

### *What Was and what Is?*

I'm cold. The day is coming to an end, and the sun will soon slowly turn the day into night. The fire in the barrel is reaching its limit. My feet are the only part of me that are still warm. I have in some magical way managed to keep my shoes from getting snitched. "At least it's not raining." I said with a sarcastic, hoarse voice and laughed for myself.

"Glen and I are heading to the pub. Wanna join?" Toomy, the guy standing in my door, had black hair, blue eyes and a very sharp nose. He was quite short but he had a grace about him that made him look taller than he really was. And he was my boss.

"Ye sure, why not? I could do the rest when I come home."

I worked as an accountant and considered myself very good at my work. The people from "the upper floors" saw me as a person heading for the top and in some years even might end up as the chief of staff. I started to pack my briefcase and in a minute I was heading down the elevator with Toomy.

"I heard from Glen that Julia and Susan are going to be there too." Toomy said and bumped into me in a teasing way. "I know I missed something last week but from what I heard you had quite a nice time with Susan."

"We had a couple of drinks and then we took a cab. She got off at her place and I at mine. Nothing else." *We got drunk, took a cab together and the driver kicked us out with a relief when we almost had done it in his car.* "She's nice I admit, but I'm not sure. I like to take it slow at first and like to learn to know one another."

Toomy raised his eyebrows and looked at me with a smile. "If you say so." He said, chuckled and walked out of the elevator when the signal came and the doors opened.

The pub was noisy and full of people. It was divided into boxes along the sides, circling the bar in the middle. We made our way thro the crowded room over to the girls in a box at the other side of the room. The girls jumped in to make room for us in the square. I sat down next to Susan and Toomy ended up next to Julia. Glen had managed to sneak in between the girls, in the middle.

"Did ya know that Glen's a geek?" Julia said with a grin on her face. And drew a curl of her blond hair from her face. Her blue dress ended up in stripes and the crooks of the arm and she sat with her right leg over the left so you would notice her black leggings.

"No I'm not!" Glen defended himself. "It's just a trial account okay?" he waved his arms in a way to defend himself from the accusations. "Just 30 days!"

"Can some one fill me in?" I said as I got the beer served by a waiter. "What are you all talking about?"

"Glen here has started to play world of the war or something." Julia said and started to laugh.

"It's World of Warcraft actually." Glen said with a sigh. Julia put a firm grip over Glens shoulder with a grin on her face that was somehow growing even larger for every second.

"Oh Glenny boy, don' get so sad. It's very natural to a 30 year old man to play children's games!" She took a sip of her drink and added. "It's sexy!" She probably regretted the sip of the drink because it looked like she was going to cough it up in her laugh attack.

I had quite a grin on my face to, even thou I didn't think it was as funny which the girls apparently did. That may have had something to do with that the girls had been here awhile and I was guessing that this wasn't their first round. "Really Glen, WoW?" Glen nodded while he took a swig at his drink. "Well from what I've heard, there's quite big game. The number of people playing it is larger than the population in some countries. Around six mill?" "Nine actually." Glen really was in the defence mode right now. "WoW has like a population equal to Sweden, around nine mill'?" Toomy had been quiet until now.

"Ye and we all know that Sweden is nice! They do at least have the Swedish national bikini

team!”

“Yaya Toom. We know that you like 15 year old Swedish blond girls but that's illegal here yeknow.” Julia said with one raised eyebrow and her head with a slight tilt to the right.

“So you mean that you don’ ever look at younger men – or boy for that matter – if they are hot? And besides they are not 15!”

“I didn’t say... That's not the point! Ah I mean that that's a totally different thing because...”

And around that time I shut my ears for that discussion. Even though Julia and Toomy kept on nagging with each other, we other had a good time laughing, over them. I talked with Glen about World of Warcraft and he explained that he was in a team or guild as he said, with only guys at his age. When he had left, early as he always did, I got a nice talk with Susan. We decided to meet in the day on a restaurant near her job.

It was dark now. But I still stand there at the barrel. The fire is still in a dying state. I reach out with my hands at the fire to look at them. The left hands fingers are repetitiously ticking up and down in a random pattern. While the right hand moves in small circles and the point- and long finger rapidly ticks up and down I notice small drops from the sky, slowly increasing. I think fast as I always have done and I find a way to keep the heat coming from the fire. I cannot lose the only source of heat.

Romantic dinner, movie and a walk in the park, the night had been perfect! Susan and I were heading down the street, to our new apartment in the south-east part of the city. We were walking arm-in-arm when she suddenly stops and crouches down with one arm over her stomach and the other one over her mouth. I hurried to crouch down next to her with a worried face.

“What's wrong honey? Did you eat something nasty that are coming up?” I was two red seconds from calling 911 or scream to random people to see if any one of them was a doctor. “D-d-do yo-you...” She had hard to say the words “Do y-you see that guy o-over there?” She said with a strained voice.

“Yes, yes I see him! What about him? Do you know him? Come, we can take another route.”

“Haha! No there's no need for that! Can't you see? He looks just like the dude from the restaurant! Yeknow the one with a really thick moustache and the most enormous beer-stomach I have ever seen?” At that time I realised that she wasn’t feeling sick. She could barely keep all the laughter inside her. She was soon going to burst.

“Relax Suss!” But I was even worse than Susan when I saw the guy and started to laugh. We pulled our self together and forced our feet to move even though we were constantly hit by laugh-attacks on our way down the street. We made our way home and I kicked of my boots and threw my jacket on the floor in the hall. The computer stood in the corner of the living room and the neon lights lit up the room with a smooth blue light.

“Only one raid while I was gone, stupid LexZor got hit by Finger of Death again! Oh god! The Chains of Adoration dropped? That’s just nasty! I could so use it to my Paladin but of course it has to be bound on pickup.” I had joined the same alliance as Glen had and we sometimes also played together. But there were mostly Germans and Canadians.

Susan came from behind, kissed me on the cheek hugged me over the chair. “You are like a child as soon as you come in contact with that computer. If it would be up to me, we would never have bought such a fancy one. And I certainly wish that Glen never told you about that game.” She kissed me on the other cheek. “I think an episode of House is going to start now. I don’ wanna see it alone.” She started to walk over to the sofa and crashed in front of the TV. I joined a few minutes later, just so I could time it to when the commercials started.

The jacket that slowly started to burn in the barrel gave my hands some heat in the rain. *I might look dumb but I got my brains left.* I thought and the idea of burning up my shoes to stay warm also crossed my mind.

“Knock knock. Hey! Keep your head in the game here! And then I don’ mean that game on your screen, I mean the work. I know you got promoted over me and probably have three times my salary but it’s an important deal this. Don’ mess it up.” Toomy winked at med and added “And by the way congrats on your one year anniversary, I hope you have gotten something nice for Susan.”

I had. It was in a small black box in my pocket and I couldn’t remember one time in my whole life that I had ever been that nervous.

I tabbed down the ‘World of Warcraft gear and talent’ site and started working. I had no chance on earth of finishing the work until the deadline that was tomorrow. But it was after all going to be a special night this night. The website was once again on top of the screen.

“I acquired Handgrips of the Foredoomed yesterday. If I just could get my hands on the Chestplate of the Risen Soldier tonight I could...” The work laid untouched in the background.

The fire is dead now. The last bit of coal is as cold as everything else in this world. I can’t seem to understand that part. One part of me sees the cold peaces in the barrel, but the other part sees the fire that is no more. The other part is still in control.

“You mind taking all of that again?” Susan shook her head with closed eyes and looked like she tried to understand the words that had just left my mouth.

“Fired, I got fired.” We were sitting at the kitchen table and eating dinner. “Two days ago. I haven’t had the courage to tell you until now.” None of us had touched the chicken and rise on our plates.

Susan supported her head on her hands held them over her eyes and talked down to the table. “Why?”

“I multiple times failed to finish my work in time.” I said and poked on the chicken with my fork.

She looked up and held her hands just under her nose in a like way that looked like she was praying “But that can’t be true!” She held out her arms in a defending way. “I’ve both seen and heard you work late nights to get the work finished! God knows that you have kept me up long nights. They must have been overworking you!”

“That’s what I said to but they won’t listen!” I hadn’t realised that my glass of red vine was empty until I moved it to my mouth. Susan hadn’t touched her water. *Water?*

“Suss? Why are you drinking water? You love red.”

She didn’t waste any time to try to work around it. “I’m pregnant”

Now it was my tome to look like I had been hit by the lightning. “Say what?”

The food got cold and was untouched on the plate. It was a long night.

The rain is pouring down on my head. The newspapers that are covering my body don’t help to keep the warmth. I don’t just feel a bit chilly now, I’m shivering with cold. I feel tired and decide to find a place to rest for tonight. I remember a more or less sheltered place a way in the alley-way where I knew there was a bunch of papers I could use as a covering.

“Can you just try to pretend to love me and our baby more than that stupid game, at least for a day?!” Susan’s stomach was big as a baby elephant and her temper was like a fully-grown one. “The land lord has been up our ass for two moths rent that we owe him! And we barely have the money for gas to the supermarket, even less for the food!” Tears were falling from

her smooth cheeks and the makeup was forming a small riverbank in her face. "I don't understand how you can keep on playing that crap it's taking all your time, you barely sleep and you sit there all day when you could be out looking for work!"

I took off the headset so that it hung down my neck. "Come on honey that's just the hormones talking. Don't worry, it'll be okay I promise." My eyes flickered between my passion, obsession and addiction, and my pregnant wife. The glances lasted longer on the screen.

"No. No, no, no! I can't have it like this! Can't you see what it has done to you?" She screamed and walked with fast firm steps into the hallway. Suddenly the screen in front of my face had gone black. She had blown the fuse in the fuse-box.

"ARE YOU CRAZY WOMAN!?" I had stood up so fast that the chair burst two meter back and did one flip on the end. "I was in the middle of an instance! You can't just do that! You stupid COW!" I didn't know what I had done until it was already too late. I was standing next to Susan and her cheek was already turning red from the slap. She wasn't crying now. "Suss, I... I'm... I'm sorry! Please forgive me! I don't know what came over me!" I was desperately trying to find a way to undo what I'd just done. My hands were shaking and I tried to brush her hair to somehow find a way around the memory of what had just happened.

Susan's sobbed and dried the tears of her face. She took my hands between hers; her voice was like a summer night, a rose in a sea of nettles, sweet as honey and warm for the soul. At least until I really heard what she had just said. "What?" Tears were falling down my cheek but now my eyes were dry.

"You have a choice. Me and your son or daughter, or the computer and the game." She kissed my hands and added. "I can't have it like this. I'm going to stay at my moms', this ain't working. You know where to find me." Ten minutes later the door closed behind her and I hadn't moved an inch.

One hour later I was back at the computer. Ten days later I had no place to call home.

It doesn't feel so cold anymore. I try to focus my sight to see if the rain has stopped and I see that it is still pouring down like the heaven opened itself over me. I can't figure out why the raindrops are so warm. My breath is getting slower. I wonder if the papers had started to make any difference. Even the warmth is gone. I can't feel anything under my waist, or under my head for that matter.

I'm starting to fall asleep, a deep, dark, dreamless sleep without any return.