

## Remembering Margaret ©

JK Savoy

### *Inspired by a segment from my memoir, Somewhere In Brooklyn*

“Damn it to hell! She did it again?” I shouted as I threw the public phone booth’s receiver down and ran to my VW minibus. Fearing the worst, I raced to the job site, the soon to be renovated Brooklyn’s Hotel Margaret, where my relocations crew was tying up loose ends in a luxury suite. As I arrived, Joey, my foreman pulled me aside whispering, “Boss, if I don’t watch her every step, she’s gonna set the friggin’ place on fire! She got all mixed up again an’ blew her lit cigarette outta the holder an’ into the trash heap. Maggie jest ain’t with it!”

Squinting at her blurred image in a vintage serving plate, my silver-haired, transferee said, “Well hello, Kenny! This is a lovely surprise. Since you’re here, please have your boys take extra care packing away this set of fine china, it was Granny’s. As you know by now, much like me, those dishes haven’t aged a day.”

Maintaining a smile I said, “Margaret, just like you, your heirloom china is hardly rough around the edges.” Pointing to a vintage ashtray, I added, “But, perhaps it’s time to leave some old habits behind, right? You know, a new start?”

“Of course, flattery does and will get you somewhere, Kenny.” After taking a long drag from her empty cigarette holder, she threw it to the trash heap while saying, “Since I’ve been confusing exhale with inhale lately, what may be next? ... Okay Kenny, let’s try it your way: A new start!” Gazing at her cabinetry, she went on to say, “I know, I must have said it to you many times: I’m ninety-four years old, so you can only imagine the age of Granny’s dish sets and bric-a-brac or that table, or whatever! I guess, five or ten times stated is better than having never being said at all. Oh, that’s merely an excuse for my ... you know.”

“Margaret yes, many times said is far better than hardly ever mentioned.”

“Oh Kenny, you’ve been so kind since the day you first arrived. I

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wish that I had a granddaughter for you, but ... Oh well, details! And by the way, it's been so nice of you to treat me to having lunch with you and your men every day!"

"The fellas and I consider you as being a part of the crew just as do I, so let's enjoy our time while we're still here!"

"Oh you ... Kenny! One day, I'll figure out a way to repay you for all of your kindness and consideration during this ordeal ... Just you wait and see!"

"Margaret, the realtors who hired us pay me plenty. So please, just enjoy the devil's food cheesecake I got for you from Junior's, and as always, it's on me."

"Random acts of kindness are never forgotten... and one day, you'll see."

"As we have already seen. And thank you for all of the Pepsis and cookies, Margaret." To which, she simply smiled. Since hers was the last of many forced relocations from The Hotel Margaret in Brooklyn Heights my upstart moving enterprise had been contracted to do, she didn't have to do anything more. I had lost my ninety five year old grandmother a few months earlier, so buying her a cheesecake and doing our best work was my pleasure as it was the crew's who referred to her as Maggie, although never to her face. Our much-loved tenant's proper title was Miss LeJeune but she chose to be called Margaret just like the residential hotel she lived in all of her life, and in whose name she was honored. The historical building was slated for conversion to luxury co-ops, of course priced beyond most of the lifelong resident's means. According to New York City's landmark rules, the outer facade could not be altered but there was nothing in writing about the wreckage of the many lives whose only home it had been. As for Margaret, rather than litigate her remaining years away, she decided to accept the buyout and allow life to take her where it must. She saw it as: *"My long overdue chance at change, forced upon me as it has to be."*

While Margaret strolled reminiscingly around her one and only home, she pointed to an antique sofa and said to Joey, "It was way

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back in 1884 when I was born right there; right below that very window and on that very same divan where I'd enjoy the warmth of the sun! Although The Margaret officially opened in 1889, since Daddy was one of its early investors, we had a head start." She gazed across the East River to the Manhattan skyline while stating in her hauntingly, childlike voice, "Mommy, rest her dear soul, often told Daddy, *"Baby girl was born right here, the moment the sun rose over those buildings, but I know that I will die as it sets far from here. She'll be known as Margaret, so she will always remember where life had chosen to set her path."* Margaret smiled, displaying her reassurance in us as her movers when Joey showed extra care in packing her classic Flora Danica dinnerware.

A realty syndicate was relocating Margaret from the Brooklyn Heights hotel where she lived her entire life to Newkirk Avenue in Flatbush where she had spent her summers during her childhood with her aunt who owned a turn of the century mansion there. As an entry level moving company, mine was chosen for The Hotel Margaret's relocations because, as a fledgling enterprise without the excess baggage of more established movers, I was able to lowball Brooklyn's more bloated companies. Margaret LeJeune was the last of the hotel's residents to be bought out, packed and then hustled to the streets on the realtor's dime.

After gazing at a Baccarat crystal carafe, she gently handed it to Joey saying, "These days, it's so much louder in Flatbush than I recall it as being when I was a young girl. Way back then, it was so quiet you could almost hear the parasols spinning in the hands of young ladies as they walked along the pathways with their suitors to Prospect Park. Do you know, The Brooklyn Dodgers are named after riders who dodged the streetcars as they jumped on or off?"

"No, I didn't know that, Ma'am. But hey, my dad's still a real big Dodgers fan, even though they left all of us hangin' when they moved to LA back in '58; so he'd know all 'bout stuff like that."

"Well Joey, as you young people would say: *"The times they are a 'changing!'"* Now aren't they? My goodness, I will so miss that glorious

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view of the Brooklyn Bridge and how it seems to frame The World Trade Center towers.” She leaned on the windowsill saying, “I was just three or so, but I can still recall the hoopla the day that bridge was opened! It and those towers, though many years apart in age, do go so well together in an eclectic way. It’s like, it was meant to be ...”

“Yeah lady. Back ta Flatbush: These days you old folks gotta learn ta be real careful there, what with all the muggin’s an’ stuff, not ta mention the gun ...”

“Joey! Be sure to double wrap all of her china. It’s heirloom and the realtors didn’t buy the extra insurance!”

As if oblivious to Joey’s gun remark, Margaret said, “Oh Kenny, Joey’s doing such a fine job. I rarely cook, so if something breaks, it breaks! I take most of my meals at the restaurant here at The Margaret. So, I suppose I’ll be able to do the same where I’m... Oh! don’t pack those dishes Joey, I promised them to a very dear friend.” Giggling, she added, “Perhaps I should tell her I did that?”

Weird how she made us feel right at home as she provided endless Pepsi Cola, Lorna Doon cookies and stories of her beloved lifelong home at The Hotel Margaret. Even more weird, considering that it was not my business to say anything about her surroundings to be, I listened as Margaret went on to say, “When I went to see the new apartment, I couldn’t even distinguish its address. But I did find it fascinating how people actually spray-paint drawings and write profanity and other things on their buildings these days! It’s so true, the times certainly are changing. I guess that I’m just going to have to go along with the changes, oh well ...” Eyes swollen, clutching a small handmade cloth doll, she looked down to the divan and then toward the rising sun, adding, “Maggie and I will certainly miss those warming rays of the sunrise. Oh well, as change is the only constant in the Universe all things must and will change, and then pass on.” She kissed the tiny figure, handed it to me and said, “Kenny, please keep Maggie. I made her all by myself a long, long time ago... she’ll be something for you to remember this old lady by, as I’ll recall your kindness during my time of need.”

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She sat on her divan, then went on to say, "I'll never stop thinking of this hotel as my entire world wrapped around this very spot, where I always sit. So many memories... some are so very vague, yet others are as clear in my mind as if they happened yesterday ... Or, just moments ago!" While she nestled into the divan's well-worn groove, a tear rolled down her cheek as she slowly looked around the room. After being sure that Joey was busy packing in the kitchen, she pointed toward Wall Street while saying, "Please excuse the ramblings of an old woman who's about to be whisked away from the only home she has ever known, but something deep inside of me ... Well, it's much like a voice telling me that not only will you understand ... but you might feel compassion for another human being who simply has to get something off her chest ... Oh, Kenny! Now I'm so terribly embarrassed! Never mind that I said all of that."

"Margaret! You are absolutely right about my sense of understanding." As I plopped down on an easy chair, I locked my fingers behind my head as I said, "Now, I beg of you, please tell me what you feel that you must say. I have nothing but time, curiosity and concern."

Eyes shut, she went on to say, "No! I'm not going to go to sleep, or ... and no, not that! So, I was going to say, way back in ninety-three; that's eighteen you know ... well, never mind it couldn't be nineteen because that hasn't happened as of yet! Oh anyway, Daddy went to the market, the stock market that is. Daddy would often remain there all day, and sometimes into the night since stocks and bonds were his passion. But that day, he came home shortly after noon. I always sat right here, right where they said I was born, waiting for his return. Anyway, that day, Daddy came home very frantic and slammed the door shut! I never saw him acting that way ..." Her eyes swelled and tears began to form.

"Margaret, if it hurts you so much, you don't have to go on."

"No! I do, so that I may move on! You must know about that ..." Then out of the blue, she giggled and said coquettishly, "How fitting: I'm telling a striking, young moving man that I must move on when if

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I weren't moving on, why is a handsome young moving man right here in my suite?"

"Uh, that's very interesting and I'm flattered, Margaret. You were saying?"

"Yes, I was saying: Daddy was very agitated if not very angry! Immediately, I felt guilty wondering what I had done as he went on to say, *"Margaret! Go to your room and close the door!"* I felt relieved that I hadn't done anything wrong when he said so very compassionately, *"Please don't be upset, my dear Margaret. Daddy simply needs this place to put an end to some very bad ... business! But I promise, I won't be here too much longer."* As always, I heeded his instructions and went to my room. Soon after, a cold chill raced along my spine when I heard horns blowing and people shouting from the street! When I opened the door to check on Daddy, I saw that he was more than just gone ..." Wiping away a tear, she said, "He left only an open window and a note pinned to ... *my* divan!"

"Shit! The market crash of 1893." Whispered Joey.

Relieved that Margaret's eyes had remained shut and that she was unaware of his presence, I hustled him away while asking, "How did you know about a stock market crash that I never even heard of? How?"

As he walked away, he said only, "You do ask too many questions, boss."

With Joey back in the kitchen, slowly Margaret rose from her special sofa, leaned on the windowsill, looked at the roadway below and said ever so plainly, "Ahem! In the days to come, I guess they will call The Margaret a co-op or that new word..."

"Condominium." By the way, what happened after your father passed?"

Returning to sitting, she replied, "Yes Kenny, "condominium", or something else like that. Oh yes. Daddy's passing on did result in something decent, yes ... it was very decent of them!" She drew a deep breath, then went on to say, "Since Daddy was one of the partners in The Margaret, the others allowed Mommy and me to stay here forever



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... or, so they said ...”

“Oh?”

“Yes, forever! They say that The Universe has no end, that is until one day they, whoever they are ...” She rose, looked to the sidewalk below and went on to say, “They must hit the brakes or, fall off the edge!” Looking away from the world below, she wiped a tear from her eye as she pressed her palms together.

Before I could say, ‘*Shhh!*’ Joey walked back into the room and asked, “So, what about your mom?”

“My mom? Ha! The film, Gone With The Wind, didn’t arrive in theaters until 1939, but Mommy sure as all heck made her exit long before that!”

“How did you, I mean, who ...?”

“Took care of me? Ha! The Wizard of Oz came out that same year, but long before that I had my own Scarecrow, Lion and Tin Man in The Margaret’s staff who cared for me, and as of late, their very descendants!” She looked to the windows and said, “And they’ll all be well taken care of after I...This was and is a family oriented hotel, I’ll have you know!” As her gaze returned to the outside view, she went on to say, “Over time, each and every one of them would say, *“Our Margaret ‘is’, The Margaret! And so, we as her staff will support and maintain her until ...”*

“Until? Keep goin’, Margaret ...” said Joey, as I kicked his shin.

“The twelfth of never? Perhaps but that’s a long, long time; and as you must know, at some point, an hourglass must be turned ... or, left to be. So here we are and sadly, all good things must and do come to an end without exception. Boys, there’s plenty of lemonade in the fridge. Sorry but we’re all out of Pepsi.”

While she tearfully gazed at the East River’s view, Joey whispered, “Kenny, fer sure that poor ol’ broad ain’t gonna be burnin’ her britches behind her.”

“Burning her what?”

“Boss, Margaret damn well knows she ain’t got no way back here after she deposits their buyout check. But if ya ask me, it seems like

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she ain't never gonna be leavin' here an' live anywheres else. It's like ... like, she's in a weird way a part of this place. But hey, what the hell do I know, I just pack 'em and then I move 'em!"

"By the way, Joey; do you happen to remember what that slumlord dude whose tenant we moved last week called us? Somehow, I keep forgetting. it"

"The one who tagged us as, *Undertakers fer the living?* Hell yeah, that was so cool! He really nailed your ass with that one!"

"Joey, stop it! Now I really can't shake that undertaker image from my head."

"Yeah fer sure boss. Hey, ya know, those 'gentravayshin', uh gen..."

"The word is "gentrification", Joey. What about them?"

"Yeah, what you said. Them home bustin' gangsters like that fat dude, who we do these basket case jobs fer, have a 'devil make hair' attitude about the stuff they do to folks. I mean, they're loaded up to the flab under their chins, but if you ask them fer a nickel to help kids by sponserin' youth centers or sports teams, they all cry broke! Total scumbags!"

"Like Margaret said, *"Change is the only constant in the Universe."* Who knows what's up with anything, anyway?"

The grand lady of The Hotel Margaret presented a generous tip to Joey and his crew. She reminded me to always hang on to Maggie, her tiny doll that she made in the image of her as a young girl, as something to remember her by. With certainty, she said, *"You must place this very special image of me where it will always know the warming rays of those many sunrises to come!"* I did and hung it from the rearview mirror of my VW minibus: The very van with which I began my moving business, and used for many years as I would a car. Hey, commercial plates allowed me to park just about anywhere in this city!

I parked near my office and set the hand brake while the doll continued to swing back and forth. As if spellbound, I wondered, 'Much like coins for Charon, the fabled ferryman of Hades, was her relocation settlement a token gesture to relieve Big Real Estate's



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conscience? Was the weight of the pennies covering her eyelids blinding her to the river she'd been sold down?' Margaret was but one of the many senior citizen residents who either were, or were about to be scattered all over New York City by salivating gentrification opportunists. Their grand renovation design for landmark communities did not include the people whose lives gave places like The Hotel Margaret a feeling of being a home for so many years. Dammit, I *had* become the undertaker for the living! My moving vans were to be like the lanterned chariots that would float along the River Styx, albeit Atlantic Avenue, and bring yet so many more souls to their reward.

The landmark hotel which overlooked New York harbor and sheltered those who sought to spend their remaining years waking to glorious sunrises, framed by Manhattan's steel and glass towers, had its own time of infamous spectacle: One night, people driving along the FDR Drive looked across the East River only to see Roman candle-like bursts of flame rising from The Hotel Margaret as it ceased to be, its remaining contents seared within a smoldering black cloud of mystery. Sadly, the charred remains of our Lady Margaret were found upon the very sofa where she was born so many decades before. Her cherished divan, that Margaret had instructed the movers to leave behind, as always, faced the East River and those many sunrises yet ahead.

A few months after Margaret's passing, I parked my minibus on Prospect Park West in my home community of Park Slope. Ever so gradually, Margaret's cloth doll swung to a stop in the August heat as it hung from the VW's mirror: Exactly where she told me to place it. She did have her quirks, but respecting someone's wishes, as mysterious as they may seem, is respect in and of itself. Although Margaret may have been amongst the wealthiest of Brooklynites, I chose to see her unassuming hand-crafted muslin wrapping with its penciled on facial features as a sincere expression of how she indeed viewed herself. It was as though the humble Maggie allowed Margaret

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to place her sense of being beyond the trappings of turn of the century excessiveness that had been The Margaret's and the lifestyle of its patrons and neighbors. Missing her charisma, sense of humor and how she was always grateful for upfront and honest human connection, I would gaze into her alter-ego's time tattered eyes, remember Margaret and often, I would hear the sound of her voice telling tales of way back when. Her influence on me made me more empathetic toward my customers whose destiny was in the hands of the flood of real estate conglomerates that had been replacing the soul of my own treasured Park Slope neighborhood with the spiritual void of those whose battle cry was, *"It's all about the money!"*

From what I understood from her obituary, Margaret had inherited a vast fortune from her mother's death as a passenger aboard The Titanic in 1912. It was comforting for me to learn that Mommie Dearest didn't leave her totally on her own while in search for better things. Fortunately for Margaret, while her mamma was seeing the world, Margaret fell into the loving arms of the hotel's staff who essentially raised her. The gossip throughout Brooklyn was: Margaret was so wealthy she could've bought the hotel many times over. That aside, why the hell didn't she just walk away from her divan, marry one of her many suitors and live the life of the grand-dame of Brooklyn that she would have become? The answer to that and so many other mysteries indeed had gone up in smoke.

From my customary bench, I stared at my erstwhile Park Slope commune residence where I had lived a few years earlier, and flashed back to the high times I had with my roomies back then. Our aging hippie asses would hang out, dance our butts off and party on anything and everything out there that came our way; be it smokeable, drinkable or that rare blast of nose candy that just happened to happen on by. As time went on, some of us knew when the party was over and switched to chamomile tea, protein shakes and long overdue hard work ethics. Still, I wondered, "Are the hippie freaks who had laid their freebie joints on us still doing that same old thing while nose candy hustlers are ripping one another off, or

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throwing old ladies under the bus for profit so they can keep the snow storm blowing through their nostrils?"

Watching one of my moving trucks taking more soon to be former commune dwellers to Staten Island, Jersey or anywhere affordable; I saw a notice in their former brownstone's parlor floor window stating: "*Another Cinderella Project, sponsored by Brooklyn Union Gas.*" Like a claim stake into my eye, this harbinger of corporate intent declared itself like a sore thumb amongst the other plywood boarded up windows of the mid-1800's brownstone mansion along Prospect Park West. A realtor chaining the doors shut had seconded the motion.

"*Cinderella Genocide*" was the spray-painted hippie response overlaying one of the gas company's posters. The young tenants who shared their lives in that space had been relocated to far less elegant surroundings. Another high end property awaited the tightening tentacles of Wall Street to secure its grip on those treasured landmark buildings. It wasn't only the remnants of the peace, love and '*end the illegal war*' generation who became scattered to the wind: The blue collar proprietors who strengthened vintage neighborhoods with their hard work attitude and sense of human decency, throughout the historical sections of Brooklyn, were being cast to the wind in favor of investor dwellers.

Sipping my Purity Restaurant brew, recollections of loudspeakers blasting from those very brownstone's windows telling of a party for one and all, danced through my mind. Chains upon the door fell from sight as I recalled a time when those doors stayed open so people might say as you entered: "*Walk right on in, sit down or dance all night! Who gives a rat's ass what your name is or isn't, or who you're with or not with? Rock on!*"

From the park bench where I sat, I looked at a completed Cinderella Project beside a condemned commune. My mind burst from the imaginary clinking sound of Waterford Crystal during a toast given by a tycoon from another era who helped to develop Park Slope, thus displacing working class victims of that age. Memorializing that

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thought, I wrote into my journal, *"Where once there were commune parties blasting rock anthems, cellists will play softly to select guests; as denim surrenders to silk."* The prose on a section of scrap wallboard, jutting from a trash dumpster, read: *"We The Unwilling Are Led By The Un-Hip To Do The Unnecessary For The Ungrateful!"* Flower Power maxims that rallied an entire generation of young Americans in search of social justice lay in iron funerary vaults as scattered, long abandoned assertions. The power of radical declarations, which once echoed from a brownstone's walls, were displaced by the force of financial statements that would see to the unraveling of young social activist's place in Park Slope's long and checkered history.

A year earlier, I sat on that same park bench observing the random sight of the enormous dumpsters heralding pending renovations. I noted in my journal, *"Like the huge seed pods from the '50s sci-fi film Invasion of the Body Snatchers, the dumpsters were placed in front of the mansions. Just as Dorothy did in the storied poppy field, folks inside would lay their bodies to rest. The hippies and working class people would drift off to sleep only to be magically replicated as moneyed substitutions, who'd beckon others of their kind to join them."*

As autumn leaves became caught up in wind swirls near my feet, waves of flashback caused my eyes to flutter then to shut while reflecting on those times. A case of writer's block is one hell of a thing for an author to flash back to. There I was, trying my best to write but my pen stalled halfway down the page of my journal. As if drawn by the hand of another, thick black circles ensued like snake eyes staring back at me. I gazed into the circles then suddenly had to leap onto the park's wall trying to escape them while my one time commune mate, Danny skidded his bike to a stop. His dilated pupils peered at the circles on my journal as he said, *"Hey, man, sorry, bro!"* Then he squinted, looked at me and yelled; *"Kenny, my ex-roomie! Is it really you? ¿Qué pasa?"* Danny was peddling three hours of loops of the park to burn off some speed-laced acid he dropped the night before. He sat upon the park wall with me as we heard a familiar voice behind us say; *"Far fuckin' out, man! I can't believe my sorry ass eyes; it's Danny*

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*and Kenny! I hope you dudes don't mind but we're like, totally tapped out of food. We all had this brutal case of the munchies and totally gobbled up everything in the basket."*

*Danny lurched back and shouted to the new arrivals; "Sally! Paulie! Oh wow! This calls for a joint. Hey man, do ya got anything for me to roll?"*

Like ghosts in the classic play, Our Town perched upon their headstones, we all sat on the wall surrounding Prospect Park recollecting long gone spirits from my onetime failed coffee house venture, September's Child. The warm sense of being with friends in that magical moment was eclipsed by a feeling that our paths were crossing for the very last time, while enroute to our separate ways. Danny began rolling skinnies as fast as Paulie could lay pot on him, and he could lick the joints. Sally took her guitar from its case, sat on the wall and sang.

Paulie pointed to a dumpster across the street shouting; *"My asshole landlord totally laid it on me that he wants to sell us our apartment! Man, like how the hell can you buy an apartment? I mean, you can buy a house that sits on the ground, but how do you buy a apartment that's totally stuck inside a building, man! What a total idiot!"* Paulie's eyes crossed as he sucked in the pot smoke. The master of his craft that he was, he held the smoke in his lungs while asking; *"No shit, is he gonna rip the apartments apart and then spread them out or somethin'? What if I wanna move someday? Man, if I wanna split, do ya think anyone besides me would be totally stupid or stoned enough to buy an apartment? If the buildin', inside an' out is the apartment, then what the hell are ya buyin,' the air in it? Even if this shit's possible, I got no bread to live on never mind buyin' somethin' stupid like an apartment! Yeah, if we don't buy it, we're outta there, totally!"* Paulie took yet another long hit and disclosed his survival strategy: *"I gave the eviction papers to my brother. Man, he's in pre-law! Them people don't know who they're fuckin' with! He'll figure out a way to make the dude quit hasslin' us! If we're supposed to be rent controlled; don't that mean that we can just sit there and the owner*



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*can't do shit to us?" He exhaled and went on to say, "My brother told me that if the dude wants us out, he'd have to lay some serious bread on us, man. But if we take it, we totally got no way back. Two people in the buildin' grabbed up the buyout from the dude already and your trucks moved them, Kenny. I mean, like you didn't do it or anythin'; like nobody's blamin' you! Ah shit, you'll probably be seein' it happen all the time." Paulie interrupted himself to yell; "Hey, Tank! Get your chubby ass on over here! Danny, roll up a skinny for the fatty."*

Sniffing the smoke, Tank, another of my hippie roomies from back in the day, headed over to join us asking, *"What's happening, everybody? If we're all flies, then Prospect Park must be shit-heaven!"* Tank grabbed the joint and passed it around. I passed it up.

*"What happened to your freak-flag, Kenny? You look like a brand new recruit. You didn't go and join the fucking Army; now did you?"*

*"No Tank, my hair got tangled up in the debris when I got tossed from my old coffee house, so I cut myself free."*

*"Shit Tank, all you totally left everyone is a friggin' one-inch flamer!"* shouted Paulie, burning his fingers as he stole the roach.

Sally threw him a roach clip then strummed her Angelica guitar, that she claimed was a Martin, and sang to Tank; *"We're all helpless and hopeless, soon to be homeless 'cause we ain't got a dime. Someone find us an answer, or you'll find us in a shelter just a-wastin' our time."* Teary eyed, she put her guitar down and said, *"Tank, they're trying to throw us out from our crib! Do you know anybody that can do anything? If they get their way, they'll have to haul mine and my kid's asses out of our home with a rope!"* Leaning her guitar on the wall, she said, *"Let Paulie talk to his idiot brother about making a deal all he wants. I don't give a rat's ass how much they give Paulie; it'll go up his nose and in his arm in less than a month. This incredible neighborhood is getting to be all about the money! It used to be about people helping people, now it's about helping rich people stampede over our corpses."*

*"Right on Sally, right on!"* yelled Tank. He took a long hit and passed a freshly rolled double E-Z Wider joint, capable of handling his mass, to Danny. Tank's face reddened. When it approached crimson, the



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alleged former soldier of fortune exhaled and stood before us shouting for the world to hear: *"You're sounding like people who would put up with bullshit without a fight! Just say, hell no! You have the goddamn Movement behind you and the Movement ended a sorry-ass war! These fucking realtors can't stop those same people who stopped Washington from turning yet another generation of innocent American kids into gunslingers for hire! Right on, my brothers and sisters! If our collective voices stopped Dick-head Nixon from dropping his bombs on Cambodia, we sure as shit can sing out and stop speculators from dropping their eviction notices into our mailboxes!"*

Tank took another long toke, looked into his heart for words and to the sky for inspiration and projected: *"The people of this neighborhood will stand tall, look the speculators and realtors right in the eyes and tell them to shove their blood money up their butts with the rest of their shit! Money can't buy off the will of the people if the people stand their ground! I'll give this block-busting shit 'til '81, and that's a stretch. Those realtor pigs will pack it all in, split and look elsewhere for bodies to bleed. Like an eagle's talons, the hands of the people will swoop down and strike to free our people's homes from greed's grasp! Word of our resistance will spread as if on the wings of eagles! The Slope will become the bastion of the final resistance to Big Real Estate's power! No offense, Kenny but: We will not be moved! We will not be moved!"*

A chorus of three joined in; *"We will not be moved! We will not be moved!"*

Tank drew from his alleged Weather Underground roots and shouted; *"The Peace and Love Movement is merely on hiatus! This greed thing, that's going on here, and all over the city, will trigger us to regroup and fight again! This time it will be heard all over America! Once more, songs of protest will sound their cries for resistance! We will march to Boro Hall and make the case for our liberty and for our homes against the Wall Street real estate cartel! The resolve of the masses will put an end to the power grab of our neighborhood! Ours will not become just one more notch on the gun belt of Big Real Estate amongst*

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*the wasted abundance of the ever-gluttonous! We will no longer feed our homes and our ways of living to the pigs! The next twenty years will again be about society nurturing itself and fulfilling its destiny! This money thing is but an anomaly that will serve to remind us of our true goal: Power to the people! Power to the people! Right on, brothers and sisters! Right the hell on!"* Then, Tank's voice yelled stridently, but solely, *"Eat the rich! Eat the rich!"* As if oblivious to his diatribe, the chorus was busy smoking and missed their turn to join in by shouting their support. Tank's noble cause seemed to become lost when their held back exhales seemed to have shut down their comprehension, never mind their hearing and aspirations.

Danny turned to Paulie asking, *"Hey, man, ya got any more of that righteous weed we been smokin'?"* Paulie shrugged and showed them his empty hands. Danny slapped one of them while Tank slapped the other. Having blown all their cannabis smoke up one another's butts, they all split. Sally sang *"Turn-Turn-Turn"* while they walked toward Seventh Avenue. As Paulie held his fist on high to the air, his fading voice reverberated from the canyon walls of the buildings around him; *"Yuppie pigs! Screw you and fuck yer money, like totally!"*

Echoes of their singing and shouting songs and slogans of former times, accompanied the sounds of clashing symbolisms rumbling in my memory. Would the generation that set out to change the world be forced to change with the world? Will they become servants and attendants to the lords of the land they once saw as their own? Will the flame of the torch that was our revolution evolve to embers becoming ashes, becoming dust? Will the delirious lead the oblivious to further uncertainty? Did The Movement turn to stillness, dissolving in its inertia? Gazing at the park's vast foliage, I wrote, *"Songs of desperation whisper through branches of inspiration, which grew from trees of truth, hanging leafless in winds of change."*

The sound of leaves of the past swirling around my feet blended with those of the present as the hiss of airbrakes interrupted my reverie. One of my huge, new trucks had parked behind the VW. My fragmented meditation joined the leaves swirling skyward as I

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stared at the diesel powered fruit of my endeavors. Bob, one of my former roomies, jumped from the truck and headed toward my bench. Back in the day, Bob and I would reminisce about our years as corporate executives who walked away from the world of thinghood to search for our true inner personas. And there we were: Penniless, stoned out and full of excuses until the day came when I turned my life around, building my moving business from my tiny VW. A refurbished Bob was my first helper and then the head honcho as my company grew. Much like serving as one another's AA sponsors, we became the reminders of our pledge to kick one another's ass to force us to recall what we did back in the day as corporate hacks, and to never again become servants of greed itself. Bob was followed by a brawny, dark skinned helper who he had just hired. The kid claimed he knew me from back in my early coffee house days.

"Kenny my man! Staring at that hi-rise ain't gonna make it rise any higher," the kid said, "although it certainly doubled in value since you started gaping at it. Hey boss, remember me?"

His face and voice were vaguely familiar but his body was something from a super hero magazine. I shrugged and said, "I give up. Who the hell are you, kid?"

"Demetrius! I'm the dude who helped you knock down the plaster in that old after hours place that became your coffee house a few years ago. You gave me some rusted old barbells from its cellar when you were giving everything you owned away to any sorry ass fool who'd take it."

"Holy shit! And your sorry ass sure as hell did use them! Your biceps must be twenty inches. Kiddo, you look amazing! I'll bet you can lift all of the weights on the bar at the same time now."

"Actually, I work out at a gym down on Fourth. I get a free membership just to stroll my steroid, bloated butt around the place, because I won a bunch of bodybuilding contests. By the way, my biceps are twenty two inches! Kenny, you gotta get bigger T-shirts. I'm breaking outta this one. Gotta go! See you around, boss. Hey,

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thanks for hiring my kid brother.”

Demetrius walked down First Street to his crib. While Bob counted out the money from his day’s moving job, I asked, “How long will that kid be able to call First Street home before his crib becomes yet another breeding nest for yuppie puppies? When you drove up, I was sitting here thinking about how fast the neighborhood changed from hippies in bellbottoms and sandals into three-piece suits, stuffed with lawyers and bankers. It’s as if The Movement never happened at all, bro! I mean, it’s like someone turned the lights on, everyone yelled ‘*Surprise!*’ and here we are back in the Eisenhower ’50s with nothing gained but evictions.”

“Kenny, wake up! The music’s over and someone switched on the lights. Movement? Dude, that so-called Movement was just another fashion statement. The suits riding in limos to Wall Street today once wore torn bellbottoms and freak flags while quoting Kennedy, Doctor King and Malcolm-X as they marched on Washington, just a few years ago. Those chameleons talked the talk and wore the look that got them high, or got their asses laid. Hell, the next different drum they followed was Barry White’s rhythm synthesizer. Like all the generations before us, hypocrisy became their manifest destiny. It was smoke, mirrors and bullshit! Years ago, they passed a joint around; talked peace and love while listening to Dylan sing, “Blowing in the Wind”. Now, they pass a mirror around with a thousand bucks worth of lines on it, talking mergers and acquisitions while listening to Sinatra sing “Stairway to Heaven.” Throughout the grand façade, the few true idealists never changed one damn bit!”

“Who were they, Bob? And just who are they now? So, who’s the real deal?”

“They were, and still are, the actual people who inspired The Movement. They had, and still have, a sincere desire to change America from a pig’s pen to a Utopia of peace, love and equality. Now they play to nearly empty houses at community colleges while the rest of what once was the crowd is gobbling up all the chips and dips at the next party. Kenny, you don’t need your Tarot cards to see it.

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Within two years, all of the longhairs, who work for you on the trucks, will become realtors, investment bankers or go right back to what they said they rejected when they followed the Pied Piper of many years ago.”

“Where do you think you'll be in a few years?”

“Kenny, I have some news for you: Start looking for another head honcho.”

“What? Why? You said that this was a great gig for you. Can we fix this?”

“You had to know that a guy like me wouldn't be driving cabs or moving trucks for too long. Soon, I'll be splitting for California to hang with our friend, Mel and chill for a while.”

“So, chilling is your new career choice? I'm not buying that, Bob.”

“Fuck careers! Haven't we learned anything? It'll still be on my terms. Mel and his old lady are going to teach me about something called 'software.' It sounds like a no pressure thing.”

“Bob, what the hell is soft wear? Let me guess: A rubber for a flaccid pecker?”

“Actually, software is the programming for computers. Mel thinks there's a future in designing programs because, as computers get smaller more people will use them. It seems like a gamble. If I'm making a stupid choice, California has some great beaches to fall back on. I'll stick around to help you train my replacement before I split. I've got to tell you, man: You inspired me to do this shit when you said, *'Every day I put everything I've done on the line for tomorrow, if there is one.'* I thought that you were laying a line of bullshit on me, but you haven't gone one dollar in debt and everything you have was paid for in cash.”

“Those rings on a MasterCharge card do resemble handcuffs for a reason.”

“That's one for your journal, Kenny. You oughta turn it into a book someday about all the shit that went down, somewhere in Brooklyn. Hey, when are you going to get a real car and stop driving around in that VW mini-moving van?”

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"I drive it because I..."

"Why the hell do I even ask you that, bro? You'll just tell me that a real car is decadent and you justify the use of the VW and your logo as advertising as you drive. What should I expect from a guy who still lives out of a derelict backpack and keeps a journal?"

"Perhaps the truth?"

"Yeah, and to quote the dude who once walked away from it all: *"Sadly, all too often, truth is merely the believable lie that turns just enough heads to make history what it is."* But hey, bro, being for real with people is its own reward, and then there may be that unexpected tip somewhere down the road. Bottom line Kenny, I'm hoping I can do the same for me in LA that you did for yourself here in Brooklyn. Hey, bro! Ain't life really nuts? Years ago, I got lost in a mind numbing career, then I spent an eternity drifting in the wind until I found myself in a singular moment. Now I'm living in it and looking to a future of hanging on to what I became."

"Let me know how to reach you just in case I need a reality check, Bob."

"You're totally on cruise control, dude! Yeah, we should keep in touch. You know, freaks like us have to keep in mind that maintaining the purity of our ideals requires staying true to their spirit." Pointing to pigeons alighting atop a statue at the park's entrance he said, "Aaahh, the pigeons! No matter what we do, they always seem to get us in the end."

"What the hell do you mean, Bob?"

Referring to decades of excrement obscuring a dead hero's name below his effigy, Bob said, "They build statues of people who stood their ground, just so they can get shit on forever!"

As Bob pulled away, I was hit by a blast of heat as I opened the door to the VW. Sitting in my Bavarian furnace, I noticed that the intense temperature from many hours in the summer sun had caused Margaret's doll's cloth body to begin to unfurl. In a vain attempt to re-wrap what had given the effigy its form, the opposite occurred. As I removed Maggie from her resting place, she quickly and almost



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totally became undone. A silvery key with a bank's name and address stamped upon it fell into my hand. Unwrapping the remainder of the weathered fabric, a handwritten, certified statement unveiled itself saying. *"Provide to the bearer, upon demand, full access to my safe-deposit box at ..."* I looked into the newly liberated Maggie's drawn on eyes while wondering. 'Some people make their intentions loud, clear and laden with bullshit through and through, as they bloviate through life. Others like Margaret bide their time showing kindness and consideration toward others throughout their days, and beyond ...'

***Find my memoir Somewhere In Brooklyn on Amazon's KDP by googling JKSavoy.com Or easier yet, scan this QR code***

