



SWIFT ENTERPRISES PRESENTS

## Sandy Swift— Not Your Average Blonde

By T. Edward Fox

Tom Swift isn't the only exceptional Swift offspring. Though a year and a month younger, his sister Sandy is a unique young lady.

With promises made in her younger years, she has just turned sixteen and is ready to hold her parents to their words. That included makeup, dating and even getting her driver's license.

That only takes a day or two to accomplish, so she sets her sights on even loftier goals. Literally, figuratively and virtually.

With a newfound feeling of confidence she storms through the final month of her sophomore year turning more than a few heads in the process. Her beauty is undeniable. Her determination is unstoppable.

Watch out because Sandra Swift is not your average blonde. She is a dynamo about to be unleashed on the world.

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This book is dedicated to the girls who make the transition from gawky teen to young woman with grace and even some style. They come from all walks in life, all social strata. They have one thing in common: they find their "voice" and they self at an early age. They know what they want and they work hard to get it. These are not spoiled rich girls. These are the keepers. These are the ones only a few lucky guys ever meet.

# Sandy Swift— Not Your Average Blonde

## FOREWORD

Truer words were never spoken. In a world of blonds and blondes—natural, sun bleached and bottled—Sandy Swift is a most unique girl. Not only is she the daughter of a famous man, and one who I have had the pleasure of documenting his exploits, she is the sister of the talented Tom Swift.

But, she is more than that. She is super smart, quick-witted, almost impossible to panic no matter how bad the situation, and a totally goofy teenage girl when it comes to her favorite guy, Bud Barclay.

I've known and written about a lot of people over the years, but I've never encountered two of them that just seemed to fit so neatly and solidly together from the very start as Sandy and Bud.

Even in the middle of her high school years, Sandy is a go-getter and a doer. Great things are in store for this young woman. Great things indeed.

I predict that given time and opportunity, she'll take the world by storm, wrap a rope around it, and take it wherever she want it to go.

Just wait and see!

*Victor Appleton II*

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**CHAPTER 1/****Happy Birthday To Me!**

THE PRETTY blonde-haired girl came downstairs, practically floating on air, and swept into the kitchen of her parents' Shopton home. She was softly singing, "Happy birthday to me. Happy birthday to me..."

"Good morning, Dear," her mother said from her position in front of the stove.

The girl stopped singing and walking. "A wonderfully glorious good morning to you, Mother," she sang out, eyes wide and a big grin plastered across her face.

Sandy Swift, daughter of one famous inventor and younger sister to another one, was an exceptionally happy girl. Today was her sixteenth birthday and the world suddenly held all sorts of new promises.

"Isn't it a beautiful day, Mother?" she inquired.

Looking out of the window over the sink, she replied, "Why, yes, Sandy. It is beautiful. But, you're in a very good mood. Any particular reason why?" she asked teasingly. She knew how important this birthday was to her daughter. It was an important milestone for most girls.

Giving her mother a look of exasperation, Sandy said, "It's my birthday. Remember. Sixteen years ago? Push, Mrs. Swift. Push. Breathe, Mrs. Swift. Breathe. *Slap!* It's a beautiful, bouncing baby girl, Mrs. Swift! Ring any bells?"

"Oh, Sandra. Of course I remember that. How could I forget? That was the day I didn't get any sleep because I had terribly bad indigestion."

*"Mother!"*

"Oh. That's right. You were born that day as well. Happy birthday, Sandy."

"And, this is the day I get to start wearing makeup and panty hose and date boys and get my driver's license," Sandy stated with assuredness her mother wished she didn't possess so much of.

"Well... I did check with your school and they are letting you have the morning off. I'll take you to the Department of Motor Vehicles right after we all have breakfast. It's now—" she glanced up at the clock just as Sandy's brother Tom walked into the room, "—just seven fifteen and they don't open until nine. As far as makeup goes, you know the rule. We are going to get a professional to give you makeup tips. Your father is flying us all over to Oswego on Saturday and you and I have an appointment at one of the makeup counters at eleven. We can't have your first experience with wearing makeup be a bad one, can we?"

She looked at her daughter through slitted eyes. She knew that Sandy and her friends had been experimenting with makeup all during the school year. Most girls did but by unspoken agreement, mothers and daughters never admitted that they both knew what was going on.

"Mother. I'm perfectly capable of—" Sandy stopped short. To say anything more would be like admitting to breaking the house rules. She pondered what her next words should be, then sweetly said, "—I am perfectly capable of going to the makeup appointment by myself. You could go shopping rather than standing there. I'm sure you would be terribly bored."

She looked at her mother and batted her eyelashes. Her mother did the same back to her, and Sandy quickly looked away and blushed.

"I'm with Mom on this one, San," Tom told her. "You don't want to slather that gunk on and look cheap. Like that girl, Suzie what's-her-name. She has so much stuff on her face you can't see any skin. It looks really bad and cheap."

"Tom Swift. How can you say she looks cheap, why I'll have you know—"

“Bud thinks she looks cheap, too,” her brother stated, stopping Sandy in mid sentence.

Her eyes went glassy and she let out an audible sigh.

Bud Barclay, Tom’s best friend for the past year, had moved to Shopton then and attended the same high school as Sandy. Like Tom, he was a bit more than a year older, but unlike her dirty-blonde brother Bud sported bark brown hair, had ever so dreamy hazel-brown eyes and was really athletic, and—

“Sandy!” her mother was saying to her, trying to get her attention. “Stop thinking about boys and tell me how many pancakes you want.”

Taken out of her reverie, Sandy took a moment to refocus her thoughts. “Uh, just two, please,” she finally answered.

Sandy Swift had a huge crush on Bud Barclay. She stopped short of doodling his name all over her school books and folders like some girls, but she had known almost from the day she first met him that Bud was the boy she wanted to go steady with.

She wasn’t alone. Bud was the subject of numerous heavy sighs and silly giggles among the girls of Shopton High. Already a six-footer, his muscular build and abilities on the football field were combined with a winning smile, great if somewhat silly sense of humor and the ability to strike up a conversation with anyone made him very popular.

And, where most boys would have pressed those advantages with the girls, Bud only dated infrequently preferring to concentrate on his hobby, flying. He and Tom worked together at Swift Enterprises, the family’s four-mile-square facility on the outskirts of town and site of development of many of the most famous inventions in modern times.

Including aircraft.

“Do we have any plans for tonight, Momsie?” Tom asked.

“Sandy wants to go out to dinner at Gunther’s, that German

restaurant downtown. Our reservations are set for seven. You will be joining us. Right?” she more told than asked her son.

Jumping up, Tom kissed his mother on the cheek, “Of course I’ll be there,” he told her taking the two plates of pancakes she had finished preparing. He kissed Sandy on the cheek before sitting back down and placing the plates on the table. “Happy birthday, San.”

“So, Mother,” Sandy said wanting to get back to promises made months and years earlier. “Now that I’m sixteen and practically a woman—” she paused to allow Tom to stop the mock choking noises he had begun making. “Now that I am sixteen, when can we buy pantyhose for me?”

“Well, dear. Why not wear that pair you keep hidden under your T-shirts in your dresser,” her mother asked, looking innocent.

Sandy turned bright red. Those were supposed to be a secret. She had saved her allowance for five whole weeks in order to purchase them. She had breezed into the Shopton Department Store and hurried to the hosiery counter. The saleswoman, used to dealing with young girls, patiently explained sizing and colors to the eager teen. In the end, Sandy had been measured and outfitted with a pair of taupe hose, complete with reinforced heel and toe.

Since that day, more than two months earlier, she had only had the nerve to try them on once. They were a little snug and she had hoped that going with her mother would prove to get her a more comfortable pair.

“You may be all eager to wear them right now, but let an old woman tell you. Come summer and all the heat, you’ll practically want to rip the darn things off at the end of the day. And, should the day come when you put on a few extra pounds and control-style ones are desired, they are even tighter than normal pantyhose. I wouldn’t be too quick to start pulling those on on a daily basis, dear.”

Sandy couldn't meet her mother's eyes. Looking at her plate, she asked, "What about dating. You've always said that I could date when I turn sixteen."

Knowing how important it was to her daughter, she didn't try to make light of the subject. "As soon as you get asked out, and I'm hoping it will be by a nice boy, then you can go out on dates. Your father and I had a long talk about this very subject last night. While he says he's ready and willing to purchase a shotgun and to try to instill some small amount of terror in the minds of any boys who might not have honorable intentions, he agreed with me that simply asking your brother to be there to glower at them when they come by to pick you up will be enough."

"You can't be serious?"

"Yes and no." Her mother sat down next to Sandy. "Honey? Dating is something everyone needs to go through for a number of years. It usually takes that long to find the right person to spend your life with. Most girls will get their hearts broken a few times and the emotional roller coaster of love is both a thrilling and sometimes dangerous ride. We just want you to be aware of the things that can make it rough and even offer advice on how to avoid them."

Sandy had relaxed and was nodding. Secretly, she agreed with her parents. There were already two girls at her school who had been physically hurt when the boys they were dating, a pair of twins from the high school in neighboring Thessaly, had decided that kissing wasn't enough. When the girls had asked to be taken home, they had both been slapped fairly hard and pushed out of the car to walk home.

"I promise to date nice boys, Mother. Tell daddy that he doesn't need the shotgun and you," she swung around to face her brother, "I don't want you to scare off any good potentials. Do you understand me, big brother?"

"What's to scare off? Everybody knows you only have eyes for Bud!"

Again, Sandy blushed bright red. She thought she had been so secretive about her feeling. *How could he know?*

"My guess is," Tom continued, "that Bud knows you like him and he'll ask you out pretty soon." He looked at her with a lopsided grin. "That is, assuming you *do* want to date Bud Barclay."

If anything, her redness deepened and Sandy could feel her heart beating.

She sat there in silence for several minutes, barely moving. Had Tom just told her that Bud might actually like her? She knew that they enjoyed kidding around whenever he came over to the house or when she saw him at school or even at Enterprises. But, could he like her enough to ask her out.

"I hope so," she said out loud before realizing she had verbalized her thought. The red that had begun to subside came right back, making her face almost burn. Except, Sandy realized suddenly that it was a good burning sensation. A very good one, too.

**CHAPTER 2/****Stop Treating Me Like a Little Girl**

THE NEXT Monday, driver's license in hand and a borrowed family sedan, Sandy drove herself to school. Parking in the student lot she walked to the office and registered for her parking permit. The school secretary was very nice and even wished her a belated birthday after writing down that information on the form.

Sandy had been sixteen for an entire five days. She and her mother had gone to the department store in Oswego where a nice, middle-aged woman with a streak of red in her brunette hair had first explained the "less is more" theory of proper makeup, and then proceeded to show Sandy first what a bad, overly made up face she could have—even Sandy had been slightly aghast at her appearance with wild eye shadow and bright lipstick—and then what a nice face she presented when just the bare minimum of creams and colors were added to her already-pretty face.

As a secondary birthday present, her mother bought her a complete set of makeup brushes, sponges and her first actual makeup.

As she walked though the hallway at school, heading for her locker, Sandy could see heads turning as both boys and girls saw her freshly made up face. She even thought she overheard a pair of boys comment quite positively about her appearance.

She did a quick self-examination. Amazed, she discovered that her step was a little bouncier and her head held a bit higher. Shoulders back and a small smile curling around her newly glossy lips, she reached her locker having made a decision.

*I'm sixteen and not a little girl any more! If I want to date Bud Barclay, I can ask him out. Why wait for him to make the*

*first move? There's just another month or so until summer break and I intend to get him to take me to a movie once a week until then and even more often after school lets out. By golly. I like the new me!*

She had to corral her daydreaming in several times during classes that day. Once, her favorite teacher, Mr. Weller, stopped what he was saying to the class when he saw her gazing at the ceiling.

"Are you having a seizure, Sandy," he asked, causing some laughter from the boys and a few worried looks from her girl friends.

"Hmm?"

"I had asked you to provide us with the five parts of speech in the sentence up here on the board. If you are finished admiring our ceiling tiles, would you favor us with that answer?"

Sandy blushed. *Rats! Caught daydreaming about Bud.* "I'm sorry, Mr. Weller. I was just thinking about something else. Uh, let's see..." and she correctly identified everything on the first try.

That afternoon, she hung around her locker hoping that Bud would pass by on his way home. She spotted him walking with Tom in the cross corridor fifty feet away and decided it would be pitiful of her to shout out his name and go running toward them when it became evident they hadn't spotted her. So, she headed home.

At the dinner table that evening Tom teased her about her new makeup. he had been too busy over the weekend to even notice her wearing any. Secretly, he was impressed. Although she was his sister, Tom had tried to put himself in the position of being other boys who might want to date her and had decided two years earlier that Sandy was no slouch in the looks department.

Now, with the addition of a little makeup, he had to admit to

himself that she was really beautiful.

*Poor Bud, he thought. He doesn't stand a chance once she gets up the nerve to go after him!*

Tuesday after school, Mrs. Swift—who had dropped Sandy off that morning—picked her up and they went shopping for pantyhose and a couple of new summer blouses.

It had all been a bit embarrassing when the saleswoman recognized her and inquired about the first pair she had purchased. “Have you been able to keep them from running this long, dear?” she asked.

“They were a little tight on her. She has very athletic thighs, so I thought I’d come along this time and make sure she selects the right ones.”

Sandy looked at her mother, amazed. She smiled and nodded her thanks receiving a nod and a smile in return. If nothing else, her mother really knew her. Sandy had begun to realize, probably months before, that daughters could hide little from their mothers. Perhaps, that wasn’t a bad thing.

They left the hosiery department with a small bag containing a pair of black hose and another in a slightly lighter tan color than the taupe ones Sandy already had.

By the time they arrived home, Sandy had amassed two additional bags containing three blouses, a pair of very shapely slacks and a new bathing suit. Sandy had almost dropped her jaw to the ground when the one she held up for approval was rejected in favor of a slightly more revealing one that Sandy secretly yearned for but had thought too daring to past parental muster.

Even the ride home had been different. Suddenly it felt a little less like mother talking down to daughter and more like two very, very close friends exchanging ideas and anecdotes.

The newly found feeling evaporated almost immediately on

walking in the door when Tom saw the new bikini and started giving her a bad time. “You sure you can fill that, San? Seems to me that you’re a few years from being old enough to carry that one off. I mean, after all, you only just turned sixteen for crying out loud!”

“Stop treating me like a little girl, Tom!” Sandy demanded. “I don’t care what you think about anything, anyway. What I wear is none of your business. Now,” she turned with a dramatic flounce and started for the stairs, “I’m going to cut the tags out of these and put them in the laundry. When I get back down either change your tune or stop talking to me. Got it?”

Tom was totally taken aback. He turned to their mother to look for help. She merely shrugged and mouthed, “You’re on your own.”

As she disappeared up the stairway Tom called out, “Sorry, San. I’ll stop giving you a rough time. My bad!”

She really wasn’t mad at him. She was impressed that he cared enough to comment about what she wore. That, and the fact that she had seen herself in the three-way mirror at the store and knew exactly how good she looked in the bikini.

Dinner conversation was slightly subdued that evening. Mr. Swift was away in Washington D.C. on a Government trip so the three of them sat in the living room eating their burger patties, broccoli with mayonnaise, and mashed, new potatoes on the wood TV trays the Swifts had originally received as a wedding gift more than eighteen years earlier.

When Mrs. Swift rose to take their dishes to the kitchen and get dessert, Tom asked Sandy, “Do you really want to go out with Bud?”

She wasn’t certain what he might mean so she asked back, “Why do you want to know, Tomonomo?”

Tom grinned. Sandy had given him that nickname, or at least a variation of it that had become the current “Tomonomo” back

almost ten years earlier.

“What I meant was that I’ve been kinda quiet whenever he asks me about you. And, about when you might start dating. I would bet he’s getting a little antsy about asking you out. Nervous, even ‘cause he has mentioned that you’ve been more buddies this past year and a half. Doesn’t want to lose that, you know?”

Sandy did know. She had been thinking along the same lines. Her great desire to go out with Bud, and to even be held in his strong arms and kissed were tempered with the dread of what might happen if they decided they wanted to stop dating. She had seen the aftermath of a couple angry breakups of some of her friends.

Sandy confided her fears in her brother. He moved closer to her on the sofa and put a comforting arm around her shoulders. Giving her a gentle squeeze, he told her, “Don’t worry about that. I’m not fortuneteller but my money is on you two lasting forever. You like to have fun and he likes to have fun. You like movies and he likes movies. You like him and he likes him.”

Sandy pulled away and gave Tom a punch in the arm. “Ha-ha.”

“I’m serious about the you belong together thing, San. Bud is the greatest guy I’ve ever known. I’ve already trusted my life to him and he didn’t let me down. I’m not sure how you should go about it, and I don’t think my going to him with ‘Sandy likes you. Sandy likes you. Do you like her?’ is going to cut it. It may take him a little time to get around to it but I know he wants to go out with you.”

Sandy leaned against Tom and put her head on his chest. She whispered, “I love you, Tom. Thanks.”

He responded, “I love you back, Sandy. And, I promise to stop thinking of you as a little girl. From now on, the most

condescending thing I’ll ever say is that you’re my younger sister. Okay?”

“Okay.”

“What are you two talking about?” their mother asked as she set their dessert owls on the trays.

“Just brother and sister stuff, Momsie,” Tom told her giving Sandy a little wink.

“That’s nice. I’m so happy my children get along.” She sat down and took a spoonful of the berry cobbler she had made that morning. *And, I’m happy that Sandy has a champion in her big brother.*



**CHAPTER 3/****First Love, First Date, First Kiss**

THE NEXT day Sandy was sitting at a table in the lunchroom when Bud came over and sat down. Usually so self-assured, he looked more at the floor and around at others than at Sandy.

She had been getting use to the additional attention people were giving her lately, so she was curious to understand why Bud was so hesitant.

“What’s up, Bud?” she asked.

Clearing his throat a couple times before speaking, Bud finally managed to get out, “I really need to talk to you. In private. Okay?”

Sandy shrugged. She was willing to do anything to get the chance to talk to Bud. Picking up her tray, she suggested that they go outside and sit under the large oak tree next to the auditorium.

When they finally sat down, she looked at him. He was just gorgeous. And, even though he seemed embarrassed right now, she knew what a powerful presence Bud Barclay could be.

“Sandy,” he started out. “Uh, Sandy? You know that I’ve liked you since we first met. Right?” She nodded, a small smile playing around the corners of her mouth. “And, I’m pretty sure that you like me. Uh, you do, don’t you?” Again, Sandy nodded only this time with more vigor and the smile she had been trying to hold back threatened to escape.

Bud looked like he was going through something in his mind. She gave him a moment.

“Sandy. Would you go out with me? I mean, just us. On an official date?”

Sandy’s heart and head were screaming, “YES!” but she took a deep breath and composed herself.

“YES!” she practically shouted, losing the battle within herself for a calm and measured response. “Of course I will go out with you, Bud.” Her smile broke through and she absolutely beamed at him.

Now it was his turn to smile. He had wanted to ask her out beginning about a week after they first met, but Tom had warned him about the family rule regarding being sixteen. It had been all he could do to keep from showing up on the Swift doorstep the morning of Sandy’s birthday to ask her out.

They arranged for him to pick her up at her house on Friday right at six. “Does a movie and dinner at Luigi’s Italian sound okay to you?” he asked.

“It sounds divine.”

And, it was. He arrived a few minutes early to find the entire Swift family gathered in the living room. Sandy looked radiant wearing a lightweight pink sweater over a white blouse and Capri-style pants. Mr. and Mrs. Swift were smiling, very happy that Bud was to be Sandy’s first official date. Both knew him well and had been acting as unofficial parents to him the past seven months after his folks had moved back to California. They felt that Bud had established himself so firmly in Shopton in just one year that they wanted him to finish school there.

Plus, his job at Enterprises more than amply paid for his apartment and living expenses.

Dinner had been great and the movie fairly good. They agreed on the drive they took afterwards that it could have been a little less ‘teenagers in trouble’ and more humorous, but had enjoyed it.

Taking her to the doorstep of the house, Bud was unsure of whether he should try to kiss Sandy. She took the decision out of his hands and leaned in and kissed him. Right on the lips.

Her first real boy-girl on the lips kiss. It had been wonderful and left her slightly light-headed.

It left Bud totally light-headed and he had to catch himself from falling over by leaning up against the house. And, the doorbell.

She lunged in and gave him another kiss before the door opened and Mr. Swift looked out at them. “Forget your key, Sandy?” he asked, attempting to look like he didn’t know what had just happened between them.

“I sort of leaned on the buzzer, Mr. Swift. Sorry.”

Shrugging, Mr. Swift turned and said as he was closing the door, “Not a problem. See you inside in a few minutes, Sandy. ‘Night, Bud.”

The two teens looked at each other and began to laugh. “Now, that’s the sort of thing that should have happened in the movie tonight,” he told her.

They shared another brief kiss before Sandy thanked him and went inside saying, “I hope you had a good time. I really would like to go out again, Bud. With you, I mean.”

Bud gulped and nodded. “Yes, please!”

He practically drifted out to his car while Sandy did likewise going into the living room where her parents and brother had been waiting. Nobody said anything, allowing Sandy to continue to savor her first date and first serious kiss.

The following morning Sandy came downstairs to find her father making coffee. She wrapped her arms around his waist and squeezed. “Good morning, Daddy,” she greeted him.

Trying to avoid spilling the fresh cup he just poured, he patted her arm, saying, “Good morning, sweetheart. Glad you seemed to have had a nice time last night. I really like Bud. Bright boy with a lot of potential. Great flyer, too.”

Sandy took a deep breath. She had been wanting to broach a particular subject with her rather for several months, and now seemed to be the most opportune time.

“Daddy?”

“What is it?”

She paused. *Now or never, Sandy*, she thought. *Now or never!* “Daddy. I want you to teach me to fly.”

He looked at her and then sat down, patting the chair next to his. “Sit down, Sandy,” he commanded her.

*This can’t be good*, she thought as she sat.

“Now, I want you to understand that your mother and I both love you and we know that you are growing up—a bit too fast it seems, but no matter—and it is just that I think flying is a little too dangerous for you right now.”

Sandy could hardly believe what she was hearing. She chose her next words. “I cannot believe that you just said that. I mean, you practically taught yourself to fly when you were, what? Thirteen? Isn’t that the story? And, Tom was up in that old Cessna and soloing before he turned fifteen.”

“I know, and there’s little I can say about that, but—”

“But nothing, Daddy. Stop treating me like I’m still a little girl. I’m not some delicate vase you can keep on a safe shelf forever. I’m a good driver because I took the time to learn all about it first and I pay very close attention to what I am doing. You taught me that. Flying may involve more things, but it can’t be so foreign that a girl can’t pick it up as fast as a boy!”

She stood up and stormed from the room. While he knew his daughter could be a bit dramatic about things, this was not one of them. He knew she was genuinely upset about his answer to her question.

“I hate to admit it,” he said to his wife later that evening, “but she’s right. Sandy is a bright girl and is very careful about the things she does. Part of me says that I have to protect her and that includes not letting her do things that could be dangerous. But, part of me says that we have to give her room to grow and to learn on her own. If we don’t, I fear she might rebel and then we’d have zero control over her.”

His wife had been sitting on the side of their bed, listening. She was a torn woman. She was already having anxiety issues around Sandy growing up so suddenly. *Where did all the time go?* she thought. She rose from the bed and wrapped her arms around his neck, placing her head on his chest.

“I hate to say this, and I pray that she’ll never do something to make me regret it, but I think we have to give her this one, dear. We let Tom get his license as soon as he could at fourteen and a half. He’s turned out to be a wonderfully careful pilot.” She sighed. “Tell me I’m wrong. Okay?”

He also sighed and held her close. “That’s the problem. I can’t tell you you’re wrong because you aren’t. This is one of the hard parts about being parents. Letting go. I’ll get her started as soon as school is out. She needs to concentrate on her sophomore year before she tackles the skies. I’ll let her know tomorrow.”

Neither of them slept well that night, each thinking about the many ways Sandy could be hurt—or worse.

## CHAPTER 4/

### Oh, My! I’m In Trouble Here

TWO DAYS later Sandy’s father and brother began teaching her about flying. They covered all of the theoretical information and had started taking her up on a few Saturdays, letting her take the controls of the old Cessna 195 Tom had first learned in for short stints of level flight.

It soon became obvious that neither of them could spare the time to fully teach her what she needed to know to qualify for her pilot’s license. So, Sandy took it on herself to look into flight schools in the area. Nothing seemed to be what she really wanted. Both schools located at Shopton Regional Airport were more suited to people who could only spare a few hours once a week.

Sandy wanted more. And faster. She asked her father what he thought.

“I’ve got the perfect solution, honey,” he told her.

The very day after school let out, Sandy arrived at the main gate of Swift Enterprises ready to begin flight training. Mr. Swift had arranged to have one of the company pilots, Slim Davis, conduct her first week of ground school.

Slim had been with Enterprises for a year and was not only one of the duty pilots, ready to fly any of the many Swift aircraft around the world, but he was a qualified flight trainer.

She went up to the large office her father kept in the Administration building. His secretary was evidently running an errand so she knocked and opened the door a crack.

He was on the phone but looked up and motioned her to come in. Once inside the door or the huge office she notices something different. On her last visit there had been one desk,

her father's, taking up one corner of the twenty foot by twenty foot room, lots of bookshelves around the perimeter, and a large conference table with ten chairs filling a full third of the room.

Today, there were two desks, each with a computer terminal, in the room and in opposite corners, and the large conference table had been replaced by a lower, almost coffee table height, table surrounded by eight large, overstuffed leather chairs.

It made the room more cozy, she noticed. *I like it.*

Hanging up, Mr. Swift said, "New layout, Sandy. I'm giving Tom's little office down the hall to someone else and setting him up in here. At least, for office stuff. He's also getting a laboratory downstairs and one in that giant underground hanger we're building over by runway three."

"All I can say is wow. Maybe some day you can cram a third desk in here and I can carry on the family tradition," she said half serious and half in jest.

"Honey. Just say the word after you graduate and I'll give you your own office here. Heck. I'll even give you a job!" He laughed. He knew that Sandy would find something to do at Enterprises. And, most likely excel at it.

They walked over to the hanger and office that Slim had set up as a classroom. Giving her a kiss on the forehead for good luck, Mr. Swift headed back to his office calling over his shoulder, "Whatever you do, honey. Don't break a leg!"

"Hi, Sandy," Slim greeted her. "Good to see you again. I hope you remember that we met last summer at the barbecue your folks had in your back yard."

"Of course I do," she told him, easily remembering the tall, lanky man who had immediately struck her as someone you might call 'Slim' even before they had been introduced.

She proved to be such an apt student that Slim was able to

cover and test her on a full weeks' worth of materials in just three and a half days. "Do you want to forge on, Sandy? Or take a break and get back to this next Monday? I can do either."

She decided to finish out that day and Thursday, then to take a three-day weekend.

"At this pace we'll get you through ground and into a plane in just two weeks," he told her. "You're about the fastest study I've worked with. No wonder your dad was adamant about getting you into training so quickly after school."

Sandy blushed slightly at the implied compliment. She made a mental note to kiss her father that evening.

By the end of week two, she had completed all phases of the ground school and could recite detailed answers to all of Slim's questions. Her memory for instrument placement amazed him, and he was certain that she would get to her instrument rating faster than even he had, and he had been one of the quickest in the entire state seven years earlier.

Their first day in a plane was partially spoiled by a freak rain and wind storm, but they hauled the aircraft into the hanger and sat in it going over an entire mock flight of three hours.

Sandy was both confident in her moves and responses as well as being very clever about handling a few small pretend emergencies he threw her way.

The next day they took to the air before eight o'clock and stayed aloft for four hours landing in time for lunch, refueling, and another three-hour flight. Sandy was at the controls after takeoff in the morning and relinquished them back to Slim for their first landing, but he was so pleased with her abilities that he allowed her to perform the takeoff and landing in the afternoon session.

"I swear I'm going to have you soloing by this time next week, Sandy," he told her. Good to his word, and because of her skills and the amount of time they had been able to devote to

her training, Slim let Sandy perform the full pre-flight checks of the little two-seater *Pigeon Special* they had been using for her training.

A brand new model that was built over at the old Swift Construction Company, it was a design her father had come up with. So versatile, it could be quickly configured to be a tame aircraft such as was required to train pilots in, and then turned around in under an hour and into a fully capable acrobatic plane.

“I love this *Pigeon Special*,” Sandy proclaimed as she was strapping herself in and preparing to shut the door. Slim grinned. He felt exactly the same way.

“Now, Sandy. You’ll report to the tower for takeoff and keep them on your primary channel. I’ll be listening in on that one and we can talk on the second channel. And that will be on...”

“129.7 megahertz, sir,” Sandy stated giving Slim a little salute.

Closing the door for her, he stepped back, looked around and gave her a thumbs up sign followed by winding his arm around in a circle. She nodded and started up the engine.

Allowing it to rev slightly, she made her instrument checks. Everything looked fine, so she contacted the control tower at Enterprises and received immediate permission to taxi to the end of the nearby runway.

She nodded to Slim and pulled the throttle out then took her feet off the pedals, releasing the brakes. The *Pigeon Special* moved forward and was soon taxiing away from Slim. Moments later it turned to the left and came to a halt. He could hear the engine being revved up, the final check-off item before she would get permission to take off.

He heard her call for permission and also the answer. “Swift three. Acknowledging request for immediate takeoff. Winds on your nose at seven. Barometer at three-oh point one and

steady. Time check at nine-two-seven plus thirty... now. Remain on this channel throughout flight. Clearance on takeoff to climb to five thousand feet and initial heading of two two zero. You are now clear for immediate takeoff. Have a happy flight.”

The engine noise arrived in Slim’s ears two seconds after he saw the little plane start forward. He watched and counted down the approximate position it would be on the runway. Right on time the nose lifted slightly and the aircraft seemed to take a little leap into the air. Sandy pulled the nose up slightly more and the plane began to climb.

A few seconds later it banked to the left and onto what Slim knew would be the proper heading.

“Swift three past outer marker and on course two two zero, passing through five hundred for five thousand.”

Slim felt a little pride in that report. Most would-be pilots taking their first solo flight sounded nervous or a little hesitant. Sandy’s voice was both confident and strong. He pulled up a chair and sat down to enjoy the next hour.

As required, Sandy reported in all of her flight particulars every five minutes. Several times the tower redirected her to a new heading, had her gain or lose altitude, and generally kept her actively flying the little plane. At no time did they allow her to fly farther away from Enterprises than a five-mile radius.

Just before the fifty-minute mark, Slim called up to her on channel two. “Sandy? Slim. You’re doing fine. Better than that. You’re doing great! I’ll let the tower know that I’m giving you a reward and letting you fly out to Lake Carlopa. They’ll give you a vector to get you over the marina and then out to the island. I want you to enjoy the view for a minute, then reverse course and come back in. Do you copy?”

“Uh, Slim,” came her voice, suddenly sounding a bit uncertain. “I may have a problem here. The engine just started

cutting in and out. Can you hear it?”

She left the radio open and he could hear the engine doing exactly as she described.

“You did hear that? Right?” she radioed.

“Yes. I want you to declare a Mayday on the primary channel and then switch back over to me. Okay? Do it.”

*Okay, Sandy, she thought to herself. You have to handle this all by yourself. Just think what Tom would do... how he'd react. Calm... steady... no emotion. Just do it and do it right!* She thought for a second more and then added, *Or die.*

She took a deep breath and activated her mic.

On his second radio set he heard Sandy call out, “Enterprise tower. I’m declaring a Mayday. Engine problems. I still have some power but it is intermittent. Am changing to secondary channel for directions from my instructor.”

There was a pause for two seconds then she came back on the second radio. “I assume they heard that. I didn’t wait. Should I have?”

“Don’t worry about that right now. Next time wait for them to respond. For now just make sure you are heading back this direction. Do you need a compass heading?”

“I don’t think so. I have a visual on Enterprises and have turned to head directly back. I’m currently on heading one three seven, altitude three thousand five hundred. Losing about one hundred feet every thirty seconds. It looks like I have enough altitude just as long as the engine keeps firing some of the time. Any suggestions?”

Slim was dumbfounded. He would bet any amount of money that almost any other pilot would be panicky right now and probably destined for a crash. Sandy’s voice was rock solid.

“Just keep her up there, Sandy. Don’t let the nose come up of you’ll lose speed. In fact, set your trim with nose down about three degrees. Keep off the flaps for now unless you begin to lose airspeed. What is your speed, by the way?”

“One thirteen. Well... now it’s one twelve. It’s dropping about one every three seconds. You’ll tell me when I get into trouble, won’t you?”

“Absolutely. Go ahead and trim to down five degrees. Let me have a minute to check with the tower. Hang on.”

He picked up the second mic. “Tower. What is Sandy’s distance?”

“Three miles and closing, Slim. How’s she doing?”

“She’s fine. I’m a wreck. Can you call out her distance every thousand yards, please?”

“Wilco!”

“Sandy,” he said into her mic, “You’re less than three miles out. Unless you lose power now, you’ve got it. I can’t see you yet. Can you see a runway?”

“Roger. Not sure which one but it’s the one behind Enterprises’; Admin building past the private gate. It looks like I’m lined up pretty well. Can I just come right in?”

“Yes. Do that.”

“Five thousand yards” the tower radioed.

“I’m right over the main road between downtown and Enterprises, Slim. Good thing ‘cause the engine just farted out on me. I’m trying to restart it, but I have a feeling I’m setting down pretty soon and not inside of Enterprises’ walls.”

*Damn!* “How much traffic, Sandy?”

“Very little. In fact, nothing right below me. Oh. By the way

I'm down to fifteen hundred feet and just slipped below ninety for speed. Can't restart the darned thing so I'm giving up on that. Can you call me a taxi, please? I'll meet them by the side of the road. Tell them I'll be the blonde with the airplane next to me."

"The tower will dispatch a whole fleet of vehicles. Just keep her wheels down when you land. Wheels up isn't so good. Seriously, Sandy. You're a great pilot and you *will* make this landing. You'll just have a bit less horizontal clearance than you might wish for."

"Five hundred feet. Putting on flaps now. Nose down to about ten degrees. Speed holding at eighty. Four hundred... three fifty... three... speed's dropped to seventy-six... two hundred... road is clear as far as I can see. No gusts. Wings level. One hundred... got to drop the mic now..."

Slim realized that he had been holding his breath for a long time and he was beginning to get dizzy. He exhaled and sucked in several deep breaths.

*She should be down by now. Damn! Why isn't she calling?*

"Yo. Slim," Sandy's tired voice came over the radio. "I clipped a wingtip on a speed sign before I got her off the road. I'm gonna be in trouble. I was doing about fifty in a thirty-five zone. So where's my taxi?"

## CHAPTER 5/

### Rescued

THE FIRE truck, ambulance, hazardous materials truck and two cars containing a security and recovery team arrived at Sandy's location three minutes after she had completed shutting off everything and had climbed out of the cockpit.

She gave them a cheery wave as they skidded to a halt, men spilling out of them before they realized that she was safe and the aircraft had not crashed.

Scratching his head, the chief of Enterprises Security, Harlan Ames walked over to her. "Hey, Sandy. You know you can get into trouble declaring an emergency when there doesn't seem to be one?"

She favored him with a smile, and then went up on tip-toe and brushed his cheek with her lips. "Thanks for coming to my rescue, Mr. Ames. Slim needs a raise. He taught me everything I needed to get the little *Pigeon Special* down and pretty much safe."

"He'll be here in a couple minutes. It took him a bit to get to his car. That's probably him speeding this way now," he said, pointing up the road toward Enterprises.

The car skidded to a halt ending up sideways. Slim jumped out and started to run toward Sandy. Suddenly, he slowed and sort of ambled the rest of the way.

"I see you opted for an off-premises landing, Miss Swift. Usually that means points off on your solo score. In this case, however, I think you get bonus points."

Sandy nodded, her jaw tight, and she held up her right index finger in a 'just one minute' gesture.

Turning away, she walked quickly to the opposite side of Slim's car. She leaned over and everyone could hear her retching.

A moment later she stood back up and walked back to Slim and Harlan.

"Sorry," she told them. "I just thought about how Daddy's going to use this as an 'I told you so' thing and make me stop flying. It isn't fair!"

"Pardon my language, Sandy, but you're damn right. It isn't fair. And, I made sure your father knows that. I spoke to him on my way here. He had to be told and all you know what would break loose if I withheld anything I knew from him. He knows you landed safely and are okay. I also made certain he understands that it was an equipment failure and that you were absolutely perfect. Handled it like a ten-year pro!"

She thanked him and then asked to be taken home. "I think I need to lie down for a bit. Or, do I need to write up an incident report?"

"Consider your verbal report made already. The written one for the FAA can wait for up to three days. I'll come over to your house tomorrow if you're feeling up to it and we can write it together."

At the dinner table that evening Mr. Swift kept up a lively conversation. When the subject came around to Sandy's solo flight he smiled at his daughter and told them all, "I hear from Slim that she handled it better than any student pilot he's ever worked with. And, that includes young Tom here."

Even Tom had not been filled in on Sandy's flight and near tragedy. He looked a little startled that his sister could have outdone him, but smiled at her and said, "Good for you, San. We'll have you out piloting Bud in no time at all!"

Mrs. Swift had been silent throughout most of the meal. She placed both hands on the table in front of her and said, "Right! I guess I should tell you all that the young doctor your father

hired for Enterprises called this afternoon while you were having your little nap, Sandra."

Everyone knew that the name 'Sandra' was only used when there was some sort of trouble.

In an overly sweet voice, she continued. "He wanted to know if you were doing alright after your plane crash. I told him that you were fine and that you would drop by his office tomorrow to prove it." She looked pointedly at all three of them. "So. Is someone going to tell me what the hell happened today?"

Tom could only swivel his head from his father to his sister.

Sandy was frozen, looking at her plate.

Mr. Swift finally said, "Sandy did not crash today. Or, any other day. She simply had a mechanical problem that forced her to land on route twenty four. No crash and the plane will be flyable by this time tomorrow after the technicians check it over. No story. No crash."

He could see that this was not mollifying his wife.

"I was going to tell you tonight after we went to bed. I didn't want you to get emotional and start berating Sandy. According to Slim Davis, she did everything better than by the book. He told me she could write a whole new book. I'm sorry that you heard about it in exactly the wrong way. At least you could see that she was alright when she came home. Right?"

He let out his remaining breath in a loud puff. Then, he reached over and placed his hand on his wife's forearm. "I'm sorry that I didn't immediately call you. I made a judgment call. If I was wrong, it's on me. Not Sandy. And, Tom knew nothing about this."

Mrs. Swift stood up and picked up a few dishes. She took them to the kitchen while her family sat silently around the table, dreading the fallout from this. When she came back in she had a smile on her face.



“I’m glad everything worked out. Will you be going back up soon, Sandy? They say you should get back on the horse after a fall.”

Sandy stood up and hugged her mother. “Sorry. I just didn’t want you to worry. Or tell me I shouldn’t be flying. And, yes. I’m going back up tomorrow right after Slim and I file the FAA incident report. Not much to tell but they require it, especially from a student.”

The next day both the report and her second solo flight went very well. When she landed and had taxied to the hanger and shut the plane down, Slim came over and handed her a piece of paper.

“Congratulations, Sandy Swift. You are a pilot!”

That evening, Bud arrived at the Swift home with a bouquet of roses and a bottle of sparkling cider to celebrate Sandy’s achievement. After an hour with the family, they left the house for a walk around the neighborhood.

Hand in hand they walked for another hour, sometimes talking and sometimes just enjoying the feeling of the other’s hand in theirs.

They had just paused for their fifteenth kiss when a large, black sedan pulled up beside them. The rear door flung open and a very large man, practically a giant, wearing a dark ski mask jumped out, pushed Sandy to one side and punched Bud in the jaw so hard the teen collapsed. He grabbed Bud, tossing him into the car, and then climbed in. “Not a word. Understand?” he yelled at Sandy as the car pulled away.

Sandy was in shock. She could barely breathe. First the airplane and now Bud. She let out a scream and a wail. Lights in several houses came on and one man ran out, a baseball bat in his hand.

“What happened?”

Through racking sobs, Sandy gave him the sketchy details. He yelled to his wife, on their porch, to call the police.

A few minutes later, three Shopton P.D. cars pulled up and the officers got out. Sandy, now slightly calmer, gave them the story and as much of a description as she could.

While one officer was radioing everything in, the others sped off in the same direction as Bud’s kidnappers had gone. The radio officer had headquarters call the Swift home and Mr. Swift arrived in their car a minute later.

As they were getting into his car, Sandy remembered something. Standing back up she called over to the officer. “The gorilla that grabbed Bud had a tattoo on his forearm. I’m certain it was the left arm. It was a banana and a bunch of cherries. At least, that’s what it looked like in this dim light. Does that help?”

The young officer gave her a grin. “Miss Swift. That not only helps, we all know who that guy is. He’s famous at the P.D. We’ll get him and get Mr. Barclay back. Tonight is my guess!” he got back on the radio and sent in more information.

Sandy and her father returned home where Mrs. Swift had already made coffee and cocoa, and had pulled out the makings for sandwiches. She knew it would be a long, sleepless night.

Nothing happened for more than two hours. By the time the clocks hit 10:00 p.m., Sandy had been pacing all over the house for ninety minutes. Her face was tear-stained and she felt sick to her stomach.

She had berated herself constantly. *Why did we go out for a walk? Why did I stop and kiss Bud right then? Why can’t I think straight and do something?!!!*

10:30 came and went. Then 11:00. At 11:06 the phone rang. Sandy was too far away to grab it first. Her father picked up the receiver and spoke into it. After agreeing that the caller had reached the Swift residence he stopped and listened. Several

seconds went by and Sandy felt like her bladder was going to explode even though she had had nothing to drink for hours and hours.

When a smile crossed his face, Sandy practically screamed at her father, “Is Bud okay?”

He nodded to her. “Just a moment, Captain Rock.” He placed a hand over the mouthpiece. “The police tracked down that gargantuan who kayoed Bud and put him in the car. Seems he was doing a for-hire job. Cash. Didn’t know who hired him, but he thought he had captured your brother. He still had Bud trussed up in his motel room when the police broke down the door. Evidently, he tried to escape out the back window, but Bud shot a foot out and tripped him. He ended up with what the Captain describes as ‘one heck of a bloody nose.’”

Sandy was so relieved that she sank all the way to the floor and remained there for five full minutes. The squeal of brakes got her attention and she rushed to the door in time to open it for Bud.

He had a big bruise on his left jaw and a small cut under his eye, but he was smiling. He wrapped Sandy in his arms and hugged her for three minutes before letting go.

“I hear you’ve got an eye for tattoos,” he told her. “Seems that your description was all the police and state troopers needed to find me and get that goon.”

They stood there for many more minutes looking into each other’s eyes and smiling. Suddenly, Bud thought of something and gently let go of Sandy. Turning, he addressed Tom.

“Hey, skipper. That man mountain was pretty gabby and was telling me all about how he was going to be a hero for nabbing Tom Swift. How he was going to get some big reward from someone with a funny foreign accent. We need to take good care of you. Somebody’s out to get you and I can only act as decoy a few more times before my jaw gives out.”

## CHAPTER 6/

### Don’t Think of Me As Tom’s Sister...

A FULL MONTH later, nothing more had occurred that might hint at a danger to Tom. Although Harlan Ames and his team had the incident high on their list of things to keep track of, there had been no further attempts to harm or kidnap him.

With only seven weeks left to go before school started back up, Sandy and Bud had been spending a lot of time together in the evenings and on weekends.

His job at Enterprises was mainly to test fly each airplane and small jet that came off the assembly lines at the Construction Company and to make deliveries of some of them to East Coast customers.

Sandy came along on some of the flights and then made a few herself to help out when times were busy. She already gained more than two hundred hours of flying time by the last week of July.

When they were together on dates or just sitting in a park or strolling along the beach area of Lake Carlopa, their hands rarely were not locked together. It made Sandy feel safe and warm inside.

She asked her mother about the feeling and was surprised when she received both a laugh and a hug. “Oh, my darling daughter. Call it infatuation. Call it puppy love. Call it hormones. Whatever you call it, you’ve got it.”

After a full two months of serious dating, Sandy realized something. Many of her friends had spoken about boys with groping hands and wandering hands, even seriously intrusive hands. But, Bud hadn’t tried anything ‘funny’ with her. It wasn’t that she wanted that, but she was curious. It all seemed like a logical next step to kissing. Was there something wrong

with her?

When she brought the subject up with her mother that afternoon, Mrs. Swift's mouth gaped open and she stared at her daughter.

"Sandra Swift," she began.

*Oh-oh. I'm in trouble,* Sandy thought.

"First of all, that is exactly not the thing you spring on your poor mother. I'm not even certain you should ever talk to me about that sort of thing. I choose, however, to assume that you are merely curious in a hypothetical situation. And, one that you have not engaged in and do not plan to engage it. Right?"

They sat down and discussed some of the finer points of boy and girl relations. Sandy had received 'The Talk' when she turned twelve and Mother Nature had made it clear she was paying attention to the pre-teen. This was different. After composing herself, Mrs. Swift was frank and honest about what happens beyond just kissing.

The more she described things, the more Sandy realized that having a relationship like the one she and Bud shared entailed a lot of things she wasn't quite sure she was ready for.

By the end of the afternoon, she felt that she was well armed with facts and ideas. All of it hadn't stopped her wondering why Bud hadn't made any advanced moves on her. Her mother knew that Sandy's curiosity would get the better of her. Probably sooner than later. She sighed and decided that a more encompassing talk, with a visit to a doctor, was going to be needed in the near future.

Sandy went up to her room and thought over the situation. She liked Bud, lots and lots, and she knew Bud liked her. Again, lots and lots. Eventually the relationship had to move on. She just wasn't certain when. She decided to ask him that evening after they had dinner at a local pizza shop.

After finishing a large half-meat (Bud's choice) and half-veggie deluxe (Sandy's favorite) pizza, they walked arm in arm through the streets of downtown Shopton enjoying the lights, the people and the companionship.

Finally, getting up her nerve, Sandy stopped and faced Bud. She first kissed him to be certain she had his attention. Taking a deep breath, she blurted out, "Why haven't you ever tried to—" her bravado petered out at that point. "I mean, why haven't we ever, ummmm—" She took another breath and made another attempt. Lowering her voice, she asked, "Why haven't you ever tried to get past what Tom calls first base with me, Bud? Am I hideous or something?"

Bud had to sit down. Luckily there was a bus stop bench nearby. He sat there, practically panting while he sought an answer.

"Well. I really like you, Sandy. I even think I love you."

Sandy felt a searing heat in her face. Blood was thumping in her ears she was so excited by his words. She almost didn't hear the next ones.

"It's just that, well, what with you being Tom's sister, I've kinda felt like I needed to be on my best behavior. See?"

Her mouth fell open. Her head cocked to one side as she struggled to come to terms with what he had just said. Somehow the concept of 'love' and being his best friend's sister didn't come together. They banged around in her brain for a moment before she got a good grip on them and throttled them into submission.

"Bud? You said that you love me. Right?" He nodded. "Okay. Let's take that as a given truth. I, on the other side of this all, love you. I really do. I think I always have since like the day we met. Okay so far?" Bud's eyes had gone wide, but he nodded again. "Fine. So the only thing that's been holding you back is... is... Tom?"

Now Bud started to look miserable. Thoughts of how badly he might have just ruined things between him and Sandy were crashing around inside. He began to tremble.

Taking his right hand in both of hers, Sandy faced him and moved in very close. So close that he could feel her heart beating through the back of his wrist. Quietly, she said, “The solution is very clear to me, Budworth Barclay. Do not, and I can’t stress this strongly enough, do not under any circumstances see me as Tom’s sister. Okay? Good. When we are together, alone and maybe even more alone than this, you are to only remember that he and I share a last name. In fact, we could be no more than distant relatives or even perfect strangers.”

Bud gulped. He found that he was liking this Sandy.

“So,” she continued very softly and with affection, “I’m not ready right now to move beyond where we’re at, but when I am ready I want you to know that you will be the first one I tell. And then, what is it you will remember?”

Bud relaxed and grinned. “That you are not Tom’s sister. You are Sandy and you are my girlfriend and that’s all I need to remember.”

Sandy gave one big and emphatic nod. “Right-o, Bud-o,” she declared climbing into his lap. Throwing her arms around his neck she gave him a very emphatic kiss to seal the deal.