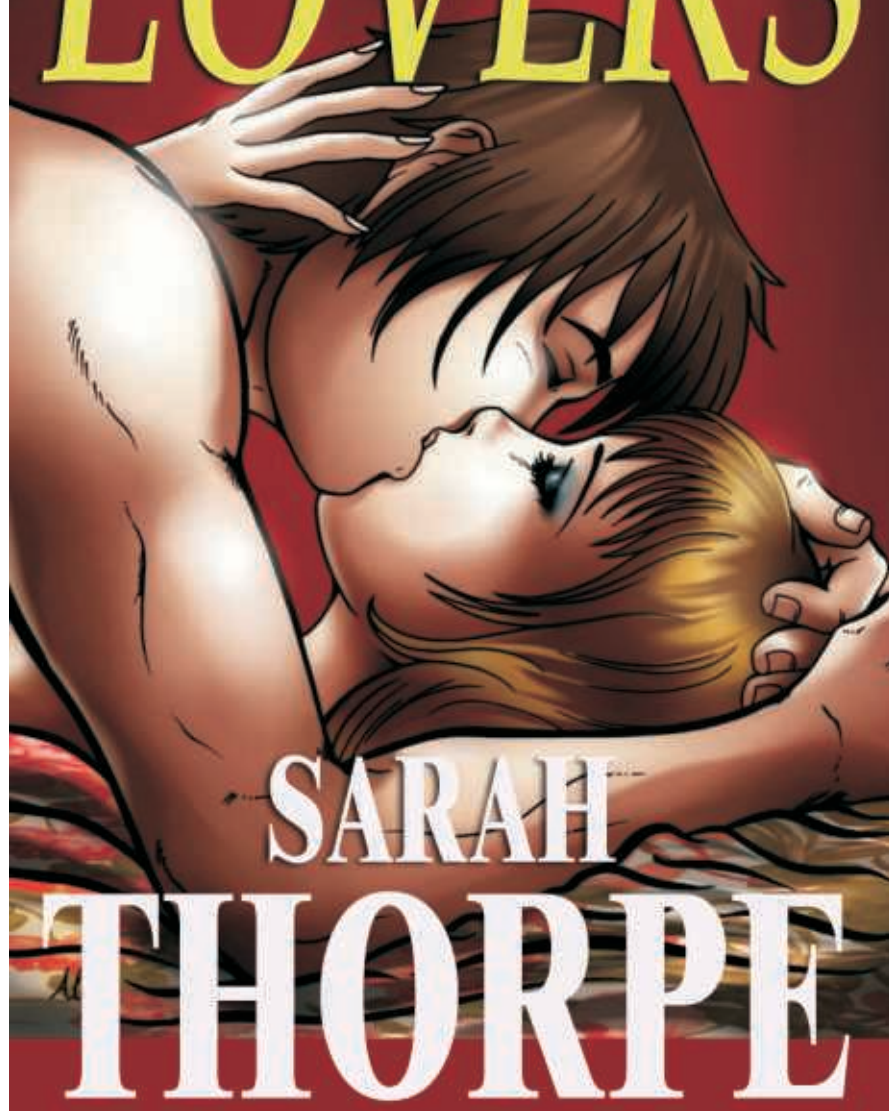


FROM ENEMIES TO LOVERS



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From Enemies to Lovers

by Sarah Thorpe

Chapter 1

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

"I didn't notice, I just left the room when that was done.."

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

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

Chapter 2

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Of course, start playing."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"When will it happen?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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