

Momma's Don't let Your Daughters Grow up to be Cowdykes

by Dennis Hiatt

Things were dead at the counter when La Donna spied James through the glass door of Harry's Ritz Cafe. He was chatting with Icky Willy the wino, who stank worse than an unwashed fundamentalist's mind. La Donna hoped Willy wouldn't lay his "Twenty-seven, whole, cents? That's mighty white of you, man!" guilt trip on James. James was very sweet but he was also very big, and black as the ace of clubs.

The Ace Of Clubs, La Donna thought, would make a GREAT Cowdyke song for K.D. Lang. La Donna couldn't wait for the Gypsy Kings' tape to be over, so that she could play K. D. Lang. La Donna's head and feathered-punk red hair was be-bopping to an imaginary Cowdyke song, "Mama don't let your daughters grow up to be cowdykes!", as James hurried through the door. He looked very unhappy. "Fiend!" La Donna greeted James with joy.

James shyly waited until he was at the counter to reply. "Neef."

"NEEF!" La Donna affirmed.

"Fiend!" James said happily.

"Chamomile tea?" La Donna enquired, smiling and pushing a limp strand of her off-center rooster comb back into place.

James shook his head. "I feel I might need a cappuccino tonight."

"Ne-e-ef!" To cheer James La Donna made her eyes playfully over-large and asked. "A ba-a-ad day James?"

Available online at <http://fictionaut.com/stories/dennis-hiatt/momma%E2%80%99s-don%E2%80%99t-let-your-daughters-grow-up-to-be-cowdykes>

Copyright © 2009 Dennis Hiatt. All rights reserved.

He nodded and laid a dollar on the counter. "I've got water on the brain."

"Fiend!" La Donna nodded with sympathy. James was a leftover hippie with a Save-The-Whales tee-shirt, old jeans and sandals. James came in almost every night, had a cup of herbal tea and threw the I Ching. La Donna, finding James' hippie stuff a little on the weird sister side, had taught James to communicate with Neef and Fiend. Those were the only two words Germutlich, La Donna's pet gerbil, spoke. Though James tried, he couldn't get into La Donna's art haircuts, but he rapped gerbil-speak like a Beastie Boy.

James sat at a table next to two beautiful kids dressed in black. The kids had colored art hair. The boy had very, very short, dark green hair, a good length for Cowdyke hair, La Donna decided. The pale girl's go-go boots and pink curls reminded La Donna of her own hair, when she was in her Little Mary Sunshine Phase.

As the espresso steamed black into the glass cup, La Donna smiled. La Donna had sold flowers from a cart in front of Meier and Franks. She'd worn Catholic girl skirts, white shirts, paisley ties and shiny, red patent leather shoes, her red hair had lay in fluffed curls down to the middle of her back. La Donna frothed the milk and tried to remember the night she'd split Los Angeles. She'd helped herself to her mother's whale-bellied, peppermint-breathed boyfriend's Visa card and six hundred dollars in cash, grabbed a taxi to the airport and picked a city three hundred and twenty-seven dollars and eighteen cents away from LA. Her mother's obese boyfriend, drunk as a bar-dog, had pinned her to the carpet and tried to cure Donna's gayness with his magic wand (a sliver actually, but a damnable one). After he'd let her up, she fled, blood running down her thighs, to the bathroom. He yelled that he couldn't believe she was still a virgin at sixteen. He had, however, no trouble believing that Donna would blow his little, blood-covered balls off with her

mother's pistol. Donna smoked a joint with the cab driver and tipped him with her mother's pistol.

A perfect cappuccino! La Donna be-bopped to James table. "One cappuccino coming up." She arranged the drink, spoon, and napkin, artfully on James table and patted his shoulder. James smiled, but it was a very sad smile. "You okay?"

James nodded. "Musing about a dark road."

Arching one eyebrow, La Donna asked. "Roads not taken?" Could James be gay?, she wondered.

"Taken I'm afraid." James said and sipped the cappuccino.

La Donna dropped the eyebrow and smiled like a Catholic school girl. "Ya know James, I've been a lot happier since I came out of the closet."

James laughed and told her a joke she'd heard about twelve times. La Donna chortled politely and decided she'd put on the K. D. Lang tape before the Gypsy Kings were through.

"Mamma don't let your daughters grow up to be cowdykes." La Donna sang to herself, while her feathered roster comb hair bob-bopped to K. D. Lang's "Walkin'". La Donna cleaned the counter and tried to think up words for her Cowdyke song. James left without drinking hardly any of the cappuccino. La Donna yelled. "Bye." Maybe she shouldn't have hinted that James was gay. He probably had enough problems being a burned out hippie. La Donna watched Icky Willy panhandle James. This time Willy scored, and La Donna turned around and cleaned the back counter.

When La Donna be-bopped out to bus tables, she saw that a skinny boy in a motorcycle jacket, thin sideburns, and a rather fat, lame mohawk had joined the boy with green Cowdyke hair and hot pink Little Mary Sunshine. La Donna watched the new kid in the reflection of the window, when she bent over to clean James' table. The little dog was staring

at her buns like he had a bone he wanted to give her. "Boy Germ," she thought, wiping the clean table.

La Donna stood and pushed her hair back into place. The sideburns boy said. "Hi. What's your name?"

La Donna smiled a little lipped cat smile. "None of your beeswax."

The skinny boy smiled drugged or happy and said. "Nice name, but it would be hard to write a song about."

Hot Pink Hair giggled. "Barf, you are SUCH a LAME dwizzle dick."

La Donna didn't mind too much. All men seemed to want her because she was a size five girl with art hair. But to be fair, maybe all petite girls with round rumps and nice boobs, had to put up with Lame Dwizzle Dicks from Art Hair Hell. La Donna swayed away from the table, her rump moving to the rhythm of a slow freight train. Barf followed her to the counter; the handcuffs and chains on his leather jacket rattled like beer cans desperate to mate.

"What can I get for you?" She asked, her head and hair be-bopping to K. D. Lang. Her smile was as professional and clean as a nun's conscience.

"Want'a get off, after you get off?" Barf's head be-bopping to the music.

La Donna smiled, not so nicely. "I don't clean toilets, and I don't do boys." "Germ," she added to herself.

"That's cool," Barf fingered a loose chain. "I'm a man."

La Donna shook her head but kept rhythm to K. D.'s song. "Germ, you don't have enough body to go with that attitude."

The boy laughed. "Hey I put out a dude's eye last week!"

La Donna's head stopped moving. "I'll try not to look at you while you're leaving. Now get out."

Laughing, Barf waved goodbye to the kids at the table and rattled out the door.

La Donna sighed. Why did each generation think that it discovered art hair?

Busty, blonde-by-bleach Amber came out of the back kitchen with a tray of sparkling cups. "Busy?"

"Nah." La Donna watched Icky Willy spare change the dwizzle dick. "Dead as a mouse in a trap in Milwaukee."

Amber nodded. "It's ten to nine, let's start closing up."

"Okay. I'll mop." La Donna said and turned up the lights. Amber looked surprised, but said nothing.

As La Donna swished the mop around she tried to think more words to "Mama don't let your daughters grow up to be cowdykes." She could see very clearly in her mind many size five girls with radically short hair and Cowdyke outfits from places like L. L. Bean. They were riding big horses and singing happy cowdyke songs as they herded little cows that were actually sweet baby calves, across a butch, cigarette-ad desert.

La Donna unlocked the door and let the art hair kids out. Amber's boy friend, Harry the owner, a big guy with longish hair, and in his early forties was getting out of his '83 Coupe DeVille convertible. La Donna held the door for Harry. "Hi La Donna."

"Hi Harry." La Donna smiled nicely, but not too nicely, and went back to mopping. She wanted to ride in the landscape in her mind, not talk to Harry.

"I saw your better half down town this afternoon."

"Oh?" La Donna's mop swished to still. Her eyes examined its wet, marsh-grey strings. "Was Simone by herself?"

"No." Harry said and lit a clove cigarette with a lame flourish.

Very carefully La Donna looked up. "Was Simone with that...Kentucky coal mine?"

Harry, playing the asshole, blew smoke over La Donna's head, into her art hair. "Kentucky coal mine?"

La Donna nodded slowly, bobbing her art hair. The worst

part about being a five-foot size five was that no one took you seriously when you were furious. People treated you like you were as cute and as impotent as a child when you were ready to cut a throat. La Donna gifted Harry with a mystery smile and said as sweet as magnolia honey, with an undertone that suggested she'd love to drip battery acid into someone's clamped-open blue eyes. "Filled with kitty litter."

"Filled with Kitty litter?" Harry's smiled frosted like breath against a cool mirror.

La Donna's art hair bobbed and swayed ever so gently. "Nineteen cats, one pound of kitty litter...feed them prunes for two months, and you got Kentucky Coal Mine's love perfume ready to be bottled." The clove cigarette between Harry's lips was not at its usual jaunty angle. La Donna smiled like a size five angel and added. "She's got so much cellulose that her thighs look like garbage bags filled with cottage cheese, and her rear looks like a tree stump."

Harry kind of coughed. "God, La Donna, that's an awful way to talk about someone's mother."

La Donna WAS embarrassed and taken aback, but she'd be soaked with gasoline and run a marathon through Hell before she'd admit she was jealous to the point of paranoia of Simeone's ex-lover, Madeline. La Donna chortled mysteriously. "Harry, don't let your daughters grow up to be Cowdykes."

Harry nodded. "You can take that to the bank, La Donna."

La Donna stared kill stares at Harry's back as he walked away, but she was back to her mopping before Harry had helped himself to a cup of the leftover coffee and copped a feel off Amber's pillow breasts. She tried to get her mind back on the desert with the beautiful Cowdykes, but Harry's clove cigarette smoke and Amber's antique Psychedelic Furs tape, tunneled La Donna's mind to a Rockabilly Hell, where no Cowdykes could herd.

"Clove-smelling boss germs", La Donna thought, and tuned

in on an old favorite memory. She was Cinderella in red patent leather shoes and a electric green G-string. Simone was a Gothic Rocker coming to take Cinderella out of the clutches of poverty and topless dancing. Madeline would play herself: a cunt.

La Donna squeezed the mop handle in both hands and narrowed her big eyes to slits. First came the sick part.

Donna (not LA Donna yet) had lost her flower job because the boss's son (a headbanger druggie) needed a job to get paroled. No one needed a sixteen year old who sold flowers and had dropped out of high school. For two weeks, Donna ate at The Green House and then stood out on Broadway to beg thirty-five cents to buy a paper to look for a job. She'd wore out her red patent leather shoes walking from stores to restaurants to fast food places and back to her cold apartment, which she could barely afford even before she lost her job. Every night she washed her nice Catholic girl skirts (and now, because she had no soap, not-so-nice white shirts) by hand. She lay her ties between the mattresses so they'd looked pressed in the morning. (In the morning she pretended that one of the ties was magic and would get her a job, but she didn't know which tie and the tie changed every day.) She would be waiting at the doors of the Green House when it opened for breakfast. She would then stand at the the corner of SW Broadway and Alder, make her eyes big, and beg nice. Sometimes she begged enough for coffee as well as a paper. Sometimes men asked her to suck their thing. By noon or one PM, Donna's pits would smell so bad from stress and fear that people told her to take the job application home or left her alone in the room to fill it out.

When Donna came home that last night and found a seventy-two hour eviction notice nailed to her door, she did what she thought she could never do. She went to a topless bar that was always advertising for dancers. Donna made her eyes big and, in her best Little Mary Sunshine voice, asked

to see the owner.

The owner, Stillman, was a jolly, fat man with a halo of red hair around a gleaming Neanderthal dome. He escorted her to his office in the back, locked the door and flopped his jello butt down in an overstuffed chair that looked like it would burst just holding him. He smiled and told Donna, who stood under a dangling hundred-watt bulb in front of him, that she could make maybe a hundred dollars a night in tips. Donna smiled nicely even though it hurt, and said she'd like that very, very much because she was being kicked out of her home and that....

The fat man cut her off. He was no longer jolly. He asked her if she was eighteen. She shivered when she said she was. He said she was a liar. Stillman said that she wasn't a day over sixteen and maybe she was only fifteen. Donna's eyes misted over so she couldn't see the terrible man very well and she did not speak. He said show me your tits. Not looking at him, she undressed to the waist. He asked if she wanted to start tonight. She nodded. He said, "Then get down on your knees." Donna knelt, soiling her Catholic Girl stocking on the grime and cigarette butts that owned the floor, until she choked on those raw juices that street children must often sup on.

By the beginning of her second week Donna was such a favorite with the customers that she didn't need to spend ten minutes in the office before she went on stage. By the end of the second week, Donna (she was dancing under the name Rita) had discovered little white pills that kept her green eyes open big. The first day of the third week, Donna walked to the bar buzzing slow like a big-eyed, fluff haired bee starved for pollen. She had a memory stuck in her mind like a ocean liner being ground between two icebergs. She was nine and lived in Quartz Hill. For some reason her father had taken her with him to LA. They'd stopped at a crosswalk and Donna had glimpsed a jewelry store. In the store's window

were tiaras, great, shimmering diamond necklaces and an enough rings and baubles to make a Snow Queen weep for want. In shock, Donna sucked a sharp breath and said. "Oh, Daddy! Do all your dreams come true in the big city?" When she was fifteen and bopping LA streets with baby dykes, she found the store again and realized that it catered to drag queens.

Donna felt like crying as she breezed into the topless (and bottomless and if you play with IT baby and let me smell your finger, I'll tip you five) bar. She tossed a nod to Bramble, an over-the-hill afternoon dancer, and hurried back to the bathroom size dressing room. Donna's speed eyes took a second to adjust to the dangling sixty-watt bulb. There were two women sitting in the only chairs. One, a Town and Country princess was in an advanced state of pregnancy. The other was a Gothic Rocker with sweat or water from the spray bottle still dripping down her high, broad forehead. Sitting in half-shadows, the dark rocker wore a sleeveless black shirt, worn-out jeans, and golden sandals. The black-maned punk was as exotic as a Moslem holy city and shimmering with anger. The thin lipped, pregnant debutante stared as calm as a slumming Madonna at the rocker in the half shadows and then turned her fertile eyes to Donna. The Gothic Punk leaned into the light and Donna drank in her long slim neck, lush-stung red lips, high, hollow cheek bones and cat grey eyes ("Pride of the Cherokee Nation,...babies."). For what seemed like forever, but was probably only a minute or two, the two women stared at Donna without speaking. The Madonna smiling as soft as a kitten's tummy, slowly caressed her bare forearm, in a delicately private way that told speed-eyed Donna, that the woman knew, past all knowing, that she was top drawer and Speedhead Donna was not much more than a damp meadow that strangers would walk across but never live. The shadowy room, filled with stale smoke, fresh woman sweat and Opium perfume, seemed to get hotter with each amorously focused breath Donna swallowed. Either woman held a future

in her arms, that if those arms held Donna, they would kill every memory of betrayal, shame and fear, that had come to fill Donna's waking hours like heavy rat-chewed furniture.

The dancer ran her long fingers through her black mane, flashing shaved, white armpits and invited. "What's your name,...babies?" The raw way she kissed `babies' to Donna made it sound as wrong as fondling a cop's gun while it was still on his hip and as dirty-sexy as an ugly dyke gym instructor soaping all the girls down in her seventh grade P.E. class.

"LA Donna." Donna chirped as tough and bitchy as she could manage and not choke on the saliva in her mouth.

"La Donna?", drawled Madeline. "Why you're just a puppy that hasn't opened it eyes yet."

La Donna (now La Donna forever) shrugged, snapped on the dresser's makeup lamp, turned her back to the women and stepped out of her dress. "What's your names?"

The dancer, her long fingers still running caresses through her long hair, said. "I'm the Witch of November, babies."

The Madonna said nothing. La Donna lay her bra and French-cut briefs on the dresser. Then she turned, and pitching her nipples hard for the fucked, asshole men outside, smiled. November smiled back. "All that, babies and a fire-muff too." The Madonna slapped November leaving a white hand print on her face. Still, La Donna and November smiled at each other. "My real name's Simone. What's your real name, babies?"

La Donna kept playing with her nipples. "La Donna." The hand print on Simeone's face turned red. La Donna pulled up her G-string and pulled her dress down over her head. "Gotta work." La Donna shrugged and stepped through the black curtain and stood in its shadows to watch Bramble finish her number. Simone emerged beside La Donna, watched Bramble for a second, and said. "Bozo The Beef-Animal."

"Bramble's nice and you're a bitch." La Donna whispered.

"She's an old whore getting six bucks an hour to exercise." Simone slipped her hand into La Donna's hand.

"Why am I a bitch?"

La Donna squeezed Simeone's long fingers. "Because you're with her, not me."

"Babies?" Simone whispered. La Donna released her hand and stepped out onto the stage. The men stomped their feet and applauded...La Donna heard clapping and looked up. Harry said.

"That spot's clean as hell, kid."

Amber adjusted her fur. "We're leaving. Want to lock up?"

"Sure." La Donna chirped sadly. She hated not being able to finish her daydream memory. La Donna waited until they 'd driven off before she put the mop a way and turned out all the lights. She put on her coat and sat in a corner, waiting for Icky Willy to move across the street. She sang slowly, softly. "Mamma don't let your daughters grow up to be cowdykes."

Simone moved in with La Donna the following week. She brought with her about a thousand pounds of clothes and a big-screen TV that showed everything in orange. "What about Madeline?", little La Donna had asked when she caught her breath.

"S&M are having a baby, babies," Simone had laughed, but it was no joke. Simone and Madeline had decided to raise a child. The baby born a week later was a boy. They'd named him Donny. He was now four and tow-headed.

La Donna watched Icky Willy stumble across the street. She went in the back room, called a cab and took a baggy of nice fresh lettuce out of the walk-in.

The cabby wasn't the one who normally drove La Donna home, so she wasn't too nice to him, lest he get cabby-germ ideas. "Fifteen twenty-seven South West Parkside Lane,

please."

The cabby smiled and fished for a tip. "That's a pretty high-rent homestead for a young lady." La Donna nodded, her art hair bobbing, but did not speak. She was terribly sad and hoped Simone would be gone before she got home.

La Donna tipped the cabby a dollar and saved out a dollar for the doorman. The doorman palmed the bill and smiled. "How's things in the penthouse, Ms La Donna?"

"Fine." La Donna smiled back, but didn't look at the doorman. Inside her apartment, La Donna hung her coat on the hall tree and went straight to the master bedroom. Simone was sitting at the make-up table in her black lace underwear, putting on her Temptation Eyes. Germutlich saw La Donna and squealed, "NEEF, neef, FIEND!" She knelt at the gerbil's cage and poked the lettuce to Germutlich. As the gerbil ate, La Donna took off her shoes and dress. When Germutlich had finished his feast, La Donna cradled the warm furry love next to her breast and said with forced cheer to Simone, "I thought of a song today!"

Simone smiled a tired smile from the mirror and combed the waves of her long, black mane back over her broad, thin shoulders. "Yeah, babies?"

La Donna nodded, her art hair bobbing, "Mamma don't let your daughters grow up to be cowdykes."

Simone shook her head. "It should be babies instead of daughters. Little boys should be able to be cowdykes too."

La Donna sat cross-legged on the carpet. Germutlich nuzzled near her heart. In her mind, La Donna saw a roundup of little boys (tow-headed four year olds) with stick horses and big tin stars pinned on crisp plaid shirts, sitting around a TV watching Hop-A-Long Helen. This made her very sad.

"No." La Donna said over brightly as Simone put on the black slit-up-the-side Suzy Wong dress. "We don't need more wanna-be's."

Simone stared at herself in the mirror, as if she were examining the garden of Eden after it had fallen into ruin, instead of a tall cool woman in a black dress. "No." Simone shook her head slowly. "Daughters wouldn't be politically correct."

"IS being a whore politically correct?" La Donna snapped.

Simone shrugged and turn to La Donna. "Madeline and Donny need money too, babies."

La Donna wouldn't look at Simone. "Madeline could struggle by with her furs and jewels somehow."

Simone bent over, brushed La Donna's wilted hair out of her eyes and kissed her forehead. "I love you, Babies."

"Me too you, poop cat." La Donna said, but couldn't look at Simone or she's start crying.

When Simone was gone, La Donna took off her bra, and cuddling Germutlich to her heart, sang sweet and low: "Germutlich don't let your daughters grow up to be Cowdykes."

As she sang, La Donna wept.

