

Lisa

The young girl waved unhappily at the old beat up Volvo just disappearing around the corner. It always made her sad when these weekends with Josh came to an end. Her father was so much fun, always kidding around, especially telling those silly stories; like his latest, "An Elephant called Kazoo" or doing his impersonation of Elvis. But most of all, just being Josh.

Why couldn't Pauline see this funny side of her Dad, then maybe they would get back together and she'd have both a Mother and a Father other girls?" Besides, she hated this being bounced between them and what's more, once a month wasn't near enough time to be with her father.

She knew her mother didn't like it either, but Josh traveled all over the country writing articles for his newspaper, so he could only be home that one weekend a month. And Pauline's job kept her away most of the time too. Oh, she came home at night, but usually after Lisa had gone to bed, so that didn't really count.

Her mother had tried to explain to her why she had to work so hard, running that big store and how so many people depended on her. But it just didn't make up for all those nights she had to be alone. Well, not exactly alone, Margaret the housekeeper was always there of course and she was okay, but it wasn't like having

her mother around.

She still remembered her disappointment during last Easter vacation. she'd bee looking forward to having Josh her so they could all go to the Easter Parade, and perhaps breakfast at the Waldorf afterwards.

But then he'd called, saying something about being held up in Chicago, but that he'd make it up to her next Sunday. But he couldn't, that wouldn't be Easter. She'd blurted out, "why can't you and Josh both live here? Then you could take turns and I wouldn't ever be alone again?"

Pauline had put down that big book she was always making notes in, looked over at Lisa and tears had come to her eyes. Gee, she'd never seen her mother cry before and right away she was real sorry she said it.

Lisa'd run around the breakfast table, put her arms around Pauline and squeezed tight. Her mother had pulled a clean white handkerchief out of the pocket of Lisa's school uniform and wiped her eyes.

Then everything was okay, but she promised herself not to say anything like that again and she sure never told Josh! But down deep she knew she wasn't really sorry for having said it. "Was that a bad thing?"

Her mother even promised to try and be home more nights, so they could have dinner together, perhaps watch some TV, even help her with her homework. "Homework Yuck."

Actually she did the Adademy, well, not all the time, but what she really liked was Mary Louise Gafferty, who, even though she was a year older was her very best friend. Perhaps part of the reason was that both girls came from homes where the parents no longer lived together.

This bond between the girls was drawn even tighter, when some one like Betty Jean Cassidy (who really wasn't very nice) would tease them and say nasty things like, "you've only got half a parent or maybe the reason your Father went away was because he didn't like you very much."

The Nuns were okay, a couple of them were sorta' weird, like Sister Ann who always said a prayer, over the dead frogs that she used in her Biology classes or Sister Helena, who, when she got upset at a student would rush over, pull open the window, lean out and take a bunch of deep breaths.

However sometimes the Mother Superior could be real mean. Like last week for instance, one of the girls had brought a copy of SEVENTEEN to school and Lisa and Mary Louise tried to imitate how the models wore their skirts, way above their knees. They found by turning over the waistbands two or three times they got the same effect. But when the Mother Superior saw them, she got realy angry, marched them right into the Chapel, told them to kneel and to say 10 Our Fathers, and ten Hail Mary's. Instead Lisa knelt there and thought about the time last summer when Josh had taken her to the Zoo in Central Park and the fun they'd had.

But there were lots of good times too, like when she and Mary Louise became sort of hero's, when Sister Anastasia found out that they were really good at Field Hockey. Lisa grinned when she remembered that it all happened because Betty Jean Cassidy fell down and scratched her knee so Lisa got to play and made the winning goal; with Mary Louise's help of course.

Now Lisa wasn't sure she should tell Josh about the poem that the girls were all saying. Someone had found out that the Mother Superiors name was Mary, so the next day it started; "Hail Mary, full of grace, fell down stairs and broke her face" She knew Josh had gone to Fordham Prep and Notre Dame, but that didn't seem to matter, cause when she told it to him, he stopped the car, right in the middle of 82nd street, reached down and grabbed his stomach and laughed until the cabby behind him threatened to call a policeman if he didn't move.

When he'd stop laughing, he became real serious for a moment and suggested that Lisa not to say anything about the poem to Pauline; it would be their secret. She was about to ask Josh what difference it made, she knew her mother wasn't a Catholic, but she decided not to. Like he'd said, "It would be their secret."

Lisae remembered too, how proud she'd been when Josh had showed up at school unexpectedly, just at the exact moment she had made a goal. He'd stood up, shouted her name and then clapped so hard he nearly fell down ontop the people sitting in front of him. Afterwards, he treated the entire team to ice cream. It was

probably her very best day ever, but down deep she was a little sad, "that Pauline couldn't have been there too."

Right then and there she decided that Josh and Pauline had to get back together. They simply had to. And it was up to her to find a way.

However because it was almost the end of the school year and vacation only a couple of days away, she knew her plans might have to wait. Besides, that way she'd have the whole summer to think about how to make her dream come true.

Then something happened a couple of days later, when Josh had taken Lisa and Pauline to Schrafft's for lunch. Half way through the meal, he'd stood up (she was glad her father was so tall) and announced that he'd been promoted and that he'd no longer be the "poor man's Charles Karalt" (she'd learned later mr. Karalt had a program on TV called ' On the Road').

Then this mystery was cleared up still further, when Josh bent down, kissed his daughter on top of the head and said, "Lisa, honey, it means no more missed weekends and maybe if your mother will let me, I can sneak in a couple of nights too. Her heart jumped a beat when she looked over at Pauline and her mother nodded 'yes'.

So now more than ever, she knew she had to try and get her parents back together!

She couldn't wait to tell Mary Louise the good news. But on

Saturday as she raced across 5th Avenue and looked into the lobby, she stopped short. Her friend was sitting there (in one of those big, old hard chairs) and Lisa could see she was crying. She looked up at Anthony, the doorman, (the medals he always wore shining in the early morning sunlight) he frowned, shook his head and went back to his position at the front door.

Lisa went over and put her arm around Mary Louise, the rough surface from the chair making a red mark on her hand. Between sobs it all came out, how her parents divorce had come through and how her mother hadn't even cried when she told Mary Louise about it.

But the worst thing of all was that her mother had taken a job up in Westchester and that they'd be moving even before the end of the summer.

And when the little girl sobbed that it was just like what mean old Betty Jean Cassidy had said, "now she really did have only one parent" Lisa decided not to tell her about her good news. At least not now!

After Anthony took Mary Louise back up to her apartment, Lisa sat in the lobby trying to think what she should do next. She knew it was wrong to say, but as bad as it was to lose her good friend, she had a more important problem. "What to do about Josh and Pauline?"

Lots of thoughts shot through her mind, "perhaps she should run away, well, not really run away. Maybe she could go and hide in the storage locker down in her apartment's basement, take a

couple of sandwiches, maybe some candy and just wait until they came for her. But then she remembered what she had heard the janitor saying about those big bugs that he was always killing down there.

Lisa hated bugs. No, she couldn't do that. Then what?

Maybe take the bus across town to Grandmother's and hide there. But no she knew that her grandmother would only call Pauline, so that wouldn't do any good either.

Of course, St. Bernard's! She could go there and hide. It was closed for the summer, but all the girls knew that the window at the side of the altar never really stayed shut. It was where they all threw their gum, if sister suddenly came in when they were polishing the floor in front of the altar or dusting the statues.

But she'd have to sneak out her heavy jacket and slacks, cause even in the summer it might be cold at night. For just a minute, the thought of staying alone in that chapel was really scary, but nope; she'd do it!

Everything fell into place the next morning at breakfast when Pauline said she would be very late that night and that for a treat she could stay up and watch a movie on TV. Under different circumstances that would have been rally peachy, but right now she had other plans.

After lunch, Margaret usually took this time to write her letters to relatives back in the Old Country and Lisa was expected to clean her room, perhaps even take a nap.

When she was sure that Margaret was busy writing, she snuck out into the pantry put a jar of peanut butter and jelly, some bread, a spoon, a can of coke all into a grocery bag and slipped out the back door, down the stairs through the laundry room and out onto the street. Oh, dear, she'd forgotten the jacket and slacks, but she couldn't go back now, maybe she'd find something at the school to keep her warm.

Now even though she'd made this trip to St. Bernard's dozens of times, today was different. She wasn't going to school to study or be with her friends. She was going there to hide!

As she got close to the school, she ducked in behind the bushes that lined the building and followed them until she was under the chapel window. Then she discovered she had a problem. From the inside, the window was level with her shoulder but out here it was above her head.

For a moment she panicked, was her plan a failure? Would she have to sneak back into the apartment, return the peanut butter and jelly, the bread and the coke and get back to her room before Margaret caught her? And what if she had already discovered Lisa was gone?

She had to get through that window. She simply must!

She had gone almost to the end of the bushes, before she found something to stand on. It was a basket, the gardener used to carry off the leaves. Now if it would just be strong enough to hold her.

Lisa slowly got up on it, for a moment it shook when she

reached down to pick up her groceries, she froze, but it held. She was now able to reach over and push the window open, drop in the bag and climb in herself without even tearing her dress.

Gee, it was dark! Then she noticed the Votive Candles, if she could just find a match, she'd have enough light.

Luckily, as her little hands swept across the tray, she felt them brush across a tiny box. She said a quick prayer, to one of the statues over her head, struck the match against the box, reached down and lit two of the candles. Only two, for she didn't know how long they would have to last. Perhaps even days or however long it took for Josh and Pauline to promise to get back together.

Then she realized she'd made a big mistake. She should have left a message telling them what they must do, if they expected her to return. Without it, they might think she'd been kidnapped or worse.

She walked slowly back to the vestibule, searched until she found what she needed, a pencil and a piece of paper. On it she scrawled (Sister Clotilda would be mad at the awful handwriting), *"Dear Josh and Pauline, I am alright, but i want you to try to get back together or (she felt a tear roll down her cheek) I don't want to come home.*

Love

Lisa

She retraced her steps back to the apartment, stood across the street until Anthony took Mrs. Heathcourt's Pomeranian for its afternoon walk, then slipped across the street, into the lobby placed the note on Anthony's desk, (she knew he'd take it to Pauline) then shot out, and made her way back to St. Bernards, in through the window and sat down next to the Peanut butter and Jelly.

Lisa didn't know how long she'd been asleep, or for a moment even where she was, when she heard voices calling her name. Someone was opening the big brass doors at the front of the church and two shadowy figures were racing up the isle toward her.

It was Josh and Pauline!

She felt herself being lifted up in the air, by Josh, then her mother was hugging them both.

Just for a moment the gaiety ceased, as Josh put his daughter down, looking her sternly in the eye and said, "honey, you really frightened your mother and I." Then he took her hand and the three walked slowly out of the chapel.

Just before they stepped through the door, now held open by Alfred, the school's janitor (who wasn't smiling at all) Lisa looked up and drawing her hand close to her body said hesitantly "How did you find me?"

Her father looked over at Pauline, she nodded and squeezed her daughters other hand. "Dear, the paper you used to send us that

note fortunately had St. Bernard's name and address on it."