

Chapter Seven

The Orthodox Slut

I was driving near St John's Hospital when I spied Mottl Gringer standing in the pouring rain, just north of Sherman Square, looking forlorn and anxious, as only an innocent can look in a red-light district. I was stopped at the light, waiting for the pedestrian walk sign to come on, but he did not cross. He pretended not to register my presence in a car, barely three feet from where he stood, but we had already made eye contact through the front window, so it was a cheap act. Bluffing as though he hadn't seen me, he just stood there looking over the top of my car, staring at the sidewalk opposite.

I didn't even wind down the window and try talking to him. I simply turned the corner, pulled into the nearest parking slot, turned the engine off, got out of my car and walked back around the corner to confront him.

"Reb Mottl, what are you doing here?"

He glanced at me quickly, anxiously. He was obviously troubled, but did not answer. He just shook his head dismissively and turned back to keep an eye on the other side of the road.

"Go away," he muttered into the night.

"You have business here?" I asked stupidly.

He turned his body fully around for the first time and looked me over contemptuously, through his thick, black rimmed spectacles, from top to bottom. Taking in my clothes, my hat, my coat and trousers and shoes, his eyes moved slowly back upwards until we were eye to eye again.

"Rebbele," he said quietly and with surprising venom for one so mild mannered and calm. "I have a good excuse for being here, even if I shouldn't be in such a unkosher place, but you? You are pushing your face into business, what is no business of yours. Go away, and do not bother a person, asking small questions. Get back in your car and drive home. Forget you saw me here. Thank you. Now be healthy and good night." And with that he twisted the collar on his gabardine up around his neck and, turning his back on me once again, went on staring over the road.

I was considering my next move when I heard him hiss an outgoing breath, and move impulsively to cross the road. A blaring, blating tractor-trailer nearly blew him out of his socks as he stumbled, first into and then back, out of the roadway. A downtown puddle was ready, right there, for him to step into; his feet were now wet to the ankles. The squall of stinging spray in the slipstream behind the huge, fast moving truck whipped at his broad brimmed, black Fedora hat.

I walked up close behind him again and called his name, "Mottl?"

There was a commotion over the road, an altercation. A prostitute was being hassled off her territory by a couple of mean and serious looking women of the same calling. Voices were raised in anger. Mottl, ignoring me, ran to cross, evading traffic and angry pedestrians. I followed as best I could, but by the time Mottl was over the road, the woman he'd been watching was walking away, driven off by

the two pros with the attitude.

He was walking quickly now, black coat flapping and water dripping off his hat, and kicking up behind his shoes.

“Mottl.” I shouted after him, but he pretended not to hear. The woman had disappeared into a doorway some way down the road. I hurried, almost running and caught up with him, determined not to be shrugged-off this time.

He ignored me even as I fell into step beside him. His gait took on a measured cadence, his chest swelled visibly, he stood up straighter, taller, and we came upon the woman he’d been following. She was waiting, watching us from her doorway as we approached.

She spoke. “Hi guys.”

Mottl stiffened into rigidity beside me. The woman came out of the building entrance’s shadow, allowing the orangey light from the sodium-vapor streetlamp to fall onto her face.

“You busy tonight? I’m not with anyone, are you? You two guys together, or what, now?”

It was hard to tell, reading her accent and tone whether she was a New Yorker, an easterner, or even an American.

I said not a word, but stood waiting for Mottl to do his thing, whatever that was going be.

“I said, you guys together?” she asked impatiently. “You aiming to get home before midnight tonight? Huh? Or do your wives let you stay out all night?”

“I’m the one with money,” said Mottl, sounding both defeated and defiant. “He’s nothing.”

“Hmmm, he’s nothing eh?” she sneered. “He doesn’t look like nothing. Maybe he’s got more money’n you, eh?” She lifted her head, throwing it back in a quick dismissive gesture, and I took a good look at her for the first time. She was made up like a prostitute, that’s for sure, everything glittered or shone or smelled perfumed or powdered or painted. She was very pretty, beautiful even in a brassy, commercial way. She probably did not need the improbably red and curly wig she wore. A calf length coat hung over an expensive looking strapless cocktail dress, slit deeply up the side, and her shoes were very spaghetti strapped, with shiny silver heels.

“Forget this guy,” Mottl interrupted her. “What’ll it cost for the whole night? The wife’s away, I’ll take you home, I want you.” But she turned her back on him and brought me right back into the conversation or negotiation or whatever was happening there on the street.

“What about you, your wife not gone away? Eh?” she said to me. “What’s the matter, not feeling romantic tonight?” Her laughter was a harsh sound, even in that place, on the street among the night people and un-people of the west village, backed by machines, police sirens, rain dripping off the awnings and the omnipresent garbage trucks and hustlers. She didn’t wait for a reply but turning once again to Mottl, swung her arm into his and started walking away with him, down the street.

They never looked back.

I bumped into Mottl Gringer at the Mikveh on the following morning. I met his gaze, nodded a greeting and affected the supremest indifference. Real frummies don't greet verbally or chat in the Mikveh, a nod is as much as it does.

I might have put the incident out of mind, but apparently, Mottl hadn't. He called me on the phone a week later. At first I couldn't make out what he wanted or the point he was making, but then I got it. He, personally, did not think I needed to be asked or told not to say anything about that night we met downtown. Mottl knew I would not tell anyone. But his wife was not so sure, and so she had asked him to call, to beg me not to talk about our meeting. I assured him I am not the telltale kind of person. He thanked me and ended the phone call.

"Well!" I thought to myself. "Either his wife doesn't mind his frequenting prostitutes in general, or else, she didn't mind this one in particular. Whatever's going on, there must be a whole new class of easygoing hasidic wife out there.... hhhmmn."

And again, I put the incident out of mind.

A month later the word was out all around town; the Gringer's marriage was in trouble. It was common gossip. Sure, they were still living in the same house together, but she, Mrs. Gringer, had been to talk to the Beis Din. And while the secretariat there is very discreet, and while Rabbi Duntz would never disclose any of the personal information to which he is privy, the shouting emanating from the rabbi's offices, Mr. and Mrs. Gringer's raised voices, and the angrier rabbinical responses carried the message far and wide: The Gringers were getting divorced.

I see Mottl Gringer in *Shul*¹ quite often, he's only occupied the same seat for 15 years. It's where his father used to sit. Reb Mottl is an earnest young man. He holds his *Siddur*² close to his face during services. His glasses look made from the bottoms of two jam-jars, and give him an air of the perpetually perplexed. His beard has a salt-and-pepper sort of look about it, and he carries the general aura of mild harmlessness so often surrounding *Cheder*³ teachers. Reb Mottel teaches Alef-Beis kids. In his spare time, he prepares boys for their Bar Mitzvah.

Milka, Mottl's wife, is an out-of-towner. They say she went to college. Actually, she studied hairdressing and took beautician courses at a night school in Brookline MA. Mottl's meager, schoolteacher's income, supplemented by his wife's wig-styling, covered basics. But even in this day and age, the Gringers of this world don't divorce. Divorces are for the louder types, or business folks, childless couples, newlyweds or moderns.

People, of course, took up sides about the divorce without knowing any of the details. Some said the whole thing was just a nasty, vicious rumor started by a person or persons unknown. Others said there was madness in the family – though exactly whose family, wasn't specified. On one point, however, all

¹ Shul: Synagogue-like place of Jewish worship.

² Siddur: Book-like compendium of Jewish prayers.

³ Cheder: School-like system of Jewish education.

were agreed: a more blameless couple could hardly be found this side of the Brooklyn Bridge.

When it first came to my ears I thought, “Aha! The days of Hasidic broadmindedness are over, Mrs. Gringer’s reached the end of her patience.”

Which all comes to show how very prejudiced even a non-judgmental person can be, when in ignorance of the facts.

I saw Mottl in the Mikveh again one Friday afternoon. He had three of his four children with him in the shower. The oldest who could take care of himself in the Mikveh, was a sober looking Barmitzvah bochur, with the earnest demeanor of Hasidic youngsters of an age to have discovered masturbation, afraid they may be the only ones in the world indulging in the sin of wasting the seed. It is a heavy load for young Hasidim, and they carry it as they have done for centuries, with fervor and terror and the spring-wound tightness of those laboring beneath a burden of desperate secrets. The other three Gringers were carefree and cheerful and loud as only children in public places can embarrassingly be. The youngest, a skinny five-year-old maintained a running commentary on all and sundry as he waited in turn for his father to shampoo his hair. The seven-year-old and nine-year-old were in a hurry to get into the Mikveh pool, they didn’t want to stand around in the shower stalls and submit to a cleaning. All the fun happens in the Mikveh pool, on the steps and under the railings in the water. Getting soap in your eyes and up your nose should not have to be the price of holiness, they insisted. But Mottl Gringer was a dad with a mission. Without his glasses he was almost blind, but the kids were easy to locate using daddy sonar. His own beard was frothed white with shampoo suds and lather flowed all over his body. I stepped around him and the two young ones as I looked for an empty shower stall of my own. The persistent and scathingly honest five year-old observations were a delight.

“Tatty,” came a crystal clear voice that carried over the din like a dentists drill. “Why does that man have so much hair?”

“Shhh,” shushed his brothers. “Don’t stare at people in the Mikveh.”

“Why not?”

“Because.”

“That man has a hanging belly, did you see?”

“Yanky, be quiet.”

“Tatty, will you have a hanging belly?”

A fight broke out among the embarrassed brothers and the relentless commentator. But five-year-olds always win fights like these precisely because they are so small, and the only way to shut them up is to hit, and hitting is not allowed, or else it draws the ire of the reigning adult, and so it was. Mottl finished scratching the soap out of his own hair and beard and took charge again. A single gruff word and order was restored among the siblings. Their showers happily completed, it was time to go and dunk.

“Tatty,” I heard the little one ask as he was led away to the Mikveh pool by his father. “Will we have a Mikveh in our house when we move?”

I followed them into the Mikveh and heard the little one explaining to an elderly man, who happened to be luxuriating in the Mikveh at the time, that the Gringer family was moving into a new house soon, a bigger house without a pool, but where tatty and mammy have their own shower, in their own bathroom even though it does not have a place to dip in Fridays.

Mottl dipped and dunked in honor of the Sabbath. And, taking charge of his children like a shepherd, ushered them out of the Mikveh and back into the dressing room. I followed soon after.

The chattering five-year-old had not run out of steam yet when I returned to get dressed, he kept up his critique of the socks he brought with to change into, his brothers’ failure to locate a lost baseball cap and the state of the floors in the dressing room which were wet and unwholesome and slippery.

Through the entire Mikveh saga Mottl showed no impatience or annoyance. He did not act like a man under stress, about to leave his wife or feeling oppressed by secrets acts. The hints his child had dropped about the family moving to a new house did not sound like a family about to break up and split. I wondered if the word about their imminent breakup was not all a hoax?

I washed my hands and, after throwing my wet towel into the laundry hamper, stopped to read the notices on the billboard outside the Mikveh door. Mottl and his family trooped out into the hallway and began the ritual hand-washing that completes the Mikveh. He saw me reading the notice-board and combing my beard. He put on his own thick glasses and, like me, searched the board for anything of interest to talk about at home.

“Is it true, what they say about you?” he asked without turning to look at me.

What do they say about me?” I asked.

“That you are Rebbe of all the kinky Hasidim?”

“Hhmmnn,” I answered, surprised. It was not a description that really appealed to me. “I suppose they might say that.”

“I want to talk to you after Shabbes, is it ok if I call you?”

“After Shabbes,” I agreed, and turned to look at him, but he was already hurrying after his children to catch them before they ran into traffic.

He never called, but Rabbi Duntz called to invite me to sit in on a dispute being heard at the Beis Din. “It’s up your street,” he added. “We may need your input.”

“Did either of the parties ask for me to be present?” I inquired.

“Both of them did,” Duntz replied.

Mottl vs. Milka, Gringer vs. Gringer, Husband vs. Wife, whichever way you look at it, it was an unexpectedly, refreshingly, lusciously striking story.

The first big shock was seeing Mottl sitting in the rabbi's chambers with the prostitute he'd picked up that rainy night downtown. The second big shock was discovering she was none other than Milka, his wife.

Proceedings were under way as soon as all the Beis Din rabbis arrived.

"We've been asked," intoned the youngest rabbi on the bench. "To arbitrate and advise but preferably not to make a ruling in this case. Mr. Gringer wants to know whether he has sufficient grounds upon which to divorce his wife. In view of the private nature of the matters to be discussed, we have made special allowances. Rabbi Duntz, the recording secretary has been excused, neither party brings legal counsel with them and I, myself, will write any records of the arguments, if it is decided they will be kept. Mr. Gringer?"

Mottl stood up. At first his eyes stared down at the table in front of him, but soon he stared around him a little bewildered to be in such uncommon surroundings. A Beis Din can be intimidating. Rabbis sit upon a dais, looking out and down at the world arguing its case before them. It's a court of law, the rabbis' very presence announces. Serious, adult people gather here to make serious, adult pronouncements after serious, adult deliberation. Mottl cleared his throat.

"My wife acts like a prostitute." Mottl tried talking but he was too choked up with emotion to continue. He shook his head as though in disbelief at his own words.

There was a deepening silence in the room. The dark wood paneling on the walls, the ticking of the antique clock on the mantel over the ornate, boarded-over fireplace, and the background buzz of the greenish florescent lighting added trivial details to the otherworldliness of the atmosphere.

I saw that Mrs. Gringer had her eyes tightly shut and she was trembling from head to foot. This was apparently a painful experience for her, for both of them.

"In our most private times, and in the public places," Mottl, steeling himself for the ordeal, continued painfully, "she dresses and talks and acts the prostitute, without even the most common decencies. Will the Beis Din not concede that I have grounds for divorcing her immediately?"

They were watching him in astonishment, hardly able to believe their ears. But I was watching her. I could see tears of pain or humiliation squeezed out from behind her eyelids. Her body still trembled and swayed in fear. Her arms defensively across her chest with her hands clutching the upper arms so forcefully her fingers sank into the cloth of her coat, but her lips were moving in time to Mottl's words as though she knew them, every one, by heart. In the silence that followed his announcement she rocked back and forth as though praying.

"Sit down, please, Mr. Gringer, thank you. Mrs. Gringer, please stand," said the rabbi after a minute's silence. "How do you respond to your husband's complaint, are his allegations true or false?"

She stood up unsteadily.

“True,” she whispered without opening her eyes. “What he says is the truth.”

The rabbis leaned toward one another and conferred in an undertone, while Milka Gringer remained standing.

“Mrs. Gringer,” intoned the elder rabbi. “We are shocked by what we have heard so far and would prefer not to have to hear any more details of your shameful behavior. We are agreed that your husband has cause to divorce you, and if the case comes before us again we will have no choice but to advise him to do so.”

He banged the gavel loudly on its plinth, and all three rabbis nodded towards us, rose and left the room.

Milka Gringer sat down heavily on her chair at the small table next to her husband. He turned around glanced back at me, then turned to his wife and whispered her name. She looked up at him and said smiled tremulously, “Mottl, that was so humiliating, I can’t tell you how much. And painful, painful. I never had such an experience in my life.”

At that moment, as all the pieces started to fall together I could have kicked myself twenty time over for being so dense. How easily we fall into a trap of preconceptions and prejudices, how much we want to be fooled.

“How long has this been going on?” I demanded to know.

The Gringers were too inhibited to talk openly in that room, at the Beis Din, and invited me to their home that night. This is story I pieced together from their separate tales.

“I was on the subway, coming home from the city,” Milka began, over a cup of coffee. “When a young man brushed up against me, and before I knew it, he was whispering, “You one sexy bitch. I bet you give great blowjobs.” I was so utterly shocked I couldn't even turn round. I mean, my first reaction was, he couldn't be talking to me, surely! Right? But then he growled again in this low class, Hispanic accent, but softly, “You do, don't you, you whore, eh?” I blushed, and scuttled off, fast as I could, to another subway car and sat next to a woman. I’m telling you, my heart was beating, and my cheeks were on fire. How dare he! How dare he! What did he think? Tell me, tell me, I wanted to ask that woman on the train, do I really look like that?”

“I saw a reflection of myself in the window of the subway car, my sheitl⁴, makeup, lipstick, everything looked horrible and whorish now. All of a sudden I felt I must look like a tart, a cheap tart. I was horrified. What must everyone think? Does anyone else see me that way?”

“I was so shaken by fear and I was so ashamed, as soon as I got off the train, even though it was only two blocks from the house I jumped into a cab. But do you know what, it’s like my brain went into shock and started working backwards. I sat there in the back seat of the cab clutching my coat tight

⁴ Sheitl: Wig worn by Orthodox Jewish women to cover their own hair.

like this, thinking to myself, I'm like a call girl, going home after a 'job'. And d'you know it was such a delicious thrill, I can't even begin to tell you at all, like a drug from beginning to end. It was a different thought or feeling or something, which had never ever gone through my mind like that before and it changed something inside my head that still hasn't gone back to what it was before.

"After that, I began to fantasize about it for hours on end - about the thrill of that fear. Of being taken for a whore. I used to squint into the mirror, and you know, growl like that disgusting man on the train, "Ho. Cheap ho." But it doesn't work like that. You can't reproduce it in your head; I needed the man to say it. And all this time I'm thinking my brain is completely fried to bits, I'm going crazy or having a nervous breakdown, the thoughts in my head are so unfamiliar, it's like someone else insides, I don't recognize the woman.

"You know, Mottl totally freaked out the first time I came to him looking like a cheap Christina Aguilera. I got myself the shlockiest sheitl from the costume store; it was bright orange, it was laughable and put it on in the bathroom here, and then I put on the brightest red lipstick I could buy. I was embarrassed to buy it in the local pharmacy with all the Hasidische women looking at me, it was so bright you couldn't go any more rubbishy, and I bought a green sheath dress."

Mottl interrupted, clutching his coffee. "Just so you know what a shock it is in the beginning. The truth to tell, I don't even begin to recognize her, my own wife, like a stranger at first; I thought it was some mad mistake from a delivery girl. When I come to realize this is my wife I almost have a heart attack. I have so much fear and *ekkelhaft*⁵, I couldn't stand it. It didn't light any hidden fires of desire in me; this is not what I am expecting. I'm shouting at her, asking the same question over and over. 'But how, how did you think of such a *M'niveldigger*⁶ thing?' I keep on moaning and groaning, asking over and over. I had shaming embarrassment inside myself over it. Under the anger I had like a disgrace about the way Milka was looking. I said 'we don't have a television; we never see such movies, such women, such ideas, where do you get it from in your mind?' She ended up taking all the *drek* off, the makeup and the dress, and the whole, *gantze* week ended up being miserable. Then we sat and when she told me what happened on the train I felt bad for her. She could have expected me to be more accepting and understanding. I mean, she had right, what would it have cost me? It wasn't as if she wanted anything wrong, it wasn't a terrible sin, God forbid! It was just a game..."

"Yeah, Mottl," Milka took over the narrative. "But you can't really blame yourself, because it wasn't just a game, I was making it more important than just a game."

Milka turned to me to explain. "I know what Mottl thought. He thought the less he said about it the sooner it would be passed and forgotten. But, you know I just made everything worse by coming out at him like that from the blue, dressed up and expecting him to know what I want. So I ruined it, and after that nothing felt like the same again between us. Here I was, couldn't go back to being me from before, I knew I just couldn't. I think I must be one of the few people in this world who really understands the power of words. I mean, my whole life, my whole person has been turned inside out by those filthy words of that man on the train. Mottl could see how I was getting sick from the inside about something. The thing is, he didn't know what it was I wanted, how could he? I didn't know myself. We had a lot of fights, lots."

⁵ *Ekkelhaft*: Disgust

⁶ *M'niveldigger*: Icky

“Firstly I wanted to make everything go back to before,” said Mottl. “I couldn’t understand what was happening, she couldn’t tell me because she herself didn’t know what was happening. I asked her a hundred times, ‘don’t I please you?’ and I couldn’t believe it when I heard her saying to me, ‘No. You don’t.’ She never said such a thing to me in my life. So I said, ‘What can I do to please you, what? You want to wear that disgusting red wig again?’ and she says, ‘Why not?’

“Milka!” I said, “I can’t believe you think that looks good - where did you buy such a thing, anyway? And all she can to answer me is ask, ‘It looks bad?’ I said ‘Bad? Bad!!! you look like - !.... and she keeps asking, ‘Yes? Yes! Tell me what I look like Mottl. What do I look like, what, what?’ A lot of fights we had for nearly six months.”

“But I’m glad now,” Milka said. “It had such a strong hold over me that I couldn’t just say Ok and forget about it. Not that it would have been possible, but I could have pretended to make it go away. But for some reason I kept remembering the feeling in the taxi. That was the strongest of all the reminders in my head. So, the next time Mottl starts touching me I said, ‘I want money.’ He looked so surprised like as if I asked him for money on Shabbes. ‘We need to discuss spending now?’ ‘No, I want money now. Cash,’ I said. And d’you know, he looked like he’d been hit with a baseball bat on his head, it was kind of sweet, really. I said, ‘I want money for sex. You have to pay me to touch me.’”

“She was like crazy serious as well.” Mottl continued. “I had to get out of bed, and empty my pockets, to pay her five dollars. That’s when I really gave in and started to play along with her *Mi’shigass*⁷. I must have said in my mind I’m not fighting anymore.”

Milka chuckled. “Oi! For a moment there, I remember, it looked as if you was going to lose it again, my poor, sweet Mottl - but we were both past caring about the small details, and after that it started being exciting. I used to clutch the money while we were being intimate. ‘You’re not holding the money.’ Mottl kept shouting at me. ‘Put it away, Milka!’ But I just held on to it even tighter, over my head.”

“You know, I thought, at that moment, she’s crossed all the red lines,” said Mottl. “What did I know from red lines!”

“Rabbi,” he turned to me. “You must be wondering about that business today in the Beis Din. I know you must surely be wondering. I should make apologies for asking the Beis Din to ask you to come and watch Milka and me there. It’s true I feel I little bad about it. But I want you to know what I’ve learned and the only way you could learn what I know already is to be there at the time. Since that time you saw me on the street in the night these last six months, I’ve learned a lot about the local rabbis. You know, at first, after I got it, what Milka wanted, it was hard to keep up with her. I thought to myself, am I going crazy, am I already crazy, or what? But, you know, after a *shtikl*⁸ while, I realized, on some deep level, this is not so far from my own *yetzer-hora*⁹ already. Instead of coming home from the Mikveh and going straight to bed and getting up in the morning, I go along with whatever spiel my wife’s mind is cooking up during the time we’re separated. It’s not such a heavy sin.

⁷ *Mi’shigass*: Craziness

⁸ *shtikl*: Shtik – Piece

⁹ *yetzer-hora*: Evil inclination

But d'you know, the rabbis here in town have absolutely no sense of humor? Not one tiny little scrap of laughter in their left little finger. I don't understand it at all. Even when I look back on my own shock when Milka first started with this whole crazy play, it didn't take me long to see the child's play, the laughing delight in it. But the rabbis in the Beis Din, they act all the time like sex is deadly serious business all the way through from beginning to end. How do their wives stand it, I don't know? It made me stop and think about the important things, about playing. You know the Torah calls sex playing; it should be playing like children. That's what I realized these last six months, and I decided to change my way of it.

"Once I went to Rabbi Gad Devalue-Schwartz with a question. I thought it was maybe a new question, ok, but not such a controversial issue to be treated that way. I said, 'I wanted to ask about condoms. You know, so he immediately interrupts me, "It's forbidden, it's forbidden! What are you even talking about?"

"I said. 'No, rabbi, let me finish. I haven't come to ask you if a condom is permitted. Even I, who am not the head of the Beis Din and the biggest scholar in the world, know that. If you will permit me to finish the question, I'll explain.' I said. 'This is the question. If a person cuts off the top of the condom so that it's totally useless against not making babies, is it ok to wear it?'

"Now between you and me, I don't need to explain why I was asking the question. We were pretending, between us, you know, and one of the things Milka wanted to pretend was the condom, 'cos men who go to prostitutes use condoms. So I was asking, just to be sure it wasn't, you know, like an *Issur D'Raysa*¹⁰. But, d'you know, Schwartz started to ask me questions. He wanted to know why I want to know about such a thing. He wouldn't let go of it, asking and asking until I said I have a sore on the side of it, you know, and I need to wear the condom to stop the sore part being hurt. And d'you know what he said after all that? He said, NO, absolute nix! He said, see a doctor and ask for antibiotics, don't use a condom even if it's not against babies, even if the top of the plastic rubber is cut off, and then he like kicked me out of his office as fast he could menshlich without picking me up by the neck.

"I'll tell you something, rabbi. More and more, I've come to realize how stupid some of our people are. Here's a big man, a Groiser Mensch, who's supposedly head of a Beis Din for a place as big as the whole of America, who can't understand why people want to play when they're making sex? You know?

"So, it's true, Milka and I used the Beis Din today in a not nice way, *Fardreying them a kopl*¹¹ in the worst most using way. Oi would they be angry if they knew we were making mockery out of them, them and their no of sense of humor. But, d'you know what it is, we got what we wanted. Milka wanted to experience the most disgraceful, painful shaming of her life. Something she can play over and over in her mind, because that's what her pleasure is. I didn't make it like that. She didn't make it like that. It's just like that. You know. The *Eibishter*¹² made her like that. I decided already a long time, there's not that many presents I can give my wife, I don't buy her a nice house. But you know

¹⁰ Issur D'Raysa: Jewish Biblical Prohibition, like eating pork or pussy.

¹¹ *fardreying them a kopl*: lit. twisting their brains

¹² *Eibishter*: Eternal One

there's a big mitzvah to make a *Simcha*¹³ in your wife. A whole year the Torah says a *Chosson*¹⁴ should make Simcha for his wife. But where does it say it's such a big *Aveiroh*¹⁵ to go on making Simcha for his wife for the next sixty years? I listen really careful to what she asks me for and I if can say yes, so I said yes. I arranged for the Beis Din say those shaming things to Milka, that's what she asked me for. And now I can say to her all the things that make her dreams come true. It's a crazy world, no?"

Milka turned to me at the end of our conversation, adding, "I will treasure that moment for the rest of my entire life. From now on, all Mottl has to say to me is what he said in the Beis Din today and what the Beis Din said back to him and to me. Oi, whew! I don't know if I can stand it. And now it's time for you to leave, Rabbi. My husband and I have an appointment, while the children are asleep."

On the way home I mused upon the meaning of love and marriage and friendship. Who has them all, rolled into one? Who is so lucky?

¹³ *Simcha*: Joy and delight

¹⁴ *Chosson*: Bridegroom

¹⁵ *Aveiroh*: Sin