

MYTHO-THERAPY ON THE BLINK

by Dennis Hiatt

Once upon a time, not so long ago in Los Angeles, Jack and Jill Woodman's father remarried. From the twins' point of view, their new mother was a Latino bitch-from-Hell.

Actually, Carmita was not from hell. She was from Echo Park and had waited tables at Los Chili Peppers, where the Woodmans ate from time to time. The kids, Jack and Jill, liked the food at Los Chili Peppers a lot, so they closed their eyes and tried to overlook the fact that Carmita was a jiggly, taco-breathed tramp who, at twenty, was only six years older than them.

They found, however, that Carmita's Mexican cooking came out of cans or microwave boxes labeled Old El Paso. It also turned out that all Carmita did was lay around the little house on Kansas Street in a bathrobe with Elvis's face on the back, watching Mexican soap operas on TV. and listening to what Jack and Jill called her Cockroach records. But what was totally the worst, Carmita wouldn't let them listen to their records or practice their guitar and drums in the basement.

Jack didn't mind so much because he caught enough glimpses of skin when Carmita bent over or uncrossed her slim, hairy legs, to keep him in the bathroom half the night. Jill, on the other hand, spent as much time as she could next door with Emily Daffodil, a well-known dullard and an old hippie living on S.S.I., who smoked so much dope all she could do was watch TV. and mutter things like, "Groovy" and "Far out."

The first Sunday after Carmita became Mrs. Woodman, she dressed the twins in their Sunday best, drug them off to eight o'clock Mass, then enrolled them in catechism class. Jack seriously

balked at going to catechism class until Jill reminded him that they had to look everywhere for new lyrics for their Post-Glam, Cow-Punk, Neo I-Love-my-Hair band.

Still, after about twenty minutes in Sister Consuelo's grim basement classroom, Jill muttered to Jack, "Major Bummer."

Jack, scanning the pictures of the martyrs, grinned soft and sly and whispered, "Yeah, but check out the dude with all the arrows in him. Doesn't he look like the drummer for the Poodles 'N Noodles?"

Jill stared at Saint Anthony and said, "Far Out! And see that chick with her hair on fire? She looks just like that dyke in my third-period English class, Cindy Pascoe!"

"Yeah?" Jack studied the picture with real interest. "I didn't know Pascoe dumpster dived in the hot tuna."

"Big time," Jill said under her breath.

"Children? Yes, you twins in the back." Sister Consuelo aimed her rubber-tipped pointer at them. "Do you have a question?"

"Yeah..." Jack started, patting his bright orange hair, "...where's the smoking section?" Jill finished, smoothing her hot pink, big hair.

Needless to say, they were in deep do-do by the time Carmita and their father picked them up after class.

It was pretty plain to the twins that Dad had done up some serious lines of crank to take the edge off his hangover. His eyes looked yellow, sick and wild, and he hadn't got it together to shave. His breath smelled like a toxic waste vent blowing through a dog's asshole. When he got them in the Toyota, he screamed in their faces, "If you don't quit fuckin' around, I'll kick your skinny, little asses so hard, your teeth will fall out!" And he didn't stop there. Driving home, he ranted about how ungrateful and screwed up they were and if they didn't get their shit together they'd find their asses out on the street, just like their mother.

"Yeah, you'd like that wouldn't you, dad?" Jack sneered.

"Then you wouldn't have to sweat us walking in on your beaner giving you head again," Jill chimed in.

Mr. Woodman slammed on the brakes. "Get the hell out, you

little freaks!" Carmita grinned like a bright-eyed fox and waved goodbye as the Toyota tried to lay rubber down the street.

The twins flipped off the fleeing car, screaming, "Fuck you! Who needs you anyway!"

After they'd yelled themselves raw, the twins mellowed out, and Jack turned to Jill. "Is this fucked, or what?"

Jill nodded and looked down the long, empty street. "We could crash at Daffodils tonight. Maybe the old man will chill out by tomorrow."

"Yeah, maybe." Jack followed her gaze down the endless, grey street, wondering if Sting or Van Halen got their start by being kicked out of their home. "Well, let's cruise."

After they'd walked for a half-hour through the grimy streets of East L.A., Jill sighed, "I'm hungry."

Jack saw their reflections in a cracked store window and thought that if they weren't dressed like nerds, they'd fit nicely on the cover of Cinderella Misery's Banned in Walla-Walla album. He shrugged. "Let's stop at the next restaurant we come to." He looked down the long, ugly street and added, "Unless it's a Taco Bell."

Jill patted her hot-pink hair and eyed her brother suspiciously. "I thought you spent all your allowance on weed too?"

"I did," Jack smirked as he pulled a hand full of bills and change out of his pocket. Jill stared at the money and arched her eyebrows. Jack snickered. "Remember when they passed that silver plate down our row?"

"Far Out!" Jill squealed and clapped her hands.

A skinny guy with long, beautiful hair, dressed in weird odds and ends, like he'd discovered the garbage cans for God's Own Gothic Thrift Shop, tripped out of the alley. "Hey dudes, what's doing?" he smiled, and Jack and Jill saw that most of his teeth were history.

"Fuck off, Troll," Jack spat and shoved the money back in his pocket.

"Name's Henry. Wanna get high?" Henry politely enquired, tossing his long, lovely hair over his shoulder.

Jack eyed Henry like he was a snake who'd just claimed he could shrug. "Sure Man, like we like just give you the money, and you'll be back right back with the dope."

Henry laughed good naturedly and gently brushed his fine hair out of his big, blue eyes. "Get real, dude. There's a McDonald's about three blocks from here. I'll turn you on, and you can buy me a couple of their little burgers. Deal?"

Jill smiled. "I can dig it." Striking a hand-on-the-hip pose like the lead singer in Glorious Clitorious, she held up a yellow disposable lighter.

Henry pulled three pin joints out of what must have been a black coat twenty years ago, and they fired up. By the end of the first block, the twins were pleasantly ripped. Jill stared at the boarded-over windows and goofs, wondering if all musicians had to suffer like this before they made it big. Jack grinned and asked, "Say dude, this is fairly rad bud. Where'd you score it?"

Henry, flipping his hair back and forth over his shoulder, thought about this so long, Jack was just about to ask him again, when he said, "Uh...from a chick I know."

"Must be a pretty groovy chick," Jill chirped, still staring at the broken windows and bums on the door stoops, and wondering now if these trolls got their start by being Hippies.

When Henry finally said, "Yeah," Jill ignored him because she was beginning to get really paranoid about saying 'groovy' and 'far out' all the time.

Up ahead, Jack spotted a small, red-headed chick in a sliver jump suit. She was leaning against a street lamp, staring intensely at the driver of every car that drove by. "DU-de! Check out the melons on that bird. She must use a cargo net for a bra!"

As they closed in on the young woman, Henry waved and sputtered, "Hey Flash, how's tricks?"

"Slow," Flash gave the twins' Sunday best the once over. "Where'd ya find the yuppie puppies, Henry?"

Really paranoid that she might turn into a hippie if she kept smoking dope with Emily, Jill's face turned as red as a hot-house tomato. Her mind tilted and she blurted, "We just got out of catechism."

Seeing his chances of coming off like a cool stud who might already be in a band drop like a paralyzed seagull, Jack groaned. But Flash just nodded and smiled, "Killer Kid, I always make early mass myself."

A cloud passed over the sun, and Flash glanced up. "Damn. I might as well take a break. You on your way to the Yellow Arches, kids?"

Henry's head bobbed. His face, looking as simple and friendly as a dinner plate, said, "Jack's going to buy me breakfast."

"Henry," Flash slipped her arm in his. "You trade that dope I gave you for a worm burger?"

Henry looked out from under his hair like some kind of rag-tag, shy-but-doomed Gothic sheep, "Not all of it."

"I'm Jack," Jack said, staring at and talking to Flash's breasts.

She smiled a tired little smile, "And you must be Jill?"

With a grin as phony as a Halloween mask, Jill fought back the urge to say 'groovy', or worse yet, 'far out'. She nodded and stared at the sidewalk.

"Hey, it's a nice name, kid." Flash patted Jill's shoulder.

Jill looked up and saw a huge skinhead in a chrome-studded, leather jacket coming down the sidewalk in a wheelchair. Jill did a double take. The punk's upper body was heavily muscled, but his legs were like sticks. Flash yelled, "Hi, Dif!"

"You bet your sweet ass I am, Flash!"

Jack kind of sneered at the punk like he wheeled out from under a rock. This Dif Dude looked just like the lead guitar for Blacked-Out Bimbos, and he was one phony Neo-Nazi nut

licker. But Jill smiled pretty, because he had such beautiful eyes, just like the drummer in Off Ramp To Hell. Waving her hand at the twins, Flash said. "Dif, this is Jack and Jill. Kids, this is Differently Able. But we tagged him Dif for short."

"Killer wheels, Dude," Jack mocked with a half-smile.

Dif was too stoned to pick up on Jack's bad vibes. He grinned and asked, "Say, you wanna get high?"

Jill, sure she was in love with this brave, beautiful could-be-a-drummer, gushed, "That'd be so groovy."

Henry looked out from under his hair at Jill like he was seeing her for the first time. "Funny," he said, "You don't look like the kind of chick who does heroin."

Jack coughed. "Like, let's have breakfast first, huh?"

After they got their Mc Everythings, they found a big booth in back and settled down to eat. Jack was put out because Jill giggled at Dif's every word, and on the way over, Dif kept showing off by wheeling in front of cars to make them stop. What a total phony. Even his leather jacket was too new, Jack thought.

"Like, how'd you end up in the hot seat?" Jill asked with a coquettish batting of eye lashes.

Dif grins big. "I played leap frog with a shark, baby."

"Is that, like, what YOU call drunk driving, dude?" Jack snorted.

Dif laughed and slapped his pencil-thin thigh. "I like you, Dude!"

Jill sighed over her Mc Whatever, "You have such beautiful eyes when you laugh, Dif."

Dif grinned big, like the cartoon cat from Alice In Wonderland. "The better to see you with my dear."

From the next booth floated a pimpish, lisping voice. "That's about all SHE can do with HER equipment, honey."

Flash froze mid bite, and even Dif's chemical good humor was ruffled. Dif sneered and said mildly to the big man, "I see the pen let out early this year, Hearts." Dif turned to Jill. "This is the Queen

of Hearts. Stay away from her. She's a bad man."

Hearts adjusted his red satin smoking jacket and rose. With a wink, he said to Dif, "Is that any way to treat someone who manages five bands, girl." He bowed slightly to Jack. "You're the one with the beautiful lips, baby. If you can sing the right song," he winked, "I've got a band you can play with anytime."

Chewing heartily on a mouthful of Mc Whatever, Jack snorted, "Screw you fagot!"

Hearts stiffened then cooed softly, "Very existential. But can you put a beat to it?"

As Hearts walked out the door, Jill held her drink in both hands and looked unhappily at Jack. "I want to go home."

Jack counted out his change. "Like, we don't have enough for a cab."

Dif shook his head. "Kids, don't worry about that fat pimp. She won't pull no shit in this 'hood."

At this, Jill looked sideways at Jack, trying to get his attention. But Jack had just noticed that, except for one tall, pale chick with black hair, all the people behind the counter were old, short men. The one working the cash register nearest Jack was a real stupid looking geezer. The one on the other register looked like he was ready to pass out. And the old dude mopping the floor kept sneezing.

Jesus, Jack thought, trying to live on Social Security must be totally fucked.

Jill kicked his leg. "Jack, how are we going to get home?"

"Follow the yellow brick road?" Henry asked innocently, and Dif and Flash laughed, as if that was a private joke.

"Like, I think we'll take a bus instead, Dude," Jack replied and took a swig of his soft drink. Something was wrong with this whole scene, and it wasn't just the Killer Queen sitting outside in a red sedan.

"Jack!" Jill kicked him again and hissed, "That pervert is watching us."

"Don't sweat that punk," Dif said, grinning his stupid, cartoon-cat grin. Jill wondered how she'd ever thought he was cool enough to be a drummer.

Flash, her face blank, took a drink of coffee and stood. "Take care, kids. I gotta get back to work."

Henry joined her. "Be cool, dudes," he said and waved goodbye.

Dif stared at Jill's small bust and said, "Wanna get really stoned?"

Jack glanced out the window at the red sedan. "Thanks dude, but we gotta go."

The old guy who was mopping, sneezed on the back of Jack's neck.

"Gross! Man, watch what you're doing, dude!"

"Sorry, I got allergies," the old guy said, not looking a bit sorry as Jack and Jill made their way out the side door.

The twins were two blocks away from the McDonald's when they noticed the red sedan following them at a distance. There was a bus stop half a block ahead, and an old lady waiting at it. The twins exchanged looks that said, 'no one gets kidnapped when they're with a grandmother', and ran to the bus stop.

The old woman turned out to be a bag lady. Worse, the bag lady was a big, old man in a gingham dress. The twins took a second to stare at the pancake makeup that tried to cover a three-day stubble. The overall effect was that of an aging linebacker doing his damndest to look like Mother Goose.

"Only in L.A.," Jill whispered, patting her hot pink, big hair back into place. Jack groaned and tried to hide behind the shopping cart as the red sedan pulled over to the curb.

The electronic passenger's window rolled down. "Fee, fie, fo, fum, I smell the hair of a teenage scum!"

Jill peeked out from behind the Mother Goose linebacker. "Shake'n Bake Snake by Smear Of Deer?"

"Sure is, and I manage them," came a cool purr from the soft, dark depths of the sedan.

"Yeah?" Jill leaned forward, straining to see into the dark

interior of the car.

"Indeed," came the melodious purr, "And I manage Awesome Death Possum, Cheap Sheep, Flat Cat and Narrow Sparrow."

"Bullshit!" hissed Jack from behind the overflowing shopping cart.

Jill shook her head, "This could be The Break, Jack."

"Shit, don't you see he just wants to get us in that car so he can peddle our asses."

Jill stuck her nose out from behind the huge bag person. "Prove it!" she yelled.

"Shit and lice are your sugar and spice...little death rocker...Needle tracks aren't covered by black... little pest Rocker," crooned a rather pleasant light baritone.

"Jesus, so what if he knows the lyrics to Chunk of Skunk? You heard them back at McDonald's. He's a pimp!" Jack whispered to Jill.

The rear door of the red sedan opened silently. "Get in. I'll take you down to my studio and you can cut a demo tape."

"Can you get Smear of Deer to back us up?" Jill asked.

"Sure thing," came a hungry lisp.

"Jill!" Jack was almost on the verge of tears. "The asshole JUST wants to pimp us!"

Jill looked at Jack thoughtfully. For the last couple of years, every time they watched one of their dad's porno tapes, Jack tried to get her to give him head and he'd been getting rougher and rougher about it. If Jack had to bob on a few knobs so that they could get a cool band, it would be cheap at twice the price. It might do their music good if he saw how the other half lived. Jill smiled nicely. "I don't think so. Besides, we can always jump out or tell him we'll call the cops." Jill popped her head back out from behind the bag person. "If you really manage Smear of Deer, you can tell me who's in it."

"Habromania Reed on Drums, Sand Doom Wilson on Bass, Duck Sausage on lead, and Sindex White on the synthesizer."

"See!" Jill grabbed Jack's hand. "Those creeps back at

McDonald's were just jealous. Come on! Let's go check it out!" She tugged at Jack's sleeve. "You're not chicken of a queer, are you?"

"No way!" Jack hissed. Straightening up, he said, more to himself than Jill, "We can always jump."

As the man in the dark car sang an old Smear of Deer Classic, 'Center Line Cuisine' ("Taste real good/straight from the hood."), Jack and Jill climbed in the back seat and closed the door.

"Hey, there's no door handles!" Jack was heard to shriek as the bright red sedan pulled away from the curb.

The old linebacker with her goose's bright, insane eyes watched the car disappear down the street with the nasty little children in its soft, leather belly and tittered, "There's no place like stoned, Auntie Em."

