



Joy!

Whenever I hear the name Beethoven, or hear a snatch of his Ode to Joy, I think of Joy Anderson. Joy was the older sister of my friend Donald, whose mother Ellen ran the Corner Cafe, where we hung out and were allowed to smoke in the back booth. Or rather, Joy would leave her butt smoldering in the ash tray when she hopped up to wait on someone and we would cop a few puffs. Ellen was divorced; tough but nice and hardworking. She also had a somewhat bad reputation because she had boyfriends from time to time. Donald was my age, 11 or 12 take a month or two. Joy was sixteen.

Donald invited me to sleep over one night and I got permission. We went to a Durango Kid movie at the Royal next door then had some pie ala mode and went to bed. Donald went right to sleep but I lie awake; strange bed in a small apartment behind the cafe. The cafe was still open. Joy and Ellen were still working.

Dozing off, I heard the women closing up.

"G'night mom."

"Good night, my dear."

To get to her own room Joy passed through the room where I lay. She bent down and kissed me and said, "G'night Dona.... Oh – you're not Donald. Sorry Paco."

"That's okey," I said flirtatiously. "Tastes good."

"Oh – you liked that? How about this?" She knelt down and planted a real sloppy kiss right on my mouth, forcing my mouth to open and soften. I took right to it. She darted her tongue in quick, then got up quick when I sucked on it. "Ha! You learn fast."

Joy disappeared into her own room and I couldn't fall asleep for hours.

When I finally did doze off, I was soon awakened by Joy popping out of bed and breezing by. "Come on you guys. Rise'n shine. School today."

It was seven-thirty. School started at nine. "What's the rush I said. Donald just grunted and rolled over. We both went back to sleep.

Eight o'clock and now Ellen yelled, "All right you guys, roll out."

Donald was up and dressing so I followed sleepily. When we joined the early morning crowd in the cafe, Ellen said, "What d'you guys want for breakfast?"

I didn't quite know what she meant. Want? For breakfast? Breakfast wasn't a real meal in my home. It was catch as catch can. If I had said the usual, I would have been served burnt toast and coffee with milk and sugar. And I would have been content. I knew that some people ate bacon and eggs and some even had sliced bananas on their cereal. Bananas on the table, bananas you could just pick up and eat when you felt like it. That was a sign that you had money. So, I didn't know what to say. Donald said, "Bacon'eggs Ma."

"That sounds good," I said, trying to sound casual.

"How you like yer eggs, Paco?"

"How d'you mean?"

"Scrambled, fried, poached, omelette?"

"Oh – fried I guess." I picked what I thought would be easiest.

"Over easy? Sunnyside?" Ellen said, and I was getting overwhelmed by so many choices, so early in the day.

"Sunnyside," I said. I liked the sound of it.

"Toast?"

"Yeah, toast would be good."

"Want any fried potatoes?"

"No – I don't think so," I said, willing to be persuaded. I loved potatoes but

felt I was making a hog of myself.

"Cereal? Oatmeal?" Ellen continued with the menu.

"No, no, that's plenty. Thanks."

When the food arrived, Donald put his down methodically. I didn't know where to begin. Sunnyside turned out to be not the way I liked my eggs. They were uncooked around the yolk and I didn't think I would be able to eat them. It must have been over easy that I wanted, I said to myself as I ate my way around the gooey part. Have to remember that. I ate as much of the eggs as I could without gagging and finished everything else then mashed my napkin into the remains. Maybe Ellen wouldn't notice. I felt bad. I had been taught to clean my plate to somehow help those starving pagan babies in China.

Donald and I walked the few blocks to school. What a breakfast. It had almost made me forget Joy's tongue darting into my mouth. She had winked at me while I ate my eggs and wiggled her ass a little more than usual. Last night my little peter got so hard that it required rubbing for awhile. Have to confess that, I thought. Dammit. I probably wouldn't actually confess it, but I would feel guilty about it. I would probably allude to it. It didn't take a terribly rational mind to figure out that a lie was only a Venial sin but those other things, if admitted, were Mortal sins.

I would say, "Bless me father for I have sinned. It's been three weeks (actually, two or three months) since my last confession. Ah – I fought with my brother and my Mom had to yell at us, I wanted to take a candy hotdog from the dime store but I didn't. (I hadn't actually taken the hotdog, after all. I got caught.) And I was late for Mass last Sunday and a few indecent thoughts..." My voice would trail off quickly as I mentioned the last offense.

"What sort of indecent thoughts?" Frankfurter would say. He knew who we were, how long it had been, who was diddling who. Why did he have to ask?

"You know – indecent."

Well young man – you know very well how wrong that is. In order for me to give you absolution you must promise not to think of such things again."

"Yes father, I know. I'll try real hard."

"For your penance you should say five Our Fathers and ten Hail Marys. Now

say a good act of contrition while I give you my blessing."

"Ohmagod I'm hardly sorry fraving offended you..." I sped through the contrition and had to wait in silence for Frankfurter to say, "Absolvo," or whatever it was he said before he said, "Go and sin no more."

I'll try, I thought, at the same time wondering how to get another invite to sleep over with Donald.

A few weeks later, Donald came through. The night came and I could hardly watch the movies. A double feature: Audie Murphy in *To Hell and Back* and *The Three Musketeers* would have normally sustained my interest for days in advance. But that night I had trouble concentrating. I couldn't wait to go to bed and had to make sure that Donald went to sleep again.

After the movies I wolfed down my hamburger with lettuce and tomatoes, pulling the onion slice off in anticipation of my tryst with Joy, I slurped my Strawberry malt and faked a yawn, "Well, bedtime."

Donald was still eating his onion slices.

"I'm not very tired," Donald said. "We could read comics for awhile."

"Not me," I countered. "I'm stuffed and bushed. It's sleep for me."

"Oh all right," Donald said. "How about Monopoly? We could play Monopoly."

"Nah - I'm too tired."

I climbed into bed and faked a few snores. Donald must have gotten bored because he turned off the light and was soon fast asleep. I felt myself dozing off and had to massage my head to stay awake. Later, much later, almost too late, I heard Ellen and Joy saying goodnight. I didn't even pretend to be asleep when Joy breezed by.

"Don't I get a kiss tonight?"

"Not tonight kid," Joy said and continued on to her room.

"What?" I was shattered. I collapsed and couldn't think of anything except my wilted little peter and Joy's tongue darting into my mouth. God! What's happening? Is this what I get for indecent thoughts? Is this Hell? God, Old Frankfurter knew

what he was talking about.

I had Religion for about five minutes, until I heard Joy's door open. I caught a glimpse of her body as she tip-toed into the room in a shorty nightgown. The soft light from behind outlined her shape. Hell? Heaven? Sweet Jesus, you do work fast.

"Move over," Joy whispered.

"What," I said, still shaken by Religion and here was the Devil herself telling me to move over. I moved. "I thought you said, not tonight."

"Yeah – I did. You've graduated." Joy snuggled in close, shivering and giggling.

"Quiet," Joy said, "maybe we better go into my room."

"What? What for?" I was terrified but excited.

"C'mon." Joy took my hand and led me into her room. As she closed the door I wondered, why is she doing this? She could have dozens of boys her own age. Why me? I concluded it was because in some twisted way I was blessed by the Devil. I didn't care if I burned in Hell I was too far gone.

Joy had me in her bed kissing me. I kissed her back. She took my peter in hand and I touched her breast, sliding my hand between the two of them. How nice, I thought, that girls have two tits. She stroked me and I petted her. No one had ever taught me what to do but it was not unlike when I learned to swim. I had called Franny Janson a fat-assed whore and she picked me up and threw me in the sandpit. Over my head! I swallowed a mouthful of water and then, by God, I swam. I swam to shore, then, elated, I jumped right back in and swam out to the raft.

Joy continued. I felt a curious stirring in my groin. The feeling had a voice telling me what to do. I rolled on top of Joy and she spread her legs wide and wrapped them around my waist. It was sorta like wrestling with a girl but without any resistance. Joy had more pubic hair than I did which made me feel a little ashamed. I felt very young until she took me in hand and guided me. As soon as I was in, it felt as if I no longer had a penis. As if Joy had taken it from me.

Joy said, "Don't you come in me."

"Whaty'you mean? I'm already in." I was puzzled and thought perhaps I should quit.

"You know what I mean," Joy insisted.

I didn't know but I didn't say so. I'd never really come before; didn't know what it meant. I knew other guys 'jerked off' as they called it but I thought that just meant playing with yourself.

Joy was pushing her hips up and down and I followed her motion as if she were a pony. I began to feel a very profound something. Something that said, yes, yes, go Paco, you're doing it right. Then the nuns would flash in front of me saying, "No, no Shemus. This is wrong."

Well I knew they were wrong and Joy told me, "Yes." And I knew then what Joy meant. I was indeed coming. Coming apart, coming together? I couldn't tell and didn't care.

"What a good word," I said.

"What?" Joy whispered.

"Nothing," I said as I came in Joy.

I didn't ever want to leave her bed but Joy soon unwrapped herself and said I had to go. I crept into Donald's room and slid into the cold sheets and shivered. Unable to sleep, I asked myself why couldn't I sleep there every night?

It was weeks before Donald invited me to sleep over again. Weeks of nothing except wanting to come again. Weeks spent thinking about jerking off but knowing that was even worse than fornication. I remembered that story about casting seeds on barren soil or some such. I looked the word up in the big dictionary at the library. I looked up come, too, but there was nothing very revealing to be found. Weeks spent contemplating my eternal damnation and wallowing in the fun I was going to have until they dragged me down. I was going to be the devil incarnate as long as I was headed for Hell anyway.

The invitation finally came and I quickly begged for permission. Ma said OK and gave me a quarter for the movies. When Donald and I came back from the movies, (Lash LaRue and Hopalong Cassidy) Joy was standing outside with some young man. A stranger in town. She was leaning on his freshly polished Merc and he was leaning into her.

"Hi kids," Joy said as we walked into the Cafe.

"Hi Sis. Hi Joy," we said with equal enthusiasm. I felt just like a younger brother and had to force myself to eat while sneaking glimpses of Joy laughing and nudging up against that stranger. The banana split kept reminding me of coming. I lay awake again that night but Joy didn't come through the room. I heard Ellen come in and go to bed but no Joy.

Hours later, still awake and in agony, I heard whispering voices coming through the back door. I heard Joy say, "Quiet, my kid brother's got a friend sleeping over."

I had to lay there listening to the bed in Joy's room squeaking. And the moaning. Joy hadn't moaned when I came in her.

Some months later, Ellen sold the cafe. She and Donald moved away and Joy got knocked up by the guy in the Merc. She went to live in one of the boxcars down across the tracks and I went back to dreaming about The May Queen.

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