

One Glorious Afternoon

By

Bob Haider

“Oh, Dear!” sighed Angela as she glanced at her watch. “The children are due to arrive any minute!” she lamented, as she rushed from the shimmering gate at the front entrance, and traversed the expansive grounds toward the massive estate house. As she burst through the large double doors, she yelled, “Malakim, Malakim!”

He immediately popped up from behind a video machine where he was tending to some last minute maintenance, “Yes?”

Angela turned abruptly. “Ah! Come along!” she prodded him. “We’ve no time to waste!”

Malakim’s eyebrows arose in annoyance. “What would you like me to do next?”

“Make some punch. Pizza makes children very thirsty, and carbonated drinks are not good for them.”

“Okay,” he acknowledged with a nod, but hesitated.

“Yes, yes, what is it?” she asked with a degree of irritation.

“Has the pizza already been ordered?”

A wry smile crossed Angela’s face. “Don’t worry. I ordered plenty of pizza. We’ll feed you too,” as she smiled tenderly, “I ordered some of your favorite, Pepperoni.”

One Glorious Afternoon-2

Malakim flashed a wide grin.

“Now get on with it,” she directed him with a flick of her hand, “make that punch.”

Eons away in a suburban medical clinic, a young woman removed her eyeglasses and began to disrobe. Her facial expression conveyed a blank stare as she donned the surgical robe and lay down on the table. As a nurse assisted her into the stirrups, she glanced through the gaps in the blinds of the second floor window and saw that the sky had darkened considerably.

Dr. Anson entered and said, “Don’t worry about anything, Kate. It’ll all be over soon.” When Kate nodded in silent resignation, Dr. Anson attempted to sooth her anxiety. “When we’re finished, it’ll be like it never happened.”

Yeah, she whispered in the seclusion of her own thoughts. That’s what I wish--- that it never happened.

In the palatial mansion Malakim stirred a bright red liquid in a large bowl and wondered if the children would like the punch while knowing they’d much prefer the refreshing carbonated soda Angela would not allow. “One thing’s for sure,” he muttered, “hasn’t been a child through here yet that didn’t like the pizza. They enjoy the camaraderie too. There’s just something about a group of kids at a pizza party that brings out every ounce of enjoyment within them---and noise too,” he chuckled.

At the medical center, Dr. Anson informed his young patient that all had gone well and there were no complications. Kate nodded again in silent resignation. When Dr. Anson and the nurse stepped away to arrange disposal, Kate was alone, and, as she got dressed and put her glasses back on, she again peered out of the narrow spaces between

One Glorious Afternoon-3

the blinds. It was much darker now as a fierce summer rain pelted the window.

At the mansion Malakim yelled to be heard above the din. “Here they come!” as the decibel level soared in a crescendo of high-pitched screams when the children rushed into the large game room.

While Malakim held his hands over his ears, Angela smiled widely at the throng of youngsters. *Oh, the exuberance and energy of youth!* As she was about to close the door, a late arrival, a young boy wearing eyeglasses, came running up and squeezed inside. “Well, you just made it, little one!” she laughed, as the youngster beamed with joy and ran inside where a pizza lunch and an afternoon of fun awaited him.

This group of youngsters was very much like all those who had come before them. They ate their fill of pizza, and drank Malakim’s punch. They laughed and playfully teased one another while they shouted in boisterous enthusiasm.

“I’m gonna be a fireman one day so I can ride on a fire engine, and put out fires,” said one youngster proudly.

“That’s what I wanted to do!” protested one of the other young boys, as if only one of them could choose that vocation.

“Not me,” said one young girl, “I’m going to be a policewoman so I can rescue people and put bad guys in jail.”

“Neat,” cooed one of the children.

A young girl shouted. “I want to be Miss America and travel all around the world proudly wearing my crown.”

A tall, long-haired boy playing a video game nearby shook his head, and snickered, “Little Miss Wonderful.”

One Glorious Afternoon-4

“I’m going to be a baseball player and make five million dollars a year!” yelled another youngster.

“Nah!” interjected a tall, longhaired boy, as he turned from playing at a nearby video machine. “Basketball and endorsements is where the real money is. I’m going to play hoops for a living and I’ll be richer than all of you put together.”

“And I’m going to be a sports agent, and deduct a nice, large fee for myself,” another boy shouted with glee.

“Pepperoni anyone?” Malakim shouted above the clamor, as he arrived with a fresh plate of pizza. Before he could even set the plate on the table a half dozen hands reached for a slice, as Malakim quickly grabbed one for himself before it was devoured.

A sensitive young girl said, “I want to learn to play the piano so I can write beautiful songs that move people’s emotions.”

The boy at the video machine simply shook his head, and mumbled, “Geek.”

Angela refilled some glasses with punch, as the serious looking child with spectacles, who had been the last one to arrive, poignantly interjected. “I’m going to be a doctor and travel to a far away land to help poor people and try to make things a little better for them.”

Angela smiled at the darling, patted the top of his head, and, as she moved toward the next table, she wiped some moisture from her eyes with the back of her hand.

It went on like this as each child stated exactly what they wanted to do, and all the while, they playfully teased each other as children so often do. After lunch they played hide and seek as they explored the many rooms of the expansive mansion, none of which were off limits, not to these young innocents.

One Glorious Afternoon-5

When the day was done and it was time for the children to leave, each youngster, one by one, politely thanked Angela and Malakim. They thanked them for the pizza and the punch. They thanked them for a great time. But most of all, they were thankful for something they never thought they'd get a chance to do. On this one, glorious afternoon, with those who would have been their classmates and friends, they were able to talk--- about all the things they might have done.

The End