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# Goldmun Et al

**By Sister Kathleen**

Otto Goldmun first became aware of the small group of youngsters late one afternoon as he made his way back to his tailor shop. He had been to the local deli to buy some bagels and lox for his mid-day meals for the next few days.

What brought them to his attention was the fact that it was shortly before three in the afternoon and as far as he knew, it was a school day, being that it was only a Tuesday in late September, and though it was rather chilly, none of the children were wearing proper coats or hats, which he thought odd. Surely their parents would never send their children out in such cold weather without first seeing that they were warmly dressed.

Goldmun stopped and gazed absently at them for a moment. There were four of them, two boys, one

about eighteen or so, short and thin and blonde and the other slightly younger, a deep ebony colored black boy about seventeen, and two girls, one about seventeen or eighteen with pretty brown hair and the beginnings of her pending womanhood, and the youngest, who had bright auburn hair, was about eight or nine at most he estimated.

He spoke to the older boy. "Why are you kinder not in school?" he asked quietly.

The boy, seeing no malice nor danger in Goldmun's benign presence, spoke, "We don't have to go to no school, no how, no way, Mister."

The other three nodded their heads in total agreement.

Goldmun shook his head in disbelief. "But it is just Tuesday, and it is the law," he replied.

"Naw," the boy demurred, "that law don't mean us."

"That's for other kids," the littlest girl replied. "Not us."

"Where do you live and why do you not have warm jackets and hats and mittens?" he asked.

"We don't live nowhere," the older boy replied sadly. "We ain't got no homes and no one who wants to buy us coats and food and things like that there," he stated matter-of-factly.

"But. . . but. . . where do you live? And sleep? Where do you eat? What do you eat?"

"Sometimes, if we're lucky and they ain't too busy, we get to stay at the one of the Missions, except that they don't like us younger kids hanging around with the older bums, but they do feed us

from time to time. Usually we just sell what we got to get money to eat.”

“Why, what do you have?” Goldmun asked incredulously, “I see nothing of value.”

The boy drew himself up proudly even though he was blushing. “Like I said, Mister, we sell what we gots!” He glared defiantly at the older man.

For a moment, Goldmun misunderstood. Then, it dawned on him. “You mean you actually sell yourselves? Your bodies?” he gasped in shock.

“Yeah, so what?” the boy defended. “No one cares nothing about us and we do what we gots to do to get by,” he replied off-handedly.

Suddenly, a police cruiser turned into the street and like a will-o-the-wisp, the four just vanished into the shadows. Goldmun waved at the Police, shook his head and when they failed to reappear, continued down the street. The four children were still on his mind when he closed shop for the day.

One of his late afternoon customers, Jerrald Schumacher, had complained that he had been accosted by a gang of cut-throats that very afternoon not two blocks from Otto’s shop. Upon further questioning, Goldmun discovered that the “cut-throats” had been a wandering band of four younger children, two boys and two girls, who had stopped him to ask for money. Jerrald, being terrified out of his mind, having recently escaped the war and terror that was ravishing his homeland, had handed the oldest boy a ten dollar bill, after which they had run off. Goldmun realized that they were the same four he had seen earlier and he wondered why they had not asked him for money too.

Over the next few days, Goldmun heard stories of pilferage and break-ins of certain businesses, but no reports of anything of any great value being taken except for some cast-off clothing and food items. In fact, it seemed to Goldmun that most of the break-ins occurred on the colder nights and he deduced that whoever was doing the breaking and entering was merely seeking refuge from the worsening cold.

Strangely enough, Goldmun's shop was spared a break-in, partly because he lived up-stairs over his shop and many nights he just leaned back in his recliner chair in the rear of the shop, pulled an old woolen blanket over his body and slept right where he worked!

In his travels up and down the street, Goldmun saw the four children from time to time, but they would not let him get close enough to talk to them. Not that he had any pretensions of being a "do-gooder" nor a "child exploiter," rather he was concerned about their physical welfare. Goldmun knew well the feelings of being homeless and cold and hungry in a land where such people are ignored as a matter of course, those who were well-off having contemptuous, derisive thoughts regarding these "worthless," "lazy" bums who infested their orderly, well-fed, well-clothed and warm world!

Goldmun had been one of the homeless thousands after the Big War, and lived hand to mouth for some years, often going cold and hungry because there was nothing to be had for anyone. Goldmun had been just eight years old when the American Army had liberated his concentration camp and turned the former detainees loose on an already war-torn countryside. It wasn't until the late 1940's

that he had come under the purview of a U.S. reconstruction agency that had arranged for him to be apprenticed to a tailor, a German-Jew, who lived in the city of Berlin. Goldmun had proved to be a bright, apt student and the old German had hoped that his apprentice would take over someday when he was too old to work.

But, alas, the old man's fondest dreams were almost dashed when Goldmun, on his twenty-first birthday, had announced that he was migrating to the Land of Opportunity, where the streets were paved with gold and there was more food than could be eaten by any ten people! Beautiful women abounded in this Paradise, and Goldmun longed for a wife and children and a home above all else.

He was determined to emigrate to the United States!

Not to be denied, the old man had sold his business and accompanied Goldmun to the USA where he soon bought a tailor shop from an estate and they set up business there. When the old man died, he left the business to Goldmun who then began his quiet quest for the American Dream. Sophia Gutzmun soon became Mrs. Goldmun and in due time, she gave birth to their only child, a son they named "Otto" after Goldmun's late business partner.

With increasing prosperity came the last parts of Goldmun's dream - he bought a home in Levittown — a white with dark chocolate trim, two bedroom bungalow, with curtains at the windows and grass all around and a picket fence and a bar-be-que in the back-yard and a dog and best of all, it was only a short ride on the L.I.R.R. from his tailor shop!

Goldmun was content at last.

Until the day some years later that he arrived home only to find that there was no more home to come home to! Something to do with faulty electrical wiring had started the house on fire and it had then burned to the ground, taking Sophia, Little Otto, dog, bar-be-que, dreams and all with it!

Sick at heart, Goldmun had taken refuge in a whiskey bottle, barely rising out of the whiskey fumes long enough to keep going. He had finally joined AA and slowly dried himself out, remaining sober ever since. Having no other place to go, he had begun to live in his shop and had done so for some years before the beginning of this story.

One particularly cold night in mid October, Goldmun thought that he heard scuffling noises and muffled voices coming from his basement, but when he investigated, he found nothing, so he put it down to the rats that roamed the city. He tucked his wool blanket protectively around his body and went back to sleep. The next morning when he went to check his stash of bagels and lox, he discovered that someone, or something, had pilfered his last bagel! The crumbs on the floor told the story plainly. Whatever or whoever it was, they had eaten his last bagel and he was left with the crumbs!

Muttering, Goldmun made his way down the street to Max's deli where he purchased six more bagels and some more lox. As he was leaving, he stopped in front of the pastries counter where some fresh, fluffy cream-puffs cried out to him. Goldmun had always had a sweet tooth, especially for fresh, fluffy cream-puffs, so he splurged and bought two, intending to have one with his afternoon tea and the other for breakfast the next morning.

On the way back to his shop, he saw the four children digging through the dumpster behind the deli and he noticed that they were not quite so raggedy and thread-bare as they had been. Obviously they had found some sort of resource to furnish them with warmer clothing!

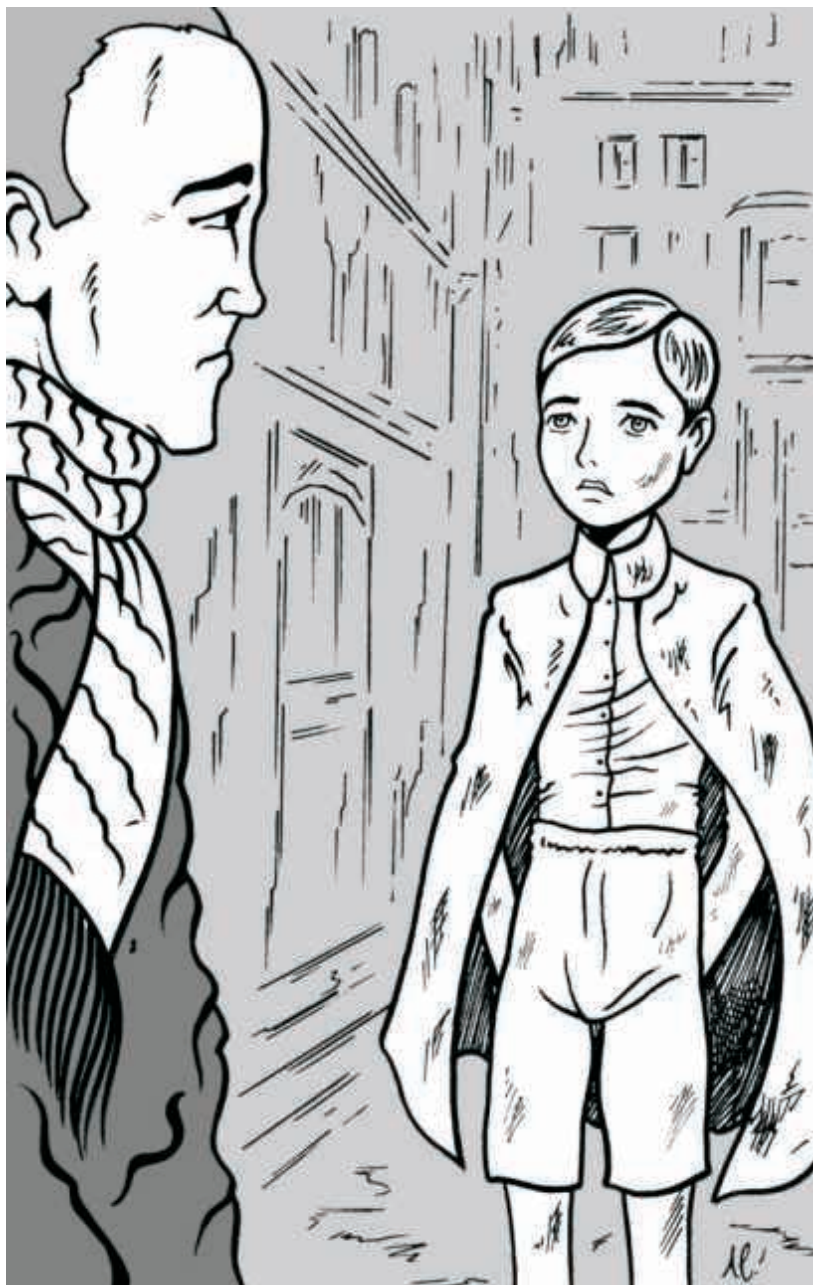
Goldmun gave them no more thought until the next morning when he discovered that not only was his cream-puff missing, but so were the five remaining bagels and all the lox! He felt angry for his loss, but then began to mull it over. 'Maybe the rats I hear aren't rats after all!' he thought. "Maybe the noises had been caused by cold children seeking warmth for the night!"

The thought made him angrier still. To think that four innocent children had to resort to such subterfuges in order to survive! To make it even worse, it reminded Goldmun of his own experiences when he had been "liberated" by the American troops.

As he was returning from the deli after having replenished his supply of bagels and lox and one more cream-puff, Goldmun saw the four running along the street with a mangy hound chasing them. He recognized the hound as belonging to the deli owner, a mean-spirited man named Max Buchmun who seemed to resent everyone. Picking up a stick from the gutter, Goldmun soon chased the dog away and took a look at them.

Immediately, from the powdered sugar still clinging to her lips, he knew that his cream-puff had found its way into the hungry stomach of the younger girl and suddenly, he didn't regret its loss as much as he had.

“Ho, Liebchen,” he called in a friendly voice, “did you like my cream-puff?”



Startled, the little girl nodded before the others could stop her. “Yeah,” she squeaked.

“Vunderbar!” Goldmun exclaimed jovially. “I have a surprise for you. How would you like another cream puff just like it?”

The little girl nodded eagerly. “I’d like it!” she grinned.

Wordlessly, Goldmun handed her the bag containing his cream-puff. “And, no sooner said than done! Here you are, Liebchen!”

“Gee, thanks, Mister,” she replied, opening the bag and taking it out reverently. “No one never not ever gave me nothing like this before, not never!”

“And for the rest of you,” Goldmun stated, “I have a bag of bagels and some fresh lox for all of us to enjoy!”

The older boy stepped forward. “What’s the catch, Mister?” he demanded. “There ain’t not no free rides and for damn sure no free lunches, th’out we gots to pay with sumthin’!”

Goldmun stared at the boy in shock. “Why. . . there is no catch, as you put it, my boy. I’m merely sharing my bagels and the lox so that you don’t have to steal them from me tonight.”

“We ain’t not never stolen nothing from you no how, Mister,” the boy denied heatedly.

“A quintuple negative!” Goldmun sighed. “Have you not been staying in my basement these past few nights? And have you not taken my bagels and lox and cream puff while I was fast asleep?”

“We found that stuff!” the boy declared stoutly.

“Yes, I have no doubt you did, in my small fridge!”

“We was hungry,” defiantly, doggedly.

“If you had asked, I would have shared,” Goldmun replied.

“Yeah, sure you would,” the boy sneered, “and I’m the Queen of the May!”

Goldmun laughed jovially. “Picture that!”

“Well, I am. . . er, I mean, I was. . . once. . .” he insisted.

“Was, what?” Now he had piqued Goldmun’s interest.

“Queen of the May,” the boy replied petulantly.

Goldmun stared at the boy, seeing the smooth, almost hairless body for the first time. In their past encounters, he had merely seen a dirty faced, ragged boy child in great need. Now that he had accepted the boy as an individual, he was surprised at his new observation.

He saw a seventeen or eighteen year old boy, scarcely five feet nothing tall, just skin and bones, barely tipping the scales at a hundred pounds, if that, with dirty, scraggly, ash-blond hair, clear, blue eyes, a sprinkling of freckles across his slightly retrousée nose, his bee-stung lips full and sensuous, his teeth in dire need of brushing and God knew what else! Had Goldmun not known otherwise, he could easily have taken the boy for a teen aged girl, and a very pretty one at that!!

“So?” Goldmun raised his eyebrows questioningly. “Are you going to tell me about it or are you just going to leave me wondering?”

“It was April a year ago when my Mom was still alive. They were having a block party in honor of May Day, and Mom and I got the idea of entering the contest. The first prize was a hundred dollars and God knows, we sure needed it!”

“I heard about it,” Goldmun admitted sadly, “but I was unable to go myself. I hear it was a great success. Mr. Soong’s daughter, Mai Lei, was an entrant and she was awarded second prize. Mr. Soong talked about it for days after!”

“Oh, I remember an oriental girl who was dressed as a harem slave who got second prize. Was that her?” he asked.

“The very one,” Goldmun agreed.

“Well, we worked on our costumes and when I was dressed, I looked just like a girl! Mom was so happy. I had never seen her so happy before. She told me that ever since she was a little girl that she had wanted a daughter to love, but that I came along instead. But, she always told me that she loved me and wouldn’t trade me for anything!

“On the day of the contest, I was chosen as a finalist and got to ride in the Prince’s carriage with the Fairy Prince over on Second Avenue! At the final judging, I was chosen as Queen and given the first prize check for a hundred dollars.”

“I just wish I could have gone! I would have loved to see you in your pretty costume with your Prince Charming,” Goldmun remonstrated. “What did you buy with the money?”

“Mom used it to pay the rent on our flat.

“And after that, I dressed up for her frequently and she and I made lots of costumes for me to wear for her.”

He stopped, tears glistening as they slid unchecked across his creamy cheeks.

“Then what happened,” Goldmun asked, touched deeply.

“This last July, Mom came down with some kind of disease and died on the charity ward at Bellevue. The landlord kicked me out and I didn’t not have no where else to go.”

Goldmun was shocked. “Didn’t you keep anything? I mean, like shoes, warm coats, mittens, underwear?” he asked.

The boy shook his head. “Naw, the guy wouldn’t not let me take nothing. Said he was keeping it all for the back rent,” he explained.

“Why. . . why. . .” Goldmun stammered, “that’s heartless and illegal!”

“Yeah, well, he did it anyway. Law don’t mean nothing much around here.”

“Who was this heartless wretch?” Goldmun demanded.

“Mr. Naish Scronzainnia on Pearl Street, the second hand store owner.”

“Ah, yes, I know him well. . .” Goldmun mused. “I shall look into it.”

“Yeah, you do that,” the boy replied sarcastically.

“In the meantime, would the four of you like to dine with me? We will go to Soongs’, the Chinese restaurant next to my store and have a decent meal. Mr. Soong is the harem girl’s father.” he explained.

“What’s the catch?” the older boy asked again, skeptically.

“Goldmun started in surprise. “Why, no catch, like I told you before.”

“G’wan! No body gives out free meals without they wants something in return,” the boy exclaimed angrily. “Don’ try ta snow us, old man!”

“My dear boy,” Goldmun replied, stung by his sharp words, “believe it or not, there was a time in my early life when I too was cold and hungry and desperate for. . .”

“Bull crap!” the boy snorted skeptically.

“Yes, young man, after the German pogroms of the late War, I was captured and made a prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp and I still have the scars and the tattoo to prove it!” He pushed up his one sleeve to show the black number tattooed on the front of his forearm. They looked at it in awe.

“After the war in Europe, I was a homeless refugee. I had no parents, no home, no relatives and no resources until the Army helped me and I was apprenticed to a tailor in Berlin. I eventually came to America with mine partner and we bought our own shop. When my mentor died, I inherited the tailor shop. Then, I got married, had a beautiful wife and a handsome son, a nice home out in Levittown, a dog, grass to mow, the whole ball of wax! We were very happy there, Sophia and I.”

“So, what happened? We know you stay in your shop all the time.”

“Fire. It took everything,” Goldmun replied laconically.

“Gee, Mister, the older girl interjected, “I’m sorry.”

“Thank you,” Goldmun replied, wiping a tear from his eye. After a moment, he went on, “First of all, my name is Otto Goldmun but everyone calls me just plain Goldmun.”

“OK, Mr. Goldman,” the girl agreed.

“No, no, not Goldman, Goldmun. Means the same thing, I suppose, but I much prefer the latter spelling. However, I will answer to either from those who do not know any different.”

“I’m sorry, Mr. . . er, Goldmun, I didn’t not know.”

Goldmun smiled. “You know, you almost gave poor Mr. Schumacher a heart attack the other day.” He saw the puzzlement in their eyes. “You know, the man who gave you the ten dollar bill.”

“Oh, him,” the boy acknowledged. “All we wanted was a few bucks to buy some food.”

“I know that,” Goldmun admitted, “but poor Mr. Schumacher didn’t.”

“Yeah, well, I guess we did look kinda scarey. . .” the boy admitted with a shy grin.

“And it is almost Halloween,” Goldmun reminded.

“Yeah, big deal.”

“Also,” Goldmun continued, “why did you run when the police car came down the street the other day? You had done nothing wrong and there was no reason to be afraid of them.”

“Yeah, well, you, maybe, but they hassle us because we’re street kids,” the older boy explained with disgust.

“Hassle?”

“Yeah, we’ve been run in three or four times and it’s a bitch getting loose from The City welfare people!” he muttered as they neared Goldmun’s block.

“Ah, here we are. Now remember, Mr. Soong is a very traditional Chinese gentleman and he likes his customers to be polite and appreciate his wife’s cooking. So please, be on your best behavior.”

They entered and Goldmun seated them all at a large table near the kitchen from which wafted the most delicious smells. The other customers pretended not to notice the shaggy appearance of the small group. A very short Asian man approached them hesitantly. “Are you sure you’re. . .” Then he caught sight of Goldmun in the gloom of the room. “Ah, so, Goldmun! I have not seen you in some time.”

Mr. Soong and Goldmun were close friends and partners of a sort. While each man maintained his own business and holdings, both collaborated in many of their investments and had become very wealthy men as a result. However, neither boasted of his success and were seldom bothered by those human leeches who are always sniffing around money. They shared an avid interest in chess and had been chess opponents for many years.

“Are these children relatives of yours, Goldmun?” he asked gently.

Goldmun nodded. “Why, yes, they are my nieces and nephews from the old country and it has been a long time since we have last visited. They have just arrived in the city today.”

Mr. Soong nodded, recognizing the four from many forays into his dumpster. “Ah, so.” He bowed

politely. "And what would you like to eat today, please?" he asked pleasantly.

"Mr. Soong," Goldmun broke in, "just bring us enough food for five hungry persons and use your own judgment about what you bring."

Mr. Soong smiled wisely and bowed anew. "Ah, so, and so shall it be done!" Turning, he clapped his hands and a tiny, smiling Asian girl appeared. She carried a large tea pot and five small, handleless cups on a tea tray. She placed a cup before each of them, curtsayed and poured tea for each of them. Goldmun took a sip and sighed with contentment.

"Ah, nectar of the Gods, Liebchen!"

The girl smiled, curtsayed anew and disappeared into the kitchen.

Mr. Soong nodded at the tea cups. "Is from China!" he smiled, as if that explained everything.

"Wow!" the older boy whispered. "This is good!"

"Have you ever had Chinese food before?" Goldmun asked.

He nodded. "Yes, in my old neighborhood there was a place where Mom and I used to go from time to time. It served very good food!"

"OK, children," Goldmun began seriously. "I want to know each one of your names and I would like each one of you to tell me a little about yourself." He sat back, waiting.

"All right," the first boy began. "First of all, my name is Johann Watson and I will be seventeen years old next month. I don't go to school because I don't have a permanent address. As far as I know, I have no close relatives in The City, nor would I live with them if I did!" He crossed his arms across his

chest belligerently. "I been living on the streets since July because I gots no place else to go to and live. So there!"

Goldmun nodded and turned to the older girl. "My dear?" he prompted.

"OK, my name is Kathleen Snyder. . . er. . . Smith and my step-father kicked me out in July because I wouldn't let the dirty s.o.b. have another piece of my ass! God, I would rather have died than submit to that bastard again! I hit him with a baseball bat! Knocked him out cold! I thought I had killed him, but I didn't. Damn the luck!" she cursed. "Anyway, when he complained about me to the cops, they arrested him for rape and he was sent up-state. He's in a maxey-max joint now. Good riddance, I say. It serves the old bastard right! I'm glad he's in jail! I hope they keep him there for a hundred years!"

"And where was your Mother and Father all this time?" Goldmun asked, shocked.

"Mom died in June and my Father took off long before I was born. Anyway, I will be eighteen the day before Thanksgiving and I hate living in the street!" She lowered her head and Goldmun could see her shoulders shaking.

He turned to the black boy. "And you?"

"My old man named me Jerome J. Jerome. The 'J.' stands for Jerome. The old man had a weird sense of humor. I'm going on sixteen years old and I can't live with the old man and his girl friends because I am in their way. So here I am."

"How long have you been in the street?" Goldmun asked gently.

"Since last June," was the choked reply.

Goldmun turned to the smallest girl. “And you, Liebchen?”

“I don’t want to talk about it!” she declared as she started to cry, her tears leaving long streaks down her dirty cheeks.

Kathleen broke in. “Her name is Darling Joy March and she’s only eight years old. Her Mom’s boy friend raped her repeatedly all last spring and early summer and when she complained to her Mom’s social worker, he was arrested and sent to prison Up-State. He’s in the same joint as my step-father. Her Mom insisted that it was all Darling Joy’s fault and told her to get out in late August.”

“My good God!” Goldmun exclaimed. “Such horrible people there are in this world!”

Darling Joy nodded in confirmation.

“Are you all right now, child?” Goldmun asked, concerned.

Kathleen and Darling Joy nodded in unison.

“Yeah. . . sort of. . .” Kathleen added, then would say no more.

They looked up as Mr. Soong appeared with several steaming bowls. The girl returned with some smaller bowls and soup-spoons which she placed before each of them. Mr. Soong ladled soup into the bowls and when the girl had placed warmed plates before each of them, he dished up piles of steaming meat and vegetables. The girl refilled their tea cups, curtsayed and stepped back.

Mr. Soong hovered over them like a mother hen until each had sampled his fare. Then, as smiles of enjoyment wreathed their faces, he grinned and retired.

“Hey, not bad!” Johann exclaimed. “It’s better than I remembered.”

“I ain’t never had nothing like this before,” Kathleen admitted, “but it’s darn good!

“Yeah,” Jerome murmured, his spoon working overtime to keep up with his swallows!

“Here, here, slow down, Jerome!” Goldmun exclaimed, laughing. “I promise you, if we manage to eat all this, Mr. Soong has gallons more in his kitchen! Besides, if you fill up on soup, you will have no room for the meat and vegetables!” After a moment, he added, “Nor for Chinese ice cream dessert!”

Jerome blushed and looked up. “I’m sorry,” he apologized. “I was hungry.”

Darling Joy smiled and giggled as she ate daintily, obviously enjoying every bite.

And as soon as they had emptied one dish, Mr. Soong or his daughter reappeared with a new one, a full one, to tempt their appetites.

Goldmun finally pushed his plate back and sat back in his chair. “Oy, vey! I don’t know about the rest of you, but I am stuffed like a Thanksgiving turkey!” he boasted.

“Me too!” Darling Joy exclaimed. “And it feels good!”

“It sure does,” Kathleen admitted, sitting back and patting her full stomach.

“Yeah, better than a poke in the eye with a sharp stick!” Johann laughed.

“Amen to that!” Goldmun agreed with a smile.

Jerome, however, continued eating steadily and Goldmun wondered where he was putting it all.

“You must have two hollow arms and four hollow legs!” he told the grinning boy who kept right on eating.

“The boy is just hungry after all his travels,” Mr. Soong laughed as he ladled more meat and vegetables onto Jerome’s plate and refilled his tea cup.

“I’d like a bit more of that tea, Mr. Soong,” Goldmun sighed. “It is so delicious!”

“Is from China!” Mr. Soong emphasized again, as if that explained everything!

Darling Joy was beginning to nod sleepily like all small animals do when their little tummies are completely full. She leaned over and laid her head atop Goldmun’s thigh, asleep before her head was all the way down.

Dessert was finally served and three of the four children swallowed it all greedily, their spoons scraping the bottoms of the bowls to capture that last bit of delicious sweetness.

Goldmun looked at the three children, then asked, “Well, what am I to do with you? It is quite obvious that I cannot just turn you loose to roam the streets and get yourselves into more trouble stealing my bagels and lox, so I guess you shall just have to come home and live with me.”

“Hey, wait just a minute there,” Johann exclaimed. “What’s the catch, Goldmun?” he demanded. “No body takes in no body for nothing! What do you want from us?”

Goldmun looked at him in surprise. “My dear Johann, I want nothing from any of you. I just want to help you in the same way that I would have liked to have been helped when I was in similar straits in

my youth, and that's the truth. Come on, what do you say? Believe me, I really have no ulterior motive and you certainly have nothing to lose."

"What's that? Ul-teer-e-or. . . motive?" he asked, shaking his head in bewilderment.

"It means that there is no catch and that I neither want nor expect anything from any one of you in return. I just want to help, that's all," Goldmun confessed, blushing slightly.

"Well, OK," Johann agreed skeptically, "but no funny stuff or out we go!"

"Agreed," Goldmun smiled as he awakened Darling Joy. He paid Mr. Soong and they went next door to the tailor shop. Inside, an old tabby cat rubbed up against Goldmun's leg and meowed in hunger.

"Oh, dear," Goldmun exclaimed, "I completely forgot about Horatio!"

"Horatio?" Darling Joy asked, kneeling and petting the cat's back gently.

"Yes, it's from Shakespeare, you know," he explained.

"Who's Shakespeare?" the little girl asked, puzzled.

"He was some writer way back in the day," Kathleen explained.

"Oh," the girl agreed, promptly forgetting all about Shakespeare. "Can I feed Mr. Horatio, Mr. Goldmun?" she asked innocently.

"Yes," he agreed, nodding. "You will find cans of his favorite food in the cabinet and an opener on the shelf up above."

Darling Joy scrambled to get the can open and soon Horatio was eating contentedly as the little girl petted him affectionately.

Goldmun looked on fondly. "Darn cat!" he muttered. "Lives the life of ease, and while the rest of us have to work for a living, he just lays around, catches a mouse now and then and gets fatter and fatter. Now I ask you, what's wrong with this picture?"

"But he's only a cat!" Darling Joy commented sagely. "What does he know?"

Goldmun smiled. "Exactly!"

"Well, I don't see why he has to work anyway," she concluded, petting him anew.

"Johann, you mentioned something about making and sewing some costumes with your Mother. Do you like to sew?" Goldmun asked.

Johann nodded eagerly. "Yeah, I sure do!" he exclaimed excitedly.

"How would you like to work with me and learn how to be a tailor?"

"Nah, you only make men's things and I only like making girls' stuff."

Goldmun laughed. "My boy, sewing is sewing. If you can sew for one sex, you can sew for the other. All it takes is training and patience and lots of practice. Myself, I worked for a tailor in Berlin when I was a boy about your age and he catered to both men and women, as I do to this day. I always make the clothes I am paid to make and the quality of my work is the same whether for a man or for a woman. And so it would be for you while you are learning. When you have progressed to the status of Master

Craftsman, you can work for which ever you choose. But first, you must learn the fundamentals, the tricks of the trade, as it were. Only then can you specialize.”

Johann nodded. “I never thought of it that way before,” he admitted.

“Well, give it a try and I shall pay you for your work which will allow you to look after your little brood.”

“I’ll have to think it over,” Johann mused.

“You do that, my boy,” Goldmun agreed, shaking the boy’s out-stretched hand.

“Could I learn too, Goldmun?” Kathleen asked shyly.

Goldmun looked at her in surprise, his mouth wreathing into a wide grin. “But of course, child,” he enthused. “But, there is one condition. . . .”

“I knew it!” Johann snorted. There’s always a catch.”

“Yes, you must go back to school and learn all you can while you can! If nothing else, you must graduate high school!”

“Go to school?” the four echoed in disbelief.

“Go to school,” Goldmun affirmed.

“Naw, we don’t wanna do that!” Johann demurred. “We don’t need no school no way!”

“Tell me Johann, can you convert yards to meters or millimeters to inches? Can you convert pounds and ounces to grams and kilograms? Do you know the difference between American clothing sizes and European clothing sizes as opposed to Japanese or Chinese sizes? Which is worth more, a pound of sil-

ver or a pound of platinum? Who makes the best fabrics and how do you tell? Can you convert dollars to euros or yens? Hmmm? Riddle me that!”

“Maybe I don’t know none of that stuff, but so what?” Johann demanded.

“Johann,” Kathleen interjected, “I think what Goldmun means is that we have to learn about what we are doing in order to do it with any kind of expertise!”

“Exactly!” Goldmun agreed.

“Yeah, I guess. . . maybe. . . makes sense. . .” the boy was half convinced.

“Makes sense to me,” Jerome admitted.

“Yeah, I wouldn’t not mind going back to school,” Darling Joy admitted shyly. “I kind of miss going. . . now.”

“All right then,” Goldmun smiled. “Shall we put you in the up-stairs bedrooms or would you rather sleep in the cellar with the rest of the rats?” he teased.

Darling Joy shuddered. “If it’s all the same with you, Mr. Goldmun,” she quavered shyly, “I’d just as soon sleep up-stairs away from the rats!”

“Fine! Follow me!” And Goldmun led the four of them up the back stairs and into his vacant home. There were two bedrooms and Goldmun decided to put both girls in his old bedroom and the two boys into the smaller one, the one with bunk beds.

“Hey! Neato!” Jerome cried. “I call dibs on the top bunk!”

“Suits me,” Johann replied, laughing shyly.

“So long as you are both happy!” Goldmun laughed. “Now, there’re some clean towels and wash cloths in the linen closet and plenty of soap and shampoo in the bath. There are six new tooth brushes in the drawer and a new tube of toothpaste on the counter. So what I want you to do now is either shower or take a bath. Just make sure you wash and comb your hair and brush your teeth. OK?” he asked, looking at each child in turn.

“All right,” Johann agreed.

“Sure, Goldmun,” Jerome chimed in.

“Oh, yes, I would dearly love a bath!” Kathleen sighed.

“Me too!” Darling Joy exclaimed excitedly.

“Fine, when you’re all done, come on down to the shop and wait for me. I have a little errand to run while you’re getting cleaned up.”

“But, Goldmun,” Kathleen protested, “we don’t have any clean clothes. What’s the use of getting clean if we have to wear the same old dirty clothes?”

“I never thought of that,” Goldmun admitted. “Let me see, there are some things that my Sophia kept here that should help you out, and the clothes she kept here for our little Otto will do for Darling Joy. The problem will be Johann and Jerome. As I see it, they can either wear some of my clothes, which would be miles too big, or they can wear some of my late wife’s clothes! I’m sure she had some boyish things that would be suitable attire for a real boy.”

Johann blushed. “Makes no never mind to me,” he asserted boldly.

“I’ll find something,” Jerome agreed.

“Then it is all settled?” Goldmun looked from one to the other. “Very well, I shall return as soon as possible.”

There was a chorus of “Good byes” from the children and Goldmun was gone.

An hour later, he had visited Mr. Scronzainnia on Pearl Street and negotiated a rather lucrative settlement thereof. In return for Goldmun’s promise not to prosecute Scronzainnia for his illegal act in evicting a minor child without direct knowledge and permission from the lawful authorities, the prompt return of all of said minor’s confiscated property and a certified check in the amount of five thousand dollars, it would all go away.

Faced with almost certain financial ruin in defending himself against a lawsuit of such a great legal magnitude, Scronzainnia had been more than eager to facilitate its disappearance. Reluctantly, he shook Goldmun’s out-stretched hand to seal their bargain.

That next afternoon, a moving van pulled up in front of Goldmun’s shop and two burly delivery men demanded, “Where is this stuff supposed to go?”

Goldmun looked in the back of the van and saw it about half full of black plastic bags, some framed pictures, a couple of chests, three steamer trunks and various other furniture objects one would expect to find in an apartment. He directed the two men to carry it all up-stairs and place it in the upper living room.

They grumbled and groaned, but when they were done, the fifty dollar bill Goldmun gave each worker more than made up for any perceived inconvenience to them and they went away smiling.

The four children watched goggle-eyed as each item was carried up the outside entrance stair and stacked inside, but Goldmun would not answer any of their questions. He just smiled at them and told them they would have to wait.

He was amazed at the change in the four. Cleaned up and dressed in clean clothes, they looked quite angelic in his eyes. Even Johann wearing one of his late wife's print dresses acted right at home in skirts! And Jerome had found a pair of his late wife's jeans and an armless muscle shirt and looked quite presentable and appropriately male.

When the workmen had left, Goldmun locked the front door of the shop and went up the stair with Horatio and the children following.

Up-stairs, Goldmun looked at Johann. "Johann, my boy, I want you to go through each of these bags of things very carefully. If you find anything at all missing, tell me. OK?"

"What's this?" Johann asked suspiciously.

"I made an agreement with Scronzainnia that if he returned all your Mother's property, I would not prosecute him in criminal court. Further, the workmen who delivered your property also brought me this certified check for five thousand dollars from Scronzainnia to compensate you for any adverse pain and suffering he may have inadvertently caused you by his illegal act."

"You're kidding!" Johann blurted in surprise. "Is this really all my Mom's stuff?"

Goldmun nodded. "Look and see," he invited, waving his hand airily.

For the next hour, Johann opened bag after bag and sorted through his memories. He was crying openly long before he had reached the final bag.

“Well?” Goldmun demanded gruffly to keep from crying himself.

Johann nodded. “I think it’s all there. I found all her jewelry in her jewelry box and her make-up and all the costumes we made and our patterns and the folded cloth and all our sewing things and her sewing machine and all the pots and pans and dishes and silverware and the small appliances and everything from the kitchen and all our towels and sheets and pillow slips and our blankets and all our clothes and coats and hats and shoes and belts and gloves and underwear and I don’t think anything is missing! Even Mom’s pictures on the wall and all her photographs are here! Some of the furniture is missing, but it wasn’t worth much anyway. Otherwise, I think it’s all here!” He gazed at Goldmun with a strange light in his eyes and he leaned over the man and kissed him squarely on his surprised lips!

This so surprised Goldmun that he grabbed the boy and held him close, kissing him in return as fiercely as he was being kissed!

“Oh, thank you, Goldmun! I can never thank you enough for all you have done for me today! If there is ever anything I can do to help repay you, just ask! And I do mean, anything, no matter what it is, just ask!” he whispered fervently.

Goldmun patted the rounded bottom affectionately. “My boy,” he replied hoarsely, “You must be very careful of what you promise because some people might take advantage of your generosity!”

“Yes, Mr. Goldmun, I know.” After a moment, he added, “And, yes, I did mean that too!”

Goldmun blushed as the import of the boy’s promise penetrated his conscious.

“There’s so much stuff here,” Johann continued. “There’s more than I can ever use! How about if we sort through it and anything that can be used here, we’ll keep. Then we will sort the clothes and share everything between the five of us. The rest we’ll give to the Salvation Army or something. OK?”

“Hot damn!” Jerome exclaimed excitedly, “It’s just like Christmas!”

Goldmun just smiled at that. Christmas was not a part of his world.

The next morning, Goldmun made a phone call and soon after they were on their way up-town to see about their schooling in a private educational institution where there would be few, if any, questions asked. Arrangements were made to transfer records from their previous schools and the four were started immediately, the principal assuring Goldmun that they would be delivered home by the school’s private bus at the end of the school day, which would then return to pick them up in front of his shop promptly at 7:30 the next morning and every school day thereafter.

Arriving home, Goldmun asked his friend, Mr. Soong to join him in his shop. After talking awhile, they agreed that the children should stay with Goldmun, but only if Goldmun agreed to Mr. Soong taking an active hand in their welfare.

As they talked, they were hunched over a chess board, small tea cups clasped in their hands as they contemplated their next moves.

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Unfortunately, a customer entered the shop and when he left an hour later after placing an order for a new suit and two sport coats, Goldmun had lost all of his concentration and was quickly mated by Mr. Soong, who chuckled happily.

“Ah, Goldmun, once again Chinese superiority has proven your undoing!” he chortled.

“Oy, vey! I let you win so you wouldn’t feel so bad after that drubbing I gave you the other day!”

“Ah, so,” Mr. Soong replied, bowing slightly.

About then, the bell over the front door tinkled and the four children trooped noisily into the shop, all talking at once.

Goldmun laughed and held up his hand. “One at a time, please! Why don’t you go first, Darling Joy, since you’re the youngest. How was school?”

“Oh, Mr. Goldmun, I didn’t not want to leave never! I wanted to stay and color some more! They have all sorts of colors of crayons and I got to use every one of them! And I got to play the piano as much as I wanted! It was great!” she enthused.

“Jerome?”

“Out standing! They have these math and physics classes that are so neat!”

“And Johann and me are taking sewing class together!” Kathleen added excitedly.

“Yeah, and I’m the only guy in the class with all those beautiful girls!” Johann laughed.

“Women, dummy, women!” Kathleen insisted, punching his arm.

“What ever! They looked like girls to me!” Johann laughed, dodging Kathleen’s flashing palm. “Ya missed me, ya missed me! You’re so slow you couldn’t catch cold!” he teased as he danced about.

“Just wait until you’re not looking, boy, and you’ll see just what I can catch!” Kathleen threatened in a typical sisterly fashion. “Don’t say I didn’t warn you!”

“OK, OK,” Goldmun soothed. “Up the stairs with all of you and change out of your school clothes and into your work togs! You have things to put away and Johann and Kathleen have got to start working on their sewing in the tailor shop, so scoot, all of you!”

Laughing with delight, they ran pell mell, whooping with glee, up the stairs. Goldmun looked at Mr. Soong and shrugged his shoulders helplessly. “Oy, vey!” he muttered.

“Oy, vey, indeed,” Mr. Soong agreed. “But remember, Goldmun, you asked for it!”

“I suppose,” Goldmun answered wistfully, trying unsuccessfully to look greatly put-upon.

“Tomorrow, you shall join me at a proper chess board at my restaurant and my wife will serve us proper Chinese tea, not that imitation stuff you brew!”

“Why you Oriental crook!” Goldmun yelled. “You sold it to me!”

“Ah, so, you round eyes are so gullible!” Mr. Soong teased as he let himself out.

Moments later, Johann and Kathleen reappeared, both wearing an appropriate dress and heels that used to belong to Johann’s Mother. Goldmun

said nothing about their choice of attire, but put them to work repairing some clothes that had been left earlier. He watched closely as the two deftly repaired each garment while he worked on the new suit, until everything was finished, pressed, bagged in a fresh plastic bag and awaiting pick-up.

Goldmun was quite pleased with the high quality of their repairs.

Kathleen sidled up to the man, asking, "Mr. Goldmun? Can you settle an argument that Johann and I have?"

"I can but try, Liebchen," he told her. "What is it that troubles you two so much?"

"It's about Johann and me wearing dresses and all," Kathleen began.

"And, so? It's his choice and I give him my blessing. He's not hurting anyone and it is not illegal. So what's the problem?"

"Oh, she wants me to wear a bra and panties and a slip and maybe a girdle and make-up and finger-nail polish and perfume and earrings and fix my hair and wear nylons and heels and all like that," Johann explained.

"And why is that, Kathleen, my Liebchen?" Goldmun pressed.

"Dresses are for girls and women, not boys and men!" Kathleen snorted. "If he's going to wear a dress and look like a woman, he should go all the way and look and be as much of a woman as he can be! I mean, I have to be completely dressed inside and out and made-up, so why not him too? It isn't fair that he gets to skate!"

“Sounds reasonable to me,” Goldmun mused. He turned his gaze on the blushing boy. “And why do you object, Liebchen?” he asked gently.

“Because she laughs at me when I can’t put the make-up on straight, and besides, my ear lobes are not pierced!” he exclaimed.

“Then you have no objection to wearing the clothing she asks?”

“Course not! I wore all that for my Mom and I’m even wearing it now. See?” And he pulled his skirt up around his waist to show that he was indeed wearing a girl’s lacy pink nylon panties! Too, the garters from a dainty garter belt hung down under the legs of the panties to hold up his sheer nylon stockings. Goldmun was surprised to see a rounded mound between his legs with no sign of the male! He also noticed the three inch high heel opera pumps the boy wore on his smallish feet. Johann pulled the top of his dress aside to show that he had on a pink nylon slip and a dainty, pink lace padded bra too. “It’s the make-up I have trouble with!”

“Then it seems to me that if Kathleen wants you to be all woman that she should be willing to teach you the proper make-up that you need to go with your ensembles,” Goldmun pointed out.

“Yeah, I can do that!” Kathleen agreed readily. “But you will have to learn how to do it all yourself so that I don’t have to do it all the time.”

“I think Johann will agree to that,” Goldmun placated the seething girl. “Won’t you, Joanna?” he asked softly.

Johann blushed. “Sure. My Mom was teaching me before she went into the hospital that last time

and never got to finish the job!” he blurted defensively.

“And if he’s going to dress like my girl friend, I want him to speak and act like my girl friend too!” Kathleen added with a soft smile.

“But I still don’t have pierced ears!” Johann countered.

“Oh, pooh, I can fix that! Run up and get a pair of diamond studs from your Mom’s jewelry case,” she directed, shooing him away.

Johann disappeared only to reappear in a few minutes with some earrings for pierced ears. He sat quietly as Kathleen heated a needle over a match flame, then put a cork behind Johann’s lobe and pushed the needle through the pink flesh. Johann winced a bit as the needle penetrated his skin when Kathleen pushed the first earring through the hole she had made, pressing the keeper on behind to hold it in place. A few moments later, Johann had diamond studs in both ears and he was cocking his head from side to side as he admired their gleaming presence in the mirror.

“Ah, then,” Goldmun announced, “and so, it is done!” He grinned at Johann. “And now you are my other pretty daughter, Joanna!”

Johann blushed. “I like that. It’s what my Mom used to call me when I was a girl for her,” he confessed shyly.

“And when you’re my girl friend,” Kathleen giggled, “you shall always be my Joanna!” She took the surprised boy into her arms and kissed him avidly, a kiss he returned with equal fervor. Goldmun looked on indulgently.

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A couple of days later, Goldmun became aware of a loud disturbance in back. An angry voice was complaining about something. He got up and went back to see what all the fuss was about.

“That thief!” he heard Joanna exclaim vehemently. “That dirty rotten, good-for-nothing, scum-bag, unmentionable thief!”

“And what thief would that be, Liebchen?” Goldmun asked gently.

“We wanted to wear our Gay-90s costumes today,” Kathleen explained.

“Yeah, with our wasp waist corsets, muslin bloomers, muslin slips, lisle stockings, the high-heel button boots and the picture hats and all. . .” Johann explained heatedly.

“And?” Goldmun prodded gently.

“But some dirty rotten thief has stolen my Mom’s bloomers!” Joanna finished.

“Whoa!” Goldmun soothed. “What bloomers are we talking about then?”

“All women of the Gay-90’s era wore taffeta or muslin bloomers under their slips and skirts and some dirty rotten, scum-bag thief has stolen my Mom’s bloomers! See?” Joanna exclaimed angrily. And both girls pulled their skirts and slips well above their waists to reveal Joanna wearing a pair of antique ivory colored muslin bloomers, while Kathleen wore nothing over her bald pubic mound. Both wore wasp-waist corsets and Goldmun noted with approval their narrowed waists and the garters holding their old-fashioned lisle stockings tautly in

place. On their feet, each wore a pair of high heel button boots common to that era.

“So how can we be dressed like twin sisters if one of us doesn’t have no bloomers?” Kathleen demanded angrily.

“Yeah, how?” the equally angry Joanna asked.

“Ah, Liebchens,” Goldmun sighed indulgently. “There are two ways to solve your dilemma. First, neither of you could wear bloomers. . .”

“No!” Kathleen objected strenuously, “no woman of that time would ever think of appearing in public without her corset and her slips and her bloomers! She’d rather die first!”

“Then the solution is obvious, we must make another pair!”

And an hour later, Goldmun produced enough antique ivory muslin to make a very serviceable pair for the fuming Kathleen. He knelt before her as she held her skirts well above her waist and held her legs up one at a time while he drew them onto her body. As he pulled them up her legs, he discovered that he was face to face with her aromatic and tangy smelling pubic mound. Without thinking about it, he dropped the bloomers, grasped her by her naked rear mounds and buried his face between her gaping thighs, his lips kissing at her avidly.

Kathleen was surprised, but she made no move to avoid Goldmun’s exciting kiss, instead jutting her hips forward in open invitation to facilitate his access, her hands holding his face firmly in place!

When he finally released her and drew the bloomers up into place, he ran his hands lovingly over her snugly encased rear mounds. “There,

Liebchen. How's that?" he asked, blushing to his roots.

"Oh, you darling man, Mr. Goldmun," she whispered throatily, "you may kiss my pussy any old time you want to!"

Goldmun struggled to his feet, still blushing furiously. "Here, here, mine girl!" he blustered, greatly embarrassed by his presumptive action. "That will be quite enough of that!"

Joanna just giggled at the man's embarrassment.

Some time later, Jerome came down to announce that he and Darling Joy had made dinner for the five of them and they all went up-stairs. The table was set with a cloth and plates and cups from Johann's Mom's collection. Tall candles gave a romantic atmosphere to the room.

"Probably to hide the taste of a burnt meal!" Goldmun teased.

"We didn't not neither never no how burn nothing!" Darling Joy insisted heatedly. "We did just what it said on the package back and here it is!" She placed a full bowl of steaming macaroni and cheese on the table and Jerome brought in a plate covered with garlic bread.

Before Goldmun dished it up, he asked Johann to say grace.

Johann looked at the older man in shock. "Hunh?"

"Grace. You know, say a blessing for the meal to thank God for his offerings," Goldmun explained.

"Oh. But I don't know how," he admitted, blushing deeply.

“I do,” Jerome piped up. “Oh, Lord, bless this meal we are about to receive and please look out for Mr. Goldmun while we’re at school every day. We don’t want to lose him! Amen!”



A chorus of “Amens” sounded and Goldmun felt a tear sting his eye.

“That was very nice, Jerome,” Goldmun praised as he filled their plates. “Now, dig in!”

For the next few minutes all that was heard were the sounds of macaroni and cheese and garlic bread and milk being devoured by the hungry crew.

At the end, Jerome turned to Darling Joy. “See, baby? I told you that just one package would never be enough!”

“Well, how was I to know?” the girl complained, down-hearted. “It said it made enough for four!”

“But there are five of us,” Jerome pointed out gently.

“I didn’t know!” she repeated, her voice breaking.

“It’s all right, Liebchen,” Goldmun soothed the little girl’s hurt feelings. “That’s why we have to pay attention and learn from our mistakes,” he continued.

“I would just have made more, like Mr. Soong does,” she ended triumphantly, sticking her little pink tongue out at Jerome.

“OK, children, since Darling Joy and Jerome made dinner, Joanna and Kathleen and I get to do the dishes and clean up. . .”

“Who?” Jerome interrupted. “We don’t gots no Joanna here!”

“Joanna?” Goldmun nodded to Johann who stood politely.

“That’s me when I wear a dress,” he explained to the others, curtseying politely.

“Is Goldmun making you wear that dress?” Jerome demanded, glaring at the man with obvious animosity. “There ain’t s’posed to be no catches!”

“No, no! I am wearing it because I want to,” Johann hastened to explain. “You see, my Mom and I were real close and I used to dress like a girl for her sometimes. . .”

“Oh, like you did when you won Queen of the May?” Darling Joy interrupted joyously.

Johann nodded. “Yes, it makes me feel closer to Mom even though I know she’s dead and I sort of feel like I am honoring her memory by being the girl she always wanted me to be,” he explained as hot tears began to roll down his pinkish cheeks.

“Jeezums!” Jerome blurted. “I didn’t not neither never mean to make you cry no way! If you want to wear dresses and be Joanna, go for it! It’s jake with me, brother!”

Johann embraced the other boy and kissed him on his blushing cheek. “Thank you.”

“Hey, nunna that funny stuff with me!” Jerome protested. “I only like real girls!”

“Yeah,” Johann replied, smiling through his tears, “me too!”

“All right, now that we have that out of the way,” Goldmun interjected, “let’s get on with clean-up! I get to wash!” he chortled.

“Hey, no fair!” Kathleen objected. “You’re taller than we are so you should put everything away after it’s been dried!”

“Well, all right,” Goldmun conceded, grumpily. Soon, the three of them had finished and all were seated around the living room. It was still crowded

because there were still many bags that had not yet been redistributed to their proper places, but no one seemed to care.

“You know,” Joanna proposed, “with some of that money from old man Scronzainnia, we should buy a decent television set as a present to Goldmun for taking us in and all.”

“Hey, that’s a neat idea!” Jerome enthused.

“Yeah, I like it too!” Darling Joy added.

“Would that be all right with you, Mr. Goldmun?” Kathleen asked.

Goldmun started guiltily. “Well, I don’t know. . .”

“Hey, come on!” Joanna protested. “You said that money was to relieve my pain and suffering and I think a decent television would go a long ways to give me all sorts of relief!”

“Yeah, Goldmun,” Jerome asked, “how about them apples?”

“I just thought that the money should go for clothing or educational materials or some other, very special things and the rest saved for a rainy day,” he explained.

“It’s raining right now,” Joanna observed slyly.

“No, it’s not!” Goldmun protested. “It’s completely dry outside!”

“But it’s probably raining somewhere right now!” Joanna replied, grinning widely.

“Yeah, how about them apples too, Mr. Goldmun?” Jerome jeered.

“Well, I guess that a television set comes under the heading of education, so it will be all right. Just remember, Joanna, we are not going to spend all of

your money just because we are fortunate enough to have it!" he warned.

With that resolve, the five of them ventured out on a cold October evening and went down the street to Jacob's TV shop to look at television sets.

They finally settled on a thirty-two inch color set with remote control and picture in a picture that was on sale and because they paid cash, Mr. Joseph had his men deliver it that very evening. Besides, it was only a block away and no problem to him.

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The children were all excited and wanted to watch when the men left, but Goldmun told them that they had to do all their school homework first. There was some grouching from the excited children, but they obeyed the rules and shortly they had all their homework done and were clicking the remote, trying to decide what to watch. Goldmun told them to hurry it along because it was a school night and they had to be in bed by 9:00 p.m. at the latest so that they would get their proper sleep. "Remember," he cautioned them, "the school bus comes at 7:30 sharp and it won't wait for you if you're still in bed!"

He sat with the children and promptly at 9:00 he arose and turned the set off. "Bed time, my little Liebchens!" he announced. The children were soon all tucked into their beds and Goldmun went downstairs to sleep in his customary recliner chair. Horatio jumped up on the ottoman and settled down between Goldmun's out-stretched legs and went to sleep. Goldmun patted his belly contentedly and set-

tled back, the woolen blanket over his body. He closed his eyes and was soon sound asleep.

He didn't know what had awakened him, but Goldmun became aware that he was not alone in the room. He started and looked around carefully, but had difficulty in making out any more than vague shapes. "Who's there?" he asked tremulously as a shape materialized out of the gloom. "Who are you?" he asked again. "What do you want?" His voice shook with fear. All he could think of was that the Nazis had come again!

Suddenly, he recognized Joanna wearing one of his Mom's sheer nighties and he let out a long sigh of relief. Then, he saw that the boy was crying.

"Why, Joanna, Liebchen, whatever is the matter?" he asked solicitously, obviously relieved.

"I . . . I don't know. . ." the boy sobbed. "I . . . I woke up and. . . and. . . I was afraid. . . and. . ." he sobbed brokenly.

Goldmun held up his arms invitingly, holding the blanket back. With a soft sob, the boy slid into Goldmun's lap and laid his head on the older man's shoulder. Protectively, Goldmun wrapped the blanket around the boy and held him while he sobbed and shook with his pent-up emotion. Goldmun patted the soft shoulder comfortingly and soothed the hair from the boy's wet brow. "It's OK, mine Liebchen," he whispered, "everything is going to be all right."

Johann shook his head. "No it isn't!" he declared. "I just know it!"

"What do you know, Liebchen?" Goldmun asked gently. "You have a nice home here and you have all your belongings back from Mr. Scronzainnia and

you have a nice new television set and you have been accepted to study at one of the best private schools in the city and you have your friends and you have Mr. Soong and me, so what can go wrong?" he asked gently.

"I don't know," the boy sobbed. "It just always does!" he insisted.

"Goldmun kissed the top of the boy's blonde head affectionately, and suddenly that head had twisted and he was kissing the red, red, bee-stung lips hungrily! Helplessly, he gave himself over to the delicious feelings that washed over him for several long moments, then he pushed the boy away. "No, no, mine Liebchen!" he insisted vehemently, sitting up straight. "We mustn't! It's not right!"

"What's the matter, Mr. Goldmun?" Johann asked, the hurt showing plainly in his eyes.

"It's not right!" Goldmun insisted. "I should not be kissing a seventeen year old boy on the lips, no matter how much I like it nor how much I might want to!"

"It's all right, Mr. Goldmun," the girl, Joanna, whispered. "I like it when you kiss me. My Mom always said that I should have been born a girl anyway."

"But, you're not!" Goldmun declared. "You said you were a boy and I believe you."

"I am," Johann insisted quietly through his tears. "Even though I don't have what other boys have between their legs!"

"I saw that," Goldmun admitted. "Were you born that way?"

“I don’t know,” Johann replied. “All I know is that when my Mom used to give me a bath when I was a small child, she would sigh when washing me there and tell me that I should have been born a girl and I used to feel so sad for her.”

“I understand,” Goldmun replied. “But we still shouldn’t be kissing like this!”

“So what?” Joanna replied softly. “I don’t mind and no one knows except us and I’m not going to tell anyone!” He tried to kiss Goldmun again but the man turned away. “Well, can I at least stay with you until I start to go back to sleep?” the boy asked insistently, innocently.

“OK, but no funny business!”

“I promise, no funny business,” Joanna laughed.

He laid his head on Goldmun’s shoulder and soon the older man fell asleep. . .

Only to awaken many hours later to the feeling of soft lips sucking at his erection which was buried in the moist depths of a knowing mouth! Goldmun tried to get away, but he was too close to orgasm to escape and within seconds, he exploded bodily into the sucking maelstrom that was the boy’s expert mouth!

Joanna rested her head against Goldmun’s thigh, still holding his quickly fading organ securely in his gently sucking mouth. Unconsciously, Goldmun caressed the blonde head tenderly as he sought to regain control of himself.

“That was very naughty of you, Joanna,” he scolded.

“Yeah, I’m the evil Queen of the May!” Joanna sneered quietly as he climbed back into Goldmun’s

lap. "Did you like that, Mr. Goldmun?" he asked softly.

"My good God, yes!" Goldmun exclaimed. "Wherever did you learn something like that?" he asked in wonder.

"You learn a lot of things if you want to survive in the streets!" Joanna replied. He turned his lips up and Goldmun kissed them without thinking. "You know," Joanna mused, "most tricks won't let you kiss them after you've sucked their stiff pricks to orgasm and they've cum down your throat! They think it's some sort of perversion, as if sucking their pricks wasn't perversion enough for them!"

For reply, Goldmun kissed him again. "I should hope that I am not like most tricks! Besides, your lips are soft and inviting. . ."

"You know, Mr. Goldmun, you're the very first man I have ever sucked off that I really wanted to suck and kiss in the first place! The others were all for money. . ."

"Well, we shall not do it again," Goldmun averred.

"We shall see, Mr. Goldmun," Joanna murmured, settling down and going to sleep.

Goldmun's sleep was troubled and sketchy for the rest of the night. And when he did awaken in the morning, Joanna was gone and he could hear activity on the floor above him and he knew the children were up and getting ready for school.

When he went up, Darling Joy laughed. "Oh, Mr. Goldmun, you have lip-stick all over your face!"

Wordlessly, Kathleen took a tissue and wiped it off, then turned to Darling Joy. "It's not nice to tease Goldmun about such things," she scolded gently.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Goldmun," Darling Joy apologized, eyes downcast in shame.

"That's all right, Liebchen," he soothed. "You meant no harm."

Promptly at 7:25, they all came downstairs and were on their way to school mere moments later. It was very quiet in the place after they had gone and Goldmun felt the silence close in around him. In times past, he had welcomed the silence, but now it just made him feel lonely and lonesome. He realized that, the cat Horatio aside, he had been missing human companionship far too long since the loss of his family and home, and he knew he would never willingly return to that sorry state of affairs as long as he had the choice!

He spent the morning on the phone, talking to various contacts he had in the city's administration and he found that, much to his unpleasant surprise, because of the ages of the children, they were considered as "non-placeable" or "non-adoptable." They were, as the social services director told him, "throw-away children," and, quite frankly, the city just wanted them to go away. Goldmun was appalled! To think that in this country of plenty, there was nothing for four small, innocent children who had never done harm to anyone!

Swearing under his breath, Goldmun agreed to fill out the proper paper-work, send it in, and in due time, appear in court where his guardianship would be legally recognized.

That afternoon, when the children came back, he informed them that at 5:00 p.m., it would be the start of the Jewish Sabbath and he would be unable to do anything with or for them until after 5:00 p.m. the next afternoon, Saturday.

So, he lay back in his recliner and ate two bagels liberally smeared with lox and thought about his future. He dozed off and on until about midnight when it all got quiet up-stairs and he figured they had all gone to bed. He smiled to himself and dozed until he awoke with a start. He knew there was someone in the room and he called out, "Joanna, is that you?"

Joanna appeared out of the gloom and once more Goldmun saw that the boy had been crying. Wordlessly, he held the blanket back in invitation and the boy slid his nightie clad body into Goldmun's lap, laying his blonde curls against the receptive shoulder. Goldmun held the silky body close, his hand caressing up and down the quivering back, across the rounded curves of his plump bottom and along a soft, hairless thigh. Joanna cried for a long time and Goldmun realized that his shirt was sopping wet from the boy's copious tears.

Still, he made no move to interrupt the crying.

Finally, Joanna's tears stopped and he lay quietly in Goldmun's arms, his soft breath bathing Goldmun's exposed neck like a searing flame. He lay still until gradually, the regular breathing told Goldmun that the boy had fallen asleep. Only then did Goldmun allow himself to nod and go to sleep himself.

Once more, Goldmun was awakened by the touch of softly sucking lips wrapped securely around his erection, the erection that was buried

deep in the same wet mouth. And again, he found himself in the throes of a violent orgasm that prevented him from stopping what was happening to him!

Finally, Joanna stopped sucking Goldmun's erection and rested his head against the man's thigh, the man's wilting erection still held affectionately in his gently nursing mouth.

"Mmmmm," Joanna murmured. "I love you, Mr. Goldmun! You have the nicest, smoothest, longest and fattest prick I have ever sucked!" he exclaimed happily.

Goldmun drew the boy up into his lap and held him lovingly. "That was very naughty of you, Joanna," he scolded affectionately.

"Yep, that's me!" Joanna agreed. "Pure evil! The Evil Queen of the May!"

"You really must stop doing that, dear girl," Goldmun replied doggedly.

"Why, lover man?" Joanna murmured, nibbling maddeningly at Goldmun's neck.

"Because it's not right!" Goldmun insisted doggedly.

"Why?" came the soft inquiry, "don't you like it?"

"That has nothing to do with it!" Goldmun insisted.

"Oh, I think that has everything to do with it!" Joanna giggled.

"But it's illegal!" Goldmun observed. "I could go to prison for years if we're caught! You are not of age legally to give consent to an act of sexual intercourse!"

“So, who’s going to tell on us?” Joanna persisted.

“Well, Kathleen, or Jerome, or, Heaven forbid, Darling Joy!” Goldmun blurted.

“Lover man,” Joanna giggled, “not to worry! They know all about us!”

“They. . . what?” Goldmun roared.

Joanna laid a soft finger over Goldmun’s lips. “Shush, Lover, you’ll wake them!”

“What do you mean, they know?” Goldmun asked in a hoarse whisper.

“We discussed who was going to make love to you and I drew the short straw,” he explained softly.

“You lost?” Goldmun whispered, ashamed.

“No, Silly! I won!” Joanna giggled.

“I don’t understand,” Goldmun admitted.

“We all wanted to make you feel good for what you did for us and we decided that the best way to do that was to suck your prick and make you cum!” Joanna explained.

“All of you?”

“Every one of us,” Joanna affirmed.

“Even Darling Joy, the way she feels about anything male, except for Horatio? And Jerome? And you?”

“Even Darling Joy! She has the softest lips. . . and she’s enough to suck the paint right off the Brooklyn Bridge!” he bragged.

“My good God!” Goldmun whispered.

“And Jerome does what Jerome has to do,” Joanna murmured.

Goldmun hugged Joanna close and kissed the soft, red lips tenderly. "I really am glad that you won, mine Liebchen, but we cannot do this again."

"Oh, we'll see," Joanna teased, settling down on Goldmun's chest and closing his eyes. "See you in the morning, you lovely man!"

"I mean it!" Goldmun insisted.

"Unh hunh," came the sleepy reply.

Eventually, even Goldmun slept.

To awaken to the sound of activity up-stairs. He was about to get up and go see what was going on when Kathleen appeared bearing a small tray. "Hi, sleepy head!" she greeted with a smile. "Don't tell me that Joanna's mouth took that much out of you?" she teased.

Goldmun blushed hard. He couldn't find the words to reply to her gibe.

"Never mind, Papa," she whispered, setting the tray on the table beside him and kissing his surprised lips affectionately. "We made some scrambled eggs and bacon and toast for you. I wanted to make coffee, but all I could find were some tea leaves, so I brewed that instead."

"Tea is fine," Goldmun managed after a bit. He took a fork and began to eat.

"What do you do on a Sabbath?" Kathleen asked.

"Not much," Goldmun replied. "It's supposed to be a day of rest and reflection and reading the Torah. No real work is allowed, but my congregation, being reformed, doesn't hold to that restriction. Still, I try to do as little as I can in keeping with tradition."

“Well, it’s almost 10:00 a.m. and we have all eaten and we have cleaned up our mess and we fed Horatio and we have all our dirty clothes ready to take to the laundromat and Joanna is still sorting through all those bags of his Mom’s and Jerome and Darling Joy are watching the Saturday morning cartoons and you’re here and I’m here and. . .”

“And, what, mine Liebchen?” he asked warily.

“I just wanted to sit and talk with you, that’s all, that is, if it’s all right with you and doesn’t interfere with your Sabbath,” she ended breathlessly.

“No, that would not interfere,” Goldmun smiled at her.

“Oh, good! Are you all done eating?”

Goldmun looked at the few crumbs on his plate. “Yes, it would appear so. I have not had eggs in ages! Bad for my cholesterol, you know.”

“In moderation,” she murmured, placing the plates and tray on the table near the stairs. She returned and before he realized what she was going to do, she had slid right into his lap and slipped her arms around his neck. “Kiss me, Mr. Goldmun,” she ordered. “Tell me if I kiss as well as Joanna!” And she pressed her soft lips to his.

Unconsciously, Goldmun held her tight and kissed her back.

Whatever Kathleen had wanted to discuss, had long since been forgotten. . .

“Do I kiss as good as Joanna?” Kathleen asked sleepily.

Goldmun nodded. “Yes, little girl,” he agreed. “You kiss great!”

“That’s nice,” she murmured, settling down on his lap, her head on his shoulder.

He never knew when it happened, but they slept for several hours, the warm, nubile female form held securely in his embrace, their lips never more than mere centimeters apart.

“Hey! What’s going on?” Jerome yelped. “We wondered where you got off to, Kath. I thought something might have happened to you.”

Kathleen shook her head and gazed at the boy lazily. “Nope, Mr. Goldmun and I were just getting better acquainted,” she explained, kissing the man gently.

“Well, come on. Joanna has something she wants you to see.”

“Oh, all right.” She kissed Goldmun again, sweetly and lingeringly. “Now you stay right here and I’ll be back in a jif!” she ordered, slipping from his lap and racing up the stairs behind Jerome. “Hey!” she called. “Whassup, girl?”

Goldmun shook his head and tried to relax, but the turmoil in his head kept him right on the edge of his chair with apprehension.

‘My good God!’ he thought. ‘What am I going to do about them?’

All sorts of dire thoughts tumbled willy nilly around in his mind and he realized that he was scared to death! He was more scared now than he had been when in the concentration camp so many years before and the Nazis had threatened him with the gas ovens.

Somehow, he had to put a stop to their shenanigans!

The question was, "How?"

Goldmun closed his eyes and slept fitfully until small hands shook him. "Hey, Mr. Goldmun, are you all right?" Darling Joy asked worriedly. "Did Kathleen do something to you?"

Goldmun stirred as the little girl slipped into his lap. "No, Liebchen, I was just resting my eyes for a minute."

"It's after 5:00 p.m.," she scolded, "and you said Sabbath was over at 5:00!"

"And so I did and so it is. What have you been doing?"

"Well, I watched cartoons all afternoon and Joanna and Kathleen and Jerome took the laundry to the laundromat and are just now getting back," she explained.

"Good!" Goldmun exclaimed. "Now, go tell the others to get dressed for the street because we are going to Mr. Soong's for supper!"

"Yay!" she squealed, jumping down and running off. "Hey, you guys! Better get dressed! Papa Goldmun's taking us to Mr. Soong's again!" she yelled excitedly.

And, half an hour later, Goldmun and his four little charges were seated around the same table near Mr. Soong's kitchen and were being served tea in the tiny, handleless cups.

"Mr. Goldmun?" Jerome asked. "Is it all right to invite someone to eat with us?"

"Why, yes, of course!" he agreed. "It's too late now, but next time, OK?"

“Oh, we don’t have to go far at all!” Jerome giggled. “I was thinking of asking Mr. Soong and his daughter, Mai Lei, to join us,” he explained. “And Mrs. Soong too, if’n she wants!” he added lamely.

“Well, we shall certainly ask that gentleman and his lovely family to join us!” Goldmun announced, pleased with the boy’s thoughtfulness.

Mr. Soong was delighted with the invitation and accepted on behalf of his daughter. “Oh, you must ask your wife too,” Jerome insisted. He hopped up and found three more chairs which he placed at their table.

“Oh, my!” Mr. Soong exclaimed. “We shall have to use the bigger banquet table!” And moments later, they were all seated around a much larger table in the banquet room and Jerome was holding Mai Lei’s chair politely. When the girl was seated, he hurried to do the same for Mr. Soong, who gave him a searching smile.

Mrs. Soong brought the food to the table and when she went to sit down, Jerome leaped to his feet to hold her chair.

“Goodness me!” that lady exclaimed, laughing, “if you keep bobbing up and down like that, your food will get cold and cold food is not nourishing like hot!” Blushing, Jerome sat next to Mai Lei and all while they ate, the two youngsters kept giving each other shy, side-long glances. Darling Joy saw this and laughed aloud.

“Hey! Jerome’s got a girl friend! Jerome’s got a girl friend!” she sing songed teasingly.

“Hush your mouth, Brat!” Jerome hissed, blushing helplessly.

“That is not a nice thing to say, mine Liebchen,” Goldmun scolded.

“Then why is he looking at Mai Lei so funny like? And she’s looking at him the same way too!” she insisted innocently. “Looks mighty sup-picious to me!”

Jerome said nothing more in his defense, just kept his head down, blushing with great pleasure while he ate.

Mai Lei kept her head down and blushed with pleasure too.

Mr. Soong spoke to Mai Lei in his native tongue and she answered with the same. Then the two Chinese laughed at their private joke.

All at once, Jerome let loose with a stream of nonsense syllables, or at least that was what they sounded like to Goldmun!

When Mr. Soong answered with the same nonsense, Goldmun realized they were both speaking Chinese! Mr. Soong gazed at Jerome with a new appreciation. “Why, Jerome, my boy, wherever did you learn Mandarin Chinese?”

“In the street,” Jerome explained. “I can speak it all right but I cannot read it nor write it,” he added apologetically.

“I shall teach you!” Mr. Soong exclaimed in Chinese. “You speak Mandarin very well for a round eyed foreigner!” he teased and smiled broadly at Jerome.

“What did you say?” Goldmun asked Jerome.

“Oh, Mai Lei told her Dad that I was a nice looking boy and Mr. Soong told her that I would sire many handsome sons one day. I told them both that I had no plans of getting married until I was at least

fifty years old and they laughed at me. Mr. Soong said that I would not have to be married to sire many handsome sons! That's all."

After that, the three kept up a rapid fire conversation in Chinese and Mr. Soong beamed happily at them, stopping occasionally to translate.

"Mr. Soong?" Darling Joy asked, "may I ask you a question?"

"Certainly, my child, what is it?"

"You're Chinese, aren't you?"

Mr. Soong nodded happily. "Yes, I am proud to say!"

"Well, if you're Chinese, why isn't your restaurant in Chinatown where the other Chinese people live?" she asked seriously.

"For that very reason, my child," he replied.

"What reason?"

"That I am Chinese."

"But. . . why?" she pressed, puzzled.

"You see, child," he replied, smiling widely, "in Chinatown I would be just one of many Chinese family-owned restaurants, but here I am the only one! You might say that I have a monopoly here."

"What's a mon-nop-lee. . . what you said?" she asked. "The only mon-nop-ee I ever heard of was a game you play."

"What it means is, if you want to eat Chinese, you have to go to my restaurant or else go without," he explained with a soft smile.

The little girl thought a moment, then grinned. "I get it! Sorta like take it or leave it, right?"

“Exactly,” the man beamed at the knowledgeable child. “Exactly,” he repeated.

Darling Joy just smiled broadly.

It was a delightful occasion.

When they were making their leave, Jerome asked Mai Lei something and Mr. Soong replied at length, shaking his finger scoldingly.

“Hey, what’s going on?” Goldmun interrupted in alarm.

“I just asked Mai Lei if she would like to go to the movies with me tomorrow night and Mr. Soong started lecturing me on the rules of engagement, or so he called them,” Jerome explained.

Mr. Soong gazed at Goldmun, a sly grin on his face. “Is OK, but must have chaperone.”

“How about one of my older two?”

“No! Send Momma Soong instead. OK?”

Goldmun looked at Jerome. “Well?”

“Fine with me, just as long as I get to sit beside Mai Lei!” he insisted, blushing furiously.

“Oh, I think that can be arranged,” Goldmun smiled.

“But no funny, round eye stuff!” Mr. Soong warned, a sly smile wreathing his face.

They said their good-byes and went back to their new home. Goldmun warned them that since the next day was Sunday, and since they had shared his Sabbath with him, he would share their Sabbath with them. A lively argument broke out about which church to attend.

Laughing, Goldmun held up his hand. “We shall go by order of seniority. Joanna, choose this week; Kathleen next week; Jerome the week after that; then Darling Joy, and the one you like the best is the one you each shall attend.”

“Good!” Joanna beamed. “I’d like to see an Episcopal service,” he announced.

“You know what Episcopalians are, don’t you?” Kathleen grinned impishly.

“Yeah, they’re the Church of England.”

“No, silly, they’re Catholics who failed Latin!” she giggled.

Goldmun rolled his eyes. “Oy, vey!” he muttered.

“I was brought up Catholic,” Kathleen continued, “and I’d kind of like to go there.”

“Yeah, well Southern Baptist for me!” Jerome interrupted belligerently.

“But I don’t gots no ‘ligion!” Darling Joy wailed. “Can I go to your church with you, Mr. Goldmun? I promise not to be naughty.”

“I don’t go to a church,” Goldmun smiled. “We call our place of worship a synagogue.”

“Hey, there’s one of them right over on Second Avenue near the Emporium!” Jerome enthused. “That’s close!”

“Good. Now all we need is to know what time services are and we’re off!”

“Yay!” from Darling Joy. “We’re off to see the ‘Piscopal wizard, the wonderful wizard of ‘Piscopalial!” she sang.

“Fine, teevee off at ten and no arguments!” Goldmun warned, and after he had their solemn

promise, he went downstairs. Leaning back in his chair, he opened the book he had been reading and soon lost himself in its pages.

He was dimly aware of the cessation of all noise from the upstairs shortly after ten and he nodded to himself, pleased that the children were being so conscientious about his rules.

He laid his book aside, swallowed the rest of his cold tea, pulled the blanket around his body and went to sleep, only to awaken shortly after midnight when Joanna appeared in the dimness. He watched as the boy slipped the straps off his shoulders and let his nightie fall to the floor. Then the naked boy lifted the blanket and slid into Goldmun's waiting lap.

"Hi, Lover Man!" he whispered. "It's me, Pure Evil, the Queen of the May!" Helplessly, Goldmun held the boy close as they kissed, his hands roaming eagerly across the boy's soft, shivering skin.

Joanna gasped with pleasure and arousal. "Oh, yes, Lover Man! That's it! Do it! Oh, God, do it!" His lips sought Goldmun's and a sharp, inquisitive tongue probed the older man's mouth knowingly. Passively, Goldmun wondered where the boy could have gained his sexual knowledge and expertise.

Joanna fumbled between their bodies, exposing Goldmun's raging erection as he straddled the unresisting man and lowered his body, guiding the erection in his hand to the waiting orifice between his spread thighs. Goldmun felt himself touch forbidden territory, and then with a short, strong push, he had entered Joanna's receptive opening fully, Joanna's pubic mound crashing into Goldmun bodily!

“Ahhh,” Joanna murmured happily. “You fill me so full!”

Goldmun said nothing in his defense because his senses were reeling with the ecstasy of the moment and he dared not break the mood of the moment for any reason!

Joanna kissed the older male again, his tongue a live flame in Goldmun’s mouth as his hips rose and fell rhythmically until Goldmun could hold back no longer and he tensed, going into orgasm and releasing his copious seed deposit deep within the clutching, squeezing receptacle that was Joanna’s rectum!

“Oh! Oh!” Joanna gasped. “Good! So good! I love you so much, Mr. Goldmun!”

“And I love you too, little girl!” Goldmun replied unconsciously.

With his half erected organ still tightly clenched in Joanna’s snug rectum, they rested, eventually falling sound asleep. Twice more during the night, Joanna raised Goldmun to the heights of passionate response, much to that man’s delighted surprise.

After that, it was accepted that Joanna would come to him after the others were asleep and they would make sweet love to one another. Goldmun knew that he loved Joanna even more than he had loved his late wife, and he had loved that woman with his very soul!

As October waned, the five became used to one another and settled into a home life of brothers and sisters and one parent. On Halloween, Joanna and Kathleen decided they were going to the block party as the Queen of the May and her Prince Charming, with Darling Joy as their princess daughter and Jerome as their Nubian slave, but with a twist!

Joanna would be the Queen and Kathleen would be the Prince! As they were the same size and would be masked, no one would know any difference!

Somewhere, Jerome had found a fake nose bone. Joanna lent him a scepter and the four went at it with a will, so that Halloween night, they were dressed and ready long before it was time. Goldmun produced four long capes for them to wear over their costumes on their way to the hall.

At the party, Joanna and Kathleen were the hits of the ball, both being waltzed around the floor until both were breathless. Jerome would only dance with a very shy, short harem slave who had the creamiest olive color skin shimmering through her sheer bodice and pantaloons.

When the winners were announced, the Chief Judge made a speech. "Ladies and Gentlemen, tonight's contestants are among the best your panel of experts has ever seen and in the end, we could not, in all conscience, award just one first prize. So, we decided to split the prize four ways and give it to the Goldmun children for their astonishing performance, a performance, I might add, that had most of us guessing all evening! Children, would you please come forward and claim your prizes?"

There were many embarrassed faces among some of the boys who had danced with Joanna, thinking that he was a girl, and more than one of them had pressed the amused boy for future dates and a phone number. Some of the girls who had danced with Kathleen had sad faces when they discovered that the boy they had danced with had been a girl just like themselves all along. But not all threw away the phone numbers they had cadged!

And as he had known all along, Jerome found that his shy, short, Oriental slave girl was Mr. Soong's blushing daughter, Mai Lei!

About a week later, Goldmun was waiting for Joanna with eager anticipation, and when the familiar silk nightie clad girlish form appeared in the gloom, Goldmun waited as the nightie slithered sensuously to the floor and a pink, naked girl-like figure moved toward his naked body, sliding into his lap with a practiced ease and drawing the blanket around their naked bodies. At once, Goldmun sensed a change in the smooth skin he caressed and he started with surprise.

"Joanna? Is it not you?" he asked softly.

"No, Mr. Goldmun," Kathleen answered gently. "It is I, Kathleen, and I claim my rightful due from my Lord and Master! If Joanna can claim what is due her, I certainly have the right to claim what is due me!" she declared breathlessly.

"Kathleen, no! It is not right!" Goldmun replied in shock.

"You are wrong, Mr. Goldmun," she hissed as she slid atop his waiting body. "It's time I paid you back for all the nice things you have done for me! For us!" she declared, her lips nibbling at his chin.

"No, no! Kathleen, mine Liebchen! You owe me nothing!" Goldmun protested.

For answer, the girl glued her mouth to his and her less than shy tongue probed his oral depths knowingly as she reached between their bodies, and, grasping his erection, guided it between her thighs and into her waiting orifice, swallowing him easily.

As Goldmun gave himself up to the inevitable, Kathleen's hips rose and fell, her tight sheathe milking him and driving him wild with anticipation. When he finally could hold back no longer, Goldmun sort of relaxed as he pumped her full of his accumulated offering, fainting dead away as she shuddered in the throes of her own orgasm atop him.

"My good God, Mr. Goldmun, but you are huge! You fill me like I have never been filled before!" she enthused. The man felt a sort of shameful pride wash over him and shortly, he fell asleep.

And awakened some time later to find her still holding him inside her body, her soft, warm breath bathing his cheek with its sweet regularity. He held her nakedness gently, his hands caressing the smooth, resilient skin of her body lovingly.

"Oh, Mr. Goldmun!" she whispered when she woke. "That was wonderful! I have never gone off like that before! It was like I had died and gone straight to Heaven!" she enthused, her lips kissing at his affectionately. Unconsciously, her hips began to move, her sheathe clutching at his swiftly rising erection as they once again soared to the heights, plunging into simultaneous orgasm eagerly, passionately, with utter abandon!

It was well after sunrise before they awoke to the sound of movement coming from the apartment above them.

Darling Joy came bounding down the stair. "Hey, you guys! Come on! Wake up! It's getting late and I don't want to be late for Church!" She grabbed the blanket and pulled it away, revealing their naked

bodies to her amused gaze. “Come on, you guys, fun time’s over!” she exclaimed.

Without any show of modesty, Kathleen leaned down and kissed Goldmun lingeringly while his hands held her rounded bottom cheeks lovingly. “In a minute,” Kathleen told the excited little girl. “Don’t be in such a rush!”

Darling Joy grabbed Kathleen’s hand and pulled her off Goldmun. “No! I mean now!”

Laughing, the naked Kathleen picked up her discarded nightie and followed the smaller girl up the stairs, her naked, delicious bottom jiggling enticingly!

‘My God!’ Goldmun mused, ‘such a wondrous, twisted family I have inherited!’

He dressed quickly and joined the festivities up stairs.

He didn’t even mind that they were going to a gentile place of worship.

On Tuesday, Goldmun got a call from the children’s school, requesting an immediate conference. Fearing the worse, Goldmun went. To his surprise, none of the children were in any trouble, rather it was the principal who was apologizing for the school’s inadequacies in not being able to provide for the children’s continuing education at their level.

Goldmun, thinking it was a matter of back-ground and/or money, offered to pay more, to which the principal waved his hand in dismissal.

“No, Mr. Goldmun, it is exactly what I have said. We are unable to meet the scholastic requirements your children demand!

“First, your Johann and Kathleen have progressed to such a point that further exposure to our curriculum would be a waste of our time and their talent. Both children are interested in fashion, in particular, the design and manufacture of same, subjects that we are woefully lacking. I took the liberty of contacting my counterpart at one of the city’s leading fashion design schools, and she has agreed to interview them for possible admittance to her school.

“As for Jerome, he is wasted here. He has an almost photographic mind. Once he hears or sees something, it is in his memory forever! Further, his varied interests are almost exclusively focused on all higher mathematics and physics, subjects our school does not, and cannot, offer. Therefore, I have taken the liberty of contacting the Mathematical Institute up-town and they are quite impressed with his latent ability. They would like to offer him a scholarship to further his knowledge and the utilization thereof.”

“I had no idea,” Mr. Goldmun stated. “I am impressed!”

“And now we come to Darling Joy. The child has an uncanny ear for music. She has perfect pitch and she can read music without being able to read music!”

“I don’t understand,” Goldmun interrupted.

“She knows what the notes on the paper are and where they are on an instrument, and all in not knowing that these marks on paper have specific names and uses! She is almost a virtuoso on the piano, and she can play the harp and zither and clas-

sical guitar and violin better than many of the so-called professional musicians on stage today!

“She can play, but she is untrained. I think she would be better suited in a musical preparatory school with an eye to Julliard when she is older. Right now, she is a bit young for that school!”

“And what do the children say about all this?” Goldmun asked. “After all, they are quite used to staying together. . .”

“Yes, that may be so, but we elders must look to their future even if they won’t.”

“I shall discuss it with them tonight and give you my answer in the morning.”

“Thank you,” the principal rose and they shook hands.

That afternoon, when the children had arrived home from school, Goldmun had them change and took them next door to the Soongs’ restaurant. Mr. Soong noticed that Johann and Kathleen were dressed alike, both in stylish winter dresses, nylons, high heels and full make-up, but made no comment one way or the other.

He smiled as Jerome held the chairs for each of the females, Joanna included, and he clapped his hands for Mai Lei to enter with the ubiquitous tea cups and a steaming pot of his beloved Oriental tea. He noticed that she hovered over Jerome as he drank and he smiled knowingly. ‘Such good children!’ he thought. ‘They will have beautiful children!’

After they had eaten their full, Goldmun invited the Soongs to join them for after-dinner tea while he explained what he had learned earlier regarding the children’s further education. They all listened si-

lently until Goldmun had finished and he waited for their reactions patiently.

“Wow!” Kathleen broke the ice. “The Fashion Institute! Oh, Baby Girl,” she spoke to Joanna, “it’s like our dream coming true!” She hugged the befrocked boy impetuously.

“Math school!” Jerome breathed reverently. “And all I have to do is learn mathematics and physics?”

“No, you would have to learn about geography, elocution, and politics, among others,” Goldmun explained. “We would not want you to be so restricted in your education. There are many other fine subjects besides mathematics and physics to occupy one’s mind!” Goldmun explained.

“But I get to do higher math at the same time?” Jerome persisted.

Goldmun nodded.

“Wow! With a background like that, I could get into M.I.T. or Stanford and get accepted into the space program!” he exclaimed excitedly.

He turned to Mai Lei. “Isn’t that great, Mai Lei?” he asked, his excitement contagious.

“Oh, Jerry,” Mai Lei exclaimed, “That’s wonderful!” Impulsively, she threw her arms around the surprised boy and kissed him soundly. Goldmun noted that Jerome did nothing to avoid the girl’s avid attentions. Even Mr. Soong chose that moment to turn away.

Goldmun turned to Darling Joy. “Well, mine Liebchen? What do you say to that?”

The girl’s shining eyes told him more than he wanted to know. She threw herself into his arms

and kissed him full on the lips. “Oh, Papa Goldmun, you are so good to us!”

And late that night, Darling Joy appeared out of the gloom and offered her charms to Goldmun, who refused point blank. But he did let her lie in his arms and sleep peacefully.

Goldmun knew he had to put a stop to all this, but for the life of him, he did not know how, and that bothered him most of all! And he continued to be visited by the three children on a regular, rotating basis and he began to feel quite comfortable with their efforts to satisfy him.

The very next morning, as promised, he conveyed their mutual decisions to follow the school’s recommendations and within days, all four were enrolled in their respective niches and peace of a sort reigned over the Goldmun household.

One afternoon, Jerome approached Goldmun and Mr. Soong, telling them that he had some information they might find interesting. When pressed, he told them about an advanced math prediction class he was taking, coupled with an economics class Mai Lei was taking, and what they had deduced after intense study.

“Mai Lei and I have studied the market quite closely, and if you invest at least a hundred thousand in this electronic stock, you will double your money in a month. They have conceived a new way of doing an electronic procedure and are about to go public. Those in on the ground floor will make a bundle, and we thought to ourselves, why not Mr. Goldmun and Mr. Soong?”

The two men were pleasantly surprised, but agreed to consider Jerome and Mai Lei’s proposal.

After much haggling and contemplation of their actions, they agreed to venture a hundred thousand. If nothing else, it would be a good lesson for Jerome and Mai Lei.

Imagine the two adults' surprise when the stock they bought split two for one the second week and then again, two weeks later, three for two. They had indeed doubled their money and then some! But, when they tried to share their bounty with Jerome and Mai Lei, they refused point blank to take any sort of monetary reward, because, as they put it, "We owe you two more than we could ever repay!"

And no amount of arguing could change their minds. Goldmun reminded Jerome and Mai Lei of Kathleen's prediction, "No good deed goes unpunished. We will get even with you!"

Jerome and Mai Lei just laughed merrily.

Over the next several months, most of the tips that Jerome and Mai Lei gave the two men proved successful, and they came to rely on the children's predictions in ways they could never have imagined in times past!

For Thanksgiving, Mr. Soong roasted a stuffed turkey for the Goldmun clan, serving his traditional Chinese fare to his regular customers, most of whom were Chinese and didn't care for a roasted turkey, stuffed or otherwise. The Goldmuns' didn't care. They devoured the turkey and the stuffing and the cranberry sauce and the gravy and the mashed potatoes and the creamed peas and the green-bean casserole, leaving nothing but empty dishes and plates and a bare turkey carcass when they were done.

Darling Joy spoke for all of them when she told Mai Lei, "That was the gooderest meal ever that I have ever ate!" she gushed. Mai Lei blushed with pleasure.

She spoke to Jerome in Chinese and Jerome laughed.

"What did she say?" Darling Joy demanded. "It was about me. I know it was!"

"She just said that you are obviously a person with good taste," Jerome explained.

"Course I can taste good!" the girl exploded in disgust.

"No, she said that you have good taste. There's a big difference."

The next few minutes were spent explaining to the little girl the difference between tasting good and having good taste, but she finally seemed to grasp it and turned away.

That was the first night that both Joanna and Kathleen visited him in the middle of the night and he was totally exhausted the next morning after having satisfied their voracious appetites numerous times. Mr. Goldmun finally concluded that he was not as young and virile as he used to be as he slept, a nubile feminine body cradled next to his on either side.

When Darling Joy woke them the next morning and pulled the blanket away to reveal three naked bodies, Goldmun found that what embarrassment he had felt in the beginning had long since vanished in the constant repetition of "discovery." Unconcerned by his nudity, he followed the three naked children up-stairs for breakfast that was served to

them by a naked, smirking Jerome. Guldmun was surprised when his tea tasted exactly the same as it did when Mr. Soong brewed it, and Jerome confessed that Mai Lei had revealed her Father's secret ingredient, but he swore Guldmun to silence lest Mr. Soong be angry with his daughter.

Clothing was dispensed with that day and Goldmun lay back and enjoyed the sight of four nubile bodies capering about his living room and they all enjoyed their "free" day.

As the children settled more and more into their new school routines, so too did their home life. Goldmun found that he rather enjoyed the regular meals prepared by his talented protégés and he listened with a sort of wonder as they regaled him with the many things they were learning in their new classes. He especially found Jerome's familiarity with non-existent numbers and negative this and negative that became positive when combined in a certain manner and spacial numbers and trajectories to be beyond his ken, especially when he found that Jerome thought that everybody should understand him because, "It is just so easy!"

And he had to have the old piano in the basement hauled up to the second floor and tuned so that Darling Joy could practice, although to Goldmun's untrained ear, she was great just the way she was!

One day in early December, Joanna and Kathleen turned to him while they were showing some new sewing techniques to Goldmun and asked him if they could show some of their designs for dresses in the front window. Goldmun was surprised because to his knowledge, the display had never been changed since long before he had bought

the store from his mentor's estate years ago. However, when he saw what they wanted to show, he thought it was a good idea.

When he agreed, they brought out two dresses they had made in class and he had to agree that they were worthy of showing. The two girls stopped showing Goldmun what they had learned and began to clean the front window. After clearing away decades of dust and washing the windows and repairing the spotlights, they draped the dresses over some racks and Goldmun had to admit that it made the place look prosperous and totally up-scale!

He was even more surprised when two women entered later that same day and asked if they could buy the dresses for their daughters to wear for their Chanukah pageants. Joanna and Kathleen were beside themselves with joy and were about to say, "Yes," when Goldmun interrupted. "The girls will have to come in to be fitted," he announced. "These are exclusive designs by The Sisters Goldmun and they make it a rule to never sell off the peg."

The two women recognized quality when they saw it and agreed to stop by with their daughters the next week for fittings. They never batted an eye lash when Goldmun insisted on a fifty dollar deposit each, "to hold them for you ladies!" which they gladly paid, promising to bring their respective daughters back for an initial fitting, then return in a week for a final fitting and delivery two or or three days later. They agreed to Goldmun's demands eagerly.

When they had left, Goldmun turned to the excited teens. "Now do you see why you need education? You must learn to not give your efforts away

but must insist on a reasonable selling price to make it worth your while.”



Kathleen looked at Goldmun with a teasing smile. "But that's why we have you, Papa Goldmun! We can suck 'em in and you can suck 'em off!" she teased.

To which Joanna began to laugh uproariously. "Hey, Sis, that's a good one!" Laughing merrily, they exchanged high fives.

"I thought so too!" Kathleen agreed with a delighted giggle.

"Humph, Kids!" was all Goldmun had to say.

When two more ladies came in shortly after that to inquire about the dresses, they got the same song and dance about fittings and because he knew all four ladies, he knew the dresses would never be on display at the same events.

He even charged them twice what he had asked from the first two, and they paid it without a whimper, even agreeing to a hundred dollar deposit each!

"And now, Liebchens, you must make two more dresses so that we have something to fit when these ladies return!" he informed them.

And that was the beginning of JoannKath's Frocks! Say it slowly - Jo and Kath, fast, and it's JoannKath!

It was so late when they finished the second set of dresses that they didn't even bother about going upstairs to get ready for bed. The three of them merely undressed and cuddled together on Goldmun's spacious recliner chair and after a session of making love, they slept happily, a head on each of his shoulders, his arm around each slim waist, each hand clasping a shapely bottom posses-

sively, and their small hands holding onto what was left of his waning erection!

All in all, JoannKath's Frocks sold ten more dresses of varied designs before Christmas Eve, and according to them, it was all Goldmun's doing! Mr. Soong agreed. All Goldmun could do was blush with a barely concealed pleasure.

The day before Christmas, Goldmun got a call from a friend he knew in city court that the adoption process was going to be finalized on December 31st. They would then be a family for real! But, Goldmun didn't say anything to the children except tell them they all had to appear in court on that day. This put somewhat of a damper on their celebration the next day, but Goldmun thought it was for a good cause and that they would forgive him when they learned the truth.

He did tell the Soongs, and it was all Mai Lei could do to keep from telling Jerome the good news, but she managed, knowing he would blab the news to the others.

On Christmas Day, a sobbing, apologetic Kathleen confessed to Goldmun that she was pregnant and that he was the baby's Father. She told him that she knew a woman in her old neighborhood who did abortions, but a horrified Goldmun quashed that idea immediately. "No, no, Liebchen, we will not murder an innocent unborn child! Let me make some calls and I think we can come up with a viable solution to our problem. OK?"

Kathleen agreed reluctantly and she allowed Goldmun to do it his way.

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It was with great trepidation that the children accompanied Goldmun to city court on the day in question and they fidgeted nervously in the pew as they waited.

But, instead of a trial, Judge Goldstein had them all accompany him into his chambers where he seated himself behind his desk and asked Kathleen, "How old are you, young lady?"

"I was eighteen years old the day before Thanksgiving," the surprised girl answered.

"Then you are of age." He turned to Goldmun, "Is this your bride to be?" He nodded at Kathleen and smiled at her.

Goldmun nodded. "Yes, Your Honor."

"And do you wish to marry this man, Otto Goldmun?" he asked a surprised Kathleen.

Without hesitation, she replied, "No, Sir, Your Honor!" she declared.

"Here, here!" the Judge thundered, turning to Goldmun. "I thought you said. . ."

"He has never asked me to marry him," Kathleen interjected quietly.

"Well, if he were to ask you, would you marry him?" the Judge demanded.

"I don't know," Kathleen mused. "Why don't you ask me, Otto?" she whispered.

A stunned Goldmun knelt in front of Kathleen and took her left hand into his. "Kathleen Sara Snyder, you know that I love you with all my heart. Would you do me the great honor of becoming my

wife?" he asked softly as he slipped a diamond ring on that surprised girl's third finger, left hand.

She gazed at the ring in wonder, then turned her gaze to the kneeling Goldmun. "Oh, Guld. . . er, I mean, Otto, of course I will marry you and be your wife!"

With a glad cry, Goldmun rose, took the girl into his arms and kissed her fervently.

"I take it that the answer is a resounding, 'Yes,' and that we can now proceed with the wedding ceremony?" the smiling Judge asked.

"But we have no license," Kathleen objected. "It says in the Law that you cannot get married without a proper license!" she insisted.

Smiling, Goldmun reached into his inner jacket pocket and produced a folded paper document. "I'm sure this will fill the bill adequately," he grinned, handing it to Kathleen.

That girl opened it and read to herself. Then she gasped and a wide smile lit up her features. "Goldmun! It's a marriage license! And it's dated four days ago! And you didn't tell me? You rat! You unspeakable louse! You nogoodnik! You. . . you. . . schmuck! Not telling me, your own wife-to-be! That was not nice! That was not nice at all!" she exploded in girlish fury. "Why, I have half a mind to cancel the whole thing! What do you think of that?" she demanded querulously.

"I wanted it to be a surprise," Goldmun explained weakly, surprised at her vehemence.

"Well, now that that's over, can we proceed with the ceremony? I still have business to complete in

Court and we're just standing here talking!" the Judge smiled.

In moments, Mr. Soong and Johann had agreed to be witnesses (Jerome and Darling Joy were still minors) and Goldmun and Kathleen stood before the grinning Judge.

"Dearly beloved," he began, "we are gathered here today to join these two persons, Mr. Otto Goldmun and Miss Kathleen Sara Snyder in the Holy bonds of matrimony!"

He turned to Goldmun, "Do you, Otto Goldmun, take this woman, Miss Kathleen Sara Snyder, to be your lawfully wedded wife, to love her, to honor her and to cherish her, to hold her above all others, for richer or for poorer, in sickness or in health, for so long as you both shall live, so help you God?"

Otto looked at the radiant Kathleen. "I do, Your Honor."

The Judge turned to Kathleen, "And do you, Miss Kathleen Sara Snyder, take this man, Mr. Otto Goldmun, as your lawful wedded husband, to love him, to honor him and to obey him, to hold him above all others, for richer or for poorer, in sickness or in health, for so long as you both shall live, so help you God?"

The answer came bubbling from Kathleen's lips. "Yes, Your Honor, I do!"

"Do you have any rings?" the Judge asked Otto.

"Right here, Your Honor."

"May I have them, please?"

Taking them from Goldmun, the Judge handed the smaller one back to the man. "Repeat after me,"

and he began the words that would bind them forever. "With this ring, I thee wed. . ."

Finally, "In as much as Otto and Kathleen have hereby pledged their troth, each to the other, before God and Country, by the power invested in me by our Great State, I do pronounce that they are husband and wife! What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder! You may kiss your bride!"

And Kathleen threw her arms around Goldmun. "Oh, Husband! I love you so much!" And she kissed him with all the pent-up fervency of her eighteen year old heart!

"Well, that went well!" the Judge smiled. "Shall we retire to the Court Room and complete the rest of our business?"

When the clerk called out the first case, "The State versus Otto Goldmun, et alia," the children were sure they were all going to be separated and sent to Juvvy Hall.

When the Judge started reading, they were surprised to hear, "In the matter of the State versus Otto Goldmun and the three dependent children, Johann Joanna Watson, Jerome Jerome Jerome and Darling Joy March, this Court will now hear arguments for and against." He turned to the straight-laced woman seated at the second table. "Is The City ready?" he asked.

"The woman nodded abruptly. "Yes, Your Honor, we are."

"And is the Goldmun representative ready?"

"We are," Mr. Soong intoned quietly.

"Very well, Ms Jackson, is it?" he asked the woman.

She nodded. "Yes, Your Honor, I am Ms Helene Jackson of the Child Protective Agency at City Place, and I have been summoned to give testimony."

"Go ahead," the Judge invited.

"Thank you. First, The City objects strenuously to the adoption of these minor children by such a person as Otto Goldmun on the basis of his incompatibility and inability to cope with the myriad needs of minor children. While it is recognized that Mr. Goldmun is a substantial citizen who is well thought of in his section of The City, that in and of itself is no basis for adopting minor children. In our investigation, we have determined that there are sufficient relatives to take responsibility for these children, and their resources are equal to that of the aforementioned Otto Goldmun. Since there is ample evidence to the contrary, we petition this Court to deny Mr. Goldmun's petition." She sat down.

The Judge turned to Goldmun. "And your response, Mr. Goldmun?"

Mr. Soong stood. "I shall represent Mr. Goldmun, Your Honor," he replied quietly.

"And you are?" the Judge asked politely.

"I am Soong, Mr. Goldmun's neighbor and also a member of the Bar of this City in good standing."

The Judge examined Mr. Soong's credentials. "Very well then, you may proceed."

"First of all, I find The City's concern quite shocking, if not down-right ludicrous! Where were these concerned relatives during those months the children were forced to live in the streets? Where were the wonderful services of the Child Protective Agency during all those months? Why did they not

step up and see to the children's welfare at that time? No, no one stepped forward until Mr. Goldmun took them into his home, saw to their welfare, sent them to school, where, I might add, each has excelled beyond one's wildest dreams! Mr. Goldmun, while he has yet to learn how to play chess adequately, is a good man. He came to this country in 1955 after the Great War, where he was interned in Dachau Concentration Camp for almost four years before being liberated by the U.S. Army! He worked for Mr. Abraham Greenberg as an apprentice tailor in Berlin and this City until Mr. Greenberg's untimely death, at which time he inherited the tailor business from that man's estate.

"He has always been a good neighbor, active in community affairs, though very reticent about publicity and acclaim for his many deeds of charity over the years.

"Mr. Goldmun took these children into his home where he fed them, clothed them, sent them to school, sent them to Church, got them involved in tailoring and helped the two oldest to start their own dress manufacturing business, JoannKath's Frocks, where they design, manufacture and merchandise clothing for the smaller woman. They employ almost twenty persons from the area, which, needless to say, has been a financial boon not only to those involved, but to our great City as well.

"I would like to question each of the children to lend further credence to my statements."

"Very well," the Judge agreed. "Call your first witness."

"I call Mrs. Kathleen Goldmun to the stand."

The Child Protective Woman was on her feet instantly. “Your Honor, this is insane! I object!”

“On what grounds?” the Judge asked incredulously.

“On the grounds that she is biased as the petitioner’s wife. . .”

“Over-ruled!” he banged his gavel.

After being sworn in, Mr. Soong spoke, “Now, Mrs. Goldmun. May I call you Kathleen?”

“Certainly.” She smiled at the intense little man.

“Please describe the circumstances that led you to your present circumstance.”

For the next several minutes, Kathleen described the loss of her home, her life in the streets, what she had to do to survive, and ended up, “The best thing that ever happened to me, besides meeting my brothers and little sister. . .”

“That’s me!” Darling Joy exclaimed excitedly.

The Judge banged his gavel. “Mr. Soong, will you please restrain your client? She will get her chance to tell her side of the story.”

Quietly, Mr. Soong explained to Darling Joy that she was not to interrupt again, because if she did, the Judge might send her from the Court Room. She quieted immediately.

Kathleen continued, smiling at Darling Joy, “meeting my brothers and little sister, was meeting Mr. Goldmun. He took the four of us into his home where he saw to our welfare in ways I could never begin to describe. It’s no wonder I fell in love with this kind, gentle, man and agreed to become his

wife. I'd do it again in a heart beat!" she exclaimed proudly.

"Do you wish to cross-examine?" the Judge asked the woman.

She nodded and stood. "Isn't it true, Mrs. Goldmun, that you are pregnant? And is it not further true that Otto Goldmun is the legally acknowledged father of your unborn child?" she demanded, an evil glint in her eye.

"No, that is not true," Kathleen replied evenly. "I got pregnant from one of my last tricks before going to live with my now husband. I have no idea who the father of my unborn child is."

"It says here that Goldmun admitted being the father!" she exclaimed loudly.

"My husband said that because he feels that no child should be burdened with the epithet bastard when there is a way around it. He offered to be listed as my child's father to give it every chance in life, and for that reason alone, I would have loved and married him!"

The woman sat down in defeat. "No further questions."

In short order, Mr. Soong had Joanna and Jerome tell their stories, which were substantially the same as Kathleen's. The Child Protective woman did not cross examine either child, which surprised Goldmun after the rather cavalier manner she had adopted with Kathleen..

Mr. Soong called Darling Joy to be a witness.

As she sat in the witness chair, the Judge leaned toward her. "Tell me, Darling Joy, do you know the

difference between telling a lie and telling the truth?”

Darling Joy nodded eagerly. “Yes, Judgie, I do.”

“Would you tell us the difference?”

“Well, a lie is something that you know is not true, but you tell it anyway, mostly because you’re scared. The truth is what you know without adding a lot of things to it.”

The Judge banged his gavel. “I find her qualified.”

Mr. Soong approached the witness chair. “Now, Darling Joy, tell us what happens to little girls who tell lies.”

“They get their bottoms smacked!”

“And has Mr. Goldmun ever smacked your bottom?”

Darling Joy shook her head emphatically. “Oh, no, Sir!” She paused a minute, then, “But my new Mommy has, lots of times! She hits hard too!”

“And are you angry with her because she has spanked you?”

Darling Joy shook her head. “No, because I brought it all on myself by lying to her.”

“Tell us about Mr. Goldmun.”

For the next several minutes, Darling Joy reiterated her life before meeting Goldmun, and then, “After I complained to the Welfare lady about my Mommie’s boyfriend raping me, they did nothing for me. All they did was send him to prison. Mommie said it was all my fault and she kicked me out.”

“How old were you?” Mr. Soong asked quietly.

“I was eight.”

“And what did Child Protective Services do for you?”

“Nothing! Mommie’s worker wouldn’t even talk to me after my Mommie kicked me out.”

“I have nothing more, Your Honor.” Mr. Soong sat down.

“Ms Jackson?” the Judge asked.

“Yes, Your Honor.” She approached the witness chair. “You say the Welfare Worker refused to talk to you?”

Darling Joy nodded. “Yep.”

“And how can you be so sure of that?” she asked snidely.

“Cause you were my Mommie’s worker!” the girl stated emphatically.

The woman blanched visibly. “No more questions,” and she sat down.

“Do you have any more witnesses?” he asked Mr. Soong quietly.

“No, Your Honor.”

“Ms Jackson?” he asked gently.

The woman shrugged. “The City withdraws its objection to the adoption, Your Honor.”

He gazed at her momentarily. Then, “Yes, I thought you might!”

The woman squirmed impotently in her seat.

The Judge banged his gavel. “In my considered opinion, I find no reason to dispute the abrupt withdrawal of the Children’s Aid Agency and I therefore find in favor of Otto Goldmun. Full custody of the aforementioned three children is hereby awarded to

Otto Goldmun and they shall hereinafter be known as his issue and his sole responsibility. You are now all Goldmuns!" he exclaimed, smiling at the astonished looks on their faces.

Darling Joy was the first to react. "Yay! I'm a Goldmun now!" and she threw her arms around Goldmun and kissed him happily. Goldmun had the grace to blush deeply.

The Judge banged his gavel on the bench. "Order! Order in the Court!"

The other three hugged and cried as they realized that they all belonged together, they were a real family now!

Before Goldmun could grab her, Darling Joy had scampered around the Judge's bench and had climbed into his lap. She put her arms around his neck and kissed him soundly. "Thank you, Judgie," she whispered. "Does this really mean that Mr. Goldmun is my Papa now?"

The Judge smiled and nodded. "Yes, child, that's exactly what it means!"

"And Kathleen is Mrs. Goldmun?"

He nodded. "Yes, that she is."

"So, Kathleen is now my Mommie, right?"

The surprised Judge nodded. "Why, yes, I suppose she is," he admitted.

"Yay! Thank you, Judgie!" she squealed, kissing him before jumping off, rushing around and throwing herself into Kathleen's waiting arms, to kiss her wildly. "Hi, Mommie!"

The others gathered around Kathleen, hugging and kissing her and calling her, "Mommie!" All Kathleen could do was cry great tears of happiness.

Goldmun was so overwhelmed by it all that he paid for a taxi to take them home!

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It was a wild celebration at the Soongs as they ate and welcomed in the new year, and even Papa Soong relented and allowed Mai Lei to sit in Jerome's lap. After all, she was of marriageable age and Jerome, in his estimation, was an ideal mate for his daughter. He smiled as he thought about the brilliantly beautiful grandchildren they would give him and his wife!

Goldmun was not surprised when Kathleen insisted that he share the big bed up-stairs with her. "Because after all," she reminded him with a sly grin, "it is legal for us to f\*\*k now! I am of age, and better than that, we're married too! We're husband and wife!"

"Yes, my dear wife," he replied warily.

He was not surprised when Joanna slipped in with the two of them shortly after they got into bed, and he knew he was being ganged up on! He accepted the inevitable, laying back passively while the two adult children mounted him in turn and took their pleasure.

Tiredly, Goldmun made his way out of the bedroom late the next morning, his two sleep mates bounding out as though they had slept soundly instead of making love to him all night! 'Oh, to be young again and able to do all night what I used to

do all night!’ he thought with a sorrowful grin. ‘My children are wearing me out!’ he sighed to himself. “Oh, it is so good to be alive!”

Later that same day, their clothing crises having long since been solved, both Gay-90’s clad girls were bent over their design table and their babble made Goldmun drowsy. Soon, he dozed and only awakened when Kathleen slipped into his lap. “Husband, may we ask you something?”

“My wife can ask me anything,” Goldmun replied sleepily.

“Joanna and I want to have a Fall showing of some of our designs. We talked it over with our advisors from school and they told us to talk it over with you and Mr. Soong before we came to a final decision. So, how about it?”

Goldmun was surprised. “Are you ready for such a thing?”

“We think so,” she answered shyly.

“You realize that a showing is an offer to sell and that you will need cloth and thread supplies and machines to sew the merchandise and hangers and plastic covers and people to do the sewing and a place to do the work and a place for the show and models and. . . and. . .”

“We have models,” Kathleen explained. “There’s Joanna and Mai Lei and Mrs. Soong and me and Jerome to announce for us and you and Darling Joy and Mr. Soong to help us change our outfits, and. . . and. . .”

“Let me consult with Mr. Soong and let us see what we can come up with,” Goldmun half promised in his sleep induced daze.

Kathleen kissed him lovingly. “Just wait until we get you in bed tonight, Lover Boy!” she teased. “We’ll turn you every which way but loose!”

Goldmun erected violently in anticipation.

‘My good God!’ he thought. ‘I must have died and gone straight to Heaven!’

Kathleen grinned. “Wow! You sure come up with the nicest things!” she teased throatily as she caressed the bulge in his pants. “Is that your flashlight or are you just glad to see me?”

The next day, he and Mr. Soong played chess as usual, the ubiquitous tiny teacups at hand, and they talked about the children’s wish to have a show.

“What do you think, Goldmun?” Mr. Soong asked as he captured one of Goldmun’s threatening pawns, smiling slyly.

“I have seen their sketches and I have seen some of the sketches made into dresses. I think if they keep things within reason, say no more than fifty or sixty items, it would be a worthwhile investment. I know a manufacturer who is almost bankrupt from a thieving partner who would be more than willing to make the goods and ship them to the buyers stores.”

Moving quickly, he quietly captured one of Mr. Soong’s bishops. “Check,” he murmured.

“And I have the old burlesque theater on Third Avenue that has a long runway that projects out into the audience, and it is just high enough to keep the models above the crowd so they can be easily seen,” Mr. Soong mused as he took the offending

knight from the board. “Check, yourself,” Mr. Soong whispered in triumph.

“Oy, vey!” Goldmun muttered.

“Indeed,” Mr. Soong agreed.

“Advertising is no problem,” Goldmun replied, his hand removing the other one of Mr. Soong’s bishops and taking a satisfying sip of tea. “Marti Morton at WWD owes me. . .”

“But how do we give the money to the children? Knowing that pair, I don’t think they would accept anything from either of us.”

“True, true,” Goldmun agreed. “But Harold Stocking at our bank would act as a banker making a loan to them, and they would not have to know that we were guaranteeing repayment to the bank!”

“Well, what sort of rent do we charge them for the use of the old theater?” Mr. Soong asked, still thinking.

“We can say that the unnamed owner would take a thousand for a one time use and let it go at that. From their bank loan, they can pay us with our own money.”

“They will be greatly annoyed if they ever find out!” Mr. Soong cautioned. “They do have tempers, those two children of yours!” he tsk-tsk’d.

Goldmun giggled. “I know a way to silence both of them!”

Mr. Soong and Goldmun enjoyed a hearty laugh at the expense of the absent teens. A moment later, Mr. Soong mated Goldmun’s king with a soft chuckle. “Ah, Goldmun, when will you learn?” he teased.

Goldmun snorted. "Better to let you win occasionally to keep you from crying!"

Mr. Soong smiled. "Ah, so."

"Oy, vey!" Goldmun responded.

That afternoon, when Kathleen and Joanna returned from school and they had changed into their outfit for the day, an early fifties "Grease" dress complete with poodle skirt, stretch fabric belt, white linen blouses with small cap sleeves, saddle shoes and ankle sox and their hair flowing loosely about their shoulders, the two bounced into the shop and immediately deluged Goldmun with questions interspersed with affectionate and intimate kisses.

After he had explained how he and Mr. Soong had "approached" their banker friend and he had agreed to lend them the money, "But only," Goldmun cautioned, "if Mr. Soong and I co-sign the loan!"

For a moment they were non-plussed, but then they brightened considerably. "No problemo!" Joanna enthused. "Our frocks will fly right out the door with our satisfied customers!"

Goldmun went on to tell them that he had talked to a manufacturer who was on the ropes and he had agreed to make their goods and ship them, but he wanted a guarantee to cover wages and the cost of material before he started.

Accordingly, they skipped school the next day and went to see the manufacturer, who fell all over himself to be accommodating to these rich, Jewish entrepreneurs! They agreed on a tentative contract to make their goods, telling him they still had to get the bank loan.

From the factory, they went to Goldmun's bank where they met with Mr. Soong and Mr. Fordson Stocking to discuss finances.

Mr. Stocking pretended that it was the bank's money and he expressed concerns that the two teens could pull it off.

Then, when he saw that they were certain of themselves and with the silent nods from Goldmun and Mr. Soong, he agreed to loan them one hundred thousand dollars to jump-start their new company, which they named, JoannKath's Frocks!

They showed their designs to Mr. Franklin at their manufacturing facility, and that man was greatly surprised at the maturity and depth of their efforts. When they left, he had their check for fifty thousand dollars to order fabric and call some of his laid-off workers back to their jobs. He expressed the hope that this would be just the first of a long and successful run.

He was not to be disappointed in that assumption.

Goldmun made the arrangements for a small reader ad to run in WWD every day for a week, and Mr. Soong hired workers to clean up the old theater and make it somewhat half-way presentable for the children's showing.

Goldmun's contact at WWD, Ms Marti Morton, knew every clothes buyer in the world and she promised to let each one of them know there was a new designer firm anxious to show them their wares. Before that week was out, more than a hundred buyers had indicated they would attend JoannKath's Frocks first showing, the news that

there was a firm that was going to specialize in the smaller woman was welcome news.

Now it was up to the children to deliver the goods, designs, that is, and make prototype dresses for their models to wear at the showing.

Mai Lei and Mrs. Soong were delighted when asked to model their creations and both women offered their services in any way to contribute to the cause in order to assure their venture's ultimate success.

Even Jerome got into the act. He agreed to announce each model and design and give a proper commentary as the model sashayed her way down the runway. With his deep, gravelly voice and his commanding presence, he was a natural, especially since he agreed to go "native" and wear the costume they were designing for him.

The problem, as he saw it, was that they would not let him see it until the day of the showing! To tease his sisters, he hemmed and hawed and changed his mind a thousand times, keeping them both off balance and on tenter-hooks the whole time. "Poetic justice!" as he told Goldmun with a pleased grin.

The first week of July, the theater and show dresses were all ready and the girl models were beside themselves with excitement as they peeped through the curtains at the people expectantly lining both sides of the runway.

"Gee, I'm surprised at the number who showed up!" Joanna confessed to Kathleen.

"Not to worry, Baby," she soothed. Kathleen was fully eight months pregnant and long since showing

a swollen belly. She was slated to model three dresses for pregnant woman later in the show.

Promptly at three, Jerome, wearing the costume they had made for him, a gorgeous white satin tuxedo with a white shirt, white tie, white top hat, white gloves, white sox and snow white shoes, parted the curtain with mike in hand.

There was an expectant pause; then Jerome's rich, deep basso startled the gathering. "Ladies and gentlemen," he announced sonorously, "Welcome one and all to this, the first nation-wide showing of JoannKath's Frocks. We know that you are going to be pleasantly surprised by the scope of our designs, and even more pleasantly surprised at their low cost per unit. Our sales personnel will be available after the showing and you may place your orders then.

"Remember, these are our exclusive designs and are not cheap knock-offs of other, more well known, designers. We would ask that you place no more than three or at the most, four frocks of different sizes in any one store to maintain at least the appearance of individuality!

"That said, may I introduce our first model? She is Joanna Goldmun and a recent graduate of the Fashion Institute where she garnered some of their highest awards for her excellence in design. Miss Joanna?" He waved his hand in invitation.

The curtains parted and the smiling Joanna stepped forward, swaying sensuously down the long runway, her high heels clicking strongly on the parquet flooring.

"Notice the flowing lines of our model's skirt," Jerome intoned as she reached the end, twirled, paused, twirled again, then started back to the rear.

“This frock is equally appropriate for afternoon or evening wear. Mark it on your program as number fourteen.

“Next, we have Miss Mai Lei Soong modeling a slinky satin evening gown for that very special occasion. Note the flowing lines, unbroken by a belt line from bust to ankle.” Mai Lei swayed down the runway, paused, twirled, paused, twirled and swayed back to the rear.

“Mark number twelve on your programs, ladies and gentlemen! Thank you, Mai Lei!”

As Mai Lei disappeared, Kathleen appeared wearing an afternoon dress. “Now, ladies and gentlemen,” Jerome intoned, “notice the clean sweep of skirt and blouse. No one would ever guess that you were wearing a maternity dress!” As they watched, the stomach of the skirt seemed to swell. “And as you can see, it is not restricted to just the early days of pregnancy!”

There were gasps of surprise from the audience and a smattering of applause as Kathleen paused, twirled, paused, and made her way back-stage.

Jerome paused dramatically, then, “Mark your programs for item number seven!”

Jerome continued to announce each dress as it appeared, but while all seemed to be in complete control out front, back-stage was a bedlam of frantic activity as Goldmun and Mr. Soong hurried to help the models out of one dress and into the next, just as fast as possible.

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It took two and a half hours of quick changes and safety pins and scotch tape and that old stand-by, duct tape, to keep the show running in a somewhat orderly fashion. Those out in front thought it was a well presented, orderly showing, and at the end, clapped loudly, calling for the designers to come forth. There were gasps of surprise when Kathleen and Joanna made their appearance dressed in identical low-cut, thigh-slit almost to the waist satin evening gowns and curtsayed to the crowd.

Kathleen took the mike from Jerome and began, "Thank you so much, ladies and gentlemen for your kind acceptance of our offerings this afternoon. We have worked very hard to make this, our first of many more to come, showing of our efforts to clothe the shorter, smaller women in our nation. As you can plainly see, my sister, Joanna, and I are the epitome of shortness, and therein lay our inspiration."

Joanna took the mike. "All I can add, ladies and gentlemen, is that I hope you will order all our designs and that you make a ton of money from them! Thank you!"

They curtsayed to the audience, which burst into spontaneous applause. The twins curtsayed again, then turned and hurried off-stage.

As they departed, Goldmun announced, "Mr. Soong and I will be at the end of the runway to take your orders, and I assure you, our pens are full of ink!"

There was some good-natured laughter at this as Goldmun sat on the end of the runway with his order book in his lap. Less than a minute later, he was writing furiously as he took their orders. The amounts surprised even him. but outwardly, he was calmness itself.

Back-stage, Kathleen and Joanna were a bundle of nerves, both holding on to one another as they cried tears of joy for their success.

When they were all cried out, they repaired their make-up and joined Goldmun and Mr. Soong to take orders. They were as surprised as Goldmun had been, but unlike that man, they could not conceal their joy and their bubbly responses to the buyers made everyone feel good.

Kathleen whispered in Goldmun's ear, "Just wait until we get you in bed tonight, Mister! We're going to fuck your brains out!"

Immediately, Goldmun erected violently. 'God!' he thought, 'what sort of hold do these girls have on me? Whatever it is,' he decided, 'it's well worth it!'

Mr. Franklin was so surprised that he had to sit down. "Do you know what you have done?" he gasped. "Now I can bring back all my laid-off workers and we can be a producing factory again! And it's all thanks to you!" And before the surprised girls knew what he was going to do, he had embraced them and was kissing them indiscriminately.

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Three days later, the deposit checks and reorders started pouring in, and by the end of that first month, Kathleen and Joanna paid off their "loan"

from the bank and had started the negotiations for buying the theater to renovate as a design studio and home offices for their now successful venture. It wasn't long before Kathleen and Joanna were too busy designing to make mock-ups and had to hire a local woman and her daughter who had worked for one of the fashion houses that had gone broke in recent months because of down-sizing and the recession that was NOT!

Then came an unforgettable night in late July when labor pains hit Kathleen and she was taken to the hospital where, thirteen hours later, she was delivered of a beautiful female child weighing some nine pounds eight ounces that Goldmun insisted on naming "Kathleen Joanna Goldmun," much to Kathleen's unstated displeasure and Joanna's glowing approval. It seemed that Kathleen had wanted the baby named just "Joanna" after her dear sister.

As Goldmun told her, "We don't always get what we want, mine love!"

"Don't you worry, Goldmun," she threatened, "never forget that I got you! And always remember that no good deed goes unpunished! God'll get you for that!" she teased.

Goldmun had no response to that, so wisely kept his mouth shut.

He knew when to keep quiet around Kathleen!

In October, they held a combination late Spring/early Summer showing that was every bit as successful as the first showing had been. This time, they included some fashion frocks for the younger child which Darling Joy was ecstatic about modeling! With her bubbly personality, her ready smile,

her bouncy promenade and her enthusiastic response to the audience, she was the hit of the show!

“Such a darling child,” Mrs. Soong praised.

‘How far they all have come!’ Goldmun mused.

And that night, after the show, an ecstatic Kathleen informed Goldmun that he was going to be a Father again!

Now that the continued success of their venture was realized, Kathleen and Joanna decided that they wanted to do something for the homeless, so they arranged for Goldmun to make a huge monetary donation to one of the Mission Houses in their neighborhood. “After all,” they told Goldmun, “we know what it’s like to be homeless!”

As a reward for their generosity, Goldmun insisted on taking Kathleen and Joanna to Florida on a belated honeymoon, but without Jerome and Darling Joy!

Kathleen wanted them to go too so they could share in her happiness. But Goldmun put his foot down and Kathleen promptly stepped on it, but he had his way and the three of them spent two weeks in Key West in late December. Then they went to Disney World, the Circus Winter HQ and some other places before they returned to The City.

Then, back home, and Joanna and Kathleen applied themselves to their next show, supervising manufacture of their dresses by Mr. Franklin while Goldmun and Mr. Soong continued their chess maneuvers with neither a clear, nor consistent, winner.

Jerome surprised them in Goldmun’s shop one afternoon when he asked Mr. Soong if they could have a word in private, at which he began chattering

away to the man in Mandarin Chinese, which was “private” because Goldmun had never learned the language!

It was at times like this that he regretted his lack.

At the end of their conversation, Mr. Soong stood, bowed politely to Jerome, who bowed to Mr. Soong, whereupon Mr. Soong embraced Jerome excitedly. Then, without a word to Goldmun, he turned his king down and hurried out of the shop.

“Well, Jerome,” Goldmun chided, “I suppose you have a good reason for interrupting my whipping of Mr. Soong?”

“OK, Papa,” Jerome replied, grinning from ear to ear. “I just asked Mr. Soong for Mai Lei’s hand in marriage and he said he would have to speak with Momma Soong first, and that I was invited to his home tonight for dinner and their decision.”

Goldmun stood and held out his hand. “Congratulations, my boy! I wish you every success. She will be a wonderful wife for you!”

“I think so too, Papa!” Jerome enthused. “Hey, I hate to run, but I’ve got to tell Kath and Joanna!” And he was gone in a rush.

Goldmun locked the front door and went upstairs where Darling Joy was practicing her music on the recently retuned piano. Darling Joy called it “practice,” but to Goldmun it was beautiful music from Heaven and he sat to listen, losing himself in the melodic sweetness that surrounded him.

He was startled when the girl stopped abruptly and segued into “The Wedding March!” Goldmun roused and stared at the girl questioningly.

“Jerome and Mai Lei are getting married!” she exclaimed. “Isn’t that wonderful news, Papa? I am so happy for them!” she squealed.

With a glad bound, she left her stool and landed in Goldmun’s surprised lap, kissing and teasing the man unmercifully. Goldmun just laughed and let the little girl have her fun.

When next they met for their usual chess game, Mr. Soong acted down in the mouth, to which Goldmun chided, “So, Soong, why the long face? I would have thought that you would be overjoyed getting my boy, Jerome, as your son-in-law!”

“Oy, vey,” moaned Mr. Soong, “whatever will Mama Soong and I do without our Mai Lei to comfort us in our old age and brighten out lives?”

“What will you do?” Goldmun exclaimed heatedly. “Why, you old fraud, you’ll be stumbling over all those beautiful grand-children they will give you and your wife!”

“Ah, there is justice in the world after all!” Mr. Soong admitted with just the slightest bit of a smile.

“Why, you old fraud!” Goldmun chided. “If it will make you feel any better, I might find it in my heart to share my Darling Joy with you!”

Mr. Soong nodded. “You are a good friend, Goldmun,” he admitted. “So, are we going to sit here and cry over my loss or are we going to play chess which, by the way, you have yet to learn?”

“Set up the board!” Goldmun roared.

Mr. Soong smiled happily.

“Ah, so. . .”

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Several months later, when Jerome and Mai Lei announced their plans to elope, Goldmun and Mr. Soong objected strenuously, insisting on a proper wedding for the two young children.

And no matter how Jerome and Mai Lei tried to sway them, Goldmun and Mr. Soong remained adamant, and on their wedding day, a radiant Kathleen was Mai Lei's matron-of-honor while Joanna, wearing a woman's satin power suit, served as best man for his brother.

As Goldmun reminded Jerome, "I told you, no good deed goes unpunished! Such is the penalty for not taking what we offered when we offered it! So, now you must suffer the consequences!"

Jerome laughed heartily. "You, Mr. Goldmun, and you, Mr. Soong, are just a pair of old frauds! You try to be so hard and you're both softer than whipped cream on Jello!"

"Oy, vey!" Goldmun whispered, pretending shame.

"Ah so," Mr. Soong sighed.

A few weeks after their wedding, Jerome and Mai Lei were off for California to study at Stanford, Jerome pursuing studies in space engineering mathematics and Mai Lei with economics, leaving Goldmun and the Soongs at a temporary loss.

JoannKath's Frocks was getting beyond the ability of Goldmun and Mr. Soong to manage and they interviewed several persons to be business manager of the firm, settling on one woman in particular, a Ms Raechel Stein, a Wharton School M.B.A. who

had been down-sized from her former employment in favor of the president of the company's recently graduated daughter. She soon proved herself to be an extremely competent manager, and the problems each had thought monumental, proved to be miniscule when handled by someone who knew what to do and when to do it!

It soon became quite obvious that Ms Stein and Joanna were fascinated with one another, and it came as no surprise when one afternoon, Ms Stein asked for a private conference with Goldmun. He was only mildly surprised when the younger woman laid it on the line. She was in love with Joanna and wished for Goldmun's permission and approval to court the boy.

"Oh, my," Goldmun mused, seemingly aghast. "You would take my beloved daughter from me?"

"Oh, no! I would never do that!" the woman protested. "I have too much respect for you to ever interfere with your personal relationship. Joanna has told me all about how you and Mr. Soong rescued them from a life in the streets, and I could not be more grateful to you for that!"

"My dear young woman," Goldmun blushed with pleasure, "You are much too kind!"

"I ask you for permission to court Joanna, and yes, I know that Joanna is not a girl, but that makes no difference to me because I love her no matter what sex she wants to be!"

Goldmun was taken with the woman's obvious sincerity and gave his blessing. Six months later, right after the birth of his and Kathleen's third child, Joanna wore a white satin wedding dress and veil and was quietly married to Raechel Stein, who

wore a light blue satin tuxedo, by Judge Goldstein in his chambers downtown.

Goldmun had a lump in his throat when the Judge asked, "And do you, Miss Joanna Goldmun, take Raechel Stein, as your lawfully wedded husband? To love her, and honor her and obey her, in sickness or in health, for richer or poorer, for so long as you both shall live?"

Joanna softly replied, "I do."

Finally, it was all over and Kathleen was kissing her sister on the cheek and whispering in her ear, "You're gonna get f\*\*\*\*d now, girl!"

Joanna just smiled and smiled.

A pregnant Mai Lei waddled up to Joanna. "Congrats, Sister! I just know you'll make Raechel a darn good wife!"

Joanna embraced her sister-in-law happily. "I'm certainly going to try!"

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Two years later, Goldmun had two grand-children and Mr. Soong had one grand-son. Goldmun teased Mr. Soong that he could never catch up, continuing the feud they had enjoyed for so many years.

Life went on, as it so often does and one day Darling Joy slid into Goldmun's lap and kissed him deeply. "Here, here, what's the meaning of this?" he demanded.

"I'm giving a piano recital, and I want you and the Soongs to come," she explained.

“Why, of course we’ll come! What ever made you think we wouldn’t want to?” he demanded.

“I’m playing duets with a boy. . .”

“So?” Goldmun asked, puzzled.

“He’s black,” she continued.

“Black? Like in African black?” the astounded man asked.

Darling Joy nodded. “Yes, he’s a refugee from one of those countries in Africa where they have been having war for so many years.”

“Is he a good piano player?” Goldmun demanded. “I don’t want any second rate player spoiling your beautiful music!”

Darling Joy laughed gaily. “He couldn’t spoil music if he tried!” She kissed Goldmun. “So, you approve and will come?”

“I said we would!” he exclaimed. “Why should you doubt me?”

“Well, he is black. . .”

“So’s Jerome.”

“Yeah, but Jerome’s family!”

“He’s still black,” Goldmun reminded her. He was Black then and he’s Black now and he will always be Black!”

Darling Joy thought a moment. “Yeah, I never thought of it that way!” she admitted. “I always think of him as my older brother, that’s all!”

“When you stop to look at it,” Goldmun continued, “we are all refugees of one sort or another. Take me, I left Germany, not because I had anything against my native country, but because there was

nothing for me there. The same with Mr. Soong. He left his beloved China because of the Communists to migrate here with his wife and escape oppression. Mai Lei was born here, you know.”

Darling Joy nodded. “Oh, I know all that.”

“There was a lot of bad feeling in this country after the big war, especially against anyone who was Oriental. This bad feeling was directed mostly at the Japanese, but anyone from the Orient was suspect. Things were not easy for the Soongs.”

“I didn’t know that,” the girl admitted softly.

“It was the same with you children when I first met you. Remember how most people treated you then?” he asked.

The girl nodded. “Yeah, and it wasn’t nice either!”

“No, it wasn’t.” Goldmun sighed. “Thankfully, each one of you got over your lost feelings and you all turned out to be rather good citizens after all.”

“Yeah, well, we had a good teacher. . . er, I mean, good teachers! Mr. Soong taught us a lot at the same time you were teaching us,” she exclaimed in awed wonderment.

“Ah, so, you were all so easy to guide,” Goldmun replied.

“Oh, you sound just like Mr. Soong with your, ‘Ah, so!’” she giggled.

Three weeks later, Goldmun, Kathleen, Jerome, Mai Lei, Joanna and Raechel, and the Soongs were seated together in a row in a giant concert hall, excitedly awaiting the debut of Darling Joy and her piano playing partner, Mr. Evan Slade.

The house lights dimmed and a hushed voice exclaimed, “Ladies and gentlemen, The Emporium is proud to present the twin sisters, Misses Ebony and Ivory Music, in their first public performance!”

The curtain parted and two girls, holding hands, stepped forward. They were dressed identically in every fashion, except where one wore white, the other wore black! The shorter girl, by an inch or so, a bouncy red head, wore a calf length black satin sheathe dress that was sleeveless, strapless and form fitting. She also wore shoulder length black, fingerless gloves, black nylons and black high heel pumps. The other girl, of obvious African descent, wore a calf length white satin sheathe dress that was also sleeveless, strapless and form fitting. She wore shoulder length white, fingerless gloves, nude nylons and white high heeled pumps. Both girls, hair bouncing loosely atop their shoulders, swayed their hips sexily as they approached the stage apron.

Without saying a word, the two girls fell into a deep curtsey for the audience, who showed their appreciation by clapping wildly.

From the curtain behind them, an arm appeared, holding a microphone. The black girl took the mike and spoke in a breathy whisper, “Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, my name is Ivory Music, and this is my piano playing partner and twin sister, Miss Ebony Music. We are going to play a medley of some old favorites and a few brand new pieces written especially for tonight’s performance.”

She handed the mike to the redhead. “Thank you, Ivory. I hope your playing is up to par tonight and that I don’t have to carry you. . . again!” the girl teased with a wide smile.

As they turned, the curtain parted to reveal two grand pianos, back to back, in center stage. One was a solid black and the other was pure white. Ivory, of course, went to the white one and seated herself on the white bench.

Ebony went to the black piano and seated herself comfortably. Then, she gazed at her partner expectantly. A second later, four hands touched the keyboards and the audience sat, enthralled, as the two girls wove their magic around them. Many minutes later, they paused to rest. The audience sat back expectantly. The black girl spoke into her mike. "Well, I must say, Ebony, you have improved greatly over yesterday's fiasco!"

"As long as I play better than you, Baby Sister!" was her retort.

"Oy, vey!" Ivory lamented, rolling her eyes. "By ten whole minutes she's older!"

"Well, you had your chance to go first, but you blew it!" Ebony retorted, and they swung into the old favorite, "Don't Rain on My Parade" by Bob Merrill and Julie Styne from the movie, "Funny Girl!"

The audience roared its appreciation of their rep-  
artee.

They continued to banter and play for the better part of two hours, finishing with the song "Sisters" by Irving Berlin, before they stood, walked to the stage apron and, still holding hands, curtsayed deeply for the audience. Then, with a gay laugh, they ran daintily from the stage. The concert was over.

Goldmun sat in shock.

He had expected a boy to play opposite Darling Joy.

Who was this girl called, “Ivory Music?”

And why was Darling Joy called, “Ebony Music?”

It made no sense to him.

Still, he kept his peace as the audience filed out and he and the rest went back-stage to meet this “Ivory” person.

They knocked softly at the dressing room door marked with twin stars, and at the muffled, “come,” went in.

They were greeted by the two girls and a buxom black lady, and all three were smiling widely. “Hi, Papa!” Darling Joy greeted. “And everyone else too! Did you like it?”

Goldmun started right in. “Darling Joy? I thought you said your partner was a boy named Evan Slade? Who’s this girl who was there instead?” he asked.

“Papa,” Darling Joy grinned. “Meet Mr. Evan Slade.” She pushed the black girl forward.

Goldmun stared. “You’re Evan Slade? A boy?”

The girl grinned and curtseyed. “Yessir, in the flesh!”

“But. . . but. . . you’re a girl!”

“So it would seem,” the grinning girl agreed.

“Yep, but don’t be fooled by appearances,” Darling Joy laughed. “He’s all boy in those silky panties under that slinky skirt!”

“But, I’m not a girl. Am I, Momma?” he asked the buxom black lady.

“Nope, he’s all boy under that get-up!” the woman giggled.

“I don’t understand. . .” Goldmun whispered.

“Oh, Papa, sit down and I’ll explain,” Darling Joy invited.

Goldmun sank into a nearby chair and waited expectantly.

“You see, Papa,” Darling Joy explained, “boy-girl duos are a dime a dozen in the music world. And so are girl duets. But, two girls who state they are twin sisters, even though one is Black and the other Caucasian, are rarer than hen’s teeth. And since Evan looks more like a girl than most girls do, except me and Kath and Mai Lei and Raechel and Mrs. Slade and Mrs. Soong, we decided to use the obvious difference between us as a promotional gimmick.”

“And it worked too!” Mrs. Slade interjected. “I, too, was totally against it at first, but after seeing how that audience reacted to them tonight, I’m sorry I was so disapproving!” She smiled fondly at Darling Joy and Evie. “But, I should have known they could pull it off! That Darling Joy has a good head on her shoulders, even if she is all bleached out!”

“Oh, Momma Slade,” Darling Joy giggled. “You know I never use bleach!”

“So you say, child,” the woman lamented, “so you say!”

“And that’s why we didn’t tell you, Papa,” Darling Joy added, turning back to Goldmun. “We didn’t want to cause you any grief.”

Goldmun’s eyes filled with tears. “Liebchen, you could never cause me grief!”

“Oh, Papa,” Darling Joy exclaimed as she threw herself into the man’s arms. “It’s no wonder I love you so much!”

That was the first concert by the duo, the twin sisters Ebony and Ivory Music, and over the next few years, their fame grew and grew and their national tour was met with great enthusiasm in every city they played. Momma Slade accompanied them as their chaperone, and as Darling Joy confessed to Kathleen one night, “She spanks us just as hard as you used to spank me!”

“Why should she spank you?” Kathleen asked, aghast.

“Well, me’n Evie got to fooling around one night after a performance and Momma Slade caught us with our panties down, so to speak. She never said aye, yes or maybe, just hauled us across her broad lap and proceeded to blister our bare bottoms! We were some careful after that, but that wasn’t the last time by a long shot. She finally got a steel cage for Evie and that stopped us cold. Boy, some people just don’t want others to have any fun!”

Kathleen told Goldmun what Darling Joy had told her and they both laughed at the children’s frustration, but thankful for Mrs. Slade’s judicious guardianship of Darling Joy’s belated chastity!

And as it must, time passed, and one day, Darling Joy plunked herself down in Goldmun’s lap.

“Today, Papa, I am eighteen years old!” she announced, kissing him fondly.

“Yah, so?” he asked, puzzled.

“I am of age, Papa,” she cooed into his ear.

“Yah, so?”

“I can make my own decisions now.”

“Yah, so?”

“You know the boy I have been playing duets with these past few years?”

“Yes, Evie, something or other,” he equivocated.

“Evelyn Slade.”

“Yeah, him.”

“We want to turn professional.”

“Yah, so?”

“You know Evie’s Black?”

“Yah, so?”

“I think I want to marry him too.”

Goldmun felt his heart sink. The last of his brood was going to leave the nest!

He swallowed the retort that sprang to his lips. She was old enough to know her own mind! And he had no right to dispute her choice!

“Yah, so?”

“Is that all you can say, Papa?” she asked, dejected.

“What else is to say? Now I know how Mr. Soong felt when Mai Lei married Jerome!”

“Oh, Papa, we are not going to leave The City! Evie and I plan to teach at the Music Institute, and I’d like it very much if I could stay right here with you and Kath! There’s all that vacant room and we’d pay rent and keep it all fixed up nice, and all like that!” she enthused.

“Have you spoken to Kathleen?”

Darling Joy nodded excitedly. “Yep! And she’s all for it!”

“God forbid I should disagree with mine wife!” Goldmun muttered.

“Hunh?”

“I said, OK,” he murmured.

Darling Joy threw her arms around Goldmun. “Thank you, Papa!”

“Anything to keep peace in the family!” he smiled.

“Oh, there is one little thing. . .”

“Yes, child?”

“I’m eighteen now.”

“Yah, so?”

“I can make my own decisions now.”

“Yah, so you said.”

“Remember when I first came here and I wanted to take care of you the same way Joanna and Kathleen did, only you said I was too young?”

Goldmun shivered. “Yah, so?”

“I can make my own decisions now,” she stated firmly.

“But, you’re going to marry Evelyn,” he protested weakly.

“He hasn’t asked me yet.” She smiled.

“What do you mean?”

“Until I am officially engaged to him, I am a free agent. As a free agent, I have the right to choose whom I bed.”

“But, I’m married to Kathleen!” he protested.

“Yah, so?” she teased.

“So, I’m married, but not to you!” he continued doggedly.



“I have Kathleen’s permission to do you one time, and after all, I too owe you the same debt of gratitude that Joanna and Kathleen owed. I have to pay my debts too!”

“No!” Goldmun exploded.

Darling Joy smiled into his shocked eyes. “We’ll see, Papa.”

She kissed him quickly, slid from his lap and darted from the room.

“Oy, vey,” Goldmun muttered.

Much later that same night, he felt the bed move slightly as Kathleen got up to go check on their newest baby. She came back a few minutes later and the dozing Goldmun felt her snuggle up to his back. Her hand came over his body and captured his swiftly rising organ. He turned to her and lay helpless in the darkened room as she rose over him, fitted his erection between her legs and dropped solidly atop him. At the unexpected tightness of her pussy, he realized that it was not Kathleen riding him, but Darling Joy! He tried to throw her off, but as we all know, a raging hard-on has no conscience and she continued to post until the inevitable happened.

Goldmun ejaculated, deep inside Darling Joy’s clutching pussy!

Just before he passed out, he heard, “Gotcha, Mr. Goldmun! I always pay my debts!”

The next afternoon, Darling Joy came through the front door all bouncy and too excited for words. When Kathleen finally got her calmed down, they discovered that at the Institute that very afternoon, Darling Joy had asked Evelyn to marry her!

And he had told her, "Yes!"

Immediately, Kathleen, Raechel, Mai Lei, Mrs. Soong and Mrs. Slade began preparations for the wedding. And since Darling Joy had subsequently followed Goldmun's original roots, she was now a Jewess and wanted to be married in the traditional Jewish manner in a synagogue with family, a rabbi, and all the traditional trappings!

Arrangements were made for Evelyn to convert to Judaism and seven months later, Miss Darling Joy Goldmun, wearing a black satin tuxedo, black hose and black high heeled pumps, was married very quietly by her rabbi to Mr. Evelyn Slade who wore a white satin bridal gown with all white accessories.

Goldmun thought the words to their vows were backwards because Darling Joy had promised to, "love, honor and cherish Evelyn, in sickness or in health, for richer or for poorer, for better or worse, for so long as they both shall live," while Evelyn, in his turn, promised to, "love, honor and obey Darling Joy, in sickness or in health, for richer or for poorer, for better or worse, for so long as they both shall live," but he thought the rabbi had just made a slip of the tongue.

He learned better at the reception when Evelyn announced that he was taking Darling Joy's surname and that they would be known in public as Mr. and Mrs. Darling Joy and Evelyn Goldmun! Further, when they set up housekeeping, he would be the wife and Darling Joy would be the husband.

In retrospect, Goldmun admitted to Mr. Soong later, "I should have suspected something of that very nature. After all, the children were already messed up in their minds before we took them over."

“Ah, so,” Mr. Soong murmured. He moved his queen and sat back, a wide smile of satisfaction on his face. He gestured at the chess board. “Check mate, Goldmun. . .”

Goldmun stared in dismay. “Hunh?”

“That’s check mate, Goldmun,” Mr. Soong repeated.

“Oy, vey!” Goldmun muttered.

“Indeed,” Mr. Soong giggled.

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