

## **TWO FRIENDSHIPS MOLDED BY FATE**

There are certain friendships that Fate seems to play a part in, conspiring to weave its strands in and out of certain people's lives. Such appeared to be the case that involved José and Josy with a Danish family named Sporon-Fiedler and, later on, with another family from Mexico.

### **PART II: THE MUN. STORY**

With the Muñ. family, Fate worked in a different but, also, a strange way. It all began back around 1935, when José was attending Secundaria No.1 High School. His classmates (with the exception of one boy) were all from Mexico City, and most of them lived in the area of the "Merced", which was the open market nearby. The exception was a fellow named Enrique Muñ. who came from Acapulco, a few hundred miles away. His family was affluent. Enrique's father owned one of the largest hardware stores in the heart of this rapidly expanding tourist city. He felt that no high school in Acapulco could offer his son the proper advantages, academic and otherwise, that an upper-class Mexican deserved. He therefore decreed that Enrique be sent to high school in Mexico City.

Here Enrique arrived, at age fifteen or sixteen, with several suitcases and large amounts of spending money. He also arrived with the determination to enjoy himself (and his new-found independence from his family) as much as possible.

After settling in at comfortable lodgings, he began attending classes. He made friends with several of his new classmates. Then he set out to have a good time. The supply of money from home kept coming, while Enrique paid little attention to school, preferring the life and activities of a bon-vivant.

This high school, however, turned out to be a serious place. Its courses were taught by a highly demanding faculty, and the work-load got increasingly heavier and heavier. Before long, many students began to organize themselves into study-groups. José himself joined one of these early on.

Eventually Enrique realized that he needed academic help. His grades had been dropping. Finally he got himself into a study-group, the same one that José had joined. It soon became apparent, however, that Enrique was not contributing anything to the group. The fellows decided that he was actually holding everybody back. They held a meeting without him and decided to ask Enrique to leave the group. Somebody had to inform him of this and, since José was the youngest member, they assigned this unpleasant task to him.

Accordingly, he met reluctantly with Enrique and informed him of the group's decision. Enrique did not take the news kindly. He parted with José on very chilly terms and, after that, they rarely saw each other at all. Once, four years

later, José, accompanied two of his Polytecnico teachers (Professor Bonnet and Professor Sokoloff) to Acapulco for a sea-creature collecting trip for the museum that the Polytecnico was establishing. While photographing sea-urchins they ran out of film. Dr. Bonet remembered the only store that sold color film in Acapulco at that time. He took José with him to buy some film, and it turned out to be the place owned by Enrique's father. Enrique, who happened to be working in the store that day, spotted José coming in and ignored him. When José finally managed to speak to him, Enrique responded in a very cool manner.

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Many years went by, and José put the incident behind him. He had long ago graduated from the high school, entered the Polytecnico, where he spent four years that he enjoyed very much, and then left Mexico to move with his family to the United States. After that, the army, marriage, children, pursuing a graduate degree, and embarking on a career occupied his time completely. As the years passed, he looked back often on his life in Mexico, but seldom, if ever, thought again about Enrique.

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1971 turned out to be an extremely busy year. José was deeply involved, at the time, with his additional duties as Assistant Dean of Penn's Dental School, as well as with his usual work as the VA's Chief of the Radioisotope Department. Josy, though teaching full-time, was also taking college courses to accumulate credits towards a "plus-thirty" status past her master's degree. By the time mid-December rolled around, they were both exhausted. José suggested that they could use a vacation during the coming Christmas holidays. He told Josy, "See what you can find out. Wouldn't it be nice to go to Acapulco for a few days?"

The day after submitting a term-paper for her course, Josy turned to **The Jewish Exponent**. She called the first number for a travel agency that she saw there. When a man answered, she announced that she needed two round-trip tickets for Acapulco.

"The next available flight I have is for August," he replied.

"No! I want to go next week. Around the 23rd or the 24th of December will be good," she answered.

"You mean for **next** year," he shot back.

"No, no, for **this** year – in the next two weeks!" she countered.

"Lady," came the answer, "You must be crazy! For Acapulco?? We've been all sold out since June! You need **at least** – at least six months' reservation in

advance!”

“O.K. All right, well, thank you anyway,” Josy replied, ready to hang up the phone.

“Now, wait a minute!” the voice called out. “I was going down my list of stand-by’s when you called. I just happen to have a cancellation for two tickets to Acapulco on December 23rd. You want them?”

“Well,” answered Josy, “Probably. I’ll have to ask my husband tonight when he comes home.”

“You don’t understand, Lady,” came the reply. “Do you want the tickets, yes or no? You have to tell me now, or I go down the list and make the next call.”

“We’ll take them,” Josy spurted out.

That night, when José arrived home from work, she announced to him, “Guess what! We’re going to Acapulco!”

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They boarded the plane about ten days later, on December 23rd, along with a group of thirty other people. The flight, direct from Philadelphia to Acapulco, took four and a half hours. Once having crossed into Mexican air space, they began to see, from their plane window, a magnificent sunset: streaks of gold and orange and coral, with lines of crimson and purple all fusing into breathtaking beautiful patterns across the western sky.

“Only south of the border,” Josy thought to herself. But suddenly she noticed, feeling it through the sleeve of her jacket from the seat beside her, that José’s arm was beginning to feel warmer and warmer to the touch. Placing her palm on his forehead, she realized that he was burning up with a high fever.

“What are we going to do?” she asked, frightened. “You’re sick! You have a high fever! I can tell! And here we’re going to a foreign country, and we’re not even there yet! And you’re sick!”

“Don’t worry!” he responded. “I probably just have a virus,” I’ll drink plenty of fluids when we get there, take aspirin, and rest on the beach.”

“You have to see a doctor,” Josy insisted.

“What can a doctor do for a virus?” José asked. “Nothing! He’d just prescribe rest and aspirin and plenty of fluids.”

“No, you’re going to see a doctor when we get to the hotel,” Josy argued.

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The plane landed, they disembarked, went through customs, and then, with the rest of the group, boarded a waiting bus for the Holiday Inn in downtown

Acapulco. Once installed in their hotel room, Josy brought up the subject of calling a physician. “If you won’t, then I will,” she insisted.

After some thought, José allowed, “Well, there is one name from Acapulco that I remember. A fellow who used to go to high school with me – Enrique Muñ. – and his father owned a large store here.”

“Let’s call him,” Josy demanded.

“I don’t know his number.”

“Well, look it up. Here’s a telephone directory,” and she reached into the drawer of the night table and pulled out the book. Hunting through the telephone directory, José finally located, at the heart of town, a surgical clinic under the name of Muñ.

“I wonder if this could be the same one?” he mused.

“Try him,” Josy insisted.

“But I don’t think I can!” replied José.

“Why not?”

“Well, it’s a long story. The last time I saw him must have been back in 1938, and we parted on not-such-good terms.”

“So?”

“So suppose he hangs up on me!”

“So he’ll hang up on you! Try!”

Reluctantly José dialed the number. A voice at the other end of the line answered, “Bueno?”

Hesitantly José began to speak in Spanish.

“I don’t know if you remember me,” he started.

“Who is this? Speak up,” came the reply.

“Well, back in high school in 1935 –”

“Yes! Yes! What’s your name? Who are you?”

“I’m at the Holiday Inn in Acapulco, and my name – well –”

“Your name,” commanded the voice authoritatively.

“José Rabinowitz.”

A long pause followed. “I’m coming right over!” boomed the voice. And within five minutes he arrived.

José opened the door to a portly man in his late forties, short and jolly, with wiry gray hair and twinkling eyes. He was smiling profusely.

“Amigo!” he shouted embracing José. “Que cosa increíble!” (What an incredible thing!) The two of them stood in the doorway, hugging each other and laughing heartily.

Enrique Muñ. was a jolly fellow. José introduced him to Josy and it turned out that he spoke some English, enough to serve for comprehension. He and José laughed together and chatted and reminisced about old times. (Not once did Josy

hear anything that sounded like a reference to Enrique's unhappy expulsion from the study group).

"Both of you are coming to my home," he announced. "I'll be sending somebody to drive you over. Around seven o'clock! Be ready! And don't make any plans for Christmas or for New Year's Eve. You're spending it all with us."

"But my husband?" Josy called out after him. "He has a fever!"

"Oh, let him drink plenty of fluids and take aspirin and rest – preferably on the beach," added Enrique with a twinkle as he made his way out the door.

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They had Christmas dinner at Enrique's home, meeting his wife Lilia, two of his three daughters (Lillian and Lulu, both in their early twenties) and his ten-year-old son Kiki. Another son, Samuel, married and then living in Mexico City, arrived later with his family. Enrique mentioned that his oldest daughter Rosa, who was a pediatrician and married with two daughters, was living in Mexico City working with the newly-elected Congress. With the support of her husband (who was an anesthesiologist), she had been extremely active in politics, and had recently been elected senator of the state of Guerrero. She would be coming in for New Year's Eve, Enrique announced, promising that José and Josy would meet her then.

The Muñ. home occupied both the second and third floors of a large building that stood on a busy corner at the heart of Acapulco's downtown section. Two blocks away from the beach, it served both as the family's home and (on the ground floor) as a surgical clinic.

That night, they all ate in a spacious dining room at the center of the second floor. This, unlike the other rooms surrounding it, was an area with no roof at all. It was completely open to the sky, and starlight provided most of the illumination. Two maids brought in course after course of a delicious Mexican meal, starting with sopa de tortillas (tortilla soup) and culminating in a beautifully colored Christmas cake.

After dinner, everyone went outside to the verandah, vine-covered and, itself, completely open to the sky. It was enclosed on all four sides, in typical Spanish fashion, by the other rooms of the house. Enrique's daughter Lillian got out her guitar and proceeded to sing Mexican folk songs for everyone's entertainment. Everybody joined in the chorus of each song and, by the time José and Josy were ready to leave to go back to their hotel, they had been made to feel that they were part of the family.

"When you come for New Year's Eve," Enrique announced as he accompanied them downstairs to the car where a driver was waiting, "be sure you're here early. No later than seven o'clock! After that it gets wild on New

Year's Eve. Everybody starts celebrating early. In the streets, they shoot guns up into the air and let the bullets fall wherever they may!

"A couple of years ago," he continued, "my oldest daughter Rosa got hit by a stray bullet. We were all sitting outside on the verandah, and the bullet came flying in over the top of the building. Can you imagine! Lucky that the clinic was downstairs. I had to operate on her right away! Fortunately, I got the bullet out of her lung. Now on New Year's Eve we all sit inside!"

On New Year's Eve, Enrique's relative picked up José (now completely recovered from his virus) and Josy promptly at 7:30, as previously agreed upon. He drove them to Enrique's home and, again, they spent a wonderful evening celebrating with the family. This time Rosa, Enrique's oldest daughter, had come in from Mexico City with her husband and children, and the festivities were even more festive than last time.

The following day, José and Josy left Acapulco and flew back with the tour group to Philadelphia. It had been a lovely and memorable vacation. They wrote to thank Enrique for his wonderful hospitality, but they got no reply.

"Mexicans are very poor letter writers," José reminded Josy.

They returned to their usual busy routine and the memory of their vacation in Acapulco began to fade.

A year and a half went by. Then, early in June of 1973, José left for a week to attend the Gordon Research Conference in New Hampshire. (This was something that he did regularly almost every year.) School was still in session for Josy, so she remained home in Philadelphia.

That Tuesday morning was extremely hot and sticky. Around 7:45 Josy was just coming out of the shower before leaving for school when the phone rang.

"Acapulco calling for Dr. Rabinowitz," the operator announced.

"He's not here," Josy answered, "He's out of town. Can they call back next week? I don't speak Spanish."

"One moment, please."

A hurried conference at the other end of the line and then, seconds later, the operator continued. "They'll talk to you anyway."

A man's voice came excitedly over the wire. Loud and booming, he spoke in rapid Spanish for about three minutes, then, without waiting for a reply, hung up.

José returned from New Hampshire the following Friday, when Josy told him about the call. "I think we're getting company," she related. "From Acapulco. I think it must have been Enrique. I think he's coming, but I don't know if he's coming alone or with his wife, or when. But I'm pretty sure somebody must be coming to visit us!"

Sure enough, the following week Enrique arrived. He called from New Jersey and José and Josy met him for dinner. With him was his second-oldest

daughter Lilian, the one who had played the guitar for them in Acapulco at Christmas time. During dinner, Enrique explained the situation to them.

Lilian, who had been working at a bank a few years back, had suddenly announced that she wanted to go to medical school, just like her older sister. When her boyfriend heard the news, he warned her, “You know, I’m not sure that I want a wife who is better educated than I am.” Then, to her astonishment, he added, “If you go to medical school, you stand a good chance of losing me!” To this, Lilian had replied, “Well, that’s just a chance I’ll have to take!”

Enrique had then sent Lilian to Guadalajara. There she attended the Polytecnico Medical School. Afterwards, with the help of influential friends, Enrique arranged for Lilian to serve her “internship” at the Acapulco Country Club. This happened to be located just across the street from the villa that the Muñ.’s were in the process of constructing, and they moved into this new home during the few months that Lilian served as “first-aid” at the club. All she had to do was walk across the street to perform her duties there. During this period Lilian set an occasional fractured bone, attended to a few cases of sunstroke and, once, even administered first aid to a drowning victim.

Now, Enrique had brought Lilian to a hospital in Cherry Hill. Here she was to observe and assist in the emergency room, a plan he had arranged through a “connection” that he had at the hospital. This experience, Enrique explained, would serve as Lilian’s “residency.” After this, she should be ready to come back to Acapulco and work as a full-fledged physician at the family clinic. Since Cherry Hill was so close to Philadelphia, Enrique explained, José and Josy could keep an eye on her for the coming year.

Astounded, José tried to reason with his former classmate. First of all, he enumerated, the medical “training” that Lilian had so far received was little. It would take far greater variety of academic and clinical experience to prepare her adequately. Furthermore, although Lilian would be most welcome to come visit as often as she liked (she could even stay at their home if she wanted) it was unrealistic to expect anyone, especially from twenty or thirty miles away, to be responsible for a twenty-five-year-old woman, especially one who did not speak the language and had her own ideas of what independence meant. Enrique pooh-poohed both arguments.

“You watch her,” he kept repeating. “Just see that she doesn’t get into any trouble!” Those were his last words before saying good-bye and returning to Mexico.

José and Josy did see Lilian several times that year. She even came once for a weekend visit but, for the most part, they heard from her only rarely and often when they called, she was unavailable.

One year later, the following June, however, Lilian suddenly called. Her

year of residency was up, she told them. Her parents, along with some of the family, were coming to take her back home. As a matter of fact, she explained, they would be arriving that very evening, and in two more days, they would all be heading back for Mexico.

Hurriedly, Josy suggested a farewell party. “Come to our house tomorrow night,” she offered. “Bring everybody with you, and we’ll all celebrate together!”

“I made some friends here in Cherry Hill, too, that I have to say good-bye to,” Lilian informed her.

“Well, bring everybody then!” Josy added. “Bring as many as you like! They’ll all be welcome!”

The next evening, around six o’clock, three limousines pulled up to the house on Juniper Road. Twenty-five people got out and came in for the party. Enrique was there, as were his wife Lilia, their daughter Lulu, their sons Samuel and Kiki, an assortment of cousins, and several American friends. Everyone filed into the house and the festivities began.

Among the group Josy noticed a serious young man, an American wearing a suit and sporting a dark beard. This fellow spoke little, though when he did, it became clear that he was fluent in Spanish. Josy approached him and tried to make him feel welcome.

“Did you have trouble finding our place?” she asked.

“Oh, no,” he replied. “I grew up not far from here –in Wynnefield, actually” (to her inquiring glance).

“I used to teach in Wynnefield,” Josy responded. “Where did you go to school?”

“Overbrook.”

“And before that?”

”Beeber Junior High.“

“Beeber Junior High? That’s where I used to teach.”

Suddenly a look of recognition dawned on the young man’s face. “Mrs. Rabinowitz!” he shouted. “Mrs. Rabinowitz! You taught me English in eighth grade! You were the one with the tape recorder! You made us memorize poems and then recite them into the tape recorder! I remember you!”

“Cover your beard,” Josy retaliated. And, when he did so, holding both his hands up to his face, she cried out, “Harvey! Harvey!”

Harvey, who had been in her English class at Beeber Junior High School many years before, had gone on, in high school and then in college, to major in Spanish. He had become a foreign language teacher and, among the classes that he now taught in Cherry Hill, was one in evening school called **English For Foreign Students**. There, Lilian enrolled. Liking his looks, she soon noticed that every evening when class was over, Harvey would leave to go out for coffee with a



couple of the students, a Spanish-speaking couple who seemed very friendly with him. She soon managed to cultivate the friendship of the woman and, before long, Lilian was being invited to also go out after class with them for coffee. From this, a friendship and, apparently, something more serious had developed.

The day after the party, Lilian and all her family left for Mexico. Not long afterwards, a letter arrived thanking José and Josy for the party, It mentioned how much Lilian missed the United States. As a postscript, she quoted a few lines from a poem that, she explained, had been written by Harvey.

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The following January Lilian returned to the Philadelphia area for a short visit. Bringing Harvey with her, she came to visit José and Josy. She wanted them to know that she and Harvey would be getting married during the coming summer. She was converting to Judaism, she announced, and the wedding would be taking place under the auspices of two rabbis (one Mexican, the other American). It would be held at the Acapulco Princess Hotel. (When the time arrived, José and Josy were unable to attend, but a few of their friends who had met Lilian during her stay in Philadelphia did go, and they reported back that it was a most glamorous and elegant event.)

Lilian and Harvey moved to Cherry Hill. Harvey continued to teach Spanish at the high school there, while Lilian devoted her time to studying for her medical board exams. José and Josy saw them frequently, and they seemed very happy. That such a charming series of events should end less than happily is very sad indeed.

Unfortunately, Lilian failed her medical boards. She took seven tries and still failed. She blamed this on her “language problem” and she took more classes in English, but her progress here was slow, as she and Harvey spoke only Spanish at home.

The years went by, and Lilian kept taking her board exams over and over again, only to continue failing them. Her scores each time remained at a consistent level. It was apparent to José that she was extremely deficient in her medical and scientific background. He tried to advise her. First, he suggested that she take courses in Biochemistry and Physiology. Once or twice she tried this, but never stayed on till the end of either course.

“It’s not that, it’s my English!” she kept insisting.

During this time, she and Harvey made several trips back to Acapulco. Lilian badly wanted them to relocate in Mexico. Her father, she assured Harvey, would buy him his own language school, which Harvey could then run and where he could teach English. Enrique would see to it that the place was officially

accredited. Harvey, however, wanted no part of this. “Live in a place where you get everything by bribery!” he scoffed. “Money under the table! It’s not for me!” He made it clear that he had no wish to live anywhere but in the United States.

A son Eric was born to them around 1980. Then Harvey got a better-paying teaching job in Atlantic City, and they moved from Cherry Hill to Ventnor. Harvey’s parents, who lived close by in Longport, gave them a property they owned near the bay. Here they rented out the top two stories, while they themselves lived on the “porch floor”, as they called it.

“Atlantic City is no place to bring up children,” Harvey used to say whenever they came to Philadelphia to visit. “Gambling! Crime! Prostitution! We’re going to move away from this town as soon as we can.” But it never happened. By the time their second child Jason was born, Harvey and Lilian were not getting along at all. José and Josy were asked to be the baby’s godparents, an honor they gladly accepted. They attended the ceremony for the child’s circumcision, which was held at the home of Harvey’s brother, an affluent dentist, but it was clear, even on this occasion, that the relationship between Harvey and Lilian had already deteriorated and grown quite bitter.

Back in the 1980’s was the last time that José and Josy ever saw Enrique. They were leaving Acapulco after José had attended a scientific congress there. Enrique, along with his daughter Lulu and her boyfriend (a young physician whom Lulu would later marry and then divorce) drove them to the airport. The plane was a bit late in departing. Just before the call came to board, Enrique turned to José and thrust an envelope into his hands.

“This is for you to use – to get what Lilian needs,” he announced. “See to it that the Medical Board gives Lilian her license!”

“What?” cried José, unable to believe his ears.

Aghast, he opened the envelope to find five thousand dollars inside.

“I can’t take this,” he exclaimed.

“This should be enough, don’t you think so?” Enrique asked. “Do you need more?”

José passed the envelope back to him.

“I can’t take this,” he repeated. “It doesn’t work that way in the States. She has to pass her exams, that’s all there is to it. I’ll keep advising her all I can, but I know she won’t listen. She needs more background and training. I’ll keep trying, I promise you, but I can’t take your money.”

Whereupon Enrique reached over, grabbed José by the collar and, shaking him, began to shout. “What kind of friend are you? We were classmates, remember?” he stormed. “You owe this to me!”

Both Lulu and her boyfriend together had to pull him away from José’s throat.

“Remember, you owe me!” Enrique continued to shout, as the other two held his arms while José and Josy boarded the plane. It was the last time that they ever saw him.

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By the early 1980’s, when their third child (a son whom they named Armand) was born, the situation had grown so bad that Lilian and Harvey were barely speaking to each other. Both went for marriage counseling. Several of Lilian’s friends (themselves single mothers) advised Lilian to get a divorce.

“What do you need him for?” they counseled her. “It’s the age of the woman now! You can manage without him!” And since they spoke Spanish, it was to them that she turned for advice and comfort.

One afternoon Lilian took the baby and went to the home of one of these friends. From here she called Josy long distance, asking her for advice.

“I need to talk to you. But please don’t tell Harvey I called,” she pleaded. Just then the baby pulled on the telephone wire and the conversation got disconnected. Josy hung up waiting for Lilian to call back. When the phone rang, though, it turned out to be Harvey.

“I don’t know where Lilian is,” he said. “She went out with the baby. Have you heard from her?”

Just then the operator interrupted, saying, “Call from Mrs. Lilian M. We’re trying to reconnect. Please hang up!” Harvey was furious.

Soon afterwards, they separated. Both retained attorneys, and they became embroiled in the most bitter of divorce proceedings. These dragged on and on for years, costing them both thousands and thousands of dollars in legal fees. Harvey took out a court order forbidding Lilian from ever taking the boys out of the country. He was afraid that she would move back to Mexico and that, once she had left with them, he would never see the children again. The boys lived with their mother during the week but then, on weekends, they went to stay with Harvey at his mother’s home in Longport.

Later, he tried to gain custody of the children, asking the judge to declare Lilian an unfit mother. She called José, asking that he write a letter on her behalf claiming that she was a good mother, which José did. When Harvey found out about this, he was furious. By the time that Eric’s bar mitzvah took place, Harvey insisted that neither José nor Josy be included among the guests. “I’m not paying if they come,” he told Lilian. And so they were not invited.

The divorce proceedings continued to drag on and on for years. Both Harvey and Lilian became financially and emotionally drained. Harvey especially became increasingly bitter and vindictive. He deliberately refrained from making any

repairs to the house with the porch floor. Eventually it fell into such disrepair that the authorities in Atlantic City condemned the place. This forced Lilian to move out, and the children, all of them in their teens by now, went to live with their father. Lilian, meanwhile, rented a small flat, taking care to keep her new address a secret from Harvey for fear of any further vengeance he might take. She saw her children only occasionally.

Lilian grew ever more frustrated with her inability to pass the medical board exams. Lilian never did pass them. Nothing that José advised her to do in this regard did she ever make an effort to try.

“You’re especially weak in Biochemistry,” he continued to tell her on several occasions. “Why don’t you at least sit in on a course or two? It happens that I’ll be giving the course at Penn this coming September. You can sit in every day.”

“But how would I get there?” she pleaded.

“You can take the casino bus to Philadelphia and back, and it won’t cost you anything.”

She never came.

“I’ll send you some books for you to study,” José then offered. He mailed several volumes to her. Later she admitted, rather sheepishly, that she hadn’t looked at any of them.

Twice, José called her long distance to inform her that he had heard of job openings where the training might benefit her. One opening was in a clinic in a Spanish-speaking neighborhood not far from where she lived. José had just met the director and already had put in a good word for Lilian. She never went to the interview. In no way did she ever attempt to make up for the experience she lacked in order to pass her medical boards.

On one trip back to Acapulco, she told José, Enrique had allowed her to assist him in surgery at the family clinic. In the middle of the operation, however, he ordered her to leave. She was refusing to follow his directions and, as he told her, the patient on the operating table was actually endangered by her presence. A huge argument developed, and a couple of the aides had to escort her out.

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In 1995 word came from Acapulco that Enrique had died. José and Josy phoned to offer condolences to the family. Lilian flew to Acapulco for the funeral. She remained there for a couple of months, then finally returned to Atlantic City.

As of this writing, she sees her children occasionally. Sometimes, when she is called in the last minute, she does substitute teaching in the public schools there. She drifts from one low-paying job to another. She claims that she would willingly

leave the States and return to Mexico, except for the fact that she would lose her children completely if she does.

“They no longer respect me,” she complains to anyone who will listen. “All I want is their respect. They don’t respect me because I have an accent!”

During a one-hour telephone call between Atlantic City and Havertown, Josy advised Lilian to take a few courses so that she could acquire a permanent teaching certificate.

“In this way” she told Lilian, “you’ll at least be able to get steady employment with long-term benefits. It will only take you about a year to get the requirement in education courses.” But Lilian refused, declaring, “I have no money.”

“Then talk to the director of the college and see what arrangements she can make for a loan or a part-time job while you study. Many graduate students do that.”

“I have no energy for anything,” came the response. “I’m just completely drained!”

Lilian admits that she feels it really is up to others to help her. After all, this is how she has been solving problems all her life. “I just have no energy myself!” she complains constantly. When other friends occasionally do find a job for her, she stays in it only a week or two, then leaves and continues to drift.

Harvey, on the other hand, still teaches in the public schools in the Atlantic City area. With the help of his mother, he is managing satisfactorily financially. But emotionally he remains increasingly bitter and angry at the world. His main concern seems to be to hunt down Lilian (who tries to hide out from him in an attempt to avert any further vengeance against her, imagined or real, on his part).

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Was it Lilian’s pampered upbringing that led her to this sorry state? Or her envy of a successful and overly-achieving sister that, early on, drove her to aspire academically beyond the limits of her own innate ability? Or, more likely, a father who insisted on creating and buying every opportunity for her along the way, bribing wherever he could to get her past any hurdle that might, in itself, have given her the experience and training that she needed and, also, perhaps have helped shape her into an individual who could achieve on her own.

Was it that she and Harvey came from two such different backgrounds – different countries of origin, different religions, different language backgrounds, different cultures and backgrounds and differing personal interests? Or perhaps it was that she and Harvey both lacked the initiative and the desire to make their marriage work.

That Fate intervened in bringing this story into the lives of José and Josy remains the only thing that they can be totally certain of.