

Cindy Lou Who

The new child was a godsend. Linda and Bill's house transformed into the family unit intended for, as the anger and bitterness, which dominated their previous four years, gave way to an environment of love and commitment for the small baby.

The decisions made by Bill and Linda to rid of their separation attempts came to pay great dividends throughout Lou's first year of life. There was no time to drink, so their world remained clean and tranquil.

Bill looked into the old pine kitchen cabinets, mystified. The baby bottles used to nourish Billy many years ago stood dormant and dusty, and the presence of cans of baby's milk did not fill their kitchen counters this time. Lou was two months of age, yet Linda insisted that she handle this much without help.

She held tightly onto her daughter, not wanting to let go, and the two were inseparable. The isolated hours spent in the past now became a shared, wholesome existence with the small child, and Bill and their son could relax with this new order.

Bill understood that Linda needed to do this mostly by herself. He could help by seeing to Billy, allowing the privacy with Lou, keeping the hostile world away from her, as it should be.

Billy spent his afternoons at the Little Folks Day Care Center, directly down the street from their house, after the school bus from Kindergarten dropped him off there. It was Bill's task to retrieve him in the late afternoon, and reunite the family for the evening.

Billy smelled the aroma of warm sausage and pepperoni pizzas as he climbed into the four-door Buick, the boy finished with his eventful afternoon at the day care. "All right, Dad!" he exclaimed, buckling his self in, seated next to the cardboard boxes containing the scented treasures.

"I thought you would like that." Bill replied, then closing the car door shut.

Due to how close they lived to the day care, they arrived home almost immediately.

The fading day's sunshine provided the only lighting inside the old house. Bill and his son entered in a scuffle. "Ssh!" Billy commanded his father, reminding Bill that they might wake his four-month old sister with their noisy clatter.

"I'll go see if your mother wants any pizza, you go ahead and start," Bill instructed. Billy moved to the kitchen to claim the spicy pies at the oak table, where Bill had placed them.

After creeping quietly to the opposite side of the house, Bill slowly opened the bedroom door and peered inside. Sprawled across their bed was Linda, and next to her a small covered hump - their sleeping infant girl.

Linda's eyes opened and a weary smile embraced the late afternoon.

"Hey, Hon," Bill softly spoke, "How long have you guys been asleep?"

"She just woke up a little while ago," Linda explained. "I fed her and she went back to sleep."

"What about you?" Bill asked in concern. "Did you eat yet?"

"I don't know..." Linda mumbled with a hint of incoherence. "You make dinner?"

"We have pizza in the kitchen, want some?" Bill offered.

Linda looked down at their daughter in dismay. "What about her?" she asked, a weary

expression dominating her gaze.

Bill smiled. "Here, I'll take her to her crib," he said quietly, reaching down and pulling away the covers to reveal the sleeping youngster in her tattered, gray baby shirt.

Linda placed her hand on top of the baby as Bill gently scooped her up, pulling back as he raised the child higher into his cradling arms.

Bill turned to the dresser, still holding tightly onto Lou, and with what free movement he had left, picked up the nightshirt Linda had left there earlier. He turned and handed his wife the garment.

Linda sat up in her covers, clutching them tightly to hide underneath in Bill's presence. "Well?" she asked, peering up at him.

Bill looked away and started to back up; offering her what she was alluding to, the respect for her privacy. "See you in the kitchen." he replied as he moved from her presence out into the adjoining hall.

At the table, Billy greedily stuffed pizza into his small five-year-old mouth. Bill just shook his head as Linda began to scold him.

"Slow down!" she chided, and Billy smirked with a whimsical grin.

"How are you and the baby holding out?" Bill expressed his concern.

Linda bit some pizza and closed her eyes for an instant, savoring the freedom now to consume her food without interruption.

"I'm doing just fine!" she courageously declared, returning to Bill and their son.

Bill hesitated, concerned about Linda's health, but not wanting to interfere with what she was doing. *When Billy was an infant, Bill was all over these chores, serving only to alienate his wife.* He was not about to make this mistake again.

"Just tell me what I can do for you," Bill offered.