

On the Run

by Anonymous

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Harriett Stanton was literally on the run. She had exploited a security leak caused by a minor local flooding due to a thunderstorm that had taken the security system of the Earl Dogherty institute for young woman out of action.

The Dogherty institute was actually a penitentiary, more or less a prison for fallen daughters of the British High Society whose sentence was less than three years and which were considered to be too wealthy to spend their time in the acquaintance of common criminals.

Harriett Stanton, a self-confident young woman, the only daughter and heiress of a selfmade business man definitely belonged to the local high society

scene, although the latter had not seen much of her yet. As such she fitted the clientele of this institute quite well, except that she had not committed the crime she had been sentenced for.

Her father, who had held the majority of shares in the British Advanced Tactical Weapons Company, in short BATWC, had died two years ago. According to her father's last will she would be able to accept his inheritance with entering the age of 25, provided she lived up to his expectations.

Until then her stepmother was supposed to hold on trust her father's assets. Right now, Harriett Stanton had other problems than managing the small com-

pany, for which she had been prepared in the holy halls of Cambridge.

She was in a situation nobody had prepared her for. Although 24 almost 25 years old she was dressed from the midriff upwards in a neat school uniform, the standard clothing provided by the Dogherty Institute for its inmates. She rightly assumed that this was a subliminal humiliation the institute imposed on its inmates whose primary purpose was to degrade their self-confidence by reducing them visionally to the state of a school-girls.

This alone might have drawn unwanted attention on her, but the main problem was that she was *handcuffed*. Not by police-style *bracelets* but by the much heavier and old-fashioned looking *shackles* this old-fashioned institute used as an effective punitive measure on its inmates if it deemed necessary.

She had had a fight with Dana Elder, a real brat, that was used to black-mail and bash her fellow inmates. Very strongly build she was physically superior to her sisters in misery and used to take advantage of it. What she did not know was that Harriett Stanton, who was a kind conversationalist and pleasant person in general also could look back at a successful career as a Karate fighter. She had even been nominated for the national team before she was sentenced.

With this in mind she had rejected Elder's threats confidentially with a smile and received a hard punch into her stomach. Dana Elder was used to the fact, that

this was usually sufficient to convince her opponents not to mess with her. However this time this had been an error she would have time to regret.

The resulting fight was a short but intense one and had ended with Harriett's victory by a spectacular knock-out.

Under the strict rules that had owned her a humiliating public beating – Harriett still got red when she thought on this incident, twenty strokes on her bare buttocks while all of her fellow inmates had been watching – and a three weak-term in the heavy *handcuffs* she still wore.

Two weeks of this term were over. It had been particularly unpleasant because at that time she had been the only girl in the institute, who was punished this way. They had even spared her adversary this punishment, because Dana Elder had suffered a laceration when she went down. So she had been the only one who had to carry this kind of 'jewelry', which had brought her a lot of mockery from her fellow inmates.

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When she recognized the opportunity to escape, she had seized it with both hands without caring too much about the neat *circlets* that enclosed her wrists. Since then she had cursed that stupid fight with the Elder-brat more than once.

She had exchanged the skirt of her uniform by a fitting pair of jeans conveniently placed on clothing line, drying in in the sunshine and also acquired a pair of

worn but fitting sport-shoes from a house entrance. But the faithful *bracelets* had denied an exchange of the tight fitting old fanished blouse that still marked her as a “Dogherty-girl”.

All attempts to get rid of the cursed *manacles* had failed up to now. The old fashioned looking *shackles* hosted a high-security lock that could not be defeated by a hairpin. Foresightfully chosen inlets had reduced the space between her wrist and the bow of the big *shackles* up to a snug fit, that made it impossible to draw her hands out of these *bracelets*, even if the latter were extensively soaped.

She could tell this from her own experience because she had tried to do so at the first opportunity after those *shackles* had been locked on her wrists. Apart for security reasons – hairpins were quite common among the girls and a piece of wire was also easily to acquire – the institute mainly used this type of *manacles* because they were suitable for long-time wear and heavy and so could also serve as instruments of punishment.

In contrast to ordinary police *hand-cuffs* – Harriett had had the opportunity to wear modern style Hiatt *speedcuff* when she was arrested and sentenced – their edges were rounded and sufficiently thick that a girl could not damage her wrists by pulling on them.

Struggling was rewarded by pain, but as long as these *cuffs* were not too tight and hers fitted quite well, it did cause only bruises and the staff of the penitary did not care about bruises. Had the

flooding which silenced the surveillance equipment at the walls and gates of the penitary occurred only one week later she might have escaped without those *bracelets*.

On the other hand it had been pure luck, that she had been alone in the garden when the failure occurred and the inmates were taken back into their cells. She had managed to hide in the bushes and since she had always been very sportive and versatile it had been an easy task to climb the wall next to the main-street of the small village, despite those *fetters* on her wrists.

It was a hot day – the thunderstorm, which caused the technical problem had been a typical for this time of the year and cleared the air – and so only an old bat shuffled along. She had waited on the barbed-wired crown of the wall till the latter had passed away and then jumped down unnoticed. Her martial arts training had allowed her to overcome the fall unhurt. This had provided her with a comfortable margin until the staff of the penitary realized that one inmate was missing.

This advance was consumed now. The village was full of bobbies looking for her. With the *cuffs* on her hands she could hardly tell anybody she was just on vacation and there was no tool available in order to cut the quite strong looking *chain* that forced her to keep her wrist in close proximity in front of her body.

Otherwise she might have had a chance to seduce a guy in order to give her a ride in his car. Tall about 5’10”, with

shoulder length blond hair, big blue eyes, that could look like poor innocence and the slender body of a well-trained athlete she was an eye-catcher.

With those treacherous *bracelets* on her hands, only superficially covered by an acquired towel that she had wrapped around them, stopping a car was not really an option. So she'd tried to avoid the larger streets at all. She did not know the local area and so could only keep the coarse direction to London. The big city should provide opportunities to hide, provided she would manage to get rid of the nasty farewell gift of Dougherty institute.

That was what she wished to accomplish. But there was another voice in her head that told her that she was a fool to believe she could escape at all. That she would be caught very soon, receive an extra charge for this ragged escape attempt to be served in an ordinary prison for women.

This scenario almost came true when she recognized two police officers guarding the path she was about to take only an instant before they had the opportunity to see her too. Luckily these two just looked into the wrong direction – a woman jogging through the fields had caught their attention.

To her right was a well fortified hedgerow, impossible to penetrate. Behind her was a field with no cover at all. Even if she would be able to outrun them, there was no way to escape the enforcement they would send for. The net to

catch her was already woven and ready to tighten. The only way out and surely only a temporary one was a wide opening in the hedgerow.

Since the latter presumably completely surrounded a considerably large country estate this was essentially a trap too. However she had no choice. Carefully keeping an eye on the badged officers who now approached the estate she entered the huge yard backwards. The interior was to her liking, a well preserved garden with old trees, a few of them huge and of oversea origin and several larger plants among all kind of flowers and synthesized by an unknown master of his business to form a beautiful ensemble.

This was one of the magical gardens you can find in the English country side, well hidden from the eyes of jellish allotment owners. However with two bobbies on her heels Harriott Stanton did not have eyes for the beauty that surrounded her. She was looking for a hiding place.

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“Nice to meet you, can I help you?” This words spoken by a deep male voice in purest upper-class English made a cold shower float down her spine. Frozen by shock she even lost the small towel that covered her *handcuffs*. She turned around.

“Sorry, if I scared you,” he said. “My name is Harold Dogherty,” he introduced himself – this name could not be a coincidence. Should he be the eponym of the institute himself.

Actually he was too young for it. He was tall, at least 6'3" slim with broad shoulders and the figure of an athlete. His hair was short and his eyes looked clear and bright, dressed like a well-heeled British gentleman from top to toe, from his dressing and behaviour he ought to be the owner of this estate.

"I am Harriet Stanton," she said dutifully before she realized that it was not a good idea to mention her real name. He extended his right hand although he could not have overlooked that she was *handcuffed*. She blushed, but returned his handclasp firmly with her joined hands.

"These are...," she did not know what to say and blushed.

"... an inconvenience," he completed her sentence. She nodded and blushed even more. What he saw was a pretty young woman two or three years younger than him with a gorgeous figure and big blue eyes who had been frightened to be caught by someone out of sight and was now terribly embarrassed.

"You're from the institute?" He asked. It was not really a question. A man had not to be Sherlock Holmes in order to conclude that she did not wear these *bracelets* and that impossible blouse that marked her as a "Dogherty girl" voluntarily. Since she had already mentioned her real name it made no sense to lie about that. She nodded.

"I've been arrested by virtue of a wrong conviction," she said. "I am the victim of a conspiracy, Sir." His gray eyes scrutinised her with surgical precision

but he could find anything sinister in her big blue ones. "The police is looking for me and if they catch me they'll bring me back to this awful place."

"They're on your heels?" He asked and she nodded.

"Alright," he said, "follow me." He turned sideways and did not look if she actually followed him, which she did hesitatingly. He made a few long steps around another corner to a small arbour used to store garden tools. He opened it.

"Get in there," he said. She hesitated.

"Miss Stanton, if you don't do what I say, I cannot help you." She gave him a long investigative look and complied. He closed the door and engaged the lock bar.

"Trust me," he said. Harriet Stanton was about to kick herself into her own rear. How could she be so stupid, but she kept quiet. It was dark and hot inside and presumably dirty. After half an hour she heard voices. One belonged to the tall man who had let her into this trap. How stupid had she been to trust a complete foreigner.

"May we take a look inside this arbour, too?" It was probably one of the policemen, who asked this question.

"Of course," the tall man said and her blood started to freeze. Then he said conversationally, "but it's barred. Do you really think that woman went inside and locked it from the outside?"

"Of course not, Sir," the policeman retorted. "That will not be necessary. Thanks for your cooperation, Sir." A

stone big as the everest fell from Harriets heart.

"You're welcome," the tall man said and it was obvious that he led the officers back to the entrance. After five more minutes in the dirt and darkness of her confinement the door was unlocked.

"Tart on me?" He asked.

"I was," she admitted, "when you barred that door, I thought you were going to call the officers to take me away."

"I've lead them around and shown them garden," he said, "but there's no need to open a box that's barred from the outside."

"And that was your intention, when you put me inside?" She asked sceptically.

"I apologize for the inconvenience, but it was the best solution I could think of," he said.

"It was no inconvenience. Thanks for the help, Sir. I am indebted to you." she said. When he did not answer, she continued, "may I leave now?"

"Of course," he replied dryly, "if that's really what you want to do? I don't think you'll get very far with those *bracelets* and it may be a prejudice, but you don't look and behave like a professional criminal."

"What else should I do, Sir?" She asked, "I've already caused you some trouble and..."

"Nonsense," he said, "you did not cause me any trouble. I did not lie to those policeman at least not literally. If you would like to refresh yourself I can offer you a guest room and if you like to do so you can tell me what you commit-

ted at a cup of tea. The institute does not host murderesses or child-molesters."

"I did not commit anything," she objected determinedly, "I was framed..."

"Okay, then tell me how you've been framed," he said, "maybe I can even do something about it."

"With all respect, Sir," she replied. "You don't know me and you can't judge what I did or did not," she replied. "You've done very much for me and I'm indebted to you, but I don't want to draw you into something you can hardly be interested in."

"What do you know about my interests?" He asked her. The up to now conciliant voice had suddenly become sharp and invidiously direct.

"Well..." She had wanted to give a sharp reply, but the way he looked at her let her change her mind. "I am sorry, Sir," I did not want to be cheeky."

"Excuse accepted," he said and his voice was warm and pleasant again. "If you leave and walk down the trail to Dorchester they'll catch you within an hour, because that's the main traffic junction here and the most likely place for a fugitive to go. Shall I tell you more?" He asked seriously and she nodded.

"Since you're a fugitive, it's likely that in case you're caught, they won't sent you back to the institute, but to Granville. That's the next woman prison here and presumably much less pleasant than the institute and surely much harder to escape from. Just in case you're interested in my opinion I can tell you how I see your sit-

uation and what I would do if I were you as I suggested already at a cup of tea.”

“Thank’s for the invitation, Sir.” She finally gave in and he advised her a guest room in the estate, that provided everything a pretentious guest could wish for.

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Although she was not able to remove her blouse or the *handcuffs*, she was able to refresh herself and when he personally knocked at her door after a suitable time, she felt better than she had since she had been sent to the penitentiary, although she still wore the *handcuffs* that had been applied to her in the latter.

“You look beautiful,” he said. It was intended as a compliment.

“Thank you, Sir,” she replied dutifully and he led her to a dining room of huge proportions and exquisite accommodation. Two covers adorned the table and invisible helpers – she had not seen anyone except him yet – had provided not only two cups of tea but biscuits and a small buttercake. He lifted her chair to allow her to sit down with grace and offered her what was on the table. She thanked him in a civilized manner. In this surrounding her upper class education paid off.

“Let’s come to the point, Miss Stanton,” he said and fixed his eyes on her, while he raised a steaming cup of tea. “Here’s what I think about you, interrupt and correct me, if I’m wrong. You don’t have to, but it would be nice, will you?” She nodded and nipped on her cup too. The tea was excellent.

“Good,” he began. “You’ve been convicted the first time for a minor crime, and sentenced to at least one at most three years. That’s a fact. The institute doesn’t take other cases. Why have you been there?”

“I was sentenced to one and a half year, for credit fraud, which I did not commit,” she made his assumptions precise.

“When exactly?” He asked.

“Two weeks and two days ago,” she said.

“I am impressed,” he said, “according to the grace you move in those *handcuffs*, I would have estimated that you had at least two weeks of practice in dealing with them.” She blushed.

“I received them after two days, Sir” she said, “I had a fight with another inmate who wanted to blackmail me.”

“And you won that fight, because you’ve some martial arts experience,” he stated.

“Yes,” she said, “how do you know?”

“It’s the way you move, when you think you’re in danger,” he explained, “keeping the balance point low, always assuming a stable position, you know,” he revealed some unexpected knowledge.

“You are an expert?” He did not answer her question.

“There was an extraordinary opportunity and you used it to escape, although you did not have a plan what to do afterwards,” he asserted.

“That’s only a guess, Sir, I assume?” She said acidly.

“No, it’s a conclusion,” he corrected her, “first, you’re still wearing those *cuffs* which is very inconvenient and treacherous for a flight and you don’t know anything about them.”

“How does, Mr. Holmes come to the latter conclusion,” she asked with mock sarcasm.

“Because you’ve tried to open them with a wire or a hairpin these scratches next to the locks are a clear sign of such an unprofessional attempt.” She looked at the locks and he was right. There were scratches she had caused by her unsuccessful attempts to open them.

“You’ve sharp eyes, Sir,” she admitted, “but it is well known that people with fingers admittedly more deft than mine can open *handcuffs* with a hairpin.”

“Cheap *handcuffs* like the ones that are used by the police can be opened within seconds by an experienced escape artist,” he explained, “but not Chubb Escort *cuffs*. Do you know what you’re wearing?” She shook her head.

“Those are the most inescapable and secure *handcuffs* I know of, approximately 300 £a pair, if you want to buy them, completely hardened and with locks no escape artist has ever picked,” he said, “some claim they’ve done so, but I doubt that those were unmanipulated ones. What should I think of someone who attacks those *cuffs* with a hairpin?”

“That she does not know anything about them,” she said defeated by his reasoning.

“Right after you escaped, you ex-

changed your skirt and shoe’s with the jeans and sportshoes you’re wearing now,” he continued. “Together with the blouse of your school-uniform that’s hardly an improvement.”

“I can move much faster, than with those high-heeled obscenities I was forced to wear before,” she objected.

“A professional criminal would have tried to acquire a tool to get rid of her *handcuffs* or would have waited to escape without them,” he stated, “because they’re the main obstruction to a successful escape.” He definitely had a point.

“Could you do something against them, Sir?” She asked and extended her joined wrists.

“Sure,” he said, “but I won’t do it, as long as you cannot convince me, that you deserve it.”

“But you’ve hidden me from the police. You must have a tool box or something to cut them off. PLEASE, SIR!” She tried her small children’s voice, but he was not impressed.

“Let’s see what we know about you,” he said, “You’re not a professional criminal...”

“With all respect, Sir,” she interrupted him, “I’ve to insist that I AM NOT A CRIMINAL. I’ve NEVER violated the law! I was framed...”

“Can you proof that?” he cut her speech. The question was sharp and direct and it was mean. She shook her head.

“You’ve an upperclass education, Cambridge I guess,” he continued conversationally.

"I know that I've picked up some gestures and habits, but Cambridge? You've read something about me." By now she was sure that this man knew more than he had told her and was playing a game with her.

"No, Miss Stanton," he replied, "I don't want to offend you, but you don't belong to the people I read dossiers about."

"Look, a clever guy can guess that I've enjoyed a university education as you did, but not even Conan Doyle could conclude, that it was Cambridge. Either you've seen me there or you've read something about me. Maybe that I was number three in my class in the national Karate championship last year?"

"No, I did not know that," he said, "and you're right, it's easy to see if someone's enjoyed a university education – in my case it was Harvard," he revealed something about himself, "but subtle details in your pronunciation reveal, that you've been in Cambridge."

"I don't believe you," she said, "or is there a metallic component in my voice that tells you, I've attended two lectures delivered by Steven Hawking?"

"Now you surprise me, Miss Stanton," he said, "I would have guessed, that you've received a degree in economics. Physics is more international. These guys don't talk like you."

"I've a master in economics," she said, "but physics was my true passion." He gave her a look, she could not interpret. Among other things it expressed sym-

thy.

"My passion was mathematics," he admitted, "Harvard has excellent mathematicians and I spent more time with them than with those boring economists."

"But you studied economics, too," she guessed.

"My parents insisted on it," he said, "but I got a master in mathematics, too, ranking first in my class, and that, Miss Stanton, is something I'm still proud of. My rates in economics were only slightly above average." She looked at him with other eyes.

"I could not finish my master in physics," she said, "my father died two years ago, unexpectedly from a heart attack. He expected me to become his successor." There was a single tear in her eye. Sometimes she could not hold it, when she thought about him.

"And you loved him," he stated the obvious.

"As much as a good daughter can love her daddy," she said, "My mother died at my birth and he more or less educated me on his own. He was a good father, his loss was – awful." Now she couldn't hold back the tears that ran over her face.

"Excuse me," she wiped them away with a handkerchief and he nodded understandingly.

"He ran a company?" He asked after she'd regained her composure.

"BATWC, the British Advanced Tactical Weapons Company, he was the majority shareholder and CEO," she said.

"So you're indeed Harold Stanton's

daughter,” he said, “Morgan enterprises, a company controlled by my family has tried to buy your father’s company a few years ago, but he rejected our offer.”

“I know,” she said, “well, I didn’t know that Morgan Enterprises is controlled by your family but I know that they offered him to buy the company.”

“That’s not widely known,” he said referring to his families ties, “economical connections are complicated networks you should have learned in Cambridge.”

“But in case you want to take the opportunity to blackmail me into selling the company, I should inform you, that I won’t have to say anything in this matter before I’m twenty-five and that my sentence will presumably prevent that I’ll have to say something in these matters anyway.”

“Miss Stanton,” he said sharply, “that is an infamous allegation and I should throw you out immediately. If I don’t do it, it’s just because I think you are emotionally distorted and don’t know what you’re saying.”

“I know very well, what I’m saying,” she replied but her voice was low.

“When you ran into me, I saw a desperate girl with big innocent eyes I had never seen before, that was in more trouble that she could handle. If that impression was wrong, my actions may have been silly,” he said firmly, “in that case you may leave and I promise not to call the police. I wish you a nice day, Miss Stanton.”

“No, Sir, your Lordship, you are Lord

Dogherty aren’t you?” He nodded.

“I am thankful for what you did for me, and it was not my intention to insult you. I apologise for what I said. I am just what you believed me to be, a fugitive without hope. It is your right and presumably an imperative of reason to mistrust me, but all I can say is that I’m truly innocent. I REALLY don’t deserve to wear those,” she said and held her joined wrist up and he smiled.

“Well, if we apply Occam’s razor everything else doesn’t make sense,” he said.

“You believe me?” She asked with hope in her voice.

“Not yet, Miss Stanton,” he replied, I only said, that your story as weird as it might look at the first sight, is the most likely one to be true,” he replied, “but I have not collected all facts yet.”

“What do you want to know, Sir?” She asked.

“You’ve been convicted for credit fraud, Miss Stanton,” he asked, “may I learn some details?”

“There’s not much I can tell you. I had to collect a larger amount of money from one of my father’s private accounts, which ought to be frozen ’till I..., well it was money my father owed some business friends and he had signed the cheques personally in advance to the due date, that was what I thought. He was a very orderly man and used to do these things ad once even if the due date lay two years in the future.”

“So you went to the bank and collected that money? Didn’t they object simply be-

cause your father was dead?" He asked and she shook her head.

"No, it was his money and his signature and it was not the first time, I did it," she said, "I brought the money to Mr. Fitch, my father's long-term private secretary, we knew what to do with it, respectively to whom my father had devoted this money," she said, "I did not keep one penny for myself and I can put my hands into the fire for Mr. Fitch, too. He was my father's best friend and would not betray him – or me."

"And what was wrong with it?" He asked.

"It was not my father's signature, although it looked like it," she said, "after an anonymous complaint it was checked and it turned out that the signature was definitely written after his death."

"But you couldn't know that," he remarked, "if you handed the money to Mr. Fitch and he did whatever he should do with it, he could testify that you acted *bona fide*."

"Mr. Fitch was retired in the meantime and he's in South America now," she said.

"That's a favorite place for persons who took money they did not own," he remarked.

"Not, Mr. Fitch," Harriett Stanton insisted, "his daughter is married in South America and..."

"So there was nobody to testify, that you did not keep the money and they blamed the false signature on you." She nodded. "May I know the amount?"

"Almost fifty-thousand pounds," she said.

"That's enough to be sentenced, but not enough to spend the rest of your life with," he said.

"Precisely," Harriett said, "and I was arrested, right after I received my master in economics. I was *handcuffed* like this," she raised her joined hands for emphasize, "in front of my friends, can you imagine the humiliation?"

"I can," he said dryly, "however in Great Britain it is not customary to put a woman in *handcuffs*. We are not in the states."

"I think, they did it because of my martial arts skills," she said, "they did it all the times, when I was out of my cell."

"And how did they know about that?" He asked. "Did you have a police record?"

"No, of course not! I performed as the third in the last national champion ship," she said, "someone ought to have read it in a newspaper."

"Possible but not probable," he objected, "it's much more likely that the person who has framed you also gave that advise."

"However, I was convicted without proof on pure evidence. My stepmother, who does not like me very much in general, handled everything and could achieve that I was sent to your father's institute – it is your father's institute? – instead to a common prison for women." She told him.

"It was my grand-grandfather, who founded the institute," he replied, "but

my family still devotes some money to it.”

“It’s the only prison I know where they do this to its prisoners,” she said and gave her *bracelets* a mocking tug in order to show him how helpless they made her.

“As far as I know the institute does not even put its prisoners into cells except for the night and they usually run freely all over the place,” he answered, “you must have earned yourself some punishment.”

“Well, there was another inmate,” she said, “she’s a very big girl. On my second day she threatened me with physical force and wanted to blackmail me into spending her some money for drugs or whatever.”

“And you did not want to give her what she requested?” He asked.

“I kicked her feet away under her and knocked her out, when she attacked me,” she said. “No other inmate admitted, that she’d seen the fight, although several others were around and that’s why I got those” – she moved her hands a little bit to make the connecting *chain* jingle – “while she went away for free. I was the only one who had to wear *handcuffs* during that time.”

“How did you escape?” He asked.

“Last nights thunderstorm had caused a minor flooding and the security system failed,” she said, “I used the opportunity to climb over the wall.”

“The walls are four yards high,” he said, “how did you do it?”

“The wall to the main street is only three yards – no problem for a trained person,” she told him, “it was very hot

about noon and there was only an old woman on the street. She did not recognize my jump downwards.”

“And you swear that all this is the truth and nothing but the truth?” He asked portentously.

“I do, Sir,” she asserted him. “That’s precisely what has happened.”

“Good,” he said, “I am willing to help you, under one condition.”

“What is it?” She asked.

“You call me Harry and I call you Harriett,” he said.

“But your lordship, Sir, I can’t...” She did not really know what to say.

“Say Harry,” he said.

“Okay, Harry,” she said slowly.

“Fine, actually my forename is Harold-Dean, with a hyphen,” he said, “That’s where I sit on when I get tired.” The latter remark made her smile.

“Winchester 73,” she said, “High-Spade, Frankie Wilson, the guy who rode with Jimmy Steward.”

“You like that film?” He asked.

“Yes, S..., Harry.”

“Me too,” he said, “but Harry is shorter and more practical.” He promised her to do everything in his power to clear her name from the accusations and she agreed to stay as long as she was on the wanted list.

“You should order a set of clothes to your liking on my account from the net,” he said, “it would not be wise to use yours. And I don’t think that you would like to run around in stolen clothes.”

She shook her head, “it would be nice,

if you could find someone to take them back, I can tell you where I acquired them.”

“That will be done,” he said.

“You should know that I will pay you these clothes I am going to order, as soon as I’ve access to my own account,” she continued.

“We’ll discuss that later,” he said, “order what you consider necessary or better what you like and don’t look at the price-tag.”

“What about those,” she said and raised her *handcuffs*.

“I like them where they are,” he said.

“You don’t trust me,” she accused him, “as long as I am wearing those, I can’t leave the house.”

“No,” he said, “they give you a magic touch, something special, which is difficult to explain.”

“You mean this ‘damsel in distress’ thing?” She asked.

“Precisely,” he said, “you are a beautiful ‘demoiselle en détresse’.”

“But I cannot change my clothes,” she argued.

“Get yourself tank tops, pinafore dresses, bra’s that close to the front,” he replied, “there’s enough stuff a woman can wear that doesn’t interfere with them.”

“You want me to wear them night and day?” she asked.

“Well we don’t have a key, do we?” He replied. “What did you do at the institute?”

“I’ve worn them night and day for two weeks,” she admitted, “they were not

taken off, except for changing dresses and taking a shower.”

“So what’s the problem?” He asked. “I guess you can take a shower without taking them off.”

“You don’t want to take advantage of me?” She asked.

“Only a little bit,” he admitted, “I am a gentleman after all. But the temptation to have a ‘damsel in distress’ around me for the next days is simply too great.”

“I promise to be a good damsel,” she replied sheepishly. Harriett Stanton was not happy about the prospect of wearing the unwanted *bracelets* for another few days, but there was nothing she could do against it.

She had wrought her head and tried everything she could think of to get rid of them, when she received them at the institute. Up to now, those little devils defeated every attempt to get them off easily and it was not to be expected that the *chain* connecting them would fail now. Nevertheless she pulled on them, just to convince herself that she had done everything.

Harriett used the generous offer of her host modestly. A new pair of jeans, short socks, a bra that closed to the front and a white tank top would do. The only luxury she allowed herself was to order them by express mail. Since everything was in store she received the ordered items right before lunch-time, which allowed her to switch into them before a servant called her for dinner.

The man was in his fifties, the first

person from the household she saw except for the master of the house himself. He could not overlook the fact, that she wore *handcuffs* but he did not even raise an eyebrow. Presumably he would not even have done so if she were completely naked. Lord Dogherty awaited her and the servant left without a word.

"Simply, but tasteful," he commented on her outfit. He lifted her stool personally to allow her to take the seat next to him.

"Thanks," she said, "if you would not insist on those" – she raised her joined hands in a gesture of protest – "I could do that myself."

"Do you want to talk about your conviction or about your *bracelets*?" He asked.

"About my conviction," she said.

"You're a rich person, Harriett," he said. "Morgan Enterprises wanted to pay your father, 5.5 Mill. £and they considered it a fair price. Did you know that?" She shook her head.

"That's much more than I expected. However I don't own anything 'till I'm twenty-five," she said, "and since I was convicted, I'll only get a small compensation."

"And that's a strong motive to frame you," he said, "who will profit from this?"

"My stepmother," she said, "my father was always concerned about the future of his company in particular the men and women working for him. Therefore he wrote into his last will, that whoever becomes CEO will have to be free of convictions etc. and that only the CEO will

inherit his shares in faithful trust to lead the company in his sense."

"And you would do this?" He asked.

"OF COURSE," she exclaimed. Unwanted tears ran over her face. "It was my father's last will and I owe him everything I am. How could I refuse this. I'm sorry" He reached her a clean handkerchief.

"You did not overcome your father's death?" It was not really a question but she shook her head and wiped the tears away.

"That means, that you would not have taken much money out of the company over the next years," he continued.

"Of course not," she said, "I'm promised to continue my fathers work not to dissolve it."

"And your stepmother?" He asked.

"She's not a business woman," she said, "she'll have to hire someone. But you're on the wrong track. Although my relationship to her is not a very tight one, she would not do something like that to me. She's a honest person. My father would not have married her if..."

"She's a daughter from a former marriage," he interrupted her, "what about her?"

"You've spent the whole afternoon to dwell in my case?" She countered his question.

"I had nothing else to do," he replied, "and I promised to help you. So what's about her daughter?"

"Melinda?" She questioned. "I hardly know her. She was on the marriage, but we have not even talked to each other.

She was married with seventeen, involved in some criminal activities – I think she stole something – and...”

“... has spend half a year in jail,” he finished her sentence. “Did you know that her former husband was in jail too?” She shook her head.

“My stepmother was in contact with her, but my father refused to meet her,” she said, “as did I.”

“Would you like to know what he was committed of?” She shook her head.

“No,” she replied, “I never met this guy; I even don’t know his name.”

“But you should,” he said, “the most important facts are sometimes hidden behind minor details. He was comitted for credit fraud. I found it in an internet news-archive.”

“You mean, he and Melinda’ve framed me?” Harriett asked. She was suddenly very excited.

“It’s far too early too early to assume this,” he said, “but she’s a motive and most likely through her ex-husband access to the knowledge how to do this. What we still don’t know on the basis of this hypothesis is, how Mr. Fitch and your stepmother fit into the picture.”

Dinner was served by the servant that had fetched her from the guest room. It was more American than British style, but excellent.

He offered to assist her in cutting the meat but Harriott insisted that she had done this at the Institute and she did it with skill and patience.

“You don’t like to rely on someone

else,” he remarked.

“If you would like to help me in getting those off, I would accept your assitance,” she replied, referring to ‘her’ *bracelets*, but he did not answer.

The whine which was served was sweat and heavy, an old Madeira she guessed. It was tempting to drink more than what would do her good, but Harriett resisted the temptation.

Her host refused to talk about her case anymore with the advise that they needed more facts, which should be acquired tomorrow. Instead he directed the talk to Harriett’s secret love, physics.

He revealed a knowledge she had not expected and very soon they were in a discussion about integrability in field theories, renormalization, symmetry groups and deeper aspects of perturbation theory, the Higgs Field, why it was necessary or not and many other topics.

His viewpoint was that of a mathematician. He asked questions she could hardly answer and quickly pointed out weak spots in her arguments, but it was not like an examination. He enjoyed it as much as she did. It was well after midnight, when he finally suggested to go to bed.

“Did I pass the test?” She asked mockingly.

“With a ‘A+’,” he replied and gave her a look that touched her somewhere where she did not want to be touched right now, yet a certain impact could not be denied.

She dreamed stupid things that night: She was Andromeda *chained* to a rock and

the seamonster Cetus was about to fetch her, when Perseus appeared and raised the Medusa head. But then something went wrong and she turned to stone.

She wanted to scream but her throat, which had turned to stone already could not form a noise anymore and suddenly she awoke. Slowly she recovered from the shock.

It was early, 6.30 in the morning. She lay alone in a large and soft but foreign bed, covered by clean sheets wearing an expensive nightgown and her faithful *bracelets*. Her wrists hurt, she must have struggled violently while she was sleeping. She would have given anything for a shoulder to lean on and strong arms to protect her. But no one was there to hold her.

Breakfast was served at 7.30. Her escape had made it into the local papers, but without pictures or mentioning any details. There was the usual discussion about security in prisons but no one was really interested in a woman committed for credit fraud.

"You made it on the local police homepage," he greeted her, "but the photo is not very good."

"Did the mention those?" She asked and raised her joined hands.

"No, I think it's not even known," he said. He looked into her eyes and changed the topic. "We may have some hope to track down Mr. Fitch. He might be in Sao Paulo." This took her by surprise.

"How did you do this?" She asked, "the police was not able to locate him for my

trial."

"We have offices in Sao Paulo and for completeness also in Buenos Aires, in Montevideo in Santiago in Caracas, in Lima and in Bogota" he explained, "All of them were still working when we went to bed yesterday. I put the facts I knew about him in one email, directed it to all of them and advised them to hire private investigators in order to find him and to keep me on track. One of them claims to've found a trace, that's all." She was truly impressed.

"Is there something you can't do?" She asked. He did not give her an answer.

"You said, you've collected several cheques," he said, "did they all have forged signatures?"

"No, just two of them," she said, "the ones with the highest amounts. What is this important for?"

"I don't know," he said. "Every detail might be important."

"You like to play, Sherlock Holmes?" She asked.

"Why not Auguste Dupin?" He answered her question with another, "it was Poe, who invented the smart detective with the stupid assistant."

"I did not consider Watson stupid," she replied, "maybe Conan Doyle made him a little bit clumsy in order to glorify Sherlock a little bit more."

"Do you want to be my Dr. Watson?" He asked.

"Why not," she said, "I think I would not be able to clarify a petty theft. What does the great Mr. Holmes want to do

next?"

"We'll visit your stepmother," he said, "we've to find out, if she's involved or not."

"WE?" She asked, "what about these?" She raised her joined hands.

"Cover them with a purse or a towel," he said.

"Wouldn't it be easier to cut them off?" She asked, "it would be much help, if you could at least cut the connecting *chain*."

"No," he said.

"And why?" she asked, "I feel like a prisoner with those *bracelets*."

"They make you... unique," he said, "that's the right word."

"Is it necessary that I'm UNIQUE?" She asked.

"It's a essential necessities," he answered seriously. She gave him a mischievous look, but accepted it.

○●○

Half an hour later she sat on the front seat of a Mercedes offroader, while he drove them to her hometown. He had not asked, where her stepmother lived, but thanks to the internet finding out was not a big deal. He surprised her however when he halted his car right in front of the local police-station. She panicked.

"Are you crazy?" she fidgetted with 'her' *handcuffs*. "This is the police station and..."

"I've to talk to the guy who led the investigations before we talk to your stepmother," he said, "I've some question only he can answer."

"But I'm a FUGITIVE and I'm HAND-CUFFED," she exclaimed and you're parking right in front of the police station.

"I suggest you stay in the car," he said, "it will take at most ten minutes. No one will recognize you. You haven't robbed the Bank of England."

"And what about the *handcuffs*?" She asked.

"Nobody will notice, the car's too high," he replied, "Cover them with that towel it makes you feel better." She wanted to say more but he simply left the car and she was alone. Following him was not an option not here and not as long as she wore those cursed *bracelets* she could not take off.

Harriett was more than upset when he came back. It had been hell to sit in that car right in front of the police headquarter. At least a dozen officers had passed her car and in particular male ones took a closer look at the good-looking woman in the car ostentatively staring into another direction not knowing that she was *handcuffed* under the blanket that covered her hands. In Harriett's opinion it was pure luck that no one realized that she was a fugitive.

"What to hell did you think, to let me here like this," she greeted him, when he came back.

"You did not enjoy the break," he asked innocently.

"Hell, no. What if I would have been recognized?" She asked.

"In my car?" He asked back. "Impossible, Lord Dogherty does not take a ride

with a fugitive at his side.”

“But I’m a fugitive, Harry,” she exclaimed, “and I’m still *handcuffed*. This is not a game.”

“Say it again, Harriett” he said.

“What?” she asked bewildered.

“You called me by my forename,” he said, “you never did it before.”

“Excuse me, Sir,” she stammered.

“There’s no way back, Harriett,” he said and started the engine. “However when we meet your stepmother, you should call me simply Mr. Dogherty or ‘sir’, never ‘Harry’ or ‘Lord Dogherty’. I’ve my reasons, remember that.” Her wrath had faded away she knew him by now well enough that there was an idea behind that.

“Did you find something out at the police station?” She asked.

“Not much,” he replied, “only that the investigation have been carried out very sluttly. They don’t know that your stepmother has a daughter with a criminal record and they don’t really care that you’re on the run – so there was no reason to fear that you might be recognized at all. The organization and training of the police in this country has declined to an unacceptable level.”

Harriett’s stepmother lived in an from the outside average house at the countryside, where Hariett was born and had spend her childhood. She was about to leave the house and on her way to the garage, when Lord Dogherty parked his car in the gateway.

“Hello, Mrs. Stanton?” he intercepted

her stepmother and shook her hand.

“Hello, Mr....?”

“Dogherty, Harry Dogherty, Mam,” he surrounded the car and opened Harriet’s door. “I am carrying out an investigation concerning your stepdaughter’s case.” Hariett left the car, ‘her’ *handcuffs* hidden under the blanket.

“Hi Ellen,” she greeted her stepmother.

“Hariett, I thought you were in that...”

“Prison. Yes I...”

“Mrs. Stanton,” Lord Dogherty interrupted her. “Your stepdaughter is still under detention. But the clearing of some questions require her presence. Can we continue this talk inside the house.”

“I wanted to leave right now,” she said.

“I am sorry, Mrs. Stanton,” he replied, “but this matter bears no delay.” Both women looked at him questioning but responded to the request. Ellen Stanton led them to her living room. The furniture had not changed since her fathers death.

“Miss Stanton is still under arrest,” he said and removed the towel, covering Harriett’s hands, who blushed immediately. “But some new facts have occurred. The signature on the cheques are doubtlessly forged, but there are reasons to believe that it may not have been Miss Stanton, who did it.”

“Oh, Harriett, that are good news,” Mrs. Stanton said and her face showed true (or pretended?) sympathy for her stepdaughter. “I never believed, that you could do something like this. But the facts were undeniable. If this nice policeman

finds out something different I'll..."

"Mrs. Stanton," he interrupted her, "I am just in the phase of collecting facts. Up to now we have nothing that points unambiguously into this or another direction."

"Of course, Sir," she replied, "but the prospect, that Harriett might be innocent, is a great one for me and my deceased husband." If she was acting she was good in it.

"Okay, Mrs. Stanton," he said, "you might help us to find out what really happened by answering a view questions."

"Of course, Sir," she said, "but may I offer you a cup of tea."

"Well that's not against the regulations," he said, "thanks for the offer." She disappeared in the kitchen.

"What are you doing?" She whispered, "you are not a policeman."

"No," he replied calmly, "and I have not said to be one."

"But you pretended to be one," she exclaimed, "and since I'm *handcuffed* she must think you're one."

"That's not completely unintended," he said, "do you know unother way to ask the questions we have to ask."

"But it's not..." she swallowed what she wanted to say when her stepmother returned with a steaming pot of tea."

"With a drop of milk, Harriott?" She asked and reached her a cup of tea.

"As always, thanks Ellen?" She could not overlook that Harriett had to handle the cup awkwardly with both hands.

"Couldn't you release Harriet from

these awful *fetters*, Sir," at least for our conversation, "I can guarantee, that she will not do something stupid, can I Harriett." Harriett nodded.

"Sorry, Madam," Lord Dogherty replied, "but that's against regulations."

"Nevertheless I have to protest against this treatment of my stepdaughter," Mrs. Stanton insisted.

"Thanks, Ellen," Harriett intervened, "but I can handle it. These *bracelets* are a small price to pay if my name can be cleared from the allegations."

"Of course," Mrs. Stanton said, "it's just so..." she searched for the right word, "uncivilized that you are forced to wear these beastly things."

"Nevertheless, Mrs. Stanton," Lord Dogherty caught her attention. "The first thing I want to know is, if you received the five cheques from Mr. Finch in one letter or were there maybe only three?"

"Do you want to say, that I..."

"No, Mrs. Stanton you are not in the focus of our investigations," he interrupted her. "But when we reinvestigated the case it was noted, that there were two days between the receipt of the letter and the time you handled them to Harriett. Where did you keep them in between?"

"Well, they lay on my writing desk. It was over the weekend I gave them to Harriett on the next working day. An then I got a phone call that she was..."

"I know these facts, Mrs. Stanton," he interrupted her. "What I want to know is: Are you sure, if it were three or five cheques, when you received them from

Mr. Fitch?”

“I am not shure,” she said, “it was a whole bunch of papers. I opened it and put it on the desk in order to do the work on monday. Melinda wanted to join me on a shopping tour and she was waiting for me.”

“Melinda is your daughter, I assume,” he said casually.

“Yes, but she was with me. She has not even set her food in this house over the weekend.” Now Ellen Stanton was alerted.

“Mrs. Stanton,” your daughter is also not in the focus of our investigations, too,” he declared, “we are just collecting facts.”

“May I know, which new findings have triggered your interest in this case?” She asked.

“No,” he said, “that’s secret. The only thing I can tell you that it is concerned with the recipients of those cheques. Mrs. Stanton you’ve been a great help. Thanks for the tea.” He turned to Harriett.

“Miss Stanton,” he said, “I have to insist that you accompany me.” Without a word Harriett raised herself. He reached her the discarded towel and they left.

“If she tell’s the truth, Melinda can’t have done it.” Harriett said, once they were back in the car. “Do you believe her?”

“I think, that she’s told us the truth,” he said, “but also that she is at least suspicious that we suspect Melinda and that we won’t get anything more out of her. Your stepmother is not stupid.” The mo-

bil rang and he steared his car to the side, before he answered the phone.

“Ah, Mr. Fitch, I am Lord Dogherty,” he said.

“No, Mr. Fitch, there’s no problem with BATWC,” he said, “it’s concerns a confident information.” He listened.

“Mr. Fitch, it’s perfectly okay, that you treat everything concerning BATWC confidential, but Miss Harriett Stanton is sitting next to me and she can tell you that the information we want is very important for her own future and that of BATWC.” He reached Harriett his iPhone and she overtook.

“Hello Mr. Fitch,” Harriett said, “this is Harriett Stanton.” He said something and Harriett continued. “To tell the truth Mr. Fitch, it concerns me. I am in big trouble with the law, because of the last of my fathers cheques you advised Ellen and me to take care of.” Again he said something.

“I know, that my father did not do something illegal. Nevertheless I would be indebted if you could answer Lord Dogherty a few question as if I would answer them.” Then she added, “thanks Mr. Fitch,” and reached the phone back to Dogherty.

“Hello Mr. Fitch,” he said, “what I primarily want know is, how many cheques did you send to Mrs. Ellen Stanton in this last batch?”

“Five!” He said. “And all of them have been signed by the late Mr. Stanton himself.” He listened.

“No, Mr. Fitch,” he said, “I believe you,

I don't want to know any details. Miss Stanton and I are indebted to you. Good-bye"

"And...?" She asked.

"It's like we thought," he said, "Mr. Fitch claims that he has sent your stepmother five cheques, signed by your late father. She claims she had opened the letter and put it on a desk. What we definitely know is that afterwards you took three to the bank, two of which were forged."

"I did not forge these cheques," Harriett insisted.

"You are not capable to do this," he confirmed, "but I also think that your stepmother did not do it although she might suspect that her daughter did it and will not testify against her or even lie on her behalf."

"But if Melinda did not enter the house over that weekend," Harriett argued, "she cannot have done it. And how should she have known about it in the first place?"

"Women are very talkative," he said, "present persons excluded, in particular mothers and daughters tell each other a lot of things."

"Nevertheless you cannot proof that Melinda knew anything about those buisness things at all," she argued, "which is essential, if it was her who framed me."

"No, but you agree, that your stepmother suspected that we suspect Melinda," he said, "if she were sure, that Melinda has not done it, simply because she did not know anything, your step-

mother would not have reacted that way."

"Right," she conceded, "let's assume that Melinda knew everything, because Ellen told her, what she needed to know. Then she came up with the plan to frame me in order to let Ellen overtake the company. The only way she could benefit from it, was when Ellen dies and she inherits from her. Do you really think she plans to kill Ellen in the near future?" He shook his head.

"No," he said, "the company's value is 5.5 million £. About one third of it may be raised without closing it's doors. Ellen does not need 1.8 million £, but I'm sure that Melinda and whoever's in the game know what to do with it."

"You think, Melinda or her ex-husband burgled my stepmother's home and replaced the forged, cheques?" She asked.

"No," he replied, "neither Melinda nor her ex-husband have the knowhow to burgle a home with a security system and your parent's home has one, as I noticed."

"So my stepmother lied," she said, "Melinda accompanied her and did it when my mother went to the toilet or something like this."

"Not necessarily," he said, "most people have someone who has a key for their house in case of emergency etc."

"And you think, Melinda has such a key," she concluded, "but neither Ellen nor Melinda will admit this."

"Right," he said, "I think we should prepare our next and maybe crucial draw. Does you stepmother have a mobil

phone?”

“Yes, but she rarely takes it with her,” Harriett said, “she does not like to be available for anytime for everyone.”

“That simplifies our next move,” he said. “Listen carefully and tell me if you agree or if you have a better idea.”

“Go ahead,” she told him.

“Do you know someone your parents know well in the neighbourhood?”

“Mrs. Robinson,” she said, “she’s an old lady. She keeps the post for my parents and vice versa.”

“Does Melinda know her well?”

“Presumably not, why?” She asked.

“Can you fake her voice, so that Melinda might not notice?” He asked.

“What do want?” She asked.

“I want you to tell her in the name of Mrs. Robinson, that her mother does not react to the phone and to the doorbell. If she’s a key, she should drive there and look for her mother.”

“So we will have a proof that she’s a key,” she said. “But she might become suspicious on such a joke and warn her ex-husband or whoever used that key to deposit the forged cheques immediately.”

“Correct,” he said, “her ex-husband works in an office for the Royal Mail. He should be on duty and if she warns him, we could be there and see what he does. At least we can catch him if he tries to destroy evidence or hit the road. I admit the whole plan depends heavily on the plausible but unproven fact that he’s the accomplice we are looking for.”

“And if he isn’t?” She asked.

“It’s your decision,” he said, “your trial was two weeks ago, no one except you was aggrieved. All evidence may be destroyed...”

“... and I’ll get an additional term I’ve spent in a woman’s prison.”

“Well, you could turn yourself in and maybe I can manage, that you can serve your time at the institute. But there they’ll presumably put you in *irons* for the rest of your sentence.”

“I am in *irons*,” she said and raised her *handcuffs*.

“You know what I mean,” he said, “shall we do what I suggested or do you have another idea.”

“I don’t believe that Melinda has another accomplice who is an expert for credit fraud,” she said. “Let’s try your plan.”

“You know, that it still bears a risk,” he said. “Reality is rarely like a Sherlock Holmes movie. All evidence might be destroyed and even if it still exists there’s a good chance we might not find it, even if it is right in front of our noses. Up to now we have only a few arguments – maybe enough for a clever attorney to plead for reasonable doubt in your trial, but still no proof that you haven’t done it.”

“I know that, Harry,” she said and she used his forename consciously, “we shall go through with it. Thanks, for everything you did for me. I’ll never forget it.” She gave him a kiss on the cheek. Not an ardent or violent kiss, just a small kiss to say thanks. “Let’s do it.”

And they did: The phonecall to

Melinda was a full success, she had a spare key and met Ellen who was of course well. She got the news that a policeman with Harriett in *handcuffs* had visited her mother and had nothing better to do then to call her ex-husband who was by now under observation.

Harry who was among the waiting in the buisy postal office noted that the guy talked to his superior. Obviously he wanted to take a break. Harry returned to Harriett, who could not leave the car with her *handcuffs*. Two minutes later the previously identified car of Melinda's ex-husband left off and Harry followed it within a respectful distance.

They almost lost him twice, but finally the ride ended in an allotment garden. Harriett insisted to accompany him despite of 'her' *bracelets*. They looked through the window of the detached house. In addition to the usual garden equipment it contained a small writing desk, which he had opened. It contained a complete couterfeiter equipment and presumably the only peace of evidence that could spare Harriett a further prison term.

Harry did not waist a second he rushed inside. The guy grepped for a gun in an open drawer. Harry's fist met his chin before he was able to use it and the he went down. But there was light in a metal bucket. With no water a hand Harry emptied it and used his shoes and everything incombustable he could find in order to quench the fire.

The guy who was haevily knocked on

but not out used Harry's distraction and crawled out of the door, but Harriett, who could not enter the small detached house due to a lack of space kicked him in the face when he protruded his head to the outside. He was instantly unconscious.

"It was a wise decision to fit you with those *bracelets*," Harry remarked. He had fetched the remains of a letter her father had written, which had been used as a master copy to forge the signature of Harriett's father, which was still visible in the unburned part.

"Do you have something?" She asked.

"Evidence? Yes," he said. "This here is an original writing from your father including his signature. I guess Melinda organized it and if they reinvestigate the forged cheques, I am sure, they will find that they've been produced here."

"So it's over?" She asked relieved.

"If you mean that your name can be cleared from those false allegations, I think the answer is 'yes'," he said, "the rest depends on you."

"What do you mean by 'the rest'?" She was confused, "What are you talking about."

"Do you like me?" He asked and she blushed.

"I owe you my honor," she said, "and..."

"That was not my question," he insisted.

"Well, yes," she said, "you're a friend,... a very good friend." He looked into her eyes.

“Harriett, will you marry me?” Her eyes grew wide. She looked into his face but there was no hint that he was joking.

“You can’t be serious,” she said, “we know each other just for a few days, you are a lord and I’m just...”

“Harriett, I AM SERIOUS,” he said, “I know you well enough to know that you’re the best thing that could happen to me.”

“But I don’t know you, Harry,” she said, “well not well enough to marry you and you don’t know me. Don’t get me wrong: I’m honored that you considered me worth...”

“You need some time to make a decision?” he answered. She blushed but nodded.

“It’s too fast,” she said. “Maybe your parents don’t like me.”

“My granddad did not like my mother either,” he replied. “If Harry Windsor could marry his wife, than I can marry you as well.” She smiled at him.

“You haven’t even kissed me,” she said.

“That problem can be solved immediately,” he replied and kissed her. It was a long and passionate kiss. They secured Melinda’s ex-husband with a bundle of rope conveniently available before Harry called first an attorney and then the police. He told the latter about their findings, requested that the officer who had investigated the case should arrive too and stated that Harriett Stanton, whom he called a good acquaintance had uncovered the plot and requested to be returned to jail on her own in order to face

possible further allegations.

“That’s not correct,” she said after he finished the call, “it was you, who did most of the detective work.”

“My name must not appear in the news,” he replied. “I’ll think about something you can do for me, when everything is over.”

“Except for marrying you?” She asked.

“Except for that,” he replied, “I can be very imaginative.” Harriett did not reply. Frustratedly she fidgeted with ‘her’ *bracelets*.

“Is something wrong?” he asked.

“It’s nothing,” she said.

“REALLY?”

“It’s only that I’m still wearing those,” she said and raised her joined arms. “I know nobody can change this, but nevertheless I feel like a common criminal with them.”

“You’re right,” he replied, “that’s not appropriate for a future Lady Dogherty.” He reached into his pockets and produced a little safety-key. “Give me your hands.”

“YOU HAVE A KEY TO THOSE?” She exclaimed. “Since when?”

“Since this morning,” he admitted, “I sent a servant to the institute and he fetched it for me.” He inserted the key and released her from the big *cuffs*, which he pocketed.

“Lord Dogherty or not,” Harriett said firmly, “hadn’t you done what you did for me, I would slap you in the face right now. How could you dare to keep me in those?”

“Forgive me Harriett,” he said, “but

you were the most wonderful demoiselle en détresse a man can imagine and they were the only guarantee for me that you were still in the car when I came back. Besides without them our visit at your step-mother would have been much less effective." At least latter argument could not be denied.

The police arrested Melinda's ex-husband and Harriett. Since the evidence was obvious, the investigating detective expressed his regret for blaming the fraud on Miss Stanton to Lord Dogherty and Miss Stanton and promised to initiate the necessary steps to clear her name from all allegations immediately. *Hand-cuffs* remained reserved for Melinda's ex-husband.

Melinda herself was arrested three days later at Heathrow where she was about to leave the country. At that time Harriett was formally acquitted of all allegations. Nevertheless she was very nervous. Dressed in her best buisness outfit, she waited for Harry to pick her up.

She did not talk much on the ride, but when he opened her door she said: "Are you shure that this is right? It's still time to call it off."

"Do you love me?" he asked her.

"Yes, but..."

"Darling, if I was ever shure about something, then it's this," he said. The formal engagement of Miss Stanton and Lord Dogherty was announced in the press the next day. Harriett was surprised how many facts of her live some reporters had found out within one day and glued

together in a story, but no newspaper even mentioned the recent wrong allegations against her.

Finally there was some time to relax just the two of them. A candlelight dinner in the dining hall of Harry's estate. It was very much like the first dinner they had shared there, except that all servants were vacated for this evening.

"Are these really necessary, Harry," she asked indicating her her faithful *bracelets*, he had reapplied to her wrists.

"No," he admitted, "they are just the cherry on the cake."

"But why do you make me wear them?" She argued, "Harry, you cannot marry me because of those." He took her in his arms.

"I don't, darling," he said, "the truth is, I liked you from the first moment, when I looked into you eyes. They were sad, but bright and clear. Your mind was sharp and when you told me that you had turned down those stupid economy-lectures in order to listen to Hawking, I knew that you were really special. These *bracelets* just make you irresistable."

"You could have easily cut them off, when you invited me" she said, "they gave me a really hard time."

"When you heard that my family controls Morgan enterprises," he said, "I was the enemy. You would have run away without them."

"No," she said, "I already liked you, the way you tricked those policemen which were after me was very... impressive."

"I couldn't let them take you away," he

smiled, "could I?"

"No, I would be in a woman prison now without hope to clear my name from that horrible accusation," she admitted. "But now I'm a prisoner, too," she said and raised her *cuffed* hands. "Your prisoner."

"No, you're not," he said.

"You don't let me have the keys," she argued.

"And you enjoy that and mess around with me," he said, "and I like the way you do that, aren't we crazy?" She did not answer and kissed him.

THE END