

“K-Joy Holiday” a personal essay was published in the December, 2013 Issue of Hobo Pancakes: Issue 16-Music, and was performed live onstage in Taboo Tales at the La Macha Theater, West Hollywood CA, December, 2012.

### **K-Joy Holiday**

My six-month marriage to my green-card wife, Claudine the Swiss facialist, is over. At breakfast on Christmas Eve day in my doublewide at Top-o-Topanga Mobile Home Park, Claudine asks me for a divorce. I’m not devastated. I married her so she could get a green card, and we made the mistake of moving in together. I’m not that in love with her facials either. The Swiss have a habit of slapping you around after they put the cream on. On Christmas Eve Claudine flies to London to spend the holidays with her ex-boyfriend, Francois the commodities broker, who, as it turned out, has been sending her crisp one hundred-dollar bills stuck between the pages of Harlequin romance novels—a rather corny and expensive ploy to win her back, which works.

I am the announcer on the six-to-midnight shift at an easy-listening radio station in Beverly Hills—KJOI. We play “beautiful music,” the kind of thing you hear in a podiatrist’s office. That night I drive into the Santa Monica Mountains via Grizzly Peak Drive and go to work. Christmas Eve in LA. I am above the smog line. Alone. I think about Claudine. I’m not going to miss her hourly phone calls on the K-Joy music request line.

“Hello. I don’t like Los Angeles. I’m afraid of the earthquake. And I hate your doublewide.”

I start a reel of Christmas music and walk outside. I will either smoke a Winston red-band or do a salutation to the sun; I haven’t decided which. Searchlights and traffic glitter below. I breathe in the dry night air and gaze at the distant purplish-gray glow

of the Pacific. I raise my hands over my head, stretch upward, and let my arms fall slowly and my spine bend forward until my head hangs comfortably between my knees. The listener request line rings. You can hear that damned thing down on Coldwater Canyon. I walk back into the studio and answer the phone.

“K-Joy, can I help you?” “Hi.”

“Hi, who’s this?” I know who it is. It’s Edith, a K-Joy regular who is probably alone on Christmas Eve. So am I.

“It’s Edith. Du-uh.” In five syllables—“du-uh” accounting for two of them—I can tell that Edith is home alone and drunk.

“What can I do for you, Edith?” “Oh, well, I think you know.”

The reel of Christmas music comes to an end, and I turn on the microphone and read from an index card, “Joy is a Christmas Eve with good friends and family, and joy is listening to beautiful music on K-Joy—FM 99.” I start another reel of Christmas music.

“Was that you on the radio just now?” “That was me.”

“Wow. Merry Christmas.”

“How are you feeling tonight, Edith?”

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“Oh, I’m a little sloshed. And feeling kind of horny.”

“You sound pretty loaded, Edith. You okay?”

“Oh, yeah, but I’d be a little better if you’d come over and pay me a visit.”

I occasionally did see my role at K-Joy as that of a service provider. I check my watch. Twenty minutes before midnight.

“Edith, I’ll make you a deal. If you stop drinking right now, I’ll come by and pay you a visit after my shift.”

“Are you kidding?” Through the phone I hear the sound of Edith hoisting herself to her feet. “This is like, call up and order a man.”

“Listen, not one more drink until I get there. Okay?” Silence. I expect that she’ll hang up. Then comes the sound of a toilet flushing.

“I’m pouring the rest of my vodka down the crapper, so I’ll be nice and sober when you arrive.”

I leave the radio station and drive north through the mountains on Coldwater Canyon. I picture suburban families nestled in bed. I begin to wonder, what does Edith look like? Have I given her enough time to sober up? What am I doing? Oh, it will be fine. Edith doesn’t sound dangerous. She and I are K-Joy friends. No. I should just get on the freeway and go home to my doublewide. But it will be empty. I don’t want to wake up on Christmas morning alone.

At 12:30 a.m. I arrive at Edith’s apartment in Panorama City. Christmas is a half-hour old. Edith answers the door wearing a sleeveless cotton negligee. She is a large, barefoot, middle-aged woman with dyed red hair and a pinkish, round face. Her bare

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arms are freckled and thick. I find her eminently attractive. She curtsies and ushers me in. And to my surprise, she has sobered up as I requested.

She takes my hand and places it upon her ample bosom, her nipples growing like expanding terrycloth bathtub animals. Then she walks into her bedroom, takes off her

nightgown, and waves me to her. I am not lonely anymore. She has a jar of Vaseline in her medicine cabinet—the lubrication equivalent of molasses—but I rub it between my hands and slather it upon us. And we while away the early morning hours of Christmas conjoined like barnyard animals. Making love to Edith is like having a sumptuous Christmas dinner—maybe a little too soon after lunch, but satisfying nonetheless.

A few days later, I have a case of crabs. I haven't been with anyone else, so I assume I've gotten them from Edith. I'm not angry. It was a lovely Christmas Eve. I go to Rite- Aid and buy a bottle of Kwell. Between Christmas and New Year's Eve, I don't hear from Edith. I suppose I should call her and thank her. Then an hour into my New Year's Eve air-shift at K-Joy, the listener request line rings. It's Edith. Sober. I am delighted to hear from her. I invite her up to the station. Once again I find myself reaching out through the K-Joy request line to touch my listener. Edith seems shocked at my invitation. I expected to spend New Year's Eve alone. But an hour later the security bell rings. It is Edith, driving a red Honda Civic and wearing a low-cut Hawaiian muumuu. It is 8 p.m. We have four hours until the next announcer arrives for the midnight shift. Edith and I strip and make love on the chief engineer's desk, right next to the fifty-thousand-watt FM radio transmitter.

It is nearing the top of the hour, time for me to announce the station ID on the air. I walk Edith into the control room and place her hands palms-down on either side of the console with its flashing LEDs and switches and knobs. I stand behind her, gently bend her over, pull the microphone toward me, and as Percy Faith's rendition of "We Three Kings" fades out, I slide inside Edith's ample, welcoming, middle-aged body, and turn on the microphone. We are on the air.

“Good evening. It’s fifty-eight balmy degrees at KJOI Los Angeles. K-Joy. From our family to yours, we wish you a very happy New Year.”

I start another tape of Christmas songs and continue to glide in and out of Edith to the rhythm of Lawrence Welk’s “Sleigh Ride”: “Giddy-yap, Giddy-yap, Giddy-yap, It’s grand, just holding your hand...” And before I can turn off the microphone, Edith lets out a loud, braying sigh over the air. And the beautiful music plays on.