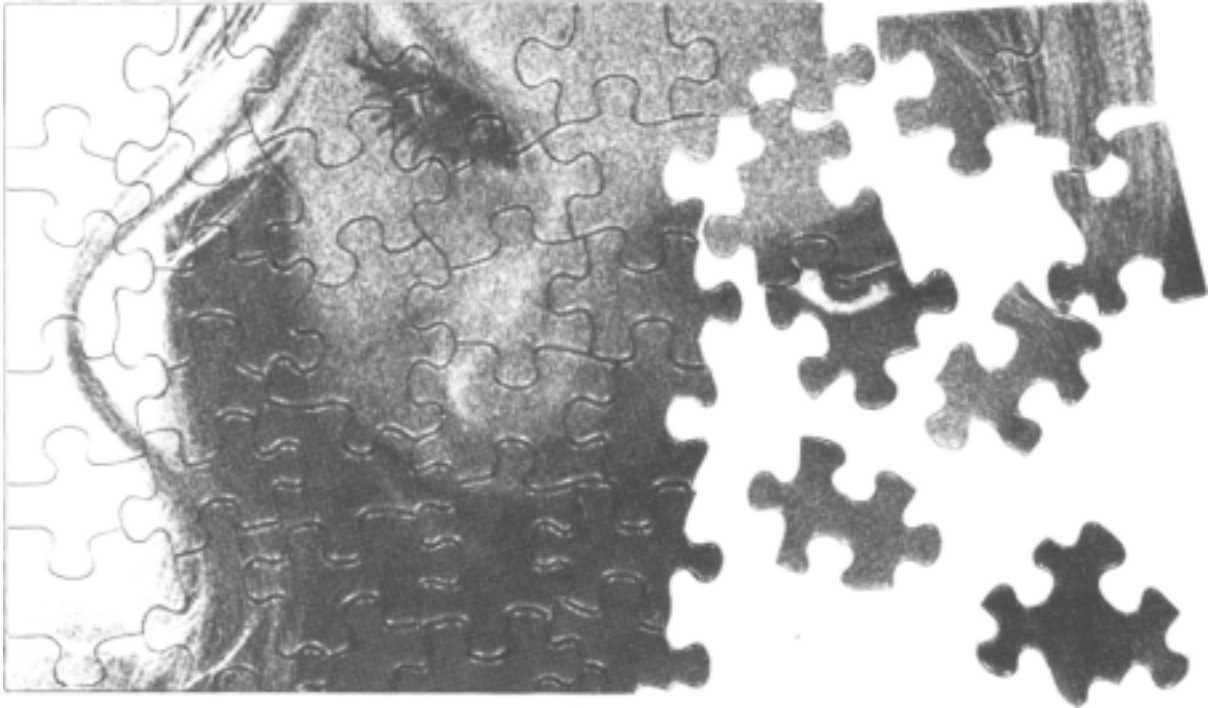


The Pregnant Witch

by Richard Rose

There is a weakness that some people have...it is the indiscriminate urge to help other people. I went through an adolescent stage of self-sufficiency and selfishness, during which time I also saw the need for genuine friends, and managed to make perhaps two or three friends who repaid me with a lifetime of friendship. I went through about ten years of a dry spell in which I made no lasting friends. Then I overcompensated after the death of a brother. I began to see things in a different light. I developed a sympathy for the misfortunes and tragedies of others, sensing that unless I were able to feel their problems I would be unable to communicate with them with proper understanding, and unless I learned to communicate there could be no friendship. There is verbal language that communicates both sincerity and duplicity, according to the motivation of the initiator of the communication. But there is a language of the heart that has less chance for chicanery. At one time I thought the language of the heart, the intuition, was beyond being deceived.

There followed another period in my life, from my late twenties until my forties, when I trusted my intuition too much. I was really projecting qualities upon people rather than discriminating and waiting before deciding that a particular encounter was sincere or not. It is possible that I was too eagerly trying to accept a substitute brother. And then I learned that people who have been sincere, and are accepted by all for their sincerity, many take a step backward and see and admire their profitable status. The next step is to maintain the external sincerity, while capitalizing on it with plans held secretly in the back of the skull. With this adroit move, they are able to present the mask called personality, while maintaining in the back of the mind their immortal, unique selfishness or even criminal direction.



I still help people, and I never know if I am properly discriminating. A person's ego may cause him to read divine destiny into any little chance to play God. Perhaps I could have abridged all of the above and said simply, that I have found that I have the ability to make a fool

of myself by way of projection and sympathy. Like the time I picked up a crying kitten on a very dark night, stuffed it into my jacket to keep it warm until I got home and found, when I got home, that it had the mange. My hair has never looked right since then, and I scratch at the slightest provocation.

The neighbors learned that I was capable of bringing home all manner of flotsam and jetsam, so they guided a lot of ego-helpers in my direction. I was working on my car about eight years ago when a young neighbor came up and told me about two unfortunates. He pointed to two figures up the street about a half-block.

"Rich, you take people in once in a while, or let them stay out on your farm, don't you?"

"Why?"

This was Bud Carpenter enquiring. "I just ran into those two guys up the street. They just got off a boxcar, and there isn't another freight out for them until morning. I talked to them and they told me that they had no money and no food. I told them that you were a pretty good guy, hah hah...and would maybe let them stay on your farm."

It was February and cold. So, after asking him for that which he knew about them, I agreed that they could stay in the farmhouse which was between tenants. He walked up the street to tell them about my decision. I saw him talking to them, but they did not come down, and instead went into a neighbor's house. I presumed that they decided to take the train, regardless, so I was surprised when the neighbor knocked on my door and asked me if it were true that I had offered to put the couple of vagrants up for the night at the farm. He was anxious to get rid of them. He had fed them, but one of them had a strong aura that clouded up the air in his kitchen. He was so eager to get them out of his house that he had driven them the half block in his car.

I went across the street and met them, and transferred them to my car. I was surprised to find that one of them was a girl, and seemingly, a very young girl, -- I would have guessed thirteen or fourteen. And she was pregnant. She blinked a bit when she talked, and I thought she was embarrassed because of her pregnancy. I am sympathetic to pregnant women, and was consequently appalled that she was considering going out on another freight train.

There was another factor which disturbed me. She had been battered about the right eye. Her skin was badly bruised and purple about the eye, and the eyeball had hemorrhaged throughout the white part of her eye. I enquired about the injury and she told me that she had been sideswiped by a car while hitchhiking. I wanted her to go to a doctor before going to the farm, but she insisted that she had been to the Wheeling hospital and that they had released her.

I started for the farm with them in my old car. My nearest neighbors were a mile away, and the farmhouse was situated in a place from which no neighbors' houses were visible. So I tried to put them at ease by generating favorable conversation. I asked them about their religion. The girl had been a Catholic, and the young man, her husband, was a Protestant. He carried a Bible with him in his duffle bag. I told them that I was raised a Catholic and had, at one time, studied to be a priest. I hoped that we had found a common ground of communication, and it relieved a bit of the awkwardness, which I felt at hauling two seemingly harmless youngsters out in the bleak, dark night to what must have been to them an apprehensive destination. But they were not the least uneasy.

The farmhouse was cold and empty, having only a few pieces of old furniture. I took them inside to unpack. I hurried out to find some dry wood to build a fire. I had worked about

an hour, making repeated trips into the house with wood. I noticed that they were whispering to each other. Then I heard her say, "Go ahead and tell him if you wish."

I cannot remember everything that they told me, word for word, but I have it written down somewhere more accurately. The husband, whose name will be Fred for this account, told me an amazing story.

To begin with, his wife, Agnes, had not been sideswiped by a car. He had done it with his hands and feet. They had decided to be honest with me because I had told them about studying to be a priest. They needed help and they hoped that something had rubbed off on me from the seminary that might qualify me to advise them. They were from Wisconsin. He had a map upon which he had inked their itinerary. Throughout the winter they had been traveling in boxcars and trucks. They slept in missions, jails, barns and sheds. Once they broke into the basement of a church, found the kitchen, and cooked themselves a warm meal before they were caught.

Why? They were running from the devil. And she was nine months pregnant.

After I brought in enough wood to last them through the night, I sat down to hear their story. I returned on three consecutive nights to ask questions, to cross-examine, and to check answers given twice to see if there were any variation. I could not believe my ears, and thought at first that they were operating a confidence game, using sex as bait. I went home late every evening, and sat down and made verbatim notes, mainly so that I could check them for lies. I never found a single lie beyond the first admission that the girl had lied to me about her black eye.

They came from a small town in Wisconsin. The town had been taken over by a witchcraft cult. This included the chief of police and city officials. I saw a show on TV the other night which reminded me of it called "The Dark Secret of Harvest Home." About the time of this account, a motion picture appeared with the title of "Rosemary's Baby." I am amazed at the similarities in both of these plays, with incidents in the Wisconsin account. Fred and Agnes told me a true story eight years ago, which recently appeared on the TV screen. I doubt if anyone but myself had the true and complete story because, in the first place, no one believed Fred in the past (until he came across me), and he died or was killed within a year after the farm episode. Either a tremendous amount of witchcraft is going on, along similar lines, or the literary minds of men are picking up something from the universal mind of man, or from archetypal memories of ancient Nature-religions. Whatever the real truths are behind all this, I am certain that never in the history of this country has the black smoke of base animal morality clung so closely to levels all Nature is geared to protect...infancy and childhood.

We wonder about stories of entire villages being possessed, and all of the victims serving as loyal guardians of their own mental prisons. If these things are true, where are our guardians of sanity, the ministers and psychologists? I presume that the former have lost their art, and the latter are too lazy to do the research, and too proud to admit that there is anything that they do not know.

To get back to Wisconsin, Agnes had lived outside of the village in a Catholic community. She met Fred and married him...and then met his people. Fred had a cousin who initiated Agnes into the cult. He did not tell her the purpose of the cult at first. He drew a picture in the palm of her hand, and then made love to her. Then this cousin and his wife made love to her. He had intercourse with his mother in front of her and others. Agnes found herself, at the age of seventeen, in a strange, new, compelling intoxication. She never bothered to explain to me how she compromised her earlier Catholic disciplines with this orgiastic way of living.

Fred relayed nearly all of this account. The girl said very little, but nodded if I asked her for confirmation. Fred did not discover his cousin's liberties with his wife until she was pretty well hooked. Once the picture had been scratched in her palm, and a certain song to the devil had been learned, the cousin could telepathically command her. The husband was helplessly outmaneuvered. She would awaken in the middle of the night and hear John, the cousin, calling her name. She knew it was inside her head, but she would arise, dress and go to a street corner near the house. He would be waiting in his car.

She did not neglect to confess these things to Fred, who became increasingly angry and alarmed. He went to the local police department, which consisted of only one or two men. They told him that he was crazy. When he pressed the matter and demanded action, they told him that they were going to arrange a mental examination for him. He went to his minister. The minister declared that he had no authority in civil matters, and did not wish to anger the police. So Fred went home, took a ball bat and went to work on cousin John. Cousin John took a few bumps, but the police arrested Fred and beat him into submission, breaking his wrist. With the broken wrist he could not work, and his employer fired him, using the criminal charge by the police as an excuse.

Cousin John was not as angry as he should have been. After all, he wanted to have access to Fred's house. He quickly forgave Fred, but at the same time confided some facts to Fred. Fred would have to either leave his wife alone, or join the cult. In the cult, he could have all the women he wished, even beyond the town limits.

And Agnes would be held in high esteem by the cult because of her youth and fair appearance. The cult would, in fact, make her the queen of hell. On the other hand, if Fred did not go along with them, a curse would be put upon him. John told him that their town was a secure headquarters for the cult, and that members of the cult were spread all over the country, and their name was legion. No place in the country would be safe. The curse would, in effect, cause his arrest...he would be imprisoned and declared insane. Then he would be killed. His child would be the child of the devil, regardless of whether he agreed or not. That much had already been decided.

At first Fred decided to enlist some help within the village, but he was avoided. He never knew if he was avoided because of encountering members of the cult, or if the people he talked to avoided him because he had developed a reputation for violence and for telling weird tales about his relatives.

So he left town. And when he left he was broke, and winter was coming on. He took his wife with him even though she was pregnant. However, nothing but failure pursued him. He could not find a job and housing for his wife at the same time. People fed them, however, and gave them rides.

His situation seemed hopeless. I asked him if he knew its hopelessness, and then asked him where he was going to stop.

"God will stop me where I am supposed to stop."

"Maybe God brought you here. I don't know the purposes of your suffering, but one thing we both know for sure. You have a wife that is about ready to drop a baby...in a boxcar, if you do not get the word pretty soon." I went on to warn him about hitting her again, at least while they were on my property. Then I told him that I would get groceries in for them, but that he had to get into town and look for a job. I promised that I would see that his wife had medical attention.

He said that it was doubtful if he could go into town to look for work because he did not trust her. It seemed that as soon as he turned his back, she managed to corner some man and seduce him. He felt that he had to stay very close to her because she had no control. This type of behavior did not seem congruous with her condition, and I mentioned it. I thought all pregnant women were above risking the health of their babies. It was then that he told me some amazing stories.

He started by saying that she would seduce me. When I protested almost angrily, he assured me that I would not have any control over the situation. They had stopped at churches for advice, and she had seduced the minister in each case, regardless of his age. When she went into her singsong chant, the environment seemed to aid her. He would fall into a heavy sleep and not awaken until everything was over.

Other parties who might have been concerned, like ministers' wives, were kept away by some mysterious power. Once she seduced a gas station attendant having no bed but his desk. They had stopped to use the restroom. Fred came out after five minutes from the men's room. He found later that an hour or more had passed, and that some diligent Freudian exercises had transpired. When he argued with the attendant about his liberties, the attendant gave him a cold look and replied that he felt sure that the husband had really set the whole thing up to try to make a few dollars.

That night Fred beat her up before they bedded down in an abandoned garage. Fred was a one-man inquisition, aided by chagrin and ego.

I went out the third evening, determined to find the girl's opinion on the matter. I found that she was a high school graduate and had made exceptional grades. I asked her to draw a picture of the form, which cousin John had scratched in her palm. She knew it well enough that she could draw it with her eyes closed. She offered to scratch the figure in my hand. I checked the Grimoire when I arrived home and found such a signature for a specific entity. Next, I asked her if the things that Fred said about her promiscuity were true.

She looked down for several seconds, blinked and replied, "I guess so."

"Don't you realize that you may be hurting the baby?"

"Maybe. But I am having a lot of fun."

"About this song that you sing, is this part of the seduction?"

"Yes."

"Does it always work?"

"Yes."

"I do not believe you."

Fred interrupted us, and told me flatly that all men were at her disposal. He said, "You may have good intentions, but she will get you. She sometimes does not succeed immediately in every case, but once she sets her head on you, she will never give up."

I was annoyed. "Let her try. I just do not believe it."

He looked over at her and said, "Go ahead, hon, go through it."

She looked at me for a moment and began a simple chant. I remember the words which were the formula. I have the exact words recorded, but I will not repeat them. I would not want anyone playing this type of game.

Things did happen when she chanted. First, her features changed. I mentioned earlier that she seemed like a child. Her skin was fair and without a blemish or wrinkle. Her face had the innocent look of a child. Her legs were slender, almost too thin. Had I not seen her high school diploma, I would have found it hard to believe that she was over fourteen years of age. But now she started to change. Her bright eyes grew dim, a film seemed to cover them. They turned from blue to grey, and then seemed to die. Her head reminded me of the head of a dead fish. Wrinkles formed vertically in her face, and her skin darkened. Then the most amazing thing occurred. Her face broke into segments, like a jigsaw puzzle, and came apart, so that I could see the wall behind her in the cracks.

For a second, I felt a flash of fear, and a strange rush occurred like a chill throughout my nerves. I thought, "I had better get myself braced for this show." I reminded myself that I was witnessing an illusion that was somehow being projected upon me, and knew that I did not dare to indulge in belief.

I waited until she had finished and had returned to normal appearance. I looked at both of them diffidently, and asked, "Is that all there is to it?"

Up to this point I had harbored the idea that it was possible that Fred was setting me up for money or support for his wife and himself. It was evident now that Agnes had produced all the voltage that she could muster and if it were a scheme, it was not working on me. Fred looked puzzled.

"Hon, are you sure that you did that right?"

She shrugged.

He looked worried almost. "Hon, go through it again. I think you left out something."

So she went through her chant again, but it was anti-climactic. She added a few things that were designed to flatter me, but I was more prepared this time. I looked over at Fred who was sitting across from her. I expected that he would be disappointed with her and perhaps embarrassed that I did not react as expected. But I was destined for a surprise. And my estimation of Fred had to take another turn. He was overjoyed.

He rushed across the room and threw his hands about her. "Hon, maybe we have it licked. Maybe we have a chance." He hugged and kissed her, and paid no attention at all to me. And I found myself happy for the both of them.

I suggested that she let me hypnotize her, and give her some suggestions about having a healthy baby. I did this because I remembered his telling me that her child would be the devil's child. If I were immune to her magic, then there was no reason for her not being immune to suggestions put into her head by cousin John. I did manage to put her to sleep and give her the suggestions, but it was with no great conviction on my part. She was nine months pregnant, and the baby was already formed, so that if it were going to have horns or negative mental attributes, there was little that I could do at this late date. I was happy for them when I left. They both had tears in their eyes, and I went home with a strong belief in their accounts of their plight.

Fred and Agnes did not remain long at the farm. But I managed to have a talk with her alone in town while he was having a tooth pulled. I wanted to learn more about the cult. I knew that he had threatened her with knives at times, and I considered, and hoped, that she had played a game for him. I did not doubt the general account, but I still found it hard to believe that she would follow him around the country if she had as much power as she claimed. I felt that he would be the servant in the arrangement.

She did not want to talk about her life, and I saw immediately that she wanted to make a good impression on me. So she told me a few things which I presume she thought I wanted to hear. She said that Fred came from a degenerate family. A sister had made it to the insane asylum. She had been so promiscuous that she had acquired a venereal disease, prior to losing her mental balance. She said that she really did not believe in witchcraft, but things did happen. She felt that her husband's sexual appetite was heightened by knowing that she was having affairs with other men. She said that at times she admitted having affairs with men along the road because he seemed to demand the confession, or need the confession to arouse himself.

On this particular day, she seemed like another person. She was no child now. She was calm and matter of fact. I suggested that she leave him because of his brutality, but she made the excuse that they were in love since childhood, and that things had changed only after he went to live with his relatives. And he was the father of the baby. She hoped that he would change.

I realized that I could have told her that I believed their previous stories, and I could have asked her about the illusion of the ancient woman with the head of a fish. Instead I asked her about her feelings when she went through the chant.

She looked at me blankly and replied, "I was having one orgasm after another."

I met Agnes several times after this, over a period of several years, and never once again would she admit that she was a witch. Her only aim from then on seemed to be to attract my attention, and develop in me a better picture of herself. And I knew from this meeting on, I would not be able to trust her or anything she said.

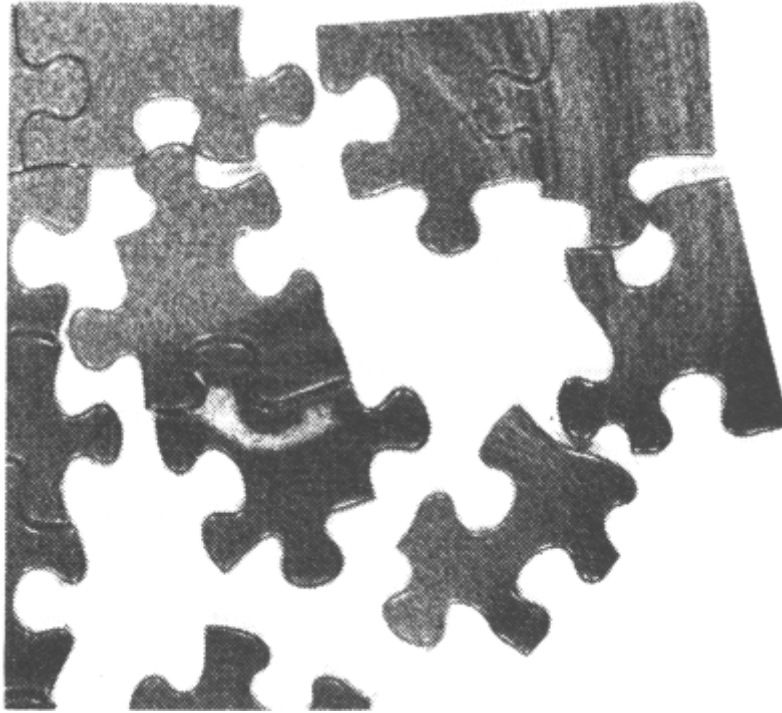
To hear her now, Fred was not a man running from the devil, but a man too lazy to work. He was just too jealous to leave her alone, and she was getting tired of playing the role of sinner and penitent. But she added, lamenting that she was stuck with him until after the baby was born. Her people had warned against the marriage and she did not want to go home and admit failure.

But I was not convinced except that some of the things which she said about Fred were true. On the other hand, there were too many things which I could not write off as being part of Fred's evil nature alone.

They left in a few days. I had bought groceries for them, but refused to buy cigarettes for Fred. I told him that I could not afford to smoke myself, and he could afford less than me. He informed me that he could get both food and cigarettes on the road, and he ordered Agnes to pack. I made a few comments and gave my opinion of people who put their desire for cigarettes above the welfare of their children.

I found out later that they did not get very far. They got a ride to a city in Pennsylvania and wound up in a mission. The baby was born but it was deformed, having no pharynx. It had to be placed in a hospital where constant care could be given it. I would like to

make a note here, that neither Fred nor Agnes had ever taken any drugs. I feel certain that neither narcotics nor medicines were the cause of the deformity.



The mission was run by an old preacher who lost no time in taking Agnes up on any project that she might endorse. And Fred, in predictable form, punched her and threatened the minister. The minister had some local contacts. Fred went to jail, and from thereto a Pennsylvania asylum. He escaped and went to Florida. He robbed a place and was not apprehended, but his conscience hurt him. He wrote to Agrees and told her that he was going to go back to the county in which the robbery occurred and turn himself in. In a few days he was dead. They found him hanging in his jail cell.

I learned about his death in a phone call from Agrees. She brought me up to date. The baby was in a hospital near Pittsburgh, cared for by nuns. They took Fred's body back to Wisconsin. There was no grief in her voice, and no concern for the baby, but she was reluctant to tell me the nature of the baby's deformity. The purpose of the call primarily was to ask if she could come down.

I remembered a few things in rapid succession. Fred had predicted that the group would have him committed to an asylum, and that he would be killed. He said that his child would be the child of the devil. I saw the baby later, and it did not look like a devil, but its neck was deformed. Otherwise, it was a serious and attractive little boy. But it did not live long, and I am sure that the devil did not claim it, but rather the father, which I will explain later.

There was still one unfulfilled prediction. Fred said that Agnes would never give up on me until she owned me. I was caught up in the story, and had to see if she had any such motives. So I told her to come on down, and I was careful not to tell my wife that a witch was going to visit us.

It had been only a year since she left Fred. But she had changed considerably...she was fatter, especially in the thighs, and she wore pants that were short, too short and too tight.

She made no overtures in the few days that she stayed at our place. She told me that she admired me and that was about it. She talked a lot about boys, and said that she would like to get married again. She was tired of living at the mission where she worked without pay, taking care of old transients who were bedridden.

I suggested that she go back home, and she agreed to if I would go up to the mission and help her get her personal belongings. My two daughters were home from college, and Agnes had Thanksgiving dinner with us, and then caught the bus for Wisconsin. A letter came from her later telling me that she had enrolled in a university at Eau Claire. It looked as though the story of her being a witch was now the farthest thing from the truth--or so it seemed.

Then I started to get letters regularly...at least three a week. They were not short letters. They informed me that she had met a lot of boys at the school, but they were all immature. The topics of interest for the students seemed childish, and she was bored stiff with student attempts to create college spirit out of a pollyannic syncretion of everything popular and inoffensive. Each letter showed her increasing boredom. She was just too mature and too street-wise to play the game of books and teachers.

I knew what was coming. She was back in my house a year later just before Christmas. She called and asked if she could come for a visit. Pittsburgh is sixty miles away, and Wisconsin was more like five hundred. Perhaps she wanted to be near her baby, so I told her to come on down. And even then, I remembered Fred's prediction that she would never give up.

Another peculiar thing happened. I had opened up the store in the basement of my house and I worked there part-time. Bud Carter dropped in at the store, about a week before Christmas, and met Agnes. He did not recognize her, and I did not tell him that she was the same girl that he had sent down to my house. I did tell him that she had been married, that she had a baby and that her husband had died. I asked him if he had any days off on the railroad where he worked. He wanted to know why. I explained that she had not seen the baby for over a year, and I would like to arrange for her to visit the baby, but could not make the trip in my car since it was a derelict that I could only trust about ten miles from home.

He said, "Hell, we'll go Monday. I'll take the day off. I want an excuse to take a day off anyway." His car was almost as bad as mine. I told him that I would go along so that his wife would not accuse him of going with Agnes alone.

We stopped on the way and Agnes bought several toys for the baby. When we arrived at the hospital, I went up to the room in which they had the baby. Bud was reluctant to go along because he had seen some of the patients, all of who were children in hopeless, or terminal, predicaments. The boy was standing in a small crib. Two plastic tubes extended from his nose. They were clogged at times, and the boy was getting his oxygen with difficulty, since they were only an eighth of an inch in diameter. Agnes gave the boy the toys and held him for a moment. He never took his eyes off me. I sensed that this little fellow knew more than he could ever express.

Then I saw his father standing on the other side of the crib. Agnes did not see him. I was overwhelmed. The thought burst upon me...Fred had come for his son. I turned around and stumbled over to the elevator, feeling like an intruder. I had no doubt that Fred was there, and while I did not feel unwelcome at the crib, it was a moment for the child to be alone with his parents.

I went down on the elevator with the same young nun who ushered us up. I asked her quietly if she believed in God. She nodded, so I asked her if she thought God approved or enjoyed the suffering of the little boy. She knew that I was unduly bitter, and did not answer me.

I told Bud about seeing Fred, and he decided that he had to go up and see the baby. While he was gone, I signed a guest book in the lobby, feeling that I should be doing something.

Bud came down later with Agnes and he was in a very emotional state. He said that he never realized before how fortunate he and his wife had been with their children who were all healthy. He was determined to go home, tell his wife about the trip and try to live more amicably together with her. I learned a couple of things quickly. Bud had never told his wife about the trip, mainly because they had been quarreling lately.

We came back to West Virginia and Agnes went out to the farm for a few days. The night before Christmas, the telephone rang. It was the young nun from the children's home. The baby had died two days after we left. The institution did not have the mother's address. I presume they had her home still listed as the mission. The nun asked for me, wanting to know if I were the man who accompanied the mother to the home. When she had difficulty locating Agnes she went to the guest register in the lobby. I had been the only name entered in recent days, and I had given my address. From that she found my phone number.

Agnes called the nun back, and arrangements were made to ship the body to Wisconsin where it was buried beside the father. Throughout all this ordeal, Agnes showed little emotion. Only for a few seconds when I went to the farm to tell her did she act distraught, but then I think she was overcome by her helplessness. She had no money, and she was faced with the responsibility of burying her baby.

Once more I was inclined to forget Fred's warning about her nymphomaniac persistence. I felt that Agnes had been brought to my house, so that I could take her up to see her baby for the last time, and be near enough to arrange for its funeral. She had behaved well; when everything was taken into consideration I could not complain about her conduct.

I began to think that Agnes was cured of any personality aberrations that may have afflicted her in the past. Once more I received letters from Wisconsin, and now they came from her home. She sent me pictures of a younger brother and sister. She was happy to be with her family, but was at the same time restless, and unemployed.

It was not long until she was back in my home for another visit. The visit came at a time when my wife was in Arizona taking care of her father who was terminally ill with cancer. Agnes arrived at a time when I needed some help around the house. She also volunteered to work in the store, which would free me from those tasks so that I could concentrate on my contracting business.

The store did not last long under her management. The profits, first, and then the liquidated stock, went into a pinball machine. Finally I closed the store. The closing gave her more time to work on the house. I came home one evening and sat on the couch, watching the television. She came in and sat beside me, but about two feet away.

She looked at me with her usual expressionless stare, and said simply, "I want you."

I did not answer her for a moment. I had always been expecting some prelude, some fiddling with the orchestral strings in preparation for the grand finale.

She grabbed herself by the knees and slid a half-foot closer. She looked at me with a glance of eager anticipation, blinked and then added, "You are the only man that I can ever love."

I debated the proper manner of handling the affair, and decided to try to be paternal, "You are a child. In fact, I thought you were a baby yourself when I first saw you."

"I don't care. I want you." And with this, she made a very strange noise. She sucked air in between her teeth with a loud, long "ish." I have heard the same sound made by children when they are faced with a big sundae or dessert.

"I don't care...issht."

"I have daughters your age. I have tried to be a friend to you and your family."

"I know...but I still..."

"Quit that for a moment. You will have me believing that all those things Fred predicted have come true."

"He was weird."

"Do you mean that he meant nothing to you. He may have given his life trying to find what he thought was deliverance from evil."

She frowned. "He was killed by two black faggots. The cops put him in the same cell with them, and he tried to fight them off. He was not killed by the cult."

"How about the curse? It could have been instrumental. If nothing else his belief in the cult's evil may have caused him to help the curse along."

"There was no curse except in Fred's head."

"But what about the condition of the baby, Fred's trip to the nut house, to jail and finally to the grave? How can you write off your husband as easily as this?"

"I did not care to spend the rest of my life in boxcars."

"You mean that Fred was simply paranoid. That all of those things which occurred at the farm were lies and fantasies?"

"Fred came from a nutty family." Her voice became impatient. "He saw devils everywhere. He believed that Wisconsin was settled by witches. Wisconsin was a code name. It means WISdom CON SIN or wisdom through sin. He believed that there were nature-spirits. He believed a lot of things...except work. The baby died because he used to choke me when we were together. He left because he felt guilty...because he realized he could not support me."

Agnes was throwing out things that made me think, but I was still disturbed by the difference between the Agnes of two years back, and today's Agnes. "Neither can I support you. I have a family. What kind of security could I guarantee?"

"I told you that I don't care about that. I love you."

"You loved Fred once too...you said that yourself. How many of the things that you told me are lies? You are sure contradicting things that you have said before."

"I said some things in Fred's presence just to go along with his beliefs."

"But when you and I were alone, you always told me the truth?"

"Sure."

"Then for you the chant that you went through was real, because we were alone that day that Fred was getting his tooth pulled, when you told me that during the chant you experienced one orgasm after another. Now Fred was supposed to be a real common nut. But I never heard you complain that he had cheated on you. But you were totally involved in a ritual to seduce me...totally...you were not just doing something to please Fred...alone. And all of this means to me that you did not care much about the baby that you were about to have."

She frowned, got up and left the room. A few days later she was back in Wisconsin, I presume. I never heard from her afterwards.

* * *

The above story is true. The couple was really from Wisconsin, but all names of persons have been changed.

If you like the dynamism and spontaneity of Richard Rose as writer and teacher, please visit Rose Publications at www.rosepublications.net