

The Damsel in dat Dress

Fuck, is not a word we use! With that, the homeless magician who could cup and ball it and make pocket contents disappear was promptly beheaded and ask to leave the county, being escorted under arms, to the border on Hudsonside in a Capri coupe with suede seats. Princess Awoda would not stand for such language in her presence, nor in her kingdom for that matter. Her royal decrees washed through the streets from the shooting galleries at the furthest Southern tip going up to the barbed-wire multi-plot projects beyond 125th street. The kingdom of Manhattan would forever more be cleansed of this kind of everyday gutter jargon.

Awoda was strict and merciless, yet beautifully naïve, in a blood thirsty sort of passive-aggressive way. She sat on her Brownstone throne east of west 80th and Broadway, a blue-haired, blonde-eyed enchantress, an angelic albino with new-wave hair dye, direly frightened that she might, in her brief but altogether too often close eared encounters with others, hear words which debased her very soul to the soles of puce Converse high-tops and erased any lingering doubts from her razor-sharp seventeen-year-old mind that all men were, in fact, useless pigs who only wished to truffle-hunt for fungi in her Chic jeans with the zipper-up ankle zippers and French-cut back pockets. They were all disgusting creatures with foul mouths.

The young girl's Father, the Most Goodly and Well-Groomed King of Manhattan, had found his daughter an afterschool job as a clerk typist on the 57th floor of a mid-town skyscraper wherein she made coffee and copies and generally, otherwise, got in the way and complained a lot. Thus establishing the long honored Fairy Tale tradition of the princess being locked away in a high tower (For four hours a day, Monday thru Friday. She still had to be home by eight to do homework and finish her chores around the house, which of course were assigned by her wicked step-mother - The Most Goodly

Queen - You're Not My Real Mom) and awaiting a rescue. (Keep a waiting. There's a Fair Prince in her future.)

Out from the 8th Ave glass doors of the Port Authority Bus Terminal emerged a slightly less than adequate savior, the Least Goodly X-King Ick, who had just arrived, imagine if you can, on a Greyhound from the swampy French-like provinces of New Orleans, LA. He was not, as most would think, the X-King of all the dirt that is New Orleans, but only a minor X-King of an apartment building on North Rampart between Esplanade and Orleans Ave.'s. "The Holder of the Keys to the Hall" they called him, or more succinctly "Hall Key".

Now we need a brief aside to explain the naming systems of the lower kingdoms of Louisiana. Based on French law, which for some unlyknown reason the peoples of both upper and lower Louisiana seem to apply to their everyday lives, sur and christian names are in reversed order. Say a gentleman from Boise, ID (or other non-Frenchly-applicable department) named Edward Tailor moves to the kingdom of Thibodaux, just South on the 308 from Baton Rouge before you get to Houma and the Terrebonne Bay, then this gentleman's name would promptly change to Tailor Edward, or Tailored to suit his newly French-leaning homeland. Edward is shortened to ed because of a lack of much needed Louisianian phonemes, which the Federal government has been promising them for years.

Therefore, when the impendingly future X-King moved from Redondo Beach, CA., where his name was Alan Ick, to his one-bedroom superintendent's apartment, only minutes by car from the shores of beautiful Lake Pontchartrain, in the Mostly Happy Province of New Orleans, he was frog-kiss transformed into Ick Al. And after several months wandering the halls, jangling his skeleton keys and fixing broken toilets, Ick gained the title - King Ick 'Hall-Key' Al. Which stuck until the X-ing of his name took place over a slight dispute with the Vicar of Bourbon St. on some modern technique of weighing certain sub-atomic mediating particles (Z particle vector bosons in particular), but the sordid facts of that encounter need not concern us here.

So, first day in the Kingdom of Manhattan and X-King Ick grabs himself a job as a taxi driver (get it? Fare Prince? Ok, he's an X-king and not a prince, so sue me) and who might I ask, on his fifteenth-day straight driving, has their hand up in Statue of Liberty-I wanna cab pose on 10th and Bleecker? No, not Awoda. He picked up her the next day, a Friday, if I remember correctly. No, there in the Western Village of Greenwich (where the villagers still speak the non-Indo-European Beat language) was Brian Bouytano, the famous ice-skating guy, who was heading uptown for a secret liaison with Brian Keith (that's right Brian Bouytano's doing the dad from *Family Affair*. Pretty weird huh?) Brian's a really good tipper too.

Anyway, the next day, Ick was buzzing by Bloomingdale's and there amongst the averagely droll and otherwise unblending of unrecognizable faces stood Princess Awoda glancing to her ladies fashion Rolex and demanding to be promptly cabbled up proper. Ick locked his brakes, threw the wheel hard right and slid across four lanes of traffic on the three lane road to ever-so-gently come to rest before the awaiting Awoda.

She gracefully climbed in the back cab door and shortly adjusted herself to the smelly cigarette smoke smell and licorice taste of the new gum she purchased from the West-Indian newspaper salesperson.

"Where the fuck you going, Gorgeous?" Awoda's mouth dropped and her Beeman's fell into the crotch of her new Klaus Barbie-doll original autumn print dress.

"What did you say?"

"I said you were gorgeous. Wanna tater skin?", he said pulling a grease soaked napkin of three-day old deep-fried potatoes from the dashboard.

"No. Before that?"

"No, you don't want a tater? No, before what?"

“What did you just say?”

“When?”

“Just a second ago.”

“I said, want a tater skin gorgeous?”

“No, *before* that.”

“I said where to.”

“No you didn’t.”

“Look, you’re beautiful, but you’re getting fucking boring. Now where in the fuck do you want to go?”

“There! You said it again! Twice even!”

“What the fuck is your malfunction sweetheart?” Ick said through half chewed tater.

"Ahh!"

Awoda sprung from the taxi covering her ears and asking the Central Park mounted police to arrest the dirty mouthed cabbie, who was now two blocks down picking up a john-n-hooker combo going out Coney Island where the motels are slightly cheaper.

“He said it!” Awoda screamed to the cop.

“Said what Ma’am?”

“The word! The ‘F’-word... you know, that rhymes with duck.”

“Sorry Ma’am, ain’t got no time for this fuck’n crap. Gotta watch for criminal types around here. Don’t you know. I’m a cop... In a uniform... On a horse... You wanna go out sometime?”

“Ahh!” she screamed again as the street scene spun away up and out of focus like a Busby Berkley high shot of slightly moist synchronized swimmers. Awoda ran all the way home to avoid the subways and buses where ‘FUCK’ was always spray painted in big neon letters over the Benetton clothing ads and where ‘SHIT’ was sometimes written or actually deposited by the car-to-car doors.

X-King Ick’s three-week-long shift was over and he aimed home with the sole intent of drinking himself into dreamless sleep. He couldn’t stop thinking about his beautiful Blooming-Snail girl though. That being Awoda, whose name he didn’t even know at this point. He mentally named her Licorice-Stink, but never told her this even after the two had had four children together and she had more than gotten over hearing words that began with ‘F’ (though she still would wince at certain ‘PH’ words).

Awoda rushed home and barricaded the front door, her chest heaving, hewing her nominally pink teenage nipples to tack sharp points under the rough, almost burlappy, fabric of the bra her step-mother had purchased from the J.C. Penny’s ‘Young Miss’ department (talk about evil step-parents).

Her regally-endowed father, The Most Goodly King of Manhattan, asked about her day. “Hell-O. Did you remember that ‘P’ comes after ‘O’ when you were filing today princess?” He was reading his paper and slamming down his fourth or fifth of Scotch. She calmed herself alternately spread-eagling the door and peeping for following followers through the peep-hole. “Yes, I remembered about ‘P’ today, daddy”. The Most Goodly Queen ‘You’re Not My Real Mom’ entered from the kitchen and inquired about her ‘F’'s and ‘G’'s.

“Ahh!” There they were again. Awoda ran to her room, locked the door and threw on her CD version of ‘Ted, Just admit it.’ Why is it evil step mothers always know just the right thing to say?

It was another week before Ick ran into Awoda again. When I say ran into, I mean: street, cab, half bottle of Southern Comfort, Princess, BAM!, shoes everywhere. She was on the ground, around lunch time, and Ick wouldn’t have even known Awoda was prostrate in cab front, a-wounded and a-bleeding, unless the bum peeing in the alley beside him hadn’t suddenly had his most goodly urine supply shut down by an enlarged prostate which couldn’t be cared for because the medical care system in this country sucks to the less-than-goodly point to which it does.

The bum flagged him. X-king Ick thought the man was starting shit and jumped out ready to spray the vagrant bitch down with a can of aerosol whoop-ass when he saw his dream maiden covered in head trauma blood, paint flecks the color of a taxi cab fender and clutching the rope handle of a Gitano bag of shoes which was spilling flats and heels into traffic as if they were equals.

“Licorice-stink”, he said scooping her into the cab back while the girl, though unconscious and bleeding internally, would not for one moment released her grip on the precious shoe bag.

“Christ! How many fucking pairs of shoes can one person own, Imelda?” He thought to himself driving to the address on the learner’s permit in her really-handsome really-endangered South American leopard-skin Gucci shoulder satchel.

The X-king cabbie carried the goodly princess to her door and pushed the buzzer thinking maybe he could dump the body in a shopping cart and leave it out front.

Buzz!

“What!” said the Goodly King of Manhattan.

“I think I have your daughter down here”, replied Ick.

“We don’t have a daughter... What’s she look like?”

“She’s got a bag of expensive shoes that she won’t let go of and a charge card receipt with the same name that’s on the mail box here.”

“Shit! That’s her. What’s wrong with her?”

“I kind of hit her with my cab.”

“And..?”

“And I thought it would be nice of me to bring her home.”

“What do you want?”

“What do you mean, what do I want? I’m dropping off your daughter. I think she’s about to die,”

“We all die someday. You hit her. Keep her”, granted the King to the X-King.

“What?”

“I said keep her. She’s yours.” A champagne bottle popped in the background as the buildings intercom clicked off leaving the Less-Than-Goodly X-King Ick holding the bag (or the girl with the bag, of shoes that is).

The teen Awoda was quite fetching, but Ick simply could not afford to keep her and live with life at a neck-above-water level in the most goodly and expensive hamlet-shire of NYNY.

He laid the teen goddess across his cab seat and (stealing the cab) passed out the Lincoln tunnel to Jersey and onward South to his used-to-be-newly-adopted homeland in one set of provinces on one set of deltas on the one-and-only Gulf of Mexico.

When Awoda awoke (after sixteen weeks in ICU), she was queen of but a small reddish spot of mud on which sat a 28 foot SilverCraft castle with a hand welded porch and awnings by decorator unknown. Ick had gained a small title managing a trailer park outside of Alluvial City (a dukedom of some sort) and held a part-time position involving gas transfer, oil checking and windshield wiping.

Awoda still had the Gitano bag clutched in her tiny hands, but could not for the life of her remember what it was for or why she had it. She was wearing the licorice gum spot dress she had had on on their first meeting. In LA., she quickly got used to hearing all sorts of words that begun with the letter 'F'. And not remembering how much she despised the word 'fuck' or how much she hated men who truffled about in her under things, she gave birth to four quite lovely princes who reigned when they grew as a bellhop, a convenience store manager, a tax accountant and an unemployed writer of extremely-short obtuse fiction.

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