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Brothers

Jeff Dosser

Stacy held her black, stiletto heels in one hand, her new Coach clutch in the other as she weaved across the empty garage towards her beat up Subaru. The parking garage of the Ritz-Carlton was packed this evening before her cousin Jessie's wedding reception. Now, her car stood alone among the echoing aisles.

She paused to dig out her iPhone and checked the time: 3:32 A.M. She'd had a bit too much to drink and remembered going upstairs with her boyfriend, Robert, around midnight. They'd made impromptu plans on spending the night together but when she awoke at three, she remembered her parents were coming to the apartment in the morning. They were taking she and her sister, Liz, to brunch before they left town.

She hadn't told Liz about her plans with Robert. Liz was probably worried. Stacy punched in her sister's number, but the call clicked off without connecting. She gazed, bleary-eyed, at the single flickering bar of reception and jammed the phone back in her clutch. *I'll just call later*, she thought, then focused her sights on her dented, green clunker and set off.

At the car, she steadied herself with a shakey hand and fumbled the keys out of her purse with the other. Before she could open the door, the sound of squealing tires turned her attention. She glanced up in time to be blinded by the brights of car rounding the corner.

She upheld an arm against the brilliance. A car door banging open followed by the rush of fast-moving feet. A form emerged from behind the curtain of light. Bowled her over the hood of her car. In an instant, rough hands yanked back her arms, duct tape spun around her wrists like a spider's biting web. She screamed once and those same heavy hands slammed her head into the hood of the car. Fireworks exploded behind her lids as the tape unwound in hollow, tubular notes and was slapped across her mouth.

She was thrown over broad, powerful shoulders and hefted from her feet. The man's shoulder jammed into her gut, an urge to vomit rising in her gullet. She choked it back a cry. With her mouth taped there was nowhere for the bile to go except back down or into her lungs.

In the briefest instant before being tossed inside, she noted the vehicle was an old cargo van. Its faded blue side door yawning open, a dim interior light dribbling a yellow glow upon the stained green carpet. A shadowy face in the passenger seat flashed past before she was heaved

inside . Stacy landed on her back, driving the breath from her lungs. She gasped as the big man unrolled tape about her ankles and then looped it around her head and over her eyes.

"Oh, yea. That's one tasty piece of ass," a gruff voice mumbled.

The side door slammed shut, and moments later someone dove into the driver's seat and slapped the van in gear. The engine revved and they raced away. The sudden acceleration bounced her against the side wall and onto her face. Her nose buried into the fetid carpet reeking of urine and body odor and fear. For a second time she struggled not to puke.

"You right about that ass," the driver said as the van bounced around a corner. Stacy rolled across the floor and slammed into the opposite wall with a hollow, metallic thud. Her hands were crushed beneath her. The first faint pinpricks of numbness spreading across her fingers.

The driver's voice was high-pitched, soft. Stacy immediately thought of that retired boxer with the girly voice. "Joe, we gunna have us some fun when we get this pretty one back home," the gruff voice chuckled.

Stacy braced her legs against the side walls and her back against the floor as the van bounded through the city. Oh my god. Fear wormed through her like dark, cloying tendrils. If they're calling each other by name they're not just planning on raping me. They're going to kill me.

The van slowed, breaks grinding as they came to a halt. "Get the door," the gruff voice ordered. "Once we're inside we'll get started."

"But I want to take a nap," the high voice complained. "Come on, Dan, I been up all night. It ain't gunna be no fun less I get some sleep."

There was a long pause then, "Okay, but not too long. I can't wait to sink my teeth into this one."

"Sink your teeth," the high-pitched voice giggled. "That's pretty good, Dan, that's pretty good."

The driver's door creaked open followed by the distant rattle of a garage door. The van eased forward and stopped again. Then the same metallic rattle behind her. The driver's side door slammed shut and the passenger side opened. There was a scuffling noise and that door slammed shut as well. The smells inside the van had changed. A dark, musty odor of old grease, dirty rags and age wafted through the van. She was reminded of her grandfather's garage out in the

country. Dry oily rags laying across buckets of rusted nails, warm days pretending inside pa-pa's abandoned pickup with Liz.

The side door of the van jolted open and every nerve tensed. A finger pressed roughly against her ankle. She jumped as if shocked.

Joe, check this bitch out," the gruff voice called. The finger traced a meandering line along her thigh. Toyed at the edge of her panties. As the finger dug beneath the elastic, her bladder released in a spasm of terror. A dark warmth spread beneath her, urine soaked hot and shameful into her skirt and blouse. A burst of husky laughter

The high-pitched voice laughed as well. "She'll be doing a lot more of that pretty soon."

The door skittered on its rollers and clanged shut. Footsteps echoed into the distance and she was left with raw fear cavorting to the hammering of her heart.

Stacy wasn't sure how long she lay there, too afraid to move. The heat of her urine faded, became chill and damp along her back. Her buzz was gone, evaporated with the terror. If she didn't do something, anything, then she was as good as dead. Worse than dead. She didn't know what they planned, but she knew it would be terrible.

Wriggling her wrists ripped away the tiny hairs along her arms in pinpricks of pain but did little else. Then, she remembered her belt. The edges on the decorative links were sharp. She nicked her finger last week and planned to throw the thing away; except it matched her blouse so well. Slowly, she dragged the belt through the loops of her skirt. Found one of the sharp brass studs. Meticulously, she worked the jagged edge through the tape. With painful slowness, the bindings parted and she ripped them away.

Stacy reached up and stripped the tape from her eyes before peering out the windshield. She was inside a cavernous warehouse. A row of windows set high along one wall let in yellowish beams of street lights which shown in elongated rectangles along the trash littered floor. The vast, open space was empty except for a low, boxy structure built along the far wall. At one time it was probably the office. The structure had a single doorway with no door and a large picture window which looked out onto the open concrete floor. From both the doorway and the window there leaked out flickering, blue tinted light. Someone was watching TV.

She didn't dare risk rolling the side door open. She climbed into the passenger seat, ran her shaking fingers along the handle and slowly pulled. The mechanism released an earth shattering 'thunk'. She swung the door away, slid to the cold, hard floor. Stacy scanned the

darkness for a way out. Behind her, was the garage door, but a padlock hung from the edge of the door's rail. The windows were out of reach, and there was no ladder. Reluctantly, her gaze settled on the only other door in the room, the one next to the open office.

Stacy slunk through the shadows towards the flickering light. She shuddered at every rat turd and dead roach crunching beneath her bare feet, yet finally she eased up to the opening. The flicker of the TV was brighter here. She held her breath, listened. Inside, a voice droned mechanically. She eyed the door to freedom and her heart sank. Although it was only a step away, there was a padlock mounted on the handle. Trapped. As Stacy sagged to her knees, her fingers brushed against something on the floor. It was thick, cold and heavy. Her finger's twined about it and she hoisted it into the light. Almost eighteen inches long, in the dim glow it looked to be a wrench, a big one.

She hefted it to her shoulder and stood. Maybe, if she could sneak up on them, she could knock them out. Then, she would have plenty of time to find the keys and escape. She sidled towards the open doorway and froze. The charnel reek of human waste and rot flowing out of that pit almost overpowered her. She steeled herself against the stench and peered in.

The room was small, twenty feet by twenty at best. A wireframe bed was shoved against the far wall, a hulk of a man lay atop it. A holey brown blanket was draped over massive shoulders that rose and sank in slow rhythm. Bolted into the wall beside him were four eye hooks. A chain and manacle hung from each ebony bolt. Stacy studied the chains and quailed when she noted the walls and floors around those hideous restraints were spattered dark red.

Seated halfway across the room and facing the flashing TV a tall man sat in a recliner. A ball cap was tilted back on his head and he leaned heavily on one elbow mumbling to himself. Stacy took a shuddering breath and stepped in. This was her only chance. If she knocked out the man watching TV, the monster on the bed would be a cinch. Just conk him while he slept.

She moved like a wraith across the floor. Raised the wrench. She could hear his rambling mania, but it sounded ... strange ... distant.

"We gunna teach that whore a lesson, oh yes we are," the gruff voice whispered. "We'll cut the evil right out. But not before we have some fun. Right Joe? Oh yea, we'll have some fun first. Then momma will love us. She'll respect her boys cuz we done right. We done the work of the lord; we carved the devil from that whore."

The mumbling continued in a litany of insanity as the wrench arched down, connected with the son of a bitch's temple. His head rocketed from his shoulders and in gape-jawed amazement, Stacy watched it rebounded off the metal wall with a hollow bang and roll to a stop at her feet. It tottered back and forth staring up at her with dark, painted eyes. The gaudy, smiling face of a mannequin.

The monster roused himself, set his feet to the floor. His ham sized hands clinched and unclenched at his knees; his eyes flicked from the bobbing head to her.

Then in a high-pitched voice, he said, "Dan, are you okay? What'd that bitch do?"

He drew his chin back and the voice deepened. "We gunna have to cut this one up slow brother. She's full of evil. She's gunna need somethin' special. Somethin' real special."

The bed springs creaked beneath his bulk as he rose and considered her with squint-eyed malice. The wrench clattered to the ground as Stacy stared into the unforgiving face of madness.

~FIN~