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SCUFFLES TO RUFFLES

by Jennifer Sue

While the boys were slowly accepting their petticoated state, the mothers brought the fathers to Dr. Cynthia Conrad for an emergency consultation. Using powerful tranquilizers and psychotropic drugs, the men were hypnotized and brainwashed to accept the complete petticoating of their sons. Upon returning home, the father helped strip his son's room of every masculine toy, book, and poster while the mother emptied the drawers and closets of almost every bit of male clothing. All that was kept were two pair of dress pants, five dress shirts, and one pair of dress shoes that the boy needed for school. The closets and drawers were then filled with the pretty new girlish wardrobe. The father then bagged everything that had been removed and took it out with the garbage.

When the still dressed boys returned home, they were informed of the drastic changes that had been made by their father. This totally eliminated any hope of a reprieve. Meekly the boy took a bubble bath before slipping into his new pink baby doll nightie. The boys were so overwhelmed by all that had transpired that they were too numb to do anything but accept their petticoated fate.

The tea fashion show was a tremendous success. The boys were praised and complimented by everyone for their utter girlishness. The previously petticoated boys and adults were also revealed, much to the shock of those who had not previously known. It was then that the boys and their fathers fully understood that the newly petticoated boys were fated to skip merrily down the one-way petticoat pathway.

How could such things happen?

Read on!

Susan Greer, a highly qualified and skilled lawyer, was fed up with all the abuse and the callousness of her male bosses. For years she put up with their sexist bigotry and patronizing because she had committed herself to balancing her employment requirements with the needs and obligations of her small family. She simply didn't want to invest the time required to establish and maintain her own practice. Increasingly over the years, her bosses directed women seeking divorce her way because they knew she could put them at ease and relate to their needs. What this meant was that she had numerous near destitute battered wives coming to her because of her fine reputation as a more than competent divorce lawyer. Susan never turned these women away. Whenever her bosses began to grumble about Susan's many charity cases; her indisputable rebuttal was that her compassionate efforts brought societal esteem and high public recognition to the firm quickly quieted the complaints. Not being a stupid woman as her bosses thought, she was quietly building a log of each and every example of sexual harassment committed against her as well as damning evidence of the hierarchy glossing over all such complaints.

This fragile balance of work and family was shattered when Susan discovered that her often verbally abusive husband was cheating. Deciding that she had to divorce him, with icy determination she kept her knowledge of his infidelity quiet while she built ironclad cases against him as well as her employer. By accomplishing these aims she would set herself up for financial and business independence. Getting the goods on her errant husband proved easy, but constructing an ironclad case for sexual harassment took great care. Fortunately she had been keeping an undeniable paper trail of all the sexist remarks and blatant sexual overtures that were a daily part of her business life in the law firm. As the indisputable evidence of sexual harassment built, Susan realized that the main problem she faced was that she could not handle raising her son and starting her own independent law practice at the same time.

As Susan pondered her dilemma, she thought of all the women clients she had who were in similar career/family straits. If a woman with children didn't have a family to help her make it through the tough times, it was almost impossible for her to build a decent life. Then it hit her, why couldn't those women form an artificial family to help each other? The more Susan thought about the idea, the more appealing it became. As a lawyer she understood that a corporation was in effect a type of family. All that had to be done was for a group of women with similar problems and interests to form a corporation.

With this revelation came the challenge to determine what similar problems and interests the women needed to hold in common so they would mesh well enough to form a stable relationship. Susan knew that her biggest problem after the divorce would be raising her irascible nine-year-old son. She would definitely need assistance in seeing that he stayed out of trouble. This then led her to conclude that the women of the proposed corporation had to have nine year old sons so that they would share virtually identical situations and be freed from this burden at nearly the same time as the boys matured.

After surreptitiously going through the county court domestic abuse and divorce files Susan came up with a listing of over fifty struggling women with a nine-year-old son. She was quite surprised to discover so many women in similar straits. Some advantageous

compensation needed to be established so that women would be willing to join her proposed venture. Since Susan wanted help in raising her son so that she could establish her own law practice, she decided to look for women who also might be interested in starting their own businesses. She also decided that she only wanted women who had only one child. These criteria quickly narrowed her list.

After six months of discreet inquiries and discussion five women accepted Susan's invitation to join her in exploring what was needed to form a corporation. Once gathered together the six women seemed to naturally gravitate to each other. Each faced very similar circumstances. All were skilled, efficient businesswomen who held low paying positions while enduring great sexual discrimination. All had been married to a verbally abusive, redneck, alcoholic husband. All had a single child, a boy nine years old who seemed headed in the same direction as their despicable husbands. None had any family to help them. All were financially impeded. All were near the end of their ability to cope with their sons and other difficulties.

Weekly meetings were held to discuss the outlines of the proposed joint venture and the women quickly became friends. Their lives were so similar it seemed scary. Simply discussing their problems with someone who knew what they were talking about eased their crushing burden. The essence of their dilemma became quite evident as their impetuous sons quickly melded into a cohesive and quite boisterous gang.

Each of the women realized they had reached a point of stabilization in their lives beyond which they saw no hope of advancing unless they joined together. Within a month of their first meeting, following Susan's advice and techniques, each of the women began to secretly document the sexual harassment they faced. During the



next several months of weekly get together their hopeless attitudes slowly improved as they saw the potential of a joint effort. They moved from the outline of what was needed to the actual requirements of forming a corporation.

During this time they also analyzed their lives. First, none of them ever wanted another demanding man in their lives. Second, they were tired of living in rent with nothing to show for their investment. Third, working full time and trying to be a single parent just didn't work out as they were having more problems with their sons. Fourth, they each desperately needed their jobs and were being used by their employers who took advantage of their deplorable situations by requiring unpaid overtime, no raises, and unending sexual harassment. Fifth, their employers kept taking away benefits like paid health insurance and vacations.

The women asked Susan, the oldest of the group, to once more explain the technicalities of her proposal. "What we need to do is form our own corporation. I think an appropriate name for us would be MISS MANAGEMENT CORPORATION. If we do it right, the MISS MANAGEMENT CORPORATION can meet all our needs. Miss Management Corporation will need to locate and buy a few adjoining multi-use properties on a busy thoroughfare in a suburban area where we can establish our businesses as divisions of Miss Management Corporation to cater to the specific needs of women. Above the businesses we'll need apartments where we can live. The corporation would pay us salaries and supply all benefits. Each division would rent their space from the corporation. Each of us would rent our apartments from the corporation. The corporation would be responsible for maintenance and upkeep of the property. As principle shareholders, we'd be the board of directors and we'd each be entitled to a share of the profits. As our businesses grow, we would hire more employees, women who need a job."

"In effect, we'd be sharing expenses, becoming our own bosses, and can pool our mothering talents," Susan explained. "Each of us could take a day of hell by taking responsibility for all the boys. This would give us five days of relative freedom. If the building complex is large enough, we could even build a private health club. Imagine a gym for the boys and a sauna and hot tub for us; maybe even an indoor swimming pool. It could be a place for the boys to be so they stay home and out of trouble."

The idea was discussed in great detail by the women and soundly approved. The six founding women of MISS MANAGEMENT CORPORATION were Susan Greer, 41, a lawyer; Barbara Jackson, 34, an aerobics/dance instructor; Lydia Martin, 38, a beautician; Francis Keller, 40, a CPA; Kathy Snyder, 30, an office manager; and Laura Douglas, 35, a real-estate/insurance agent.

Laura began a search for the ideal location. Fran began to set up the financial framework for the corporation. Kathy drew up a corporate chain of command. Susan drew up the papers forming MISS MANAGEMENT CORPORATION.

Ninety years ago Westlyn was a small town a mile outside a mid-sized city. With the advent of the automobile age, the small town was quickly gobbled up by the suburban

sprawl of the nearby city. During the cold war Main Street became part of United States highway system, part of the growing interstate highway system. In the early seventies a bypass around the city removed the heavy truck traffic that had been clogging the small town streets. Opened to the incessant local traffic, Main Street once more became a thriving business district. The block next to the traditional business district had been upscale row homes when built before the depression. After WWII three local businessmen bought up the entire block for a low price as the original homeowners grew old and all the younger people wanted to move into single-family suburban homes. These shrewd businessmen renovated most of the first floors as storefronts for small businesses with apartments above. With the advent of the enclosed shopping malls in the late sixties and early seventies, many of these small businesses failed. Many of the storefronts remained vacant but the apartments, located near the city and with nearby public transportation, thrived. Two of the businessmen sold off their portion of the buildings upon their retirement. One stubbornly held onto his buildings as an investment. As often happens with older people, he failed to maintain his properties. Upon his death, his children wanted cash, not run-down apartments and vacant storefronts. In their greed, they decided to sell off the buildings.

Only two businesses remained in the ten building complex. Cynthia Conrad, an unmarried 39-year-old doctor, operated an OB/GYN medical center. Janice High, a divorced and childless 52-year-old woman, operated an upscale fashion boutique featuring formal and special occasion apparel for Women and children. Both these successful women lived in an apartment above their business and placed bids on the properties they occupied and one next door in hopes of expanding their floor space.

After two months of intensive investigations searching for an acceptable site for their joint venture, Laura Douglas found the half block of row homes for sale. The location was perfect and it would take only moderate renovations to make the buildings suitable for their needs. On the behalf of the nascent MISS MANAGEMENT CORPORATION, Laura put in a lump sum bid for the entire half block of row homes.

At first the greedy children rejected the bid for being too low, but the only other bids they received were for the four properties Cynthia Conrad and Janice High wanted for themselves. After three months of anxiously seeking further bids the avaricious children decided to sell the holdings as a block. Thus MISS MANAGEMENT CORPORATION was on the verge of purchasing the half block.

The main stumbling block was that the MISS MANAGEMENT CORPORATION had virtually no money. The six founders had pooled their meager resources to make the bid down payment. The balance of the purchase price was due in three months. The banks didn't want to listen to their applications for financing, in fact, they laughed.

It was at this time that Susan suggested they play their wild card. With the unshakable documentation of sexual harassment that each woman had amassed on her arrogant male chauvinist employer, Susan coldly approached each boss and informed them of their intent to publicly reveal the data and sue for sexual harassment.

The employers, at first quite indignant and furious, quickly calmed down when they saw the preponderance of evidence. Public disclosure would not only ruin their public images thus greatly hurting their business, it could very well ruin their marriages. Susan's offer of a signed contract assuring discretion and no lawsuit in exchange for a sizeable out of court lump sum payoff was eagerly accepted. Part of the agreement was for the women to stay on to finish jobs and train their replacement as well as a generous severance package. These settlements were barely completed before the May 15 settlement date. With the cash in hand, the MISS MANAGEMENT CORPORATION successfully purchased the properties and had enough left over to make the needed renovations.

Naturally Cynthia and Janice were quite upset when their bids were rejected in favor of the one single bid for everything. They had no idea if they could even remain in the buildings they occupied. The two women were invited to attend a meeting of the MISS MANAGEMENT CORPORATION. At first they were justifiably skeptical of the stability of the embryonic corporation. After attending several of the weekly meetings, Cynthia and Janice decided they liked the concept and asked to buy shares in Miss Management Corporation! Being shrewd, Susan refused to sell any shares, but offered to trade shares in exchange for having their businesses become divisions of Miss Management Corporation. After a few moments of thought, both agreed. Accordingly the now eight members of Miss Management Corporation began making arrangements to rename the existing businesses in keeping with the precepts of the MISS MANAGEMENT CORPORATION. Thus the MISS UNDERSTOOD CLINIC and the MISS FIT BOUTIQUE came into existence. Cynthia and Janice requested that their employees, and any future employees of any of the divisions of Miss Management Corporation be given the opportunity to purchase shares if they were deemed acceptable to the other shareholders. The suggestion passed unanimously. The only one to take immediate advantage of the offer was Harriet Franklin, Janice's assistant manager. Harriet was 45 years old, single, quite demure, very lady-like, and shared an apartment with Janice. Almost everyone thought the two were lesbians, but they were quite discreet so nothing was said about the relationship. Once Harriet purchased shares, she began to attend the weekly meetings of Miss Management Corporation shareholders but had little to say.

The renovations needed to establish the new businesses and expand the old were begun promptly upon settlement. The heating systems in the basements were cleaned out and the walls opened to create inter-connected storerooms. Of the ten storefronts, MISS FIT BOUTIQUE had the first two on the corner of the half block complex. The third storefront became Lydia Martin's MISS CONCEPTION BEAUTY SALON, an upscale full service beauty shop. The fourth storefront became the location of MISS PLACE REAL ESTATE & INSURANCE. The fifth storefront held Susan Greer's MISS FEASANCE LAW OFFICE. Storefronts 6 and 7 held the MISS UNDERSTOOD CLINIC, Dr. Cynthia Conrad's medical center. The next storefronts, 8 and 9, became the home of the MISS MANAGEMENT CORPORATION with Kathy Snyder as office manager and Francis Keller as CPA. The last storefront became the MISS CUE DANCE & AEROBICS STUDIO, Barbara Jackson's dance studio.

Behind the first seven buildings, the lawns and outbuildings were torn down and a large parking lot built. Behind the last three buildings a large communal building was constructed. Half of the first floor provided central utilities and loading dock for the entire complex. An elevator and underground passage to the connected basements of the ten buildings gave easy indoor access to everything. In addition, the communal building also provided the recreation area for the Miss Management Corporation shareholders and their sons. The second half of the first floor held an indoor swimming pool, hot tub, sauna, and shower room. The entire second floor was a huge open room which held a gym with various equipment, ping-pong tables, big screen TV, an entertainment center, and an arts and crafts area.

Of the twenty apartments in the complex, twelve already had tenants. Six of the eight vacant units would become the apartments for the founding shareholders of Miss Management Corporation. As soon as the school year ended the six founding members of Miss Management Corporation moved into their apartments. As the stores were completed and stocked, they would open for business. The MISS FIT BOUTIQUE and the MISS UNDERSTOOD CLINIC never fully closed. The MISS CONCEPTION BEAUTY SALON opened July 5th, the MISS PLACE REALTY & INSURANCE opened July 10th, the MISS FEASANCE LAW OFFICE opened July 15th, the offices of the MISS MANAGEMENT CORPORATION opened on July 20th, and the MISS CUE DANCE & AEROBICS STUDIO opened on July 25th. The shell of the communal building was completed on August 5th and the parking lot paved on August 10th. The entire complex had it's grand opening on August 15th.

The renovations to the storefronts and basements as well as the construction of the parking lot and communal building gave the six boys, who by that time were almost eleven years old and had just finished the fifth grade, plenty of ways to get into mischief.

During the long formation period of the MISS MANAGEMENT CORPORATION, the weekly meetings of the six women had been held on Sunday afternoons. The six boys were blissfully oblivious to the enmity their mother's had developed towards males. Just as the mothers found they had a lot in common, the boys discovered many mutual interests. Each lad strongly felt the recent loss of their father due to the divorce of their parents. Each of the men, once freed from the burden of their family, went wild drinking and whoring. There was little money left for child support and visitations were mostly nonexistent. Still, the boys bragged to each other about their tough and virile estranged fathers.

At the first meetings the guys contented themselves with watching ESPN. As the meetings grew longer and the days warmer, they moved outside to play baseball. Usually the brief ball games of the three member teams ended in raucous, laugh filled free for all wrestling matches. None of the guys were ever seriously injured although there were a few bloody noses and many ripped shirts and torn jeans. By August baseball faded from popularity in favor of football. Of course, as far as the mothers were concerned, the only difference between their baseball and football games was the equipment since both ended in filthy wrestling.