait to get married. Ross had informed his family about his new plans. They were so happy for him and hoped the couple would stay happy forever.

In May Ross' parents came to visit their son at the same time Alison was there. They noticed the resemblance with Sandra and understood why Ross had fallen in love with her. They were sorry to hear that Alison had no family left, but that didn't hold them back to provide a beautiful wedding for her. The wedding would take place later that summer; at a time they hoped that Alan was back from his secret assignment. He was scheduled to be Ross' Best Man, while Joyce would be Alison's Maid-of-Honor. In the absence of any family members on Alison's side, Stan Bosworth had volunteered to give away the bride.

Joyce had been involved in the wedding from a very early stage. She accepted with honor her role as Maid-of-Honor. She also kept Alan informed about Ross' plans, and he was more than happy to be Ross' Best Man. He just had to get rid of Rita first.

When June arrived everything was settled for the raid. It was only to wait for the ship. They knew the name of the ship and the name of the Captain and they only waited for

confirmation of arrival date. The Coast Guard had the ship under surveillance and reported every move it took. The ship held back for a while out in the Atlantic, as if they were waiting for something. But nothing happened out in the sea, the ship just laid there. Then suddenly it started moving again. To the police this was a clear sign that they waited for someone special on shore, most likely the right crew of customs people.

As soon as the ship came to the harbor in Baltimore, police and FBI were waiting for them. At the same time similar crews were ready to raid Calvin Shanahan's offices in DC, New York and Boston.

The ship arrived at the allotted time. The crew started unloading right away. The customs people went through the papers and took a random check of the cargo. They cleared it right away. Then it was time to load the ship with its new cargo. The cargo was prepared for loading when the Police and the FBI started the raid. It was so well organized that everybody was taken by surprise. There was very little resistance, the bandits knew that they had lost and gave in right away. The ship tried to run away, but special forces took care of the crew and secured the ship. The raid in Baltimore was a 100% success. Tons of narcotics were prevented to flow into the US market, and millions worth of arms were stopped from being shipped to the IRA.

At the same time raids were done in three other cities on the east coast. Police and FBI entered the office buildings and took everybody by surprise. Only in DC there was some disturbance. Calvin Shanahan tried to flee. He reached his car and turned on the ignition. He had just started driving when a bullet hit one of his tires and Calvin lost control of the vehicle. It changed direction and crashed into a wall. At that point it was no problems apprehending him.

In the offices chaos broke lose. Peggy was quickly taken care of and placed in a police car. For Rita and Marjorie it was worse though. As soon as they were aware of the raid, they acted differently. Marjorie did her best to destroy as much as possible, while Rita did just the opposite. That was foolishly done by Rita; it made Marjorie suspicious and she jumped at her. Rita should have done just the same as Marjorie, all data were at Police HQ anyway.

When Marjorie stormed at Rita she screamed and said: "So you are behind this! I knew we couldn't trust you. Everybody else said otherwise, but my gut feeling told me it was something wrong with you. I will kill you for that!"

She hit Rita hard in the face, grabbed her by the hair and held one arm around her throat in a very tight grip. It hurt like hell, but Rita was prepared. She kicked backwards and hit Marjorie on her right calf. Her shoe was reinforced so the kick hurt like hell. Marjorie screamed in pain and her grip loosened. Rita managed to break free and slammed her fist into Marjorie's face. Rita completely forgot that she was a woman now, and fought like a man. This took Marjorie by surprise and she started to fight dirty. She used her nails as claws and dug her right fist deep into Rita's left breast. Rita had no nerves in that area, but was conscious enough to let out a major scream. But there was another problem, Rita had no blood vessels in her breasts either, and as soon as Marjorie would notice that, she would become extremely suspicious. Rita had to end this fight right away. She got both her fists free and gave Marjorie a hard blow with each of them. Marjorie's head rocked from one side to another. This was much more than she could stand, and she fell uncon-

scious on the floor. At the same time Joyce entered the room. She saw Marjorie on the floor and said: "Is she severely hurt?"

"I don't know," Rita replied between getting her breath back, "I had to knock her out before she realized that my breasts weren't bleeding after she had put her sharp nails into them. You can see the marks right here." She pointed at her left breast. Joyce could see the marks from the nails and thought about herself getting such a wound. She would have screamed like hell and blood would be pouring out. "Did you scream?" she asked.

"I screamed like hell, and I think that was very convincing. But there will be no wound in my breast. Thanks to the silicone it will just be like new in less than 15 minutes. That thought went through my mind so I had no other option than to knock her unconscious."

"Of course you had. Now you must disappear. We have all the information we need. Calvin is in custody and the raids in all other towns were successful. The gang is broken for good. Now come with me?"

"Where to? We can't just go out on the street."

"Of course not. There's a car waiting for us outside. It will take us the secret apartment. When we're there we will decide what we do further. The most important thing now is to make Rita disappear. No traces must be left from her."

"I understand. Let's go."

They hurried out the building and managed to get into the car unseen. The car sped away and drove down into an underground garage. From there it was only a short walk to the elevator that took them to the secret apartment. Once inside they could sit down and relax.

Once inside Rita undressed and went straight to the sauna. Joyce followed close by, naked as well. After about 15 minutes inside, the torso started to swell and could be torn off in pieces. All the pieces were put in a plastic bag for disposal. The torso could never be used again. Next step the bathroom and a shower. Alan looked at himself and saw what sorry state his own body was in. It clearly needed time in the open in order to get its old looks back. "You must stay for at least one week," Joyce said, "at that time your own body should be sufficiently normal for you to be amongst other people. They had a beer each and chatted for about one hour when Joyce suddenly said. "Please stay put. I need to go down and meet someone that can't wait to see you." Joyce opened the elevator door and disappeared to street level.

She was back in less than 10 minutes, bringing Ross with her. "Welcome back, Alan," Ross said when he saw his old friend. "How was your assignment?"

"Stressing. That's all I can say about it. The whole thing was highly classified."

"I won't be surprised if you were disguised as a woman."

"I can neither admit nor deny that. As I said, it's classified. But enough about me, I can't tell you more right now. Maybe later. Let's talk about you. I hear you have met a girl and fallen in love? A girl I should know."

"That's true. Her name is Alison Jansen and we're getting married next month. I understand you've been asked through Joyce to be my best man."

"That's true, and I'm happy to be your best man. And of course I know Alison. We've been talking through e-mails for several years already. I have never seen her though. The only time I saw her was when she was her former self and lived as a boy."

"So I've understood. I met her at my office in March. She was in for an interview for a job with Bosworth & Co. She teased me and said that she had met me before. She also mentioned that she knew you and that the two of you stayed in constant contact and that you should be the one to tell me about it. She was also afraid something had happened to you, since she hadn't heard from you in two months. I contacted Joyce to see if she could help me get some information about her from you. She told me everything. I was amazed, but still in love. So now I am stuck. I have some pictures of her here." Ross took out some pictures and handed them to Alan.

Alan took a good look at them and said: "It's amazing. She's drop down gorgeous. No wonder you fell in love with her. And I must say that she reminds me about Sandra."

"She did that on purpose. She had had the looks for her long before she crossed over. When Sandra died, and she saw how I grieved, she decided to adapt a 'Sandra look' to see if I would be interested in her. I fell for it, and the rest is history. And I might add, she's a fantastic lover. To be honest. She's better in bed than Sandra was; and she was good."

Alan handed the pictures back to Ross. "I can't wait to meet her."

"You will in a couple of weeks. As soon as she graduates she will move in with me. That means that you're officially out, my friend." Ross laughed at his own remark.

"That's no problem friend, as you know, my stuff is already at Joyce's apartment. I'll move in with her as soon as I'm back on the street. And we will get married too. We plan the wedding for late August. Will you be my Best Man?"

"Of course buddy. Nothing would please me more. I understand that the girls will be each other's Maid-of-Honor as well."

Joyce confirmed with a nod.

They spoke for two more hours before Ross said goodbye and left. Joyce would spend the night in the apartment. She couldn't wait to get back in bed with Alan again. She was not sure if could perform yet, but would do her best to help him along.

Eight days later Alan was back on work. Everybody knew he had been undercover some place, but only a selected few knew where. He was welcomed back with a small party. Since the day also was his birthday, someone had brought a cake for the occasion.

During the day several of his colleagues asked Alan where he had been, but he didn't say a word. Some rumors went around that he had been in Los Angeles, and when Alan was confronted with these rumors he just shrugged his shoulders. If someone wanted to check if he had been there, a telephone call would verify that. It was in their files, even if he hadn't been there. This was just to keep up the story.

One of the things Alan did as soon as he was back, was to see if Charles "Chuck" O'Neil had been erased from all registers. It would not be good if Alison had left her fingerprints or DNA at a place where the Police was investigating a crime, and they found a

match between her and the fingerprints at the crime scene. That would be something that would be very hard to explain. Alan checked all possible registers and found that Charles "Chuck" O'Neil was nowhere to be found. Alison was safe.

Calvin Shanahan and his folks had been in front of a judge from the first day after they were caught. It happened in all the four cities. In all case the culprits had been sent to jail with no possibility for a bail. Destruction of evidence and fleeing the country was a risk too high to take. Their crimes were so serious that this was the right thing to do. In addition the prisoners were put before the judge one by one without even seeing each other, and locked up far away from each other. This way no one would really miss Rita. For Marjorie it all ended in tragedy. The final blows from Rita made her fall against a shelf and she broke her neck and died. This was fortunate for Rita, this way her secret would never be out.

Calvin Shanahan was only a shell of himself the moment he was brought before the judge. It was clear that the man was completely broken. Evidence also showed that his family had not been involved in any of his dubious businesses, only in the legitimate ones. This meant that his wife took out a divorce right away to further distance herself from him. Calvin took this very hard and he committed suicide while waiting for his trial. All his legal assets went to his closest family, while all his illegal assets were confiscated by the Federal Government.

It took almost a year before everybody had received their sentences. All were convicted and sentenced to many years in jail. No prison held more than one of the gang members.

From the DC branch two people received only mild sentences, both because what Rita had told the Police. One was Peggy from her office, who in fact had no idea what was going on right in front of her nose. The other was Sean whom Rita had met on her first day. He had knowledge of what was going on, but since his involvement was very limited, and his son was very active in Ross' football project, he only received a three year suspended sentence

Alison graduated in late June and moved straight in with Ross in his apartment. Alan had been out for quite some time already, so this was no problem. As agreed Alison showed up at work on July 1st. It didn't take long before she was settled in and started working on various projects. The wedding between her and Ross was held in Philadelphia on Saturday July 25th. Since Alison had broken all ties with her family it was a very low key wedding. The newly weds were back on work on Monday already; their honeymoon would take place the following summer. Back in DC plans were laid for Alison's artificial impregnation. Sandra's eggs were moved to a hospital of Stan Bosworth's choice and through the coming winter Ross started to donate his semen. The impregnation wouldn't take place right after the Conway's honeymoon.

Joyce and Alan were wed in St. Paul on August 29th. This was also a low key wedding since Alan was without any close relatives. They would also postpone their honeymoon until the following year. In fact both couples planned to go together. Exactly where was not decided, except that it would be to Europe. Both brides had close family ties to that continent. The grooms' family ties were too washed out to find any distinct country. One

thing was sure though, they hailed from the British Isles. Joyce and Alan also planned to start a family as soon as they were back from honeymoon.

THE END