

The Bag

The bag was black and soft with a shoulder strap
It was full of books, paper, food, Passport, money, toilet paper
The usual
It was the custom for a man to carry a woman's bag in this new city
She wasn't sure she wanted to let it go the first time or the second or tenth
He asked to carry it the first night after class
He was very persuasive
She reluctantly handed it over
And allowed herself to be escorted home
That was just the beginning
He reminded her of handing it over many times,
She always forgot
He would say, "Luise, give it."
Like he said "Take it" in cards
She responded by giving it to him
It was easier each day they met
One day she was busy talking to students,
Carrying her bag to meet him,
He slipped up behind her quietly
Gently taking the bag out of her hand
Almost without disturbing her conversation
When she noticed him, the students she had been walking with dispersed
Leaving them alone
As usual
A woman her age alone with a man his age
Is unusual
This man likes to weave symbolic patterns of behavior
A deeper message imbedded in a simple act repeated many times
Has its effect
Dominance
Control
Possession
Symbolic possession
Symbolic control
Symbolic dominance
Of this woman
He's just carrying her bag
As usual

October 23, 1993 this little poem emerged from a simple kindness men show to older women in Kiev Ukraine.