

Enough
A missing scene from "Sweet Revenge"
by Brit

I thought somehow that I'd find peace here. I used to. Way back in college—my UCLA years—I'd hop in my beater and drive north to Ventura. The beach there is gorgeous, and typically not as crowded as those closer to the city.

Tonight, though...tonight the peace I so desperately wanted was nowhere to be found. So I kept on walking, the waves lapping at my legs. The drenched cuffs of my pants felt weighty, dragging me even further into the sand. I had hoped the sunset would be spectacular tonight, but it wasn't. The sun all but disappeared in a cloudy haze, the colors dulled by the heat. Kinda like how I felt—dulled—pounded to bluntness.

That's why I was out here. Why I'd been walking around for the last three hours—alone. Well, me and the gulls. They followed along for a while, hoping I'd have some bread or stale popcorn to throw to them, until they finally gave up on me.

Gave up on me...

Seems like that's been happening a lot lately. Bob gave up on me—on us. After three years of being together, he one day just up and decided that he "needed something more." *More than what?* I mean; we'd been talking about setting a date. I'd even bought some of those bridal magazines that I'd always laughed at my friends for when they'd get them, looking all starry-eyed and stupid. Me—the professed bachelorette.

He needed more.

Translation—I wasn't *enough*.

Well, now. That certainly wasn't the first time I'd felt inadequate, thank you very much. There was the promotion from customer service to outside sales a month ago, but I was told I wasn't *gregarious enough*. That's not true—I'm as outgoing as the next person. I just don't bat my eyes and toss my Farrah Fawcett wannabe hairdo at my clients, giggling like a moron at everything in a suit like whatsherface, the bimbo from the San Diego office. Then there was high school. Just take a look at my high school yearbook—all the pictures of varsity sports, choir, scouts, whatever. There you'll see a plethora of pictures I'm *not* in. Or just ask either of my parents. Ask them what *their* plans were for their little girl. I'm sure you'll hear all sorts of stories about their Katie not applying herself enough, or not being smart enough or...

Huh. How many brains does it take to know that you shouldn't kick the sand in front of you in the middle of a good pity party because there might be a hidden rock? Now, to top

it all off, my big toe is throbbing like crazy. *And the 1979 Nobel Prize for Common Sense goes to...*

I plopped my butt in the sand and checked out the offending appendage. Stupid toe was already swelling and turning a bit purple. Brilliant. Well, I could either sit there in the sand and have a good cry, or I could head back to my mute little house and drown my sorrows in a big bowl of butter pecan. It was pretty much a toss up, but since it was starting to get dark, and I'm not so moronic as to sit out on the beach alone at night, so I hauled myself up and started to hobble down the shore. I figured the water's cool enough that it might help my swelling toe, so I waded in a little, being a bit more cautious and peering into the water for anything else that might trip me up.

I'd almost made it back to the parking lot when I saw something shiny in the water. Last year I'd been picking up rocks with my niece and had found a woman's bracelet. It wasn't real gold or anything, so I'd let her keep it. I was pretty surprised that what had washed up ahead of me wasn't jewelry or some change, but a badge.

No, *two* badges. Somehow, the two gold shields were intertwined, back-to-back. I tried to pull them apart, and managed to stick my finger on one of them in the process. *Figures.* The first shield's clasp was still open, the pin freed. It had gotten harder to see with the sun setting, but I could make out that it had a huge gouge scratched across the front of it like a wound. The second shield's pin was clasped and intertwined through the hook of the other. At some point the first badge's hook had been damaged, crushed down enough so that the two were now inseparable. If you wanted to separate them, you'd literally have to have some major hardware to tear one away from the other. I wonder how two badges ever ended up in the Pacific, and how long they'd been there.

Still, damaged or not, I decided I probably ought to see that they got back to the cops who lost them. Even if they didn't need them again for whatever reason, Bay City didn't need some whackos finding them, then go around impersonating cops. In a city full of crazies, we didn't need any flashing badges.

Tomorrow I'd call my neighbors before they left on vacation. Len was a city clerk or something or other, and maybe he could get these back to the right people.

My toe throbbed all the way home.



I caught Len and Ginny a few minutes before they took off. I would be picking up their mail for them while they were gone for the next two weeks visiting her parents in Phoenix. Ginny's more of a friend to me than Len—he's kind of a friend by "default". Actually, I've always thought he was a little weird, but what can you do about your friends' husbands?

I explained to Len how I found them, and he agreed that the badges should get back to their owners. He was going to put them away until they got back from vacation, but for some weird reason, I felt a sense of urgency. Call me crazy, but I've always "listened" to that little voice inside, urging me toward a decision. It's proven me right a time or two. Well, except when playing the lottery—then it *never* works.

I could tell they really wanted to hit the road, but Len agreed to run back inside and make a few calls. Ginny and I tagged along so she could make sure for the millionth time that she hadn't left anything on. She's a bit paranoid that way.

Len ended up making three calls, and I'll give him credit—he was pretty quick about it. During the last one he beckoned me over.

"I've tracked down who the badges belong to by their shield numbers—some homicide detectives from Metro. The desk sergeant will send a couple of uniforms down to pick them up from you later." Even though Len's just a county clerk, he's always liked to play up the importance of his job—dropping names, using "the lingo." Whatever.

I shrugged. "I've got to drop off some paperwork from the office downtown anyway. I'll just swing by before work."

Okay, so there *was* more to it than I "just happened" to need to go downtown. I know it sounds stupid, but I felt a sense of ownership of the two shields at this point, and wanted to make sure the badges were back where they belonged. I was also pretty curious about how they ended up in the ocean to begin with.

Hey, when your own life is pretty crappy at the moment, hearing somebody else's tale of woe—or stupidity—can make your existence seem a little better. And right then, my sorry little life could use a boost.



The desk sergeant hardly even looked up at me when I asked him which way it was to the homicide detectives' offices. He did grunt and asked if I were reporting a crime, but when I said I wasn't, I was apparently no longer worthy of his attention. *Gee, but it's nice to be invisible.*

When I reached the second floor, I was surprised by the disarray. Apparently, some major remodeling was going on, and everything was covered in plastic, including a rather decrepit looking ping-pong table. A wandering painter pointed me to the unmarked doors of the detectives' squad room, so leaving a trail of drywall dust behind me, I made my way through the organized chaos.

I was surprised further that there was only one person in the office. A ruffled looking blond was slumped over his desk, thumbing through what appeared to be a fifty-pound

computer printout. My first impression was that if this was an example of who the city relied on to catch the bad guys, we were all in trouble.

Okay, that wasn't nice. *Bad, Katie, bad.* But this guy looked horrible. Haggard. *Consumed.* One hand was wrapped up in sterile bandages. I wondered what had happened to him. "Excuse me?"

When he looked up...I don't think I'd ever seen so much pain in one person's eyes. *What caused him to hurt so badly?* I didn't think it stemmed from the injury to his hand. His gaze was so captivating, I forgot for a second what I had come there for.

"Yes?" His voice was hoarse, as if he hadn't spoken in weeks. His eyes were red and bleary. *From what?* Pain? A lack of sleep? Tears?

"I...uh..." Did I mention that I'm brilliant and articulate, too? I unfolded the paper that Len had written the officers' names on. "I was told to ask for Detectives Starsky or Hutchinson?"

Something in the cop changed. "I'm Hutchinson." He never moved, but I swear, I could instantly feel something in the room change. It was a little weird.

"I have something for you..." I had reached into my purse to get the badges, and he was beside me in an instant, his hand wrapped around my wrist hard enough to make me gasp. He pulled my hand out and rummaged through my purse.

"Officer, I don't know what you..." What was he looking for, a weapon? I should have been frightened, or angry, but when he was done, the eyes that looked back at me were...dismayed. Beyond exhaustion. Then contrite. And the pain there...in one breath, for some wild reason, I knew that I would give anything to be able to take away the hurt in those eyes. But what did I have to offer him that could possibly be enough?

Not me.

"I'm sorry," he rasped out, shaking his head. "I'm just...I'm in the middle..."

I knew a dismissal when I heard it. "I won't keep you, then." I took the handkerchief out of my purse that I had wrapped the badges in and offered them to him as I pulled back the corners. He paled when he realized what it was that I had, and I swear his hand trembled as he took them from me.

I watched for a moment, trying to figure him out. I wanted to ask him about the shields, but I couldn't break the silence. His face was incredulous, almost in awe, as his thumb brushed gently across the surface of one.

That little voice inside told me that I were intruding on something personal, almost intimate, so I turned to leave. Before I made it to the door, he was beside me again, his grip around my wrist almost painful.

“Why’d you do this?” He held the badges tightly in his fist. There was a fire in his blue eyes that was a bit unnerving.

What did he mean? “I don’t understand...the scratch?”

His fingers uncurled, revealing the shield with the gouge running across its middle. I shook my head. “That’s how I found it. I don’t know how that happened.”

“No.” I had to strain to hear him now, his whisper an odd contradiction to the passion in his voice a second before. He released my wrist to gently tug at the shields bound together. “Why did you...”

“I didn’t, honestly. That was how I found them—back-to-back.”

I couldn’t really hear what he said next, but I think it was “Holding on.” When a few seconds passed and the detective didn’t move or speak—just stood there, staring at the badges—I opened the door.

The hand on my shoulder that stopped me this time was gentle. “*Thank you.*”

I turned back to brush off his gratitude with a blithe, “It was nothing,” but then I met his eyes again. The hurt was still there, but I swear there was something else, something less...haunted. I couldn’t really say it was hope, or anything that poetic. All I know is that it having those two battered shields back made a difference somehow—they were enough.

I was enough.

I squeezed the hand still cradling my shoulder and walked away.



Hutch eased himself into the familiar chair next to Starsky’s bedside, the only sounds in the room coming from the respirator and various life-support monitors. The blond drew his and his partner’s shields out of his jacket pocket, still intertwined, and rubbed his thumb across the scarred face of Starsky’s badge. Hutch had been praying for a miracle, praying for some sign that somehow—somehow—they would make it through one more time. The woman—Hutch realized that he had never even asked her name—offered him an unexpected hope in their intertwined badges: scarred, damaged, but still bound together. It was a small hope, but it was still hope.

And it was enough.

Brit
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