

TOPAZE 18

—JAYN

I had originally intended a large, obscene issue of Topaze for the 69th disty, and also a semi-nudie photocover, but after the recent events of the past week, I don't feel much like anything funny. So Jayn is sercon for an issue, and you'll just have to put up with it. Plogging mundanities from the typer of Jayn Ellern, 975 No. Oakland Ave., Pasadena.

THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF GETTING INVOLVED

Monday, Ellers, I went into court. I was there as the complaining witness in a child neglect case. Suffice it to say that I had previously done my trick of getting all hung up in another Lost Sheep Affair, and I recorded some of it for APA L. In March of last year, we had occasion to contact the Bonded Baby-Sitters Agency for a sitter. They sent us what looked like a nice dumb sitter named Marilyn Limb. I had previously gotten a lot of little old ladies who didn't have the smart to change a diaper properly, and I welcomed what it looked as if I had gotten--someone who was not too bright and malleable enough to take orders. She didn't threaten the children with mayhem, didn't yell at them, and since they were usually in bed when she arrived, there was no problem of feeding them. I was pretty happy, and we kept her on after the agency replaced her because she was expecting a baby. She sat for us till October 7th, when her child was born, and during the birth, we looked after her children. I had grown to love her kids during the previous months, as she often brought them with our consent, to play with ours when she sat during the day, and sometimes in the evening. I knew that she was short on money, as she was not married, and had no income other than what she received from the Mormon church in the way of food and a small amount that she got as child support from the father of her four year old.

After the birth of her child, something seemed to happen to her personality. Where she had been sweet and dumb, she became subject to tantrums, and fits of tears. Where she had been loving but somewhat ineffectual in matters of taking care of her own children, she began to snap at them, and harrass the life out of them. Where she had been communicative, she became a Godding haranguer. Instead of reading the sort of thing that she had said she enjoyed, she spent most of her time reading the Bible, and going on about Heavenly Father and spending all her time at church. I thought that she was having Baby Blues. This sort of thing is common, and one pulls out of it after a while. But Marilyn didn't. I became more and more reluctant to leave our kids with her, and as time went on, and I saw her own daughter treated as though her mother hated her, and with no clothes to wear, and no coat even in the coldest weather, I began to watch things more closely. I saw that even though her children rarely got enough to eat except when we fed them, and that I had to make a coat for Mari-Alice, (the daughter) so she could go to school, Marilyn had a regular appointment with the hairdresser once a wvek, and a mammoth collectinn of Charles-of -the-Ritz cosmetics. I had to give her milk for them, but she would buy expensive cakes and ice cream often from the best bakery and Ice-cream store in town. When she had a sitting job, I took care of them all. And I saw that even though I had lent her my entire

collection of baby clothes, that the infant rarely wore more than a sacque that didn't meet around his chest, and a paper diaper. He had no blankets to wear, and she often laid him shivering and crying on my cold kitchen table, while she chattered on and on about her love affairs. When I cared for him, his diaper area was covered with such diaper rash that blood oozed from the skin of his buttocks. When I changed his diaper, he screamed with pain, and when she changed it, I saw her dab at his bottom and leave it half-covered with his bowel movement. Then she would take a mammoth diaper, often the disposable paper kind, and simply pinch it around his middle, with no attempt to make it fit smoothly, without chafing his raw bottom.

I was aware at the time that she left the children alone often. Don't ask why I didn't do something THEN. I know now that I should have done. But I was still trying to help her to help herself, and since I knew when they were alone, and Mari-Alice could call me if anything happened, I went on trying. We worked with her, attempting to get her to at least begin to communicate again. Bill and I sat for hours with her, trying to teach her the rudiments of Know Thyself, so that she could quit with this depending on the charity of those whom she claimed Helped Her. It wasn't that we were tired of supporting her, We tried often to get her to let us adopt Mari-Alice, who often roamed the streets at night and came to us after Marilyn had pushed her out of the house. We asked her to let Mari-Alice stay over night with us, which she did, often for days at a time, without even inquiring as to her welfare. We would even have adopted the three younger ones en mass.

This situation went on for months, with Marilyn coming to our house at ten in the morning and staying till late at night, showing up at dinnertime with the kids unfed, and cold, and similar things. Then the bomb burst. During one of her hours long talking streaks, she told me that she had spent time in Patton State hospital, and had been advised to return. At that point, the whole sordid mess became clear. The secrecy, the tantrums, the refusal to communicate even though she talked for hours nonstop. The fears that someone was following her, the refusal to allow her phone number to become known, the reluctance to apply for State Welfare, the lot. We went into a tailspin. This woman, who had come to us through a bonded agency, who had taken care of our children for months, had had us so completely fooled that we had never caught on to her warning flags. I promise you, Ellers, that never again will I consider myself a judge of character. I was so caught up with my need to help people, and do Good Works, that I never caught on.

I sweated for weeks, taking her children into our home as often as possible for their safety. We had previously contracted with her to care for ours during the week between Christmas and New Years so that we could have a little vacation. What to do? If we didn't go away, she would get suspicious and leave the city, and go God knew where with hers, and we couldn't do anything. I was afraid to leave. Finally, we decided that we would go away for two days, and stay in a motel in the local area, leaving Owen with her during the first day, and calling in during the second. When we called, there was no answer. I was in a panic. We both wanted to come home then, but I got a feeling, and had Bill call her house in Altadena, giving the signal on the phone so that if she was there, she would answer. She was there. There was some mixup about the gas man coming to both our houses to check the equipment, and she had taken all the children and gone up there. We relaxed a little, and spent the night in our motel as planned, and then went home the next day. I found our children locked up when we came back, with the rest plus Marilyn watching T.V. The food in the refrigerator was untouched, as if she had not fed any of them. I went to the bedroom to put

away some of our things, and Mari-Alice followed me. She came over to me and held up her hand which had been cut in three places. There was not even a Band-aid on it, though one of the cuts was deep enough to have used a stitch. With a little psychology, I found out that Marilyn had not only attacked her with the pancake spatula, but later I discovered that she had been threatening my children with the same spatula. Bill found it in the bassinet. Later, Mari-Alice opened up to me and told me a tale about Marilyn threatening her with a knife. I was convinced in my own mind that this was true, as I questioned her quite closely about it.

After they went home, Bill and I decided that the time had come. We discussed matters for a couple of days. Then Marilyn gave us the opportunity to do something without her on our backs. She went into County General Hospital for a hysterectomy. She said that I would have to take her down there, as her car was out of gas, and she had no money. (She had a fresh hair-do) When I went up there to get the children and her, she was in a state. She had a tantrum about people invading her privacy, and attacked me verbally because my daughter was what she called "a privileged child". I was purposely quiet during this hysteria, as I knew what I was about to do, and didn't want to tip my hand. I dumped her at the hospital and went on home with the children. She had loaded me down with clothes for the two younger ones, (all dirty) and provided nothing for her daughter. I had to go through Mari-Alice's filthy room, rummage through piles of trash and filth to find the tights I had bought her two weeks before, which were buried and dirty. She had no socks. I got some skirts, and a couple of blouses. The skirts turned out to be ones that she had got when she was six. They still fitted her around the waist. She is now ten. I got one dress, (Goodwill) that I hemmed up so that she would have more than one dress to wear to school. She had one pair of shoes, so I went through my collection of shoes, and gave her several pairs of boots that were too small for me, but fitted her.

When I got home I went through the reeking boxes she had given me. In it I found, not only dirty children clothes, but her own. There were about a dozen panty-girdles, all dirty, underpants, some that she had used (pardon me, people) during her period and flung in a box that way. There was a slip, almost new, and several dresses of hers. She had just bought a new slip at the Broadway, claiming that she didn't have any. The box also contained a pair of sheets. I simply folded the lot, and put it back in the box. I separated out the kids things, and washed from Monday afternoon till Friday afternoon. During that time the Diaper Service man came. In the collection of diapers, almost half were mine, that had been missing. I cancelled the service, and separated out my diapers. We bought Mari-Alice a bed to sleep on. When Marilyn called up and found that Mari-Alice was not forced to sleep with Michael, she went into another tantrum. Then she asked me to bring her a can of hairspray and some tweezers. I didn't. Instead, I called the police. I went down to the Pasadena Police Department, and wrote out a six page report. I asked that the children be allowed to stay with me, and to help with welfare support. They advised me that the only way to get action was to turn the children over to them to take to McLaren Hall. And they talked sense. Until the county is involved, one is up the creek trying to get action. When Mari-Alice was told, she went into classical withdrawal. Even though she had turned green and almost vomited when she found her mother was coming home, she could not believe that what we were doing we believed to be best all around. She was afraid that we would lock her up. She would not sleep without the light on, and wouldn't shut the door to her room. She was afraid we would lock her up in there. My heart was

breaking. I finally had to get a rope and give it to her to tie to the bed-leg so she could let it out the window if she was locked up even accidentally, as sometimes happens on that door. After she had tested it with her weight from below, she consented to enter her room again. We let her keep the light on, and I tried to calm her by giving her an old jewel case and a lot of jewelry that I had kicking around. I gave her some high heeled shoes that she tried on and that took her mind off it. But even so she refused to go to bed till 11:00 P.M. When she consented to go to MacLaren Hall without a fuss, I made all sorts of promises that the Powers That Be wouldn't let me keep. Like bringing her things, and coming over to see her. The best I could do was bug the Probation gal about how she was.

Monday we went to court. In the interim, I had had all sorts of helpful phone calls from people like us who had "helped" Marilyn. They all said they would help me in court with information. But not one of them showed up. Ann Johnson, who knew Marilyn, and is staying with us, said the classical sentence. "I couldn't get involved." Dorothy Bruce, another of the suckers, asked me how I would feel if someone turned me in. And I have had numerous Christian Science "ladies" on my doorstep treating me like a bitch because I cared about those childrens lives. Not even the Mormon Bishop, who was all sweetness and light and helpfulness showed up. Noone, Ellers, but me.

The judge put her on probation for a year and gave them back to her. She had come with four women who testified to what a hard time the world had given her, and what a good mother she was; some of whom had known her for upwards of five years. When we came in she looked up at us and smiled as if we were the best friends she had in the world. "Hi!" she said, as if we had done her some sort of wonderful favor. She sat there during the whole proceeding with a not-quite-right-in-the-head smile on her face and kept making little moues of fond motherhood at each child. The judge would not let me give the evidence I had. He listened instead to the negro gal who told me that she had helped Marilyn for the past five years and she certainly wouldn't tell the cops about it! I broke in once when things began to look hopeless, and the two police types who were there shut me up and said I was damaging the case. The judge let me talk for a minute and then said curtly, "thank you, Mrs. Ellern." and turned away.

In the hall after the trial, Mari-Alice came up to me, smiled, and put a stick of gum in my hand. I could hardly keep back the tears. I took the gum, thanked her, and kissed her hand. Then the Good Ladies rushed her away. As we drove off, Mari-Alice was coming out of the building. I leaned out the car window, and called, "Mari-Alice, you know where to come." I hope to god, people, that she is able to make it to us when what I know will happen happens.. Maybe if she comes to us bloody, then the police and the judge will listen.

The next day, Marilyn's attorney called. He said I had some of Marilyn's things and she wanted them back. I told him that this was true, and that I would like to have my things back from her. He wanted to send a Christian Science Lady with her to get them. I said no. Then I told him, that I hoped he and the judge would not be sorry for what they had done, for I knew, if they didn't, what was going to happen to those children. I said I hoped when one of the children was killed or maimed, that they would both be satisfied. He was very quiet. It is a hell of a world, Ellers, where those who should be protected from injury are sacrifice to the acting talent of a sick woman, and the criminal selfishness of women who have so far repudiated their humanity as not to know who most deserves their kindness. I spit on their empathy. I spit on their charity. I do not call them sisters who refuse to take the responsibility of helping those who need their help, and in their pride, call themselves mothers

and helpers. Their Christianity disgusts me. Their righteousness disgusts me, and so does their supposed kindness. Listen to me, Betty Knight, what you are seeing me do is the Goddess in action in her aspect as the Hag. To know a wrongness, and grok that it should be destroyed, and destroy it is the responsibility of deity. My only apology is to the Goddess, that I was not able to do the work that She delegated me to do. I owe none to you, nor to Marilyn. And despite your silly dragging in of ancient history, you know no more now of what the Goddess is, or what I am than you did when I offered to help you. You chatter about Attis and Kybele as if that were the only example of Her power. Do you really find modern Christianity any better? Is it more desirable to keep men in the emasculating subjection of our Christians cultures sexual theories, or to castrate them outright? I don't find the degradation of Roman Goddess worship to be any more evil than I find the attitude of the present day Roman Church on Birth Control. Both disgust me, as they must disgust the Goddess. And I might say that your lukewarm Unitarianism and wailing about your troubles disgusts me too. Be my guest, snipe at Her, and at me. Then tell me where in allyour life you have used the womanhood that is sprung of the Goddess to do what had to be done, be it constructive or destructive. When you can do that, I shall give you the Goddess' blessing, and call you sister. Until then, spare me your tiresome wailing about your cats, and all the uninvolved tear-shedding you do about the downtrodden masses. Until you get off your can, quit talking, and DO something, you are no Avatar. You are not even a Christian.

Look at me, Betty. Most of the time, I am a struggling human dustmote, weighed down with years of desperate nothingness. But once in a while, I show what I realize I am, The Goddess. Whether I am the Nymph, the Matron, or in this case, the Hag, I am She. Try it sometime, you might even enjoy it.

I suppose I should say I'm sorry for hauling this nonfannish mess into APA.L, but I'm not. The laws of this state regarding the welfare of children are practically nonexistent. The laws regarding parents rights are regrettably not. As long as children remain parents property, there is no hope for them, and little for our culture. Children are neglected to death, emotionally warped, beaten, maimed and murdered, and noone can do anything. I cannot even tell the babysitting agencies with which Marilyn is listed that she is a raving psycho, without getting myself a slander suit that would cost us everything. I beg you, please help me. Do something. Say something, anything. Write a letter to your local newspaper, call Joe Pyne, or at least tell someone who will listen that children are dying without their knowing it. Thou Art God, Ellers. Don't refuse to accept that responsibility!

--Jayn

 The unexamined life is not worth living...Plato

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