

Julie ©

By

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Julie was seven when she became aware that she had to compete with an older and a younger brother for her father's attention. No problem, she studied what pleased her dad: biscuits and gravy; ooh's and ah's about dad's hunting skills; and he loved the smell of her fresh shampooed hair.

Not just any biscuit either; she would check out the class lunchboxes, find out whose mother was the best cook, and drop by the house to ask to observe her cooking. The mothers were flattered by this cute little girl, and taught her well. Her dad bragged to his friends about the apple pies that little Julie baked just for her daddy. She was the one who got to sit in the front seat next to Daddy.

When she was 12, a concerned teacher remarked to the school nurse: "Julie is very smart. But when I call on the class for an answer, she holds back. She isn't shy or anything. I think she holds back so the boys will like her. Please talk to her."

When Julie was summoned to Nurse Belder's office, she was surprised to learn that Mr. Evers and the nurse both were on to her pretending to be dumb in class! Nurse Belder explained to Julie that she had done the very same thing, played dumb so the boys would like her. As a result, her grades were too low to get into medical school. She regretted having dumbered down then; she didn't want Julie to suffer the same failure.

"I suppose you are sweet on Jimmy Belkamp?" she asked. Julie blushed. Then the nurse proceeded to explain what getting pregnant would do to her future. She reminded her of Sarah, the fifteen-year-old who had a baby, dropped out of

school (or was kicked out) and now could never go to college or do anything but work in the Belkamp mill. Instead of having fun at college parties, Sarah spent her time washing dirty diapers and cleaning poop.

Without meaning to, the nurse explained how priceless the cherry was in the world of “romance.”

As she had with her father, Julie did what was needed to get Bobby Belkamp interested in her. Not that Bobby was so great; but his father owned the Belkamp Mill. As the only son, he stood to inherit the mill and the House On the Hill.

When she heard Bobby quote poetry, she spent the afternoon learning about poems from the librarian. Bobby was interested in the local baseball team; she showed up at the practice games and soon they attended together. They went steady, but no, he would have to wait till they were married.

Marriage! Oh No!

Mr. and Mrs. Belkamp were dismayed when Bobby Belkamp, age eighteen and all set to go off to college, announced his plans for marriage to Julie Brown. Harry Belkamp cautioned Helen not to say anything now; Harry firmly said, “Bobby, we’ll discuss this later.”

Later was in the car driving in the open country where others couldn’t hear Mrs. Belkamp’s screaming and yelling to her husband:

He won’t go to college!

She is after his money!

Her father works in the mill!

Her older brother works in a garage!

Each detail became louder and shriller. Finally, Harry Belkamp convinced her that everything she said was true and that he would take care to fix this mess. He was convinced; money talks. Mrs. Belkamp finally quieted down because she knew her husband was a capable man; after all he ran the Belkamp mill.

At the Belkamp Mill, Mr. Belkamp regularly had high school students work at his plant during school break, so they could get experience. He recalled Julie being pretty and bright. He checked her file; yes, she was over eighteen and could run away with Bobby and get married or get pregnant, which was the same thing. He got her phone number from his son's cell phone, and called her. She agreed to come to his office.

Harry Belkamp Negotiates

As president and sole owner of Belkamp Mills, Harry Belkamp had the mahogany office usually reserved for Wall Street Tycoons. He had read about Hitler having a step- up desk, so that he was always above the supplicants; Harry's desk was on an elevated platform requiring a two- step stairway. No matter how tall the worker's representatives were who came to ask for higher wages, he, seated behind an imposing desk, was above them. If they were offered a seat, then they needed to cram to see him. Harry had learned negotiation skills well. This is why he had asked Julie Brown to meet him at HIS office.

As this eighteen year old that threatened his son's future came into the office, he had to admit she was certainly pretty. She wasn't dressed for vamping or contesting with her potential father-in-law. She wore a simple white blouse and blue skirt. Unlike other teenagers, her skirt wasn't short at all; actually, it was blanketing her knees. Yet, even this dull outfit made her look outstanding. If she could look so fetching in a simple outfit, how would she look in the clothes that Sylvia, his older daughter favored? Julie listened attentively to the adult explaining why marriage should be delayed.

Harry: "Bobby needs to finish college."

Julie nodded her head, her long blond hair falling to her young bosom. "I fully agree. When we are married, that is my number one goal."

Harry: "What about your college? Don't you want to go to college?"

Julie: "Oh yes, I want to graduate as a nurse and help in the third world."

Harry: "That's very noble. Well for that you need money for tuition."

Julie: “Oh, I can work.”

Harry: “Really? What kind of work, Julie?”

Julie: “Oh, I’m good with figures, Mr. Belkamp.”

Harry: “Just because you are married, you can’t expect Bobby to support you in school.”

Julie: “Oh I wouldn’t think of that. It’s more of the husband comes first. I can work to support him in school.”

Harry: “Besides, if he is in one school in California, and you are in school in Georgia, then it’s not much of a marriage.”

Julie: “Oh, we plan to go together.”

Harry was becoming impatient. He decided to cut to the quick: “Julie, getting into one school today is difficult enough. For two to get into the same school is unlikely, at best. Paying for school isn’t easy. If you are working to pay for Bobby’s schooling, then a college education is out of the question for you, especially if a baby comes along. Then you both drop out, and work as laborers.

Julie, you know what I’m saying is true, don’t you? You said you were good at figures. How many hours would you have to work to pay for the cheapest tuition of 40,000 a year? Yale, where Bobby belongs, it is 65,000 for one year. “

Julie hung her head and remained quiet. Harry detected her wiping a tear. Julie noticed the large silver urn in back of Mr. Belkamp.

Julie: “May I look at your trophy, Mr. Belkamp?”

Harry: “Of course, Julie.”

She went up the two stairs to the shelf behind Harry. She picked up the large silver cup, shining in the bright sunshine, that streamed through the tall window. The light enhanced Julie’s alluring features. As Harry turned around, she stood very close. The slightest misstep, and she could land in his lap. He dared not turn any further as she picked up another trophy behind him. He couldn’t see her, but was well aware of her heat and fragrance. As she moved in the sunlight from behind

him where he could look at her safely, Harry had to remind himself that this was not an angel, but rather the creature that threatened his son's future. As he stared, fantasies began to arise.

Julie: "Oh, this is the trophy for the golf tournament you won! That was in the papers; how you beat those professionals from Augusta."

She read the script: "To Mr. Harry Belkamp. WINNER of the Athens Country Club GOLF tournament of 2011. Boy, you must be so proud."

Harry's fantasies rose and could no longer be censored. Had he been able to reason, he would have shrugged away the fantasies. However, the cognitive brain was no longer in command, much less in control of this forty-eight-year-old pillar of his community. Actually, he physically was unable to speak. Fortunately, no one took his blood pressure at this time, otherwise his health insurance policy might have been cancelled. Actually, the blood was not flowing to his brain, but to a lower organ instead.

Finally, Julie returned to the chair where he could look down on her, almost like the judge in the court. If he had worn a judicial wig and robe, the effect would have been the same.

Harry: "Julie, you can go to college, any college, and finish without worrying about finances. Here at the Belknap Mill we have scholarships for the children of our workers. So, pick your college and go to it. Your tuition will be paid." His words bypassed his cognitive brain.

Julie: "Oh that's wonderful, Mr. Belkamp. Thank you so much. Now I will only have to work to pay for living expenses. Well, a few hours probably won't affect my grades that much."

Harry: "No no, living expenses are paid too. And if you have any extra expenses, just send the bill to Mrs. Ochs."

Julie: "Really? That will certainly help my grades. My school nurse told me once how her poor grades kept her from going to Medical school. Gosh, if the living expenses were to be the same as Bobby's 1400 a month, why..."

Harry quickly: “Yes yes, you should receive the same living expenses as Bobby. Julie, just think, then you can go to college, all expenses paid, and graduate to any career you choose, and be happy.”

There was a long pause as Julie dabbed her eyes. Finally,

Julie: “Of course this comes with no marriage to Bobby, doesn’t it?”

Harry: “Julie, you can finish college. When you do you will be a different Julie than you are now at eighteen. Maybe then you can think of marriage and kids. You have plenty of time. Think of having good times in school with expenses and ...”

Julie: “I see you play golf in Atlanta, Mr. Belkamp.”

Harry; “Actually, I do.” Er, “How did you guess?”

Julie smiled, “No guessing; your trophies in back of you!” Her smile was sweet as she said, “Do you play golf in Atlanta often, Mr. Belkamp? “

Harry was noticeably breathing faster. He was well aware of the heat in his face and scalp. Even though his cognitive brain was essentially closed, his primitive brain said, “Yes, and I go there for business ... too, Julie.” (did that Julie sound like a stutter?)

Julie: “They have good schools in Atlanta. “Julie was looking around the well-appointed office as Harry took in her words, and became aware of a stiffening.

As he studied her long blond hair, her smooth skin, her cute nose, and as each feature became etched into his being, he heard himself say, “Julie, it is often hard to study in those crowded noisy dormitories. Maybe you should consider someplace quieter.”

Julie: “Yes, someplace quiet and secluded, away from the noises.”

Harry:” Yes find a small apartment and...”

Julie: “Would Mrs. Ochs object if the apartment wasn’t too tiny? Sometimes they are larger in the quiet neighborhoods.”

Harry: I'm sure she won't have any objection. It is more important for you to study."

There was a silence. Julie slowly put her handkerchief into her purse. Belknap fiddled with some papers on his desk. Here was a contest of who would bring up the subject that both were mulling. Finally:

Julie: "Mr. Belknap, I am a virgin."

Harry paused to allow the fantasies to finish. The waiting was over, the matter was settled.

Belknap: "Oh yes, you will need a small used car to get to school with."

Julie: "I am a Christian Virgin."

Harry: "Right. A new car is always safer and requires less upkeep."

In a sense, Harry was now in his element, this was like one of those union bargaining talks. Best of all, both knew exactly what each wanted.

Harry: "Your insurance can be paid from your scholarship fund."

Julie: " That will certainly allow me to study hard and make good grades."

There were no longer fantasies; now there were plans.

Julie: "Oh Mr. Belknap, wouldn't it be great, to have a quiet apartment within walking distance to a golf course... for my lessons." Harry was sure his heart was racing – but how could he stop? Just then, he was saved.

Harry's buzzer announced his next appointment was waiting. He unsteadily rose to escort her to the door, careful to adjust his coat.

Harry: "Well, Julie, you better get busy making those applications for college." He carefully descended the two steps, holding the desk, aware that he wasn't fully able to attend to his balance. When he stood before her, aware of her heat, he fully realized how small and appealing she was. He intended to walk her to the door; he worried if his legs would carry him. No, he didn't escort union leaders to the door.

A few steps from the door, Julie said, “Thanks again, Mr. Belkamp. You have been ever so kind.” She turned, held him in an appreciative embrace. She held him long enough to learn that he was fully responsive and then released him. “I’m really looking forward to college in Atlanta. Bye, now.” He was immobile as he stared appreciatively at her bouncing curves. Later, as the sight remained etched in him, he wondered if she had exaggerated her hip movements? So what, the bargain had been sealed!

Julie thought: Boy, I certainly got the right advice about remaining a virgin so I could attend college and amount to something! Atlanta was the place with infinite possibilities for her. Now she was the one with fantasies of car, golf, apartment – ooh, she better rush and get her driving license. There hadn’t been a need for that before, but now...

That afternoon, as his clouded mind cleared, his negotiator skills were displayed through the union and civic meetings. He wondered, who had negotiated best here? He with years of experience with tough opponents or Julie, the simple high school girl. Well, he must sharpen his skills for future encounters, mustn’t he.

That night, Harry assured his wife, no there was no possibility that Bobby, now 18, would run off with Julie and get married. No chance of that at all. No, she needn’t worry about some unforeseen pregnancy either; he had taken care of the matter. It had been settled amicably, to everyone’s advantage.

Coincidence? Insight? Mrs. Belkamp asked, “Say Harry, are you scheduled for golf in Atlanta this fall?” Harry moved behind her so she wouldn’t see his flush.” Yes, dear. Why do you ask?” Mrs. Belkamp

“Oh, I thought maybe I might go with you and do some shopping. The styles in Atlanta are so much better than what is available here.

The End