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Sally, Part 9

My Manhattan Adventure—1965

Fiction by Angela Bauer

It was still Thursday morning when I walked into the lobby of the famous Time-Life Building, as if I owned the place. I knew my Daddy was a name partner of a major award-winning advertising agency. So in fact I did own a little piece of the building. I remembered Daddy's office was on the 37th floor. I read the elevator signs to be sure I selected the right one that actually went to the 37th floor. After I got on I pushed 37 and stepped to the rear of the elevator car.

Probably I had been in that same elevator before. It turned out four elevators served the 37th floor. When we reached it there were different offices at either end of the elevator lobby. I walked to the one with Daddy's name on the glass, along with the names of his partners.

Beyond the glass doors there was a reception desk. Behind that there was a metal sculpture of the advertising agency's logo. The several times I had been to his new office with Daddy were on Saturdays or Sundays.

The sign on the reception desk said "Megan Calvert" The lady behind the desk was slender and had dark hair. She was wearing a well-fitted bright yellow sleeveless dress, without a shirt or blouse. She smiled at me warmly without fully opening her mouth.

Once I was standing across the desk from her I told her my name, and that I would like to see my Daddy. Without blinking Ms Calvert asked me to have a seat. After speaking to somebody on the phone, she told me there would be a slight delay. She asked if I would like something to drink.

Her phone rang. I could not hear what was being said. A minute later a tall woman I remembered being so kind to me at Daddy's previous office came to greet me. Thinking fast I remembered her name as being Joan. I knew Daddy had told me she had gotten married, but I did not remember that name. It did not matter because Joan greeted me with a big hug. She immediately started talking about a Saturday when I visited with Daddy because everyone was working on an emergency project.

What I remembered about that day was sampling the contents of some glasses as it was getting dark outside. The next thing I knew I was waking up in Daddy's car as we neared our Larchmont home.

Walking to Daddy's private office we passed a door that said Joan Harris: Traffic and Office Supervisor. I assumed Harris was her married name.

Mrs. Harris told Daddy's secretary, an attractive older woman, who I was, and that I would wait inside Daddy's office. The secretary, Miss Ida Blankenship, did not answer, seemingly engrossed in reading some papers.

The timing of my surprise visit to Daddy could have been a whole better. Just before Mrs. Harris closed the door I saw Daddy's back through the glass walls of what I knew to be the conference room. Daddy was standing. I assumed he was talking to all the men and the lone woman in the conference room. That lady was wearing a black dress with a white blouse. She also was standing. Even in high heels she was inches shorter than Daddy and probably shorter than Mommy.

Daddy's office has a sofa along the frosted glass wall near the door. That was where I waited.

Even if the staff at camp had not called home when I did not show up, by now it was almost time for me to walk to Dr. Wendy's office. She was certain to let Mommy know when I miss my appointment with her.

When I was forming my plan to see Daddy, I had not considered the consequences. Probably I would

eventually have to go back to Mommy. I realized she would use the special hairbrush to greet me and express her disapproval. By then my bottom was used to getting spanked with that nasty hairbrush.

Daddy's reaction to seeing me sitting on his office sofa was priceless. He looked worried. He did not act angry with me. Daddy actually said, "You know right now I am in a lot more trouble with your mother than you are."

I told Daddy I was so sorry about that.

Daddy walked over to his desk. He pushed a button. Over the speaker I could hear the dial signal. After a couple of rings Mommy answered.

"Betty, did you know Sally had taken a trip to visit me at my office?" Daddy's voice was calm and friendlier than during any of his recent conversations with Mommy.

Over the speaker I could hear Mommy's voice: "What do you mean, Don? Sally is at camp now. She has an appointment with her shrink after lunch."

Realizing he was on speaker phone, Daddy turned that off before answering Mommy. Before she could blame him, Daddy told her she needed to come pick me up immediately because he had a full-schedule of important meetings.

There was a pause, apparently while Mommy responded. Daddy said "Goodbye" very coldly as he hung up.

"You are in so much trouble, Young Lady! Your mother said that she is getting ready to attend a political party with Henry this evening. She needs Carla to look after Bobby and Little Gene.

"You are going to have to spend the night with me. Then after your mother has lunch in the city tomorrow, she will pick you up here. Sally, do you understand everyone at home is very worried?"

My thought was that obviously Mommy did not know I took the train, so how worried could she be? Besides, Mommy had been acting so hateful to me probably she was glad I had left.

However, what I did do was look as contrite as possible and say: "I am so sorry Daddy. I will be good and not cause you any trouble."

"Are you hungry?" Daddy asked. Before I could answer he said, "I must have lunch with the clients who are waiting in the conference room. Someone will take your lunch order. Do not leave my office for any reason! If you need the ladies room ask Miss Blankenship, okay?" I nodded "Yes."

Half an hour later nobody had asked what I wanted for lunch. I felt I should try using the toilet. I had done that on the train, but that was a while ago. Not wanting to be rude and use the intercom to talk to Miss Blankenship, I walked over to open the door.

With the door open only a crack, I could see Miss Calvert, Miss Olson (one of Daddy's previous secretaries who by then was a copy-writer) and Mrs. Harris. They all were clustered around Miss Blankenship.

Miss Calvert and Miss Olson seemed flustered, almost weeping. Mrs. Harris clearly had taken charge. Someone asked if they should call a doctor. Mrs. Harris answered, "No, call the police and have them send the Medical Examiner."

Poor Miss Blankenship! I realized I had not actually ever talked to her, although she had been Daddy's secretary since New Years. Daddy had mentioned her when we spent Saturdays with him. I remembered seeing her name on the desk.

Silently I closed the door and backed away from it. I sat down on Daddy's swivel chair. The office door suddenly opened. I hoped someone was going to ask about lunch.

Instead it was Miss Olson, clearly startled to see me at Daddy's desk. She shouted at me, "Don't leave this office!"

I answered "I know that."

An hour later, at 1:30 P.M., I still had not been brought lunch. There was ice in a bucket, clean glasses and a carafe of water on the bar cart behind Daddy's desk. I filled a glass and had some ice water.

A few minutes later, Daddy came into his office along with the lady I had seen in the conference

room. He introduced her as "Faye Miller" and said she would be taking me to his apartment until he could get away for the afternoon. When Daddy inquired if I had eaten I told him "Not yet."

Daddy then asked Miss Miller to take me someplace for lunch.

She mentioned to him she had expected to eat with the clients. "Oh, sorry Faye, of course you should eat with Sally." He took money from his wallet and handed it to Miss Miller. Then Daddy turned and left his office.

"Hi Sally. My name is Faye Miller. I will be spending the afternoon with you." What a strange woman. Did she think I was 5 instead of 11?

As politely as possible I responded, "Yes, Miss Miller, my Daddy just introduced us."

"Oh, Sally, actually I prefer to be called 'Doctor Miller.' I am a market research psychologist."

All I could think was Faye Miller not only had no clue about anything, she was as pretentious an ass as I had met. I mean, Dr. Keighley was a psychiatrist, and actual medical doctor, not a lowly research psychologist. She encouraged me to call her "Dr. Wendy" instead of the more formal "Dr. Keighley." So where did this Faye Miller get off being so presumptuous and arrogant?

Dr. Miller did take me to lunch, at the coffee shop in the building, not The Court of the Twelve Caesars restaurant on the top floor.

While we were eating Faye (I could not bring myself to even think of her as "Dr. Miller" finally noticed my paper bag with my camp uniform.

"Sally, did you bring a change of clothing for tonight?" Now that was a logical and intelligent question. I had forgotten, as I made my cunning plan, that when I spent the last Saturday night with Daddy I had wet my pajamas slightly. I had brought those home, where I helped Carla wash them.

"No, Ma'am. All I have with me is this dress and my summer camp uniform."

"Sally, before we catch a cab let us walk down the street to a store to get you some new pajamas and underwear."

It was two blocks south and a half block west to a shop where Miss Miller was known. That was hardly a lingerie store where Mommy would buy clothing for me! Mommy might well buy her own nightgowns there. Sure, Faye Miller had proven herself pretentious and clueless, but I did appreciate that she knew attractive lingerie.

What Faye bought for me was very grown-up. She called it a "pajama set" although I remember Mommy and her friend Francine pointing to a similar set shown in a magazine, calling that a "baby doll." While we were in that store Faye also bought me two pair of cotton panties which were so thin they could have been silk.

As we rode the cab south on Seventh Avenue to Greenwich Village, I tried to remember if there were any clean gauze diapers left in the drawer and if I had a pair of my plastic panties for bed.

My reasoning was that Daddy knew I sometimes wet my bed. We did not talk about that. Like Bobby there was a rubber sheet on my bunk bed to protect my mattress. To me there was no point in trying to keep any of that a secret from Faye.

"Dr. Miller, Ma'am, the thing is I still sometimes wet my bed. At home I wear training pants and plastic panties to bed. I don't think I have any at Daddy's apartment. Could we stop somewhere and get me some? I have some money left."

Faye almost smiled before she answered. "Sally, I remember on the way there is a baby store called Carmela's Bambinos. We'll stop there. From there it will not be a long walk to your father's place." I assured her I liked to walk.