

Conjugal Visit

by Katie Norton

Sandy stood with three year old Josh, in line at the Santa Cruz County Correctional Facility in Watsonville. They were waiting to visit Tim, who she had met when she moved back to California after breaking up with Josh's father. If you call fleeing in fear across state lines "breaking up." Josh's father had turned crazy and mean and Sandy couldn't stay. She came home to start over, and she found love with Tim, who was perfect, except for one little problem.

Sandy's family was furious that she had moved in with a man who was going to jail. After leaving a man who had threatened to kill her. Bad, bad mother she was.

Sandy didn't care what they called her because when she was with Tim, all was right with the world. She was in a bubble of happiness. She felt so safe with Tim, after being constantly on guard for her prior partner's mood swings. Tim and Sandy had a future together. Right after he did his time.

You couldn't really call it a country club prison, the little jail in Watsonville. More like a home for wayward boys. Set among the lettuce fields, near the coast, in the cool, foggy-sunny sea air. The inmate population was mostly Mexican, a few whites and a sprinkling of other ethnicities, incarcerated for drunk driving and pot busts. Also some hard core homeless guys who were thrown in after deliberately urinating in public when they felt the need for three hots and a cot.

Beyond low-security, it was practically on the honor system. The nutritious home-style food was prepared by school cafeteria-type ladies. The inmates got to get out and work every day at county parks on the California coast. Sometimes they found good stuff while they were working, such as lost wallets and leftover bottles of booze from beach parties, which of course they kept. It reminded Sandy of *Tortilla Flat*.

Tim said everybody inside got along real well, "But of course, I'm not going to give any of these people my address or phone number when I get out."

The most unusual part of the jail was the visitor area, which was nothing like jails on TV. Sunday was visiting day and it was practically like a family picnic: green lawn, a playground for the children and broad leafy trees to sprawl under.

Sandy waited in line on visiting day with Josh, who was looking forward to the playground. She held a folded up blanket and her purse. The guards did a cursory search of the visitors' belongings. You could have smuggled in an elephant. Sandy didn't smuggle in anything. No need to make trouble. Just get Tim through this and get on with their lives.

The line was moving quickly, everyone knew the drill. The guard at the gate looked like Eric Estrada, with blindingly white teeth and aviator sunglasses, uniform worn with jaunty panache. Sandy opened her purse for inspection and shook out the blanket. The guard motioned them inside.

Tim was waiting for her. They led Josh over to the playground where he took off like a rocket, making a beeline for the other kids on the climbing gym. There were about a dozen children on the playground, with some grandmotherly types supervising. Grandmothers of criminals, that is. But they looked ok. Tim and Sandy spread their blanket under a tree at the far edge of the visiting area, near the fence line, and sat down.

Families and couples sat on picnic tables or on the grass. Tim and Sandy discussed their plans. He would be out soon, back home in a couple more weeks. Because of overcrowding, Tim only had to do two months out of a six month sentence.

Several jail guards stood at various places in the yard, but their body language was relaxed, non-threatening.

Tim wrapped the blanket around him and said, "lay down with me."

They couldn't make out because of the rules, but they were lying very close together, face to face, on their sides, covered by the

blanket. Sandy was wearing loose fitting pants and a tee shirt. Under the blanket, Tim took Sandy's hand and placed it on his penis. It was rock hard, throbbing. He rubbed her hand against it. He glanced around, casually. Nobody was looking at them. Sandy couldn't believe it. They were out of the sight line of most everybody, close to the tree as they were, sheltered behind a picnic bench. The guards weren't looking at them, neither were the inmates and their visitors.

Tim said, "I think we can manage a quickie, if we don't move too much."

Sandy was game. Why not descend to the last rung of bad motherhood—having sex in a jail visiting yard while her son played nearby. She looked over at the playground. Josh was laughing and playing on the merry-go-round. "Tim, are you crazy? Oh, ok."

She slid further under the blanket. With a few quick moves, Tim had both of their pants down and he was inside her. He paused and looked around. Nobody was looking at them. Well, maybe that old man across the yard, visiting his son. He could possibly be looking out from under the brim of his cowboy hat, but he wasn't pointing or anything. Tim moved slowly, trying to keep his face in a normal expression. It didn't take long for him to come. "Ahhhh," he said, "God, that was great!" He lay against the ground, under the blanket. Sandy slid a Kleenex out of her pocket and in between her legs so she wouldn't drip when she stood up. Sandy had not reached orgasm, being in a hurry and in public, there was no way, but she felt a thrilling rush all the same.

It was not great sex. But, like being in the Mile-High Club, it was a rare experience. Sandy knew that Tim would brag about it to the guys. He had to be the most macho dude in the place, the big bad biker. At home, he didn't go for kinky sex and he was so modest that he closed the door when he went to the bathroom. This was totally out of character. Sandy figured it was important for him to be able to go back inside and announce that he got laid. To take control in some way in a situation where he was being controlled by others.

Too soon, visiting time was over. Sandy gathered Josh from the playground. "Say goodbye to Tim. We have to go home now."

Josh ran around them in circles, happy to be outdoors in the sunshine. He would probably take a good nap on the long drive home. "See you later bud!" Tim said to Josh, rubbing the top of his head. Sandy said, "I love you Tim. See you next week."

"I love you too, Sandy. Drive safe."

As she walked through the gate, Eric Estrada lowered his shades and winked at her.

