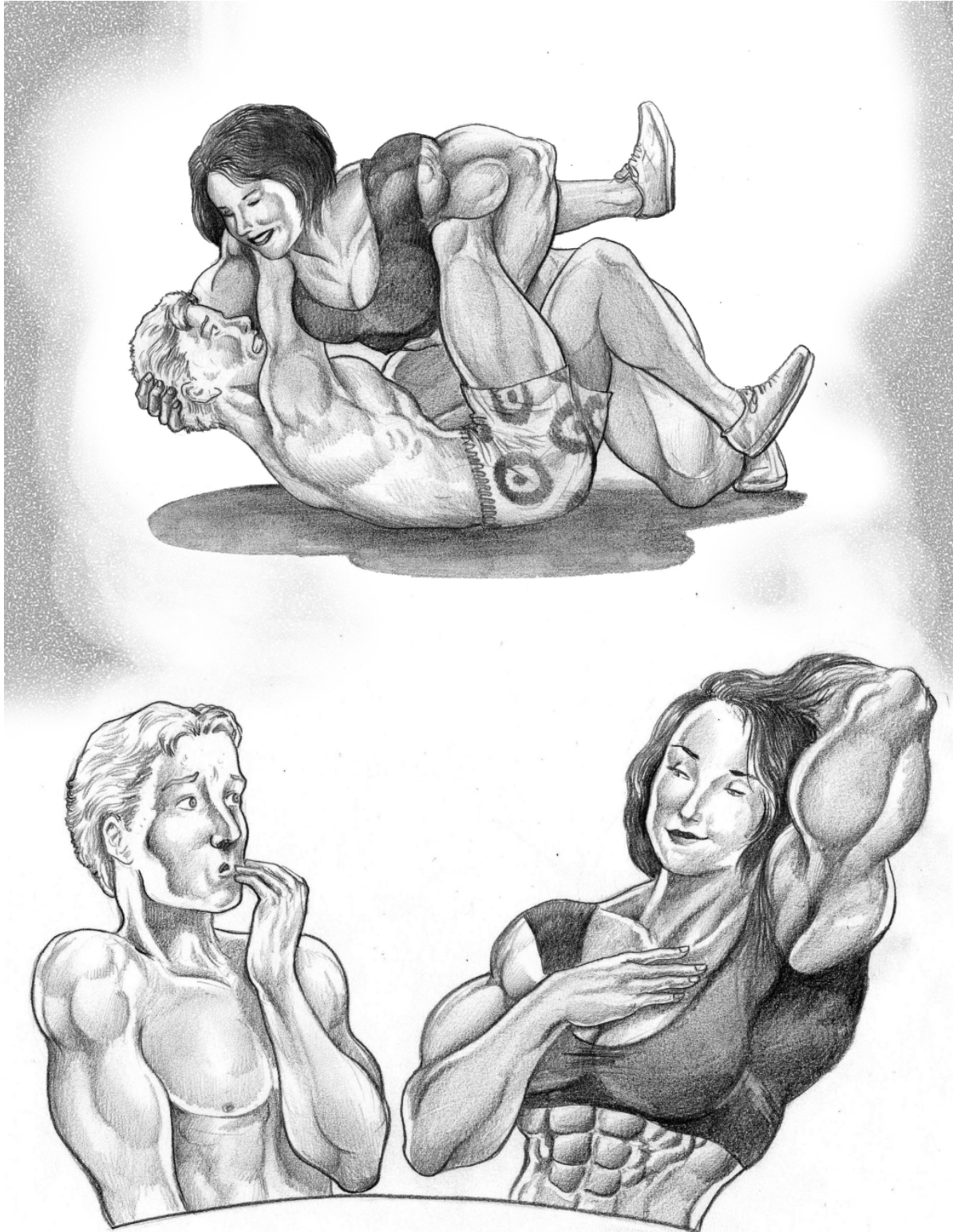


# MACHO MAN (Part 1)

(a Puppetman Story)

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I had known Don for several months before the subject of the Amazon, Julie, came up. A slightly built man of about my age, a good four inches shorter than my own 5'8" and at least 40 pounds lighter than my 180 lbs., he had transferred into the department in which I worked, and we had struck up an immediate friendship, having lunch together almost daily. I knew he was married with no children, but had never been to his home or met his wife until one day he came into the office limping and wincing with almost every move.

"What happened to you?" I asked.

"Tell you at lunch," he muttered and walked down the aisle to his work station.

We had lunch, as we did every day, in the Company cafeteria, and, since our department's lunch hour started a half hour earlier than most others, had a table to ourselves. I renewed my question. "You're walking around like you got hit by a truck," I told him.

"Oh, it's nothing," he replied. "Sharon and I were horsing around downstairs in her basement gym last night, having a little fun, and I landed wrong, that's all. Twisted my right leg and shoulder. It'll be all right in a couple of days."

I did a double take. "Sharon? Your wife? Wait a minute! Are you telling me your WIFE did this to you?"

He gave me a strange look, and then smiled ruefully. "That's right. You've never met Sharon, have you? It was an accident, and she felt terrible about it. But, when you like to horse around like we do, those things happen sometimes."

"What the hell were you doing?"

"Just a friendly, little wrestling match. She had me up over her head and was giving me an airplane spin when she lost control and I fell." He shook his head. "I guess I landed pretty hard on my shoulder with my leg twisted under me. It hurt like the devil! Still does, but it's better today."

I gaped at him. "She LIFTED you?!? OVER HER HEAD?!?" I exclaimed.

He flushed and nodded. "Yeah. I only weigh about 140 lbs.," he replied.

I started to laugh, and then immediately apologized. "I don't mean to make fun of you, Don," I said. "It's just that I've never known a guy who'd let his wife beat up on him."





He grimaced. "I don't LET her do anything, Mike," he told me. His voice was starting to sound a little defensive. "She's bigger and a lot stronger than I am. That's nothing to be ashamed of. She's been working out with weights since she was in her teens, and she's stronger than most men."

I was tempted to ask the obvious question, but, realizing I was in sensitive territory, thought better of it. "Okay," I said. "Sorry. I didn't mean to pry."

"That's okay." He hesitated. "I know what you're thinking," he added finally. "What's a guy like me doing married to a girl who's bigger and stronger than he is; who wears the pants in our family; all that kind of stuff. I've heard it all before. The fact is, we love each other very much and have just about a perfect relationship. She's never deliberately hurt me, and we both love to horse around together, even though she always winds up on top." He spread his hands, wincing a little at the effort. "Let's face it, it's a great form of foreplay. Although, I have to admit, it didn't work out too well last night..."

"Hey, Don," I said, putting up both hands in a defensive gesture, "I didn't say a word. Whatever turns you on is okay by me – none of my business, anyway." After a moment of silence, I

couldn't resist adding, "I have to tell you, though, I can't see any woman doing anything like that to me."

"She could. And several of her friends could, too."

I started to laugh. "Now, wait a minute. I outweigh you by at least forty pounds, and I was state wrestling champion in high school, wrestled and did a little semi-pro boxing in college to help pay the bills. Admittedly, I'm not in the same shape I was back then, and, with all the emphasis today on women's sports, I'm not saying that there isn't some female behemoth out there who might be able to take me. But any woman even close to my size? Not a chance. Women just can't develop the upper body strength necessary to compete pound for pound with a reasonably athletic man. They don't have the genetics for it."

Don shrugged. "I know that's the conventional wisdom," he replied, "but we think it's being disproved, little by little. We think the fact that most women have smaller upper bodies and weaker upper body musculature is as much a result of heredity and environment as genetics, and that as more and more women develop themselves physically, the genetics will change, although probably not in our lifetime."

"Thank God for that. The last thing I want to see is a world of big, hairy, musclebound, female Arnolds! I like my women feminine."

He pursed his lips, looking at me evenly. "Sharon's as feminine as you can get," he said, and, as I started to protest that I hadn't been suggesting otherwise, cut me off. "So are most of her friends," he continued. "Even her friend, Julie, who's 6'3" and goes around 210 lbs. of solid muscle, is as lovely and feminine a girl as you'd ever want to meet. Yet she's probably 2-3 times as strong as most men, and I suspect could do just about anything she wanted to with you physically. She certainly can with me!



"Look, huge muscles don't necessarily mean strength. Most of these bodybuilders are not anywhere near as strong as they look. It's not just the size of the muscle, but the number and density of the muscle fibers that determine strength, and that's determined more by heredity and environment than genetics. After all, it's generally recognized that women's lower body strength can be equal or superior to men's. Why not their upper bodies, too?"

I laughed. "Well, I'm not in a position to dispute your logic – I'll leave that to the scientific community! But when you tell me your wife's girl friend is strong enough to do anything she wants with me...well, you'd have to prove that!"

He grinned. "Want to meet Julie?"

I laughed again. "Thanks, but I'll pass. Nothing against your wife or her girl friend, you understand. I'm just old fashioned enough to think that men should be the stronger sex...you know, protect 'em and open doors for them, that kind of stuff, and I think that any man who'd get into a fight with a woman or hit a woman is beneath contempt. No offense intended. It's just the way I think."

"You don't know what you're missing," he told me. "Julie is absolutely gorgeous and a marvellous person, and, like you, she's single and not seeing anyone seriously right now. Moreover, you've said you sort of prefer tall women, and she definitely prefers shorter men. Who knows? You two might hit it off - no pun intended!"

"I'll bet she prefers shorter men!" I grinned. "The kind she can toss around! And 6'3" is just a bit out of my league. Thanks, but no thanks!"

"Pity. Sharon's only 5'10" and only weighs 160, but we have an understanding. I don't fool around with other women, and she doesn't wrestle other men, even good friends like you. Wrestling men is too much of a turn on for her, so we confine it to each other where we can both get turned on."

That ended the discussion, and we finished our lunch and went back to the office. The next day, however, the subject came up again at the lunch table. He handed me a photograph, a close up of two of the most beautiful women I had ever seen, a young blonde with long hair covering her shoulders and, behind her and slightly to one side, an equally youthful brunette with a short, but beautifully coiffured, hairdo who was several inches taller.

"The taller one is Julie," he said. "That's Sharon on the left. I told her last night about our conversation, and she suggested I show you this, just so you could see what you're missing."

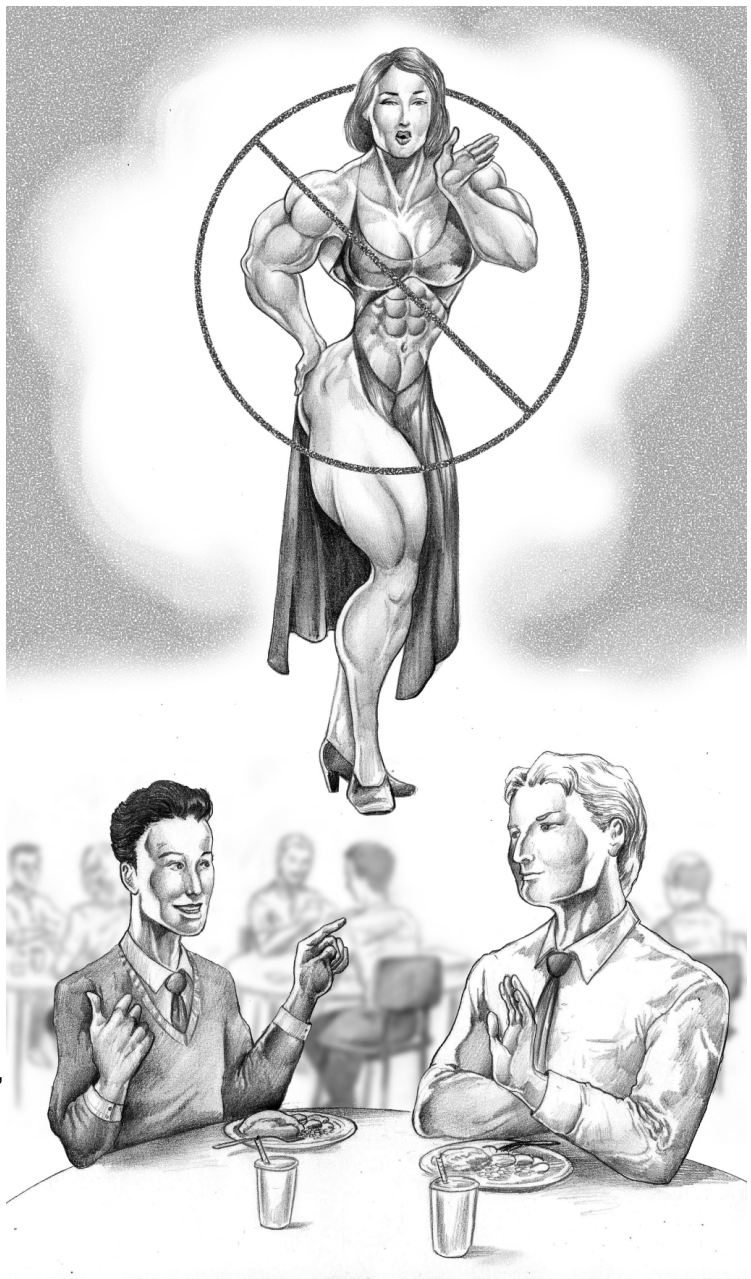
I whistled. "Wow! You're right! I've never seen two lovelier women, and your friend, Julie, is a knockout--again, no pun intended!"

"Sharon called her last night to tell her about you, and after I described you--I was very complimentary, by the way--she said she'd really love to meet you, but she could understand why you might be afraid to meet her. A lot of guys are, when they find out how big and strong she is."

"Now, wait a minute," I protested, "I never said I was afraid! Quite the contrary. I just don't believe in fighting with women."

"Well, you wouldn't really be fighting with her, just sort of horsing around, like Sharon and I do. Julie said she'd be careful not to hurt you, and she didn't think you'd be capable of hurting her."

"Sounds pretty overconfident to me."





"Maybe, but I've seen her handle a number of guys, some of 'em a lot bigger than you. I don't think there's a guy anywhere close to her size that she couldn't handle with one hand tied behind her back."

I had to admit I was intrigued at the prospect of a little, friendly, physical contact with the gorgeous creature in the photograph. "So what do you mean by 'just horsing around'? Just what does this Amazon friend of yours have in mind?"

"Well, what she told Sharon was that she'd bet you a dinner for all of us that you wouldn't be able to do anything against her, and that she could do anything she wanted with you."

I frowned. "Sounds pretty vague to me."

He grinned. "That's because, at least in the beginning, she'd let you pick the kind of contest and your objective, and then she'd pick her objective. For example, if you chose arm wrestling, you wouldn't have to beat her, just keep her from beating you for any reasonable period of time, say, five seconds."

"FIVE SECONDS?!?" I pushed back my chair and stared at him. "Where'd you say this gal was from? Krypton?"

He laughed. "Well, I've never seen her leap tall buildings with a single bound! But I have seen her make this kind of bet with other guys, and several of 'em were bodybuilder types who were taller and heavier than she was, and all muscle. And I've never seen her lose."

That statement really got my attention. "You know," I said, "I find this whole thing just a little hard to believe. You're telling me that this girl can take on any guy, no matter how big or strong, let him pick any kind of contest he wants and set any halfway reasonable rules he wants and then beat him at it? And all without hurting him? You have to admit, that's off the wall! I can't believe that any woman--or, for that matter, any guy her size--can be that good."

"Julie is. As I said, I've seen her in action. She is, to say the least, unbelievable!"

I thought a moment. "OK," I said finally, "I'll agree that you've got me interested. But I thought I heard you say those rules only apply in the beginning. What happens after that?"

He chuckled. "Good question. You're the first guy who's picked up on that. That's the second half of the bet. The first part is that you won't be able to do anything against her, and the second is that she can do anything she wants with you. After you've tried everything you can think of and failed, then it'll be her turn. She'll tell you what she's going to do to you, and then she'll do it."

My stomach started to get queasy. "Like what, for instance?"

"Nothing that will hurt you--well, at least not physically. For example, this one bodybuilder type – he was 6'3" and had to go 225 at least – she picked him up and carried him around several different ways: up over her head, over her shoulder, tucked under one arm, and cradled in her arms. He was absolutely helpless to stop her. Then she laid him on his back and pinned his shoulders to the ground with just her legs, no hands, and started teasing him and playing with him. She'd bet him she could get him all hot for her, and she did, had him eating out of her hand in just a few minutes. Problem was, she wasn't interested in him—big, muscular guys don't turn her on--and once she'd turned him on, she couldn't turn him off. She really felt badly for the guy, so she sent him on his way and released him from his bet." Don chuckled, adding, "We found out later the guy couldn't have delivered anyway; he didn't have any money. Julie told us if she'd known that she'd have turned him over her knee and spanked him! She doesn't like welchers!"



I was looking at him in disbelief. "You know, Don," I told him, "you've gotta be making this up! Nobody, man or woman, her size could do that to a 225 lb. man who was in halfway decent shape!"

He shrugged. "Believe what you want. All I can say is, I saw her do it. Of course," he added with a wink, "in your case, she might be tempted to go all the way. I think you could really turn her on!"

"Are you saying she could RAPE me?" I asked incredulously.

"No, it wouldn't really be rape. But I do think she could turn you on to the point where you couldn't stop her from going all the way with you, even if you wanted to. And somehow, despite all these macho posturings of yours, I don't think you'd want to!"

That did it, except for one more question. "What happens if at any point in this process I'm successful--that I'm able to achieve my objective or keep her from achieving hers?"

"Contest ends right there and Julie treats all of us to dinner that night, at the restaurant of your choice. And, in case you're wondering, she can afford it. She's a computer programmer and designer for one of the top software companies here in the valley. Designs and programs games, primarily. She makes a bundle!"

"In that case," I said, "tell your Amazon friend she's on! And tell her to bring her credit cards. She'll need 'em!"

Don chuckled. "Just be sure you bring yours," he said.

The next day he told me the contest was set for 1:00 p.m. the following Saturday at his home, which was secluded in a wooded area at the end of a long, private road. "Sharon and I like our privacy," he told me, "particularly when Sharon's tossing me around in the back yard. Just park in front and come around to the back. Bring swimming trunks, in case we decide to swim later, before dinner. We'll be by the pool."

The address he'd given me was a good hour's drive from my apartment building, and I therefore arrived a few minutes early, wearing a light, loose fitting sport shirt outside a pair of shorts and tennis shoes, with my swim and dress clothes hanging in the back of the car. The house, a small, stone ranch that looked expensive, even for California, was set on a large, beautifully manicured lot surrounded by thick growths of large trees. I parked in the circular drive next to a Mercedes 300SL and walked around the side of the house to find Don and his blonde wife, whom I recognized from the photo he had showed me and who seemed even lovelier than she had appeared in that photo, lounging by a large, oval swimming pool.



As I approached, I greeted both of them, apologized for being early, and complimented them on their home. They both stood up, and for the first time I got a disconcertingly good look at Sharon. As Don had told me, she was a couple of inches taller than I in her bare feet, dwarfing her husband, with broad shoulders, clearly defined and powerfully muscled arms and legs, and a figure that was solidly muscular, yet shapely and enticingly feminine. She took my hand in a firm, but gentle, grip that somehow gave me the impression she could have crushed it if she had chosen to do so.

"It's nice to finally meet you, Mike," she said in a soft, subtly seductive voice. "Don's told me so much about you, although I must confess I expected someone a lot more macho than you appear to be."

I laughed. "I certainly hope I don't come across that way," I replied. "I've never thought of myself as the macho type, although I've always been pretty athletic."

"Yes. Wrestling and boxing, according to Don. Just the kind of man Julie likes."

I looked around. "Speaking of your friend, has she arrived yet?"

"She's in the house changing." Sharon relaxed onto the lounge. "She'll be out in a moment. Incidentally, I do hope you brought changes of clothes, for dinner tonight and in case we want to swim later."

"Yes. I wasn't sure what to do with them, so I left them in the car."

She motioned to her husband. "Don, be a dear and go get Mike's clothes. You can hang them in the hall closet." Her tone made it clear she was giving him an order, and, after I assured him my car was unlocked, he hastened to comply, disappearing around the side of the house. Sharon watched him go with a hint of amusement in her eyes and then turned her attention back to me. "You know, Mike," she murmured, "for a man who claims not to be the macho type, according to Don you still seem to harbor that outdated notion that women are the weaker sex, from a physical standpoint at least."

I smiled at her and decided to choose my words carefully to avoid offending her. "Well, I think today on average they are. On the other hand, there's no question that as a general rule women have made tremendous strides physically and athletically, and that the gap is significantly smaller today than it was, say, twenty years ago. And it's certainly not inconceivable that some women who have chosen to develop themselves to their full potential could be physically superior to many men of comparable size."

She pursed her lips, regarding me with that same look of amusement that had followed her husband as he had hurried to obey her. "But you don't think Julie is physically superior to you?" she asked.

I shrugged. "I really don't know. Under normal circumstances I would tend to doubt it, but from what Don has told me... Anyway, as I recall, the bet was that she could do anything she wanted to with me, and that I would not be able to do anything against her. I don't have to defeat her. All I have to do is stop her from doing just one thing she tries to do against me, and I win."

"You really think you have a chance of winning?"

The voice, coming from above and behind me, was rich, feminine, with an almost bell-like quality. I turned to stare up at the beautiful brunette of the photograph, now towering larger than life over half a head above me. She was standing so close we were almost touching, and, involuntarily, I fell back a step to get a better look.

Her presence was overwhelming! Without thinking, my mind raced through a catalogue of visual impressions of this magnificent woman: broad, powerful shoulders, seemingly almost wide enough for me to sit on; massively, yet smoothly, muscled arms ending in large, shapely, perfectly manicured hands; a wide "V" of a chest, with small, firm breasts barely covered by a black halter, tapering sharply to a slim waist that was a wash-board of rippling musculature; narrow, slightly flared hips under brief shorts that revealed long, unbelievably massive and muscular thighs and calves. All in all, a miraculous combination of physical power and sensuous femininity that left my mouth dry and my mind fumbling for the right words like a trembling schoolboy.

Fortunately, Sharon came to my rescue. "Julie, this is Mike. I don't think he's going to be much competition for you, but, from the look of him, he might make it interesting."

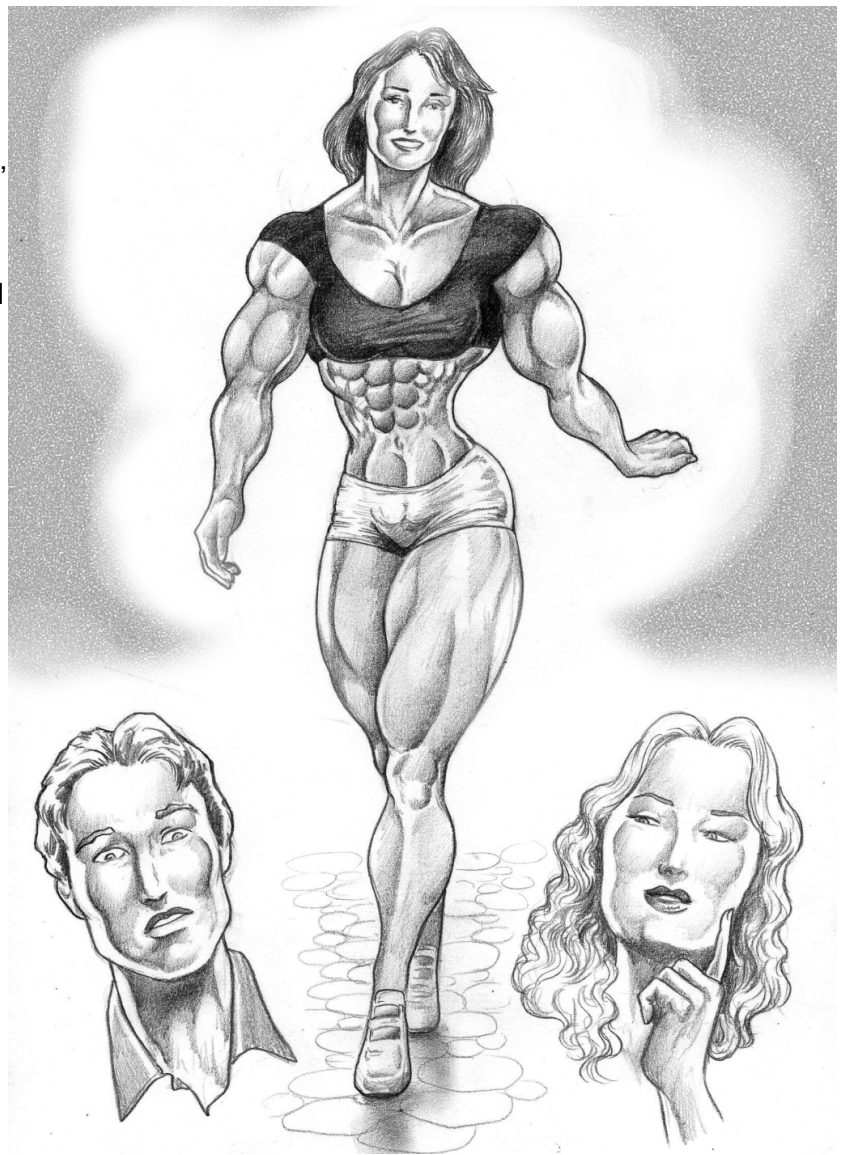
Julie flashed me a dazzling smile, took my hand in a firm, gentle grip and then nodded to Don, who had just emerged from the back of the house to join us. "Hello, Mike," she said. "I agree, Sharon. And Don, you didn't exaggerate. He's adorable!" Then, to me, "But you haven't answered my question, Mike. Do you really think you have a chance of winning the bet?"

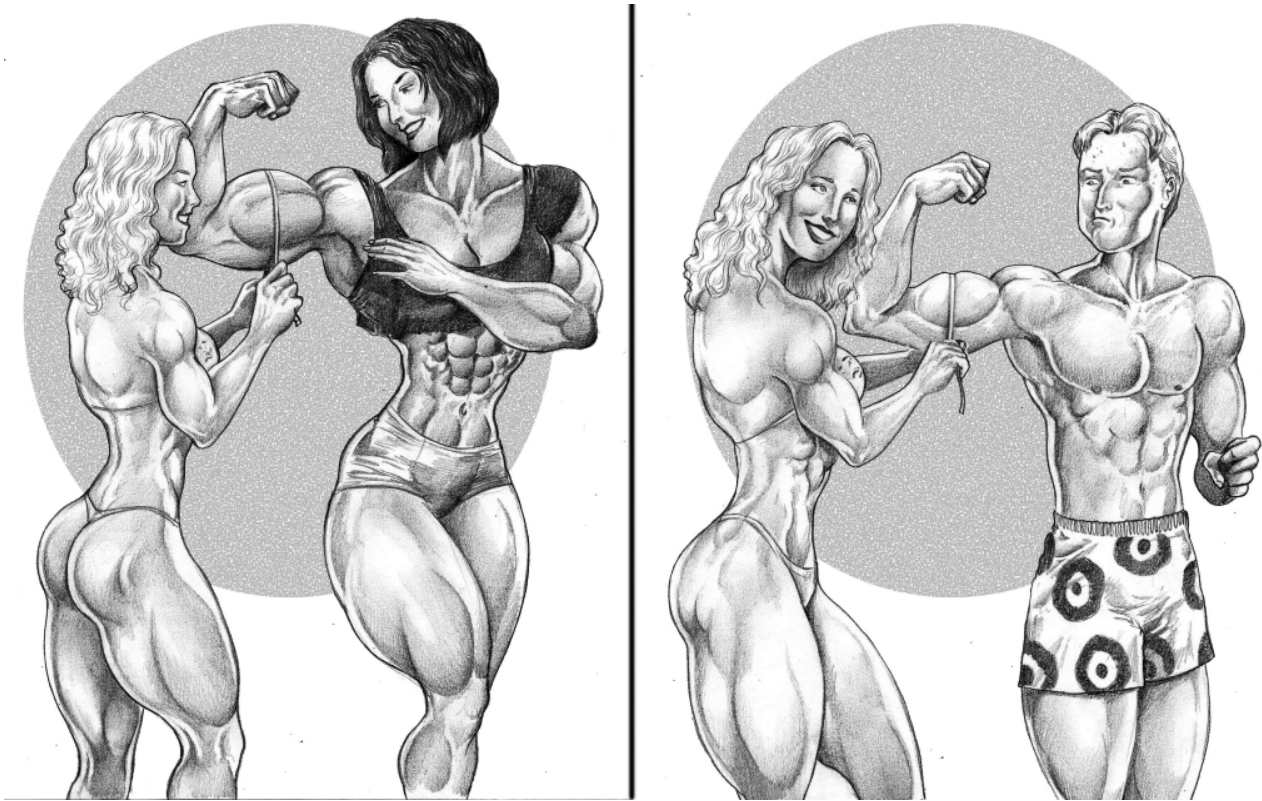
The interval had given me a chance to recover my composure. "I think," I replied slowly, "that any form of physical contact with you would be fun, win or lose."

Her eyebrows raised, and then she gave a low laugh. "Perhaps for both of us," she murmured. "But before we begin, I think I should give you a little better idea of what you're up against, and me some notion of how we should proceed. Want to start by comparing measurements?"

"By all means!" I replied, grinning back at her, and deftly removed my shirt. Sharon produced a tape measure and came up behind me to slide it around my chest.

"Flex for me, Mike," she said, and, as I took a deep breath and tensed my chest to spread my lats, tightened the tape. "Forty-three and a half," she chuckled. "Not bad for a man your size!" She went around behind Julie and did the same, and as Julie flexed, I had to gape in amazement as her lats swelled out several inches on either side of her already massive chest. "Got you beat by a mile, Mike," Sharon chuckled. "Forty nine and three quarters!"





"Biceps next," Julie suggested. She raised and cocked her right arm, and a bicep almost the size of a softball erupted under her smooth skin. Sharon wrapped the tape tightly around the massive muscle, which was not dented at all by the pressure of the tape. "Eighteen and one quarter inches," Sharon sang out, "and hard as a rock! Hey, girl, you've added a good quarter inch since the last time we did this!"

"Been working out," Julie replied. "Now for Mike."

I made a helpless gesture, knowing I was hopelessly outclassed in that department. "No contest," I admitted.

Sharon nevertheless wound the tape loosely around my upper right arm. "The question is not whether you're beaten, Mike," she told me, "but by how much. Now, be a good boy and flex for me!" I sighed and obeyed, and Sharon tightened the tape lightly around my arm. "Fourteen and one half, but pretty soft," she said, and tightened the tape further, making a significant dent in my muscle. "Only fourteen, solid," she added. "Mike, I think you're going to have a problem here! Let's try the waistline next."

She wound the tape tightly around my waist, compressing the small roll of softness over my kidneys. "Thirty two even," she pronounced. "You know, Mike, you could have a great build for a guy if you worked out." She went over to the taller girl and wrapped the tape around her waistline, and then started to laugh. "Looks like Mike has you beat here, Julie! Twenty six and a half."

That was the only time I exceeded her measurements. Her thighs were a massive, solid 25" to my 20" and her calves 18" to my 15". By the time the comparison was finished, I was feeling less and less sure of myself.

Julie put a hand on my shoulder, smiling down at me. "Tell you what, Mike," she said gently. "I don't think I'd better wrestle with you, 'cause I might accidentally hurt you. Why don't we start with a test of arm strength? We'll lock hands and use both arms, and, since I'm a lot taller than you, I'll keep my hands low, just below your shoulders, to give you the advantage of leverage. And I won't hold your hands too tightly."

Her expressed concern for a guy who had been a state wrestling champion was a little hard to take. Nevertheless, from the size of this girl, I figured it would be prudent to accept any advantage offered. I thought a minute. "I get to set my own objective, right?"

"Right, if they're halfway reasonable. And then I'll set mine."

"Okay," I grinned. "All I have to do is move your hands back...say, four inches! And Sharon can be the judge of whether I've succeeded."



I didn't really expect her to agree, but, to my surprise, she nodded, and we locked hands. She was as good as her word, keeping her hands just below my shoulder level and her grip gentle. I set myself, looked up at her and said, "Oh, by the way..." and then suddenly heaved forward with all the strength and leverage I could muster, hoping to catch her off guard. I did. I forced her hands back perhaps half an inch or so before I saw her arms flex slightly, and then she became like a stone statue. Even with the leverage advantage I had, no matter how hard I strained or whatever maneuver I tried, I simply could not budge her hands. Gasping, my face contorted from my exertions, I gaped up at her in amazement and was stunned to see her smiling placidly down at me, with no sign of strain on her lovely features.

"My turn yet?" she asked sweetly.

That did it. I gave up, panting, my mind spinning in the humiliating realization that I, a grown man and former wrestling champion, had been so easily and completely

overpowered by, of all people, a girl! Never mind her size advantage and unbelievable muscularity, she was still a female, and my masculine ego simply could not accept the fact that a girl could be so much stronger than I.

I tried to release her hands, but she continued to gently hold me in place. "Let me know when you're ready, Mike," she said. "You seem pretty winded, and I want you at full strength when I do my thing."

"Which is?" I choked.

She wrinkled her nose at me. "I'm going to force your hands behind your back and give you a little hug--not too hard, I promise!--and a great big French kiss. I hope you won't think that's too forward of me, since we've only just met, but you're so little and cute and helpless I just can't resist the temptation!"

I felt my blood start to rise at the taunt. This girl was just too much! "And all I have to do is stop you from French kissing me, right?"



She bit her lip, grinning. "Uh huh. But would you want to?"

I set myself. "Whenever you're ready," I grated.

Julie winked at Sharon. "I think I'm making him mad," she chuckled, and then, with a surge of irresistible power, forced my wrists back so that I had to release my hold on her hands. Shifting her grip to my wrists, she twisted my hands inward so that she could bend my arms around my back without dislocating my shoulders or elbows, and then pressed me tightly against her. I writhed and struggled with all my strength, but I was completely helpless. All I could do was keep my head down, my eyes just below her chin, where she could not reach my mouth with hers.

Then I felt her cross my wrists behind me and secure them in the grip of a single hand. Immediately I strained to separate them, but to my amazement, her grip held and continued to press me against her. Her free hand came up to grasp the top of my head and force it back, so I clenched my jaw shut and my lips together. Smiling

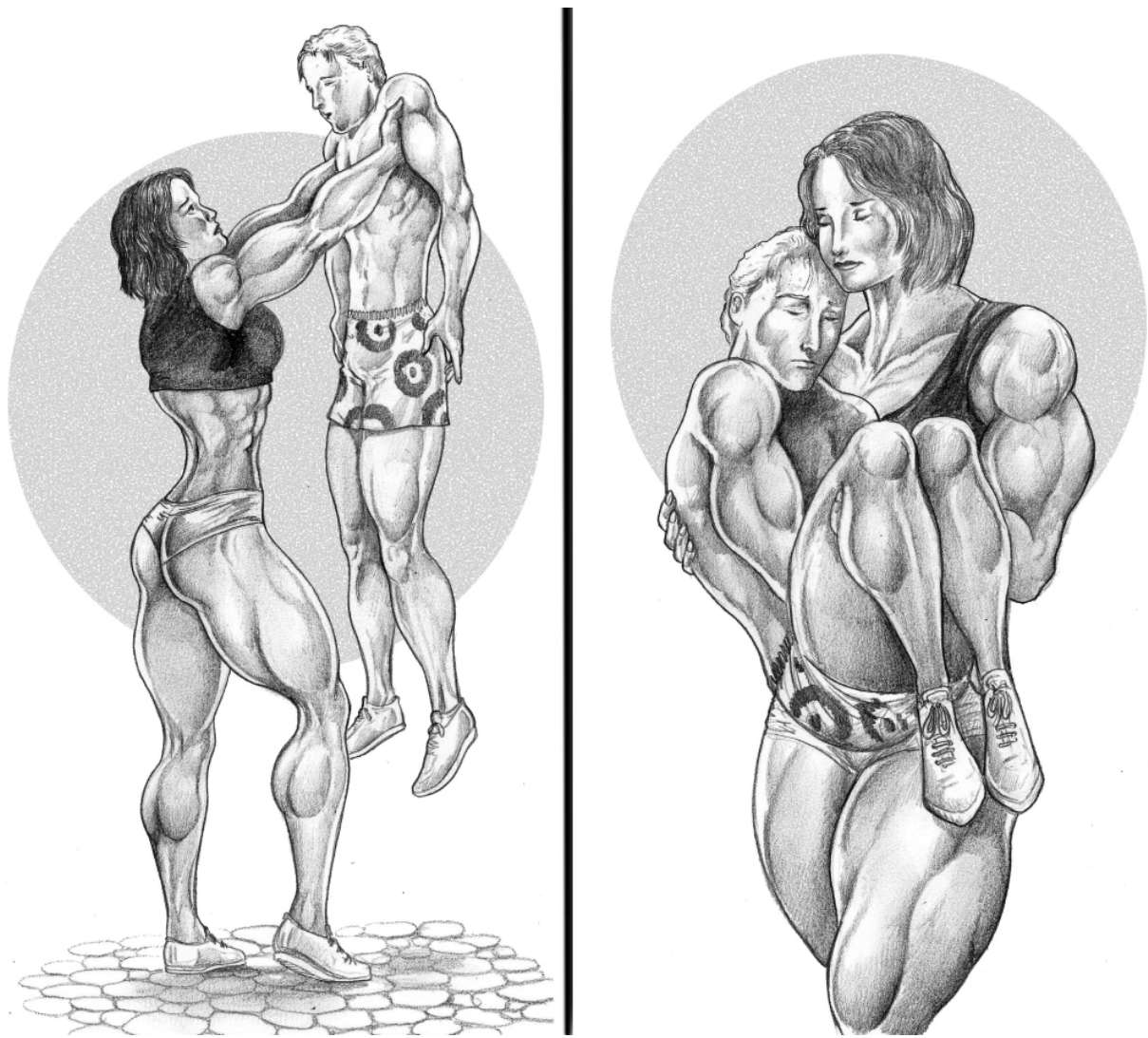
down at me, she quickly moved her hand from the top of my head to the back of my neck, her long fingers almost completely encircling my throat, and then suddenly squeezed, almost choking me and forcing me to open my mouth.

Grinning down at me, she murmured, "We can do this the easy way or the hard way, Mike. If you promise not to try to bite me, we'll do it the easy way, and we both might enjoy it. If not, I'll have to do it the hard way, and it won't be too comfortable for you."

It was all I could do to even speak. "No promises!" I finally managed to croak.

"Have it your way," she sighed. Her open mouth crushed down on mine, and her hand, still holding the back of my head, forced my mouth up into hers with a force that literally took my breath away. I couldn't close my mouth, even to bite her, and could only hang helplessly in her grasp, barely able to breathe, while her tongue probed the inside of my mouth at will. Only when she at last released me and I collapsed against her, gasping for breath, did I become aware of the vague stirrings in my loins and the tell-tale pulsations of a budding erection. And with those sensations, continuing chagrin and embarrassment--no, abject humiliation!--at the ease with which I had been controlled and conquered by this tall, beautiful Amazon.

But that was not the end of my humiliation. She slid her hands under my armpits and then, incredibly, lifted me and held my 180 lbs. out at arm's length, my feet dangling limply several inches off the ground, as easily as if I had been a sack of laundry.



"You okay?" she asked me, genuine concern showing on her face and in her voice. Then, to Sharon and Don, "Poor little guy! I guess I came down a little too hard on him, maybe harder than I intended to keep him from biting me." She brought me against her, slipped one arm around my chest and, without putting me down, stooped to wrap her other arm behind and around my thighs, and then straightened to hold me cradled in her powerful arms like a small child.

I was too shamed and exhausted to offer any resistance as she carried me to one of the chaise lounges next to Sharon and Don, laid me down on it, and seated herself next to me, her hand resting lightly on my chest.

"Better take a little rest before we go on, Mike," she murmured softly. "I promise to take it easy on you from now on. I tried my best not to hurt you, and I hope I didn't, but you really didn't give me any choice."

Still barely able to talk, I managed to choke, "What makes you think we're gonna go on?"

She looked hurt. "Aw, come on, Mike," she said, "you're not giving up already! We've just barely started! Whatever happened to the fun of physical contact with me, win or lose?"

"Lady," I replied hoarsely, "I don't know where you come from, but you're damn near superhuman! My idea of fun does not include nearly getting killed! There's no way I'm gonna let this go on."

She smiled and patted my cheek. "Sorry, Mike," she told me gently, "but there's no way you can stop it. The bet was that I could do anything I wanted with you, and no concessions are accepted. If you want to make like a limp rag while I fold you up every which way from Sunday, that's up to you, but it won't be much fun for either of us."

I glanced over at Sharon and Don, and Don grinned and spread his hands in a helpless gesture. "Don't look at us," he said. "The last time Sharon and I tried to help a guy, all three of us wound up flat on our backs!"

"Jesus!" I muttered. "What in the hell have you gotten me into?"

Julie laughed softly, then leaned down and kissed me lightly on my cheek. "Relax, Mike. I really do promise not to hurt you. Tell you what. I'll increase the stakes. We'll do another test of strength, only this time I'll only use one arm. If you win--and you can still set the rules--I'll not only buy everyone dinner tonight, but I'll be yours for the rest of this weekend and all of next. You can do whatever you want with me, use me any way you want, and I'll do whatever you want me to, no exceptions."

I stared at her. "You're not serious!"

"That's the bet," she replied. "Can you think of a better way to restore your macho self image than to have a girl like me as your personal slave?"

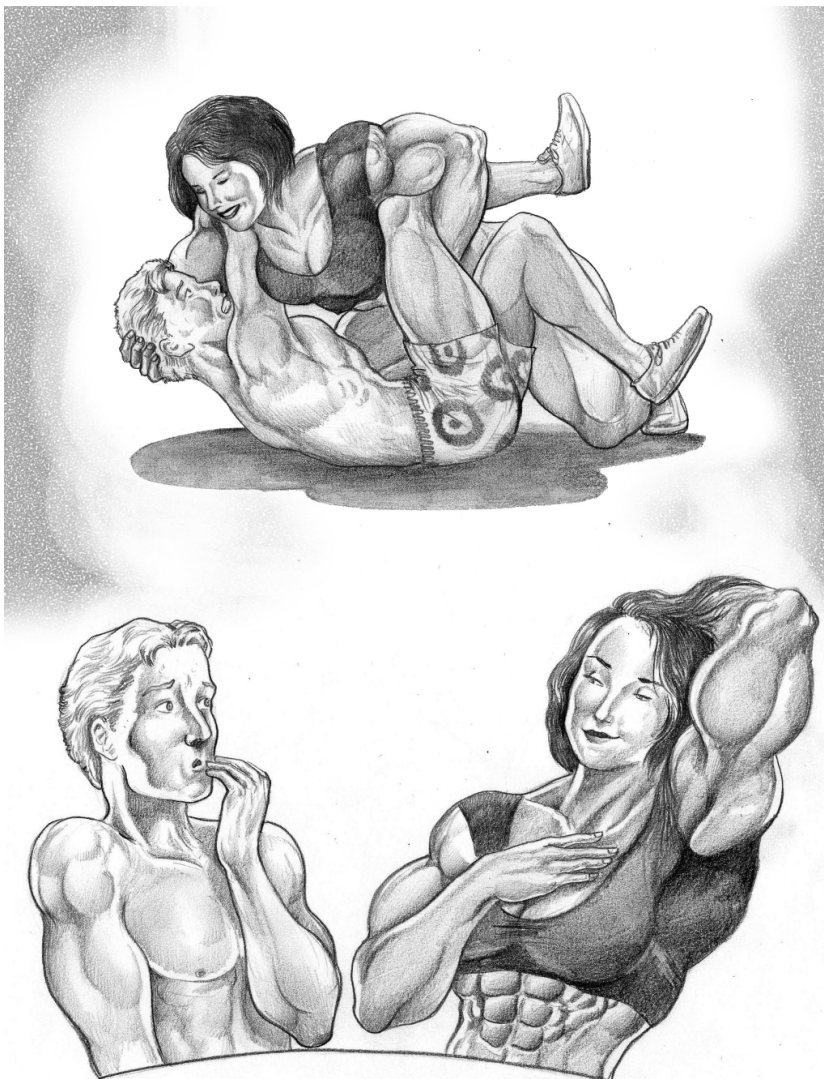
"And if you win?"

"Your bet stays the same. You buy us all dinner tonight, and that'll be it. And, if that's what you want, you'll never see me again. Of course," she added slyly, "I don't think that's what you're going to want."

I shook my head. "You're unbelievable!"

She laughed and patted my cheek again. "You're learning," she replied, "but you still have a long way to go! Are we on?"

"I guess I don't have any choice." In fact, the only chance I had to end this carnage was to win at something, anything. With an effort I pulled myself to my feet, taking a deep breath and moving my arms and legs to ensure that I and they were still functional.





"Take all the time you need, Mike," she told me. "Like I said before, I want you at full strength, so there'll be no excuses."

"Thanks a lot," I replied laconically. "How do you suggest we do this?"

She thought a moment. "Well, let's see. I'm only going to use one arm against both yours. Why don't I let you get an armlock on me? That way you can use the combined strength of both your arms and the leverage of the hold. If you can back me up a step or maintain the hold for ten seconds, you win."

"Five seconds," I corrected her. "And Don does the counting."

She frowned. "Okay," she said finally. "But if I break your hold too quickly I might accidentally injure you. So let's agree that if I can straighten my arm to ninety degrees in the first five seconds and then break your hold in the next five, I win. Don can be the judge."

I shrugged and said, "Have it your way." I had an idea, and if it worked the struggle would never get that far.

**THE END** (Part 2 – Coming Soon)

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