

PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

**PLASTIC IS  
WHAT  
PLASTIC  
DOES**

Philip Marraccini

PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

© Philip Marraccini 2006

WGA West Writers Guild

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

*Cover Photo by Peterson Design*

*Graphics and Formatting Melody B Thorp*

*Sweetwater Publishers Homestead, FL*

*Available on Amazon.com & Kindle.com*

**ISBN 13: 9781515203889**

**ISBN 10: 1515203883**

Printed in the United States of

America 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

WGA 1910368

FIRST EDITION

Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in, or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise), without the prior written permission of the copyright owner and author.

The scanning, uploading, and distribution of this book via the Internet or via any other means without the permission of the Author, copyright owner, is illegal and punishable by law. Please purchase only authorized electronic editions and do not participate in or encourage electronic piracy of copyrightable material.

Your support of the author's rights is appreciated.

*DEDICATION*

*Thanks to my Mother and Father, Mary and Philip Marraccini, who taught me the disciplines of life while encouraging me to develop into a creative being. A salute to my older sister, Filippa for teaching me to be tough, thus preparing me to meet life's challenges.*

*For my Dear Wife Patty who allowed, and encouraged me to run with my dreams, often at the sacrifice of her own. To my children, Philip, Christina and Michelle, when under duress, displayed their talents along with their mother, on stage in several of my movies. A salute to my many friends and family members who shared their time and skills. We had fun didn't we?*

*A special thanks to members of the Lamplighter Writing Group from Homestead, Florida for help and encouragement.*

PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES



PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

**PLASTIC IS  
WHAT  
PLASTIC  
DOES**

Philip Marraccini

PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

Chapter One

**LIFE IS A BEACH...OR IS IT?**

*Strange*, Jim thought, *wherever you go, there is always something to remind you of where you have been.* Miami was as windy as Seattle. He pushed his windblown hair off his forehead, where it settled back into a wave. He smiled as he lifted his face to the warm breeze. He realized he would never go back to Seattle, too much rain for him. He loved it here with the white sandy beaches, the prevailing sun, and usual cloudless sky. He refused to dwell on the hurricane season. He could always head inland when one threatened but not to worry today. As far as he was concerned things were perfect. He adjusted his trousers where they had been pinching his waist, straightened his tie and kept his coat folded carefully over one arm. He wished he was wearing his T-shirt that bore the legend “Life is a Beach.” He smiled again and strode confidently on, his shoes making little slapping sounds on the sidewalk.

He thought of his job as a paramedic. He realized he loved rushing people to the hospital in time to save them, at least most of them, he told himself wryly. To add to his love of life in Florida was his part-time job as a lifeguard on the beachfront at a small seaside hotel. God, he thought, he had never seen so many “undressed” females in his life wearing their next to nothing bikinis.

Some of them had exhibited weird shapes. He often wondered what gave them the courage to wear a skimpy bikini with a roll of fat around the middle or a bugling

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

stomach coupled with chunky thighs. Oh well, he shrugged. Glancing at his reflection in a shop window, admiring his muscular form on his way to sublime happiness.

How lucky he had been to meet Inga, he kept telling himself. It had begun with long conversations, laughter and all of a sudden he was falling in love. “Inga” he said, tasting the word and letting it linger on his lips. Beautiful Inga. His heart rate increased as he thought of what she could do to him with just her blue eyes, the soothing color of the fascinating water surrounding a tropical isle. He smiled to himself at his thoughts.

Without warning he was facing a sign. “Adult Novelty Shop.” The sign jarred him out of his contemplative mood and brought him face-to face with reality. He pondered the thought, how disgusting and only two doors away from a toy store. He quickened his steps to get by it as fast as he could. That shouldn’t be allowed. The laws in Florida were certainly more lax than other places he had been. He shook his head in disgust. What about the children?

He said aloud. “What if they were my children?” Someday he thought, someday he would be a father. Maybe it would happen soon. He told himself that men have biological clocks as well as women and he guessed his was winding down, slow but sure.

He almost missed something else he’d never paid attention to before. A sign in a little cobwebbed window that read. “Madame Leah’s Palm Reading Parlor. See your Future: Up-to-date predictions.” Jim never believed in this kind of thing but the words, “See Your Future,” tempted him. Something was compelling him to open the door. He entered cautiously going up the stairs.



## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

Once inside the room he could scarcely make out anything in the dim light. Finally, he focused on what he thought to be candlelight coming through a gauze curtain. Squinting in the dim light, he could make out the figure of a woman. She seemed to be in some kind of a trance. She sat leaning towards the center of the table, her body and hands motionless.

“Ahem.” He hoped the clearing of his throat would catch her attention but she remained silent, as if she was unaware of Jim’s presence. Jim glanced at his watch, wondering if he had enough time to be fooling around like this.

“Hello,” he called. “If you’re busy I can come back another time.”

Her soft, pleasant voice answered. “Come in Jim, I’ve been expecting you.” He was momentarily surprised. Her voice was not raspy like an old Gypsy hag he had imagined would be in a place like this. Parting the curtains he choked on his words.

“How, how? How did you know my name?”  
Well now, she surely is aware of my stuttering.

“I am Madame Leah,” her voice still controlled and soft. “Relax. Don’t be afraid to enter. Please sit down.”

Jim walked towards her. He glanced at the chair with the red velvet cushion across from her. His eyes darted around the room taking in every detail. Aside from the gauze curtain and the chair, he continued to inventory the contents in the mystical tent, in which Madame Leah was seated. It was like something out of Arabian Nights. The only other item in the room was a dark wood chest with candlesticks on it, holding two burning candles. There was some kind of

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

leaves in a brass bowl. And of course, as he'd expected, her crystal ball which was perched in the middle of the table.

He realized she was younger than he expected. In fact she was sort of pretty, except for being a little on the pudgy side. Her smile showed perfect white teeth with a gold crown on one of her upper incisors. Jim wondered if the gold cap was real or something she snapped on before he entered. Her gold earrings reminded him of an old foreign movie he saw as a child.

Again the fortune-teller motioned toward the empty chair in front of her. He sat down laying his coat carefully across his lap. Madame Leah took his hands in hers. He could not control the trembling. Now the only thing separating them was the small table with the glowing crystal ball. At second glance the ball seemed to dominate the room. Jim palms began to sweat.

Madame Leah's soft voice had a tranquilizing effect on him so he began to relax.

"So you want to know your future, your immediate future?" Jim felt the warmth of her body penetrate his soul through the touch of her hands. Figuring he had nothing to lose but fifteen dollars, the price advertised on her door, he opened his heart as he told his story.

He spoke of Inga, a stunning model, who had stolen his heart. "I'm going to propose to her tonight at the best restaurant in town. Chateau Pierre's down the street a bit."

Madame Leah kept her dreamy eyes on him and nodded several times. Jim stopped talking, released her hands and fumbled in his coat pocket. He removed a pink velvet box and opened it with confidence. He held it out to Madame Leah to see. Worry lines wrinkled her forehead. Noting the change in her expression, he checked the ring again.

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

It seemed smaller each time he looked at it. He was confident it was a damn good diamond, regardless of its size. The sparkle was enough to blind a person, he thought.

“It’s not much,” he stammered, “b-b-but it’s all I can afford. I wish it could be...”

“Stop right there,” Madame Leah interrupted, “I can tell by your aura that your heart is a greater gift than any shiny stone.”

Jim experienced a wave of excitement. He blurted out his hope to her. “Then she’ll feel it won’t she? And she’ll say yes?”

She gave him a look of sympathy, it was apparent in her eyes and in a comforting voice. “I’m afraid not. You see Jim, Inga is not ready. She’s living in a plastic world filled with glitz and glitter. She entertains unreachable expectations. Inga cares nothing for friendship or true love. For now she is incapable of making a commitment to you or anyone. She’s so caught up in her glamorous career at present time, nothing else matters to her.”

Jim sat back in shock. She had to be wrong about Inga. He became angry and hoped to escape before the Gypsy woman had a chance to say anything else against his Inga. He slid his chair back and for a moment was motionless, staring at the bearer of ill fortune.

The gypsy continued. “In the near future someone will enter your life or perhaps re-enter your world. This someone will be worthy of your love and love you in return. Stay focused. You will find the happiness you seek, but not with Inga, not with her at this time.”

Jim jumped out of the chair and grabbed his coat before it fell to the floor. “Oh no! Lies, All lies. You’re wrong. I’ll prove it to you. You don’t know my Inga. You

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

don't know what you're talking about!" He picked up the ring and jammed it in the pocket of his coat. He took fifteen dollars from his worn wallet, and slammed the money on the table as he turned to leave. Before he could take a step, Madame Leah grabbed his hand and kissed it. She pressed the money into his palm and uttered her final words of encouragement.

"Jim I wish I was wrong. Please take your money back. Please remember me when your dream does come true."

Jim ran out of the Arabian tent of doom. He wiped the imprint of Madame Leah's lipstick from his hand and backed down the stairs. Stepping on some loose stones just outside the door, he slid almost falling. He slammed the door shut and shook his fist at it shouting, "I should call the Zoning Department. They should arrest you for code violations. You're nothing but a fraud."

Behind the door Madame Leah dropped her head in her hands as tears dripped through her fingers. She thought of what she'd told Jim and how she hated being the bearer of such bad news. As she wept about Jim's upcoming disaster, she thought about the downside of her profession. She wiped away the tears, lifted her head and shrugged. Oh well, *someone has to do it... that's my job.*

Jim regained his composure, placing the lipstick-stained handkerchief in the pocket of his pants. He checked his wristwatch. Only five minutes until he would be with his Inga. The thought was enough to turn his knees into jelly. He took a few steps towards the restaurant. Out of nowhere, a middle-aged drunk staggered into his path. They brushed shoulders, Jim grabbed the man preventing a serious fall to the pavement.

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

The drunk mumbled, “thank you kind sir. By the way, you wouldn’t possess a few extra bucks for a bottle of Crackling Rose, would you? You see my woman left me and I’m in need of some company. You do understand what I mean?” Jim glanced back toward Madame Leah’s parlor as he remembered the fifteen dollars, and murmured to himself, “Dirty money from that awful woman.”

Without a second thought, Jim gave the money to the intoxicated man. “Here take this. I don’t want to infect my wallet with her filthy fee.”

Not understanding a word Jim had said, the drunk, elated with his small fortune, tipped his hat. He stumbled to the stairs of the adult store, sat down and counted his money. Jim focused on his mission to meet Inga. Neither of the men were aware the owner of the adult store was redecorating his display window.

Chapter Two

**THE LAST SUPPER**

Although Chateau Pierre was only a short distance from Madame Leah's parlor, it seemed like an eternity before Jim finally arrived. Surveying the exterior of the building, he was impressed with what he saw though it seemed too ornate for this part of town. Jim thought it was overdressed, kind of how he felt at the moment. Shrugging his shoulders, his fleeting thoughts were left outside the building and he entered the huge foyer. There was glass everywhere and crystal chandeliers hung from the ceiling while all the walls were mirrored. He carefully examined himself in one of the mirrors, smoothing down his hair while nervously waiting for Inga. Within seconds the hostess approached Jim.

He watched her undulate towards him as he had a fleeting thought, that her dress probably cost way more than his suit. She smiled with white, even teeth.

"I am Guinevere, sir. And your name is...?"

"Uh, uh Jim, No James, James Smith."

"Welcome to Chateau Pierre," still smiling as she led him to a small podium. She stood behind it and went over a list of names. "Ah, yes. You're down for a six-thirty, party for two. Is that correct Mr. Smith?"

"Hmmm yes, my date and I, I mean the future Mrs. Smith, she should be here any minute." He checked his watch

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

seeing it was six-thirty on the dot. Wow, he thought, I just called her my future wife.

Picking up on the sentiment, the hostess replied. “Well it seems this calls for a celebration.” She snapped her fingers and the headwaiter appeared in an instant.

“Garcon when the soon-to-be Mrs. Smith arrives make sure the most romantic table in the place is prepared. And include our special dessert as our gift on this happy occasion. And you Mr. Smith may wait in the lounge for your lucky lady. I will escort her to you as soon as she arrives.”

Fighting his elation and trying to be cool Jim nodded. “That will be nice, thank you.” Her Cordial invitation was real.

The thought of a smoke filled bar was not his idea of enjoyment. For God’s sake as a paramedic for the fire department, I get enough smoke at work. Maybe it’s what people were supposed to do in a fancy place like this, drink and smoke. I’ll be happy with a glass of ginger ale.

To his surprise the lounge was smoke free. Thank God, I forgot about the new anti-smoking ban. Jim looked around, and observed several people seated at the bar. The women seemed comfortable on their plush stools. A few couples were snuggled in cozy red leather booths with soft light from candles. His heart floated around in his chest at the sight. He wished it was Inga with him in one of the booths. Then he realized he shouldn’t imagine her in a booth in the dark. She loved the light, especially on the runway. She would be coming soon and at last they could sit at a table together.

His thoughts drifted to the seat where he always sat in the audience and cheered when she strutted out in skimpy underwear. The cameras loved her and her magazine cover

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

photos littered her apartment. He didn't mind much that other men were cheering for her and gawking at her charms.

He knew only the two of them would be riding in her limo to her apartment. He'd stay until she told him to go. Sometimes he was there only for an hour or more, perhaps enough time for him to paint her toenails or brush her white angora cat. Anything she let him do was an honor and a privilege. She always let him kiss her cheek before he left. It was the little bit of heaven he lived for, now he expected more.

He waited thinking of the day they met. She was one among many models in the park that day. Inga was the one who stood out as far as he was concerned. A magazine assignment was doing some photo shots of girls in lacy gowns and ridiculous hairdos. Their faces were made up like mannequins without expression. Inga's face was the exception. She captured him with that face and he offered up his love like a benediction from his heart and soul.

God must have been smiling on him that day because he was the only one who got to help her with a trunk she couldn't open.

"My job depends on this she cried. How will I ever get anywhere if I can't be ready with my clothes on time?" She stared at the helpless photographers who probably had never seen a hammer. Jim was immediately drawn to her.

"I may be able to help. My tools are in my car right outside the park." He ran all the way out and came back with a red toolbox. He unfastened it and took out a tool that could fix anything, according to the salesman on TV, "this handy dandy item is a miracle tool." Jim hoped it would work, at least this time. He held his breath and when he inhaled again the odor of honeysuckle greeted him. Inga was standing beside him.



## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

The wonder tool delivered, success on the first try, the lock dislodged. Inga opened the lid and laughed. She threw her arms around Jim.

“I could sure use someone like you.” She backed out of his arms and eyed him up and down. “You’re pretty strong and quite handsome. Why don’t you come to my apartment and do some things I can’t do myself?” She laughed and Jim realized he was hooked. He was ready to go and would do anything she desired. He wondered if his tongue was hanging out, because he felt like a puppy that had just found a new owner. The photographers were all laughing and making lewd remarks, but she was still looking at him and he never wanted her to stop.

He stayed at her beck and call: doing errands, painting the apartment, plus keeping her beat-up car in working order. Inga spoke with determination.

“Someday I’m going to be famous, own a limo to take me everywhere, live in big lavish apartment with white fur rugs and expensive furniture.”

He continued to be her handyman all during her rise to the supermodel runway. He carried suitcases and trunks filled with her posh outfits. Things that mustn’t touch the ground or else he would become the target of one of her nasty tirades. She’d insult everyone in her entourage, especially Jim, but to him it was music. She even cursed at him a few times and one time lashed out when he dropped her makeup case.

“You idiot! Are you retarded? How can the paramedics allow you to handle sick people? You’d probably drop them too.”

He had to admit it really hurt him. Later in her apartment he begged her to forgive him.

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

“Oh, Jim, I’m not a bad person, am I?”

“No, you’re not. You’re a wonderful person. I understand you didn’t mean to say those things to me today. I know you lo...lo...lo... me.”

“Oh yes, I like you, I guess. Now be a sweetie and run my bath will you? Wash your hands before you touch anything in there.

He was amused and had to laugh at the way she played with him, pretending he was her slave. She started to call him her slave man. How could she not love him? His soul was generating so much love for her, he was sure that she loved him. Sometimes he would imagine that she had another man in her apartment, but he always dismissed the idea for he was the only slave man she needed. Yes, there were tender moments as well. Jim remembered that special day when Inga let down her guard and revealed the dark past about her childhood and coming of age.

“I remember growing up on my parent’s farm in Sweden, times were tough and we were poor. My parents struggled to keep me fed and clothed. There was never enough but there was plenty of love to go around. We were happy together; however, the trials and struggles of poverty took their toll on my mother...” Inga stopped speaking and Jim deduced she was back there in that love-filled home.

“What happened?”

“She died when I was almost seven years old. I can remember how broken hearted I was. I clung to my father and stayed close to him. Every time I thought about my mother I cried, but thanked God I had my father who loved me. He loved my mother so much. He told me everything would be all right because we had each other, but a few months later he died of a broken heart.

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

“I was shocked and grief stricken, I didn’t understand what was going on around me. Uncle Nils and Aunt Ulva came and took me to their house. They said I could live with them. The first day I was there they explained what chores I’d be required to do daily. They never told me they wanted to help me in any way. They never said they cared. I found out soon enough they didn’t possess a loving bone in their bodies. Uncle Nils was so lazy. All he ever did was sleep on the sofa. When he was awake he would shout at me for not getting the dishes clean enough or for not sweeping up every piece of dust under his smelly sofa. Sometimes he would hit me, but I never cried. Never.

“They sent me to school in a nearby village. I was happy there because I could dream my dreams and entertain my fantasies of one day having everything I wanted. After a while it was all I could think of, beautiful clothes, big cars, with chauffeurs, maids, and servants. I wanted to be rich. And you know what? I didn’t need anyone to love me. When my father died I learned to live without love. After living with Uncle Nils and Aunt Ulva I made a vow never to love anyone again. They helped me be free from loving anyone. I had dreams and they were more real to me than the life I existed in.

“When I turned sixteen I was in our small village picking up supplies for their farm. A group of foreign photographers arrived. They were shooting the natural setting of the hillside homes, farms and fields with a selected group of people from our town. On my way home I accidentally drove the wagon right into one of their shoots. Some coincidence, Yah,” she said smiling.

“They weren’t angry. In fact they treated me like a movie star, taking pictures of me in all kinds of poses. They kept telling one another, ‘She’s a natural, she’s a real beauty.’ I didn’t comprehend what that meant but I liked the way they said it.

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

“One of them found a phone and called his New York modeling agency. They wanted to meet my parents about signing a contract. I told them my parents were dead. I lied and said I lived alone and that I was eighteen years old. They didn’t doubt me at all. I was very well endowed, as anyone could see. I signed the contract myself.”

“They wanted to believe me. They couldn’t wait to get me to a plane that would take me to New York as soon as possible, and the rest is history. I still dream my dreams but now I’m watching them come true. I didn’t need anyone’s love. You understand that?”

She said it in a defiant way as if trying to warn Jim not to get too close. He never did, except for those kisses she allowed him, whenever he left her apartment. He sighed and told himself her heart could be melted, if she would only say yes.

He jumped when the hostess called him.

“She’s here Mr. Smith. She’s still outside getting out of her limo. I took the liberty of telling you before she comes in.”

“Oh, that’s fantastic news.” He straightened his suit for the umpteenth time and walked toward the foyer. Inga’s entrance was like a visit from the queen. Jim was a little surprised the employees seemed to recognize her. He wondered if she’d been here with other men? He walked toward her and she acknowledged him with a nod of her head. Her eyes flashed about the room as she smiled at some of her fans. Their eyes popped like flashbulbs. Jim was used to the fanfare from their travels together. He waited to one side while she enjoyed her welcome. An attendant offered to take her fur wrap. She nodded and the young lady whisked it away. Beneath the mink stole she was wearing a stunning, body clinging, black sheath dress.

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

No fancy jewelry only a thin silver chain, a gift from her father with her name attached to it. No, there was nothing to detract from her perfect figure. She was a natural beauty all right. He'd known her for so long but was as mesmerized like everyone else. She glanced in all directions.

This is my cue, he thought. He knew she would not tolerate being unescorted for long. As always, he hurried to her side and took her arm. They followed the hostess until halfway to the table where Inga managed to get Jim behind her. She wasn't used to following anyone especially a male. All eyes were on her. Jim remembered she was accustomed to being followed by her entourage, the paparazzi and her fans.

I am not a mere fan, nor am I one of her many attendants. Jim was beginning to feel a slighted. He'd never felt that way before. Suddenly an image flashed back, it was the Gypsy woman. He shook his head to dispel the thought as the maître de seated Inga. Jim pulled out his chair and sat down.

"Your waiter will be with you immediately." The maître de spoke softly as he left winking at Jim. That's when Jim realized the news he shared with the hostess had traveled around the restaurant like a racing greyhound.

"Inga, you are stunning tonight." His voice caressed the words.

"I wish I could say the same about you. Where the hell did you get that suit? Couldn't you see that the pants are a different shade of gray than the jacket? How embarrassing."

Jim couldn't believe his ears. Maybe she's merely in a bad mood. Before he could reply the waiter appeared.

"My name is Maurice. Would you care for an aperitif before dinner?"

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

Jim didn't understand what it was so he shook his head no. At the same time Inga nodded in an affirmative motion. She ordered from the menu something he'd never had or heard of so he told the waiter he'd changed his mind and would like to duplicate her order. The waiter handed Jim a wine list. He took it and glimpsed at Inga's enraged face. Ignoring her mood, he opened the wine list and tried to read the French labels, his attempt was futile. He shook his head and studied Inga's expression, while trying to pass the wine list to her. She stiffened and gave him an irritated glare. Her harsh voice came from behind clenched teeth.

"Simply ask the waiter if he would suggest a wine and hand the list back to him."

To avoid embarrassing Jim, the waiter turned his head as if he was distracted by something in the back of the room. Jim began to feel like a poor slob from another planet who didn't understand the language or habits of Inga's fancy fairy tale world. Following Inga's cue, Jim ordered a rack of lamb. After dinner arrived, he picked up a small glass vessel and spooned out a little of the green contents. He looked at Inga and exclaimed.

"This Jello is terrible, it tastes like mint."

Inga looked on in horror. "You idiot! Put that down!" She glanced around the restaurant hoping none of the patrons were watching.

Inga's expression began to relax as she enjoyed the exotic fare of each course. Jim resumed rehearsing his proposal in silence. He'd been practicing all week. He decided to pop the question with the arrival of dessert. Occasionally he would glance up to catch the patrons looking, all eyes were on him. Oh how my surprise proposal spread, they're waiting for me to ask for her hand.

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

Crepe Suzette was a surprise, he had never had them before but they were somehow the perfect dish for the perfect moment. When the waiter left the table, Jim reached into his pocket with a shaky hand and folded his fingers around the soft velvet box. He was glad he'd decided on the half -carat diamond instead of a smaller one.

“Inga, I have something special for you.”

Her eyes brightened with the excitement as she responded to his request and paused eating her crepe. “You know I love surprises! What is it? What is it?”

He pulled the box out of his pocket and snapped it open. He held it close to her face so she would be dazzled by the sparkle.

“Will you marry me Inga?”

Shocked and surprised for a few seconds her eyes focused on the ring and then back at him several times. Jim felt doubt and fear grip him, a terrible fear that she might say no.

So he added, “I don't need an answer today. You can think about it until tomorrow.”

What started out as a whisper, turned into a soft siren as she replied, “I don't need time to think about it, the answer is No! What made you think I would say yes?”

He placed the open ring box on the table in front of her. He was confused and unable to breathe, as if someone had punched the air out of him. He refused to accept her answer. Tears rose in his eyes.

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

“Wha...wha...what are you saying Inga? You don’t love me? I know you love me. All this time we spent together... That’s why I’ve been saving up for this ring. I...I...I...”

“Jim I warned you there is no place for love in my life. We were never a couple. You were only my escort. There is no room in my world for anything more.” “You’re asking me to marry you? Are you out of your mind?” She began to laugh aloud, her voice growing shrill as people stared. She calmed herself and continued. “The answer is no! No! No! I am not ready to marry anyone. I am married to my career.”

Jim began to feel queasy and it wasn’t from the green Jello. This had to be a nightmare. It couldn’t be real. Then he heard her say.

“Didn’t you know I’m trying out for a big part in a movie? My first screen test! Next week!”

Jim rationalized, of course, she’s rehearsing for her part, it must be a drama.

“I’m going to be a star. Something I’ve been dreaming about all my life. Do you think I’d let anybody get in my way? I’ll be even richer than I am now.”

Her attention returned to the ring box. She picked it up and tossed it to Jim.

“You call this a diamond? I can buy diamonds so big they’d weigh my hand down. I could buy the jewelry shop where you bought this. I’ll be famous. So step out of my path. I’m on my way to the top.”

Inga pushed back her chair and almost knocked down an approaching waiter. She huffed off and out of the dining area.



## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

Another female diner remarked.

“What a bitch!”

Her companion added. “He’s a lucky guy all right, lucky she said, no.”

Jim had managed to catch the ring box. It was still open but the ring was not in it. He bent down to search for it. So did the waiter who’d served the now estranged couple.

“I am so sorry sir.”

The patrons who had commented were on the floor beside him, combing the plush carpeting with their fingers. Some of the customers overheard and joined the search.

Jim’s tears weighted against his eyelids like stones. He’d never experienced such pain before. So this is what it’s like to want to die?

Within minutes one of the searchers exclaimed, “I found it. Here it is!” He rose and handed it over to Jim. “I’m sorry pal, I can’t figure out why you wanted to marry a dame like that.”

Jim’s first urge was to punch him. Then he realized the man was offering sympathy. He took the ring and returned it to the box. Jim prepared to leave but the maître de approached and blocked his path. Unaware of what had transpired and taking note of the unfinished crepe, he inquired, “Was the dessert not satisfactory?”

Jim nodded a thank you. Oh, that’s real funny. It’s like asking Mrs. Lincoln how she enjoyed the play?

He took note of small group of people who tried to console him. Now he noticed the barely touched bottle of wine on his table.

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

Although he was a nondrinker, he sat down and filled his water goblet with the house wine reserved for special occasions. He was not in a hurry, since he had no pressing obligations. Only loneliness awaited him outside the door. Suddenly he realized he had something in common with the jilted drunk he had met earlier. With each sip of wine Jim welcomed his new friend in the bottle.

By the time he reached the middle of his second bottle, his mind hit the rewind button. He began to think about his encounter at Madame Leah's. His thoughts began to flip flop. Was this a jinx from Madame Leah, a sadistic prediction or was this destiny at its worst? Either way it was just as painful

**Chapter Three**  
**TRANSFORMED**

Unknown to Jim, Inga had encountered the Gypsy woman as she left the restaurant.

In hopes of being wrong, Madame Leah had been watching the drama unwind through the restaurant window. As Inga scurried from the table to the front lobby, she grabbed her wrap the hatcheck girl held out for her. Inga fled the restaurant, slammed into Madame Leah who had intentionally stepped into her path. Shoving Madame Leah aside Inga shouted.

“Watch where you’re going you clumsy hag.”

Madame Leah grabbed Inga’s arm. “It’s not where I’m going but where you’re about to go.”

Inga’s body begin to seize up like a rusty pipe. Before the strange tingling reached her mouth, she was able to utter a few last words.

“What do you mean? What do you mean? Is this some kind of a spell? Who are you? Are you some kind of witch? What are you doing to me?” All of a sudden her lips froze and she could no longer utter a sound.

Now in complete control, Madame Leah responded, “As I said, it’s not where I’m going but where you’re going?” She continued in a measured tone and began to explain the curse she had placed on Inga.

“Enough is enough. No longer will I allow you to blame your past for your present actions. I am Madame Leah

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

from Sweden, your old country. I am here to teach you that life is about friendship. Family and love are the most important things on this earth. Lessons you blotted from your mind a long time ago, life is not about fantasy and movies or about having all the material things money can buy. Your existence is surreal. Until you find the value of true friendship and can accept love, plus give it in return, you will be doomed to live in your own shallow reflection.”

“Inga you are plastic, and plastic is what plastic does.” As her words ended, Madame Leah released Inga’s arm and blew a puff of air that caused Inga to vanish.

“Be gone. Be gone, you inflatable Barbie Doll.” At that precise second, Inga reappeared as a plastic blow up doll in the window of the adult toy store.

Inside the Chateau Pierre, Jim checked his wallet as he finished a second bottle of wine. Realizing his meager finances he decided it was time to pay the tab to avoid further embarrassment. Jim weaved his way to the door. Once outside he caught a glimpse of what seemed to be Madame Leah slipping into the dark shadows. Was her image real or was she his pink elephant? He staggered in her direction. He continued to put one foot in front of the other, when his body received a jolt from another swaying object. It was like de ja vu as Jim collided with his intoxicated friend from earlier that evening. For a moment both men lay motionless on the sidewalk in front of the Adult Toy Store. Recovering from the impact they sat up slowly until regaining their footing on shaky ground. The original drunk broke the silence as he delivered his news to Jim.

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

“Ain’t found me a woman yet, but I’m having one hell of a night. Some Gypsy lady bought me a bottle of vino.

Don’t recall its name but it sure was good.” Holding out his hand he continued, “The name’s Herbie. What’s yours?” Before Jim could respond, Herbie recognized him.

“Say, aren’t you that bloke who gave me this here money earlier? What the hell happened to you? You’ve been mugged or something? I still got your fifteen bucks. Do you want it back?”

“Nope, my friend. You keep it,” Jim responded as he took hold of Herbie’s hand. “I’m Jim or at least I think I am. She turned me down, she said no.”

In a comforting tone while patting Jim on the back, Herbie said in a slur. “It’s always a woman, but don’t worry buddy. You’re a good looking guy you’ll find another.”

The two men embraced awkwardly as they stumbled toward the stairs of the adult toy store. Jim hesitated, his back leaning on the showcase window where Inga was displayed. Jim mumbled to himself.

“Inga, my Inga. How could she say no? Deep down inside she loves me but her past keeps holding her back.” Jim stumbled away from the window without looking back. Unnoticed to him were Inga’s arms reaching out to him from behind the glass window. In a flash, Jim was gone. With Jim almost out of sight, Herbie shouted in his direction before turning towards the adult toy store.

“Good luck my friend. As for me maybe my salvation might be inside here.”

Chapter Four

**HOW MUCH IS THAT DOLLY IN THE  
WINDOW?**

Another man was about to enter Inga's life. Herbie's jaw dropped as he spied the new attraction in the window. It was love at first sight for him. With Jim's fifteen dollars he entered the shop. To get the attention of the clerk, who was watching a porno movie, Herbie slammed the money on the counter.

"I'll take that lady in the window off your hands for fifteen bucks."

The clerk waved his hand taking a quick glance at Inga on display. "Where the hell did she come from? I didn't put her there. I'll take twenty-five bucks for her."

Herbie understood how to drive a hard bargain. After all he used to be a top-notch salesman until he started hitting the bottle. He blocked the storekeeper's vision of the movie as Herbie made his final offer.

"Fifteen bucks or I'll stand here all night. Take it or leave it."

The clerk confronted Herbie with disgust. "Hey, you bum, you're blocking the action. Give me the fifteen bucks and get the hell out of here, you drunken sex fiend." The clerk stuffed the money in his shirt pocket as he turned his "holier than thou" attitude back to the motion picture.

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

Herbie waited for a few moments for the clerk to retrieve Inga from the display window, but the clerk remained transfixed on the screen as the flick heated up.

“Get her yourself you pervert. I can’t leave my seat, might miss the triple X climax.”

Herbie reached into the big display window and took Inga by the arm. With gentle care he carried her into the dimly lit room.

“Got a bag or something big I can put her in?”

The clerk snapped back with a chuckle. “A bag that size? Listen dummy. First you need to deflate your dolly and God help her when you blow her back up. With the alcohol on your breath you’ll probably melt your plastic bitch. There’s a roll of brown paper and string on the counter. Knock yourself out. Wrap her good. Don’t want any of those little bastards coming out of the kiddie store getting an education. Their mommies might get upset... or maybe intrigued.”

Herbie found the air valve between Inga’s shoulders. She almost escaped his grasp as she deflated with a flutter. With tenderness he placed her on the edge of the paper and rolled her as best he could into a sloppy bundle. With the last fold, Inga peered directly at Herbie’s face. He was licking his lips and salivating. Inga tried to call for help.

“Oh God, help me. Help me.” The words felt strange as they tried to reach her forever-open mouth. This is what rigor mortis must be like, only I’m not dead, or am I?

Herbie walked down the steps of the shop with his store bought woman. She tried to struggle loose but could not move any part of her body. Only her arm remained uncovered, it fell through a hole in the paper wrapping.

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

I don't understand why I can't use any part of my body, but I can still see, hear and cry. She wondered as tears rolled down her cheeks and dripped onto Herbie's greasy, smelly shirt. I'm not real happy about still having a sense of smell. She was amazed by the amount of tears that could flow from her plastic tear ducts. Perhaps they were an accumulation of unshed tears from the past. She had not cried since being sent to live with her Aunt and Uncle so many years ago.

It was a short walk to Herbie's bungalow. Like a scene from the Hansel and Gretel, Inga marked the path. Instead of breadcrumbs she used her tears shed for Jim. It took Herbie longer to ascend the stairs to his second floor apartment than it did to stroll home. More time fumbling with the keys to the door...it creaked open. Herbie carried Inga inside and placed his prized package gently on the couch. He began unwrapping Inga as if removing a negligee from a bride. First a slight tug on the string followed by the removal of the tape binding the edges.

"Well hello-o-o there!" Drunk Herbie chuckled as he enjoyed beautiful Inga, still dressed in the fashionable outfit she wore at the restaurant. "Fancy finding you in that store window I passed a thousand times before. Now you're here you beautiful doll. Oh my, where are my manners? How do you do Miss? My name is Herbie, what's yours? Not talking? Well, that's okay. First let me make you comfortable. May I inflate you my little missy?" Herbie took Inga in his arms and began to inflate her by blowing into the stem on the back of her lower neckline. Cold chills tingle down Inga's spine. A far cry from the warmth she had felt from the intimate moments she had spent with Jim.

Herbie noticed the chain around Inga's neck bearing her name. "Oh, so you're Inga. I like women with exotic names."



## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

Inga stared in disbelief. This can't be happening. It must be a dream and I'll wake up soon. Her eyes ached from trying to shed more tears but for now her rigid tear ducts were dry. Oh, somebody help me, she screamed, but she couldn't hear her own voice. Somebody will come, but deep down in her plastic body she feared it was going to get a lot worse before it got better. She realized her predicament when drunken Herbie finished inflating her and began arranging her in different sexy positions on the couch.

To Inga's relief, Herbie paused for a moment and addressed her, "Well Darling, I think I'll freshen up a bit."

He got up and headed for a door near the entrance. Once inside the grimy little bathroom he studied his image in the mirror. A week old beard adorned his oily face but he wouldn't waste time shaving when he could be with his beautiful companion who was waiting for him and was unable to complain. He splashed his face with cold water as he searched around for a bottle of cologne. In the medicine cabinet he found an expired bottle of Viagra. The faded label made his mind drift back to past pleasurable memories.

"I haven't taken one of these babies since Betsy left me. I wonder if they're still good? Oh, what the hell."

Herbie popped two, three or perhaps a half dozen pills into his mouth followed by a slurp of water. He pressed his lips to the spigot to wash them down. Winking at his reflection in the mirror he opened the door.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, My Sweet Thing. How 'bout I get us a drink? You like a beer? Coming up. An ice cold one for you." Oh, how I hate beer, Inga thought to herself. I hope he doesn't force any down my throat.

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

He returned with one bottle and two glasses. Sitting down beside her, he made sure his leg was lightly touching hers. He lifted one of the glasses to her lips and pretended she was drinking from it. For now Inga was safe as Herbie waited to see if the blue, expired tablets still had enough potency to pour him a “stiff one.”

Chapter Five

**ALL QUIET ON THE WATERFRONT**

Jim continued weaving toward the waterfront near the local junior college. Along the path two young ladies were hurrying to their evening class. They were talking as they headed in Jim's direction. Sandy asked.

"Melanie do you think Professor Ward will be mad because we're late again?"

"Think about it." Melanie answered, "he's always jolly he won't be angry. He'll just pause, tap his pocket watch and smile as usual." Her eyes flashed ahead and she shouted.

"Look out Sandy that drunk isn't watching where he's going!" She finished the sentence as Jim strayed into their path. He was just shuffling along, unaware he almost collided with them.

"How cute they were, spritely Sandy with her blonde hair and Melanie a pretty brunette. The girls continued on their way but turned to look back and remarked, "what a pity such a handsome man wasting his life." They faded into the night.

Jim arrived at the pier as the rushing waters of the incoming tide below seemed to offer a way to end the pain of his broken heart. He removed his shoes but before placing his water resistant, not water proof, Timex inside the right loafer, he noticed the time was 8:11, unbelievably all this took place in less than two hours.

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

A cool gush of sea breeze slapped him in the face bringing him to his senses. He recalled that he was a paramedic, a person who saves lives not one that takes them. In his despair Jim stretched out on the pier and fell into a deep sleep.

Chapter Six

**PSYCHOLOGY 201**

When they arrived at the classroom door Sandy and Melanie stood outside for a moment, gathering nerve to walk in their 8 o'clock class. Melanie reached for the doorknob but the door flew open. Professor Ward stood there with a terse expression that was supposed to scare the two girls. His demeanor was that of a lumberjack. His red suspenders, white hair and beard, coupled with a twinkle in his eyes and round belly completed the familiar image of Ole Saint Nick. Professor Ward checked his pocket watch, tapping on the crystal. He bellowed in a booming voice attempting to embarrass the girls, "you're late!"

The class loved it and broke out in laughter. Sandy and Melanie tiptoed to their seats. Pleased with himself, a smile on his face, the professor turned to the blackboard where he had printed in big letters the word 'INANIMATE. Looking directly at Sandy and Melanie, he said.

"This is your outside assignment. I want you all to pair up in groups of two and I want each twosome to find an inanimate object. That object is to become your soul mate for the next two weeks. Give it a name, treat it like a friend, talk to it."

With a chuckle a student named Steve asked, "You mean like a pet rock professor?"

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

From the rear of the class came, “Yeah Steve, like the rocks in your head.”

Another student joined in. “Professor how about a Beanie Baby?”

Professor Ward replied, “Getting closer but I want you to think out of the box. Find something unique. Something like...” He hesitated keeping the class with pencils in hand.

“Something like...like...well, that’s for you to figure out.” He gave his usual smile and left them hanging. The students filed out looking confused. Sandy and Melanie passed by Professor Ward.

“I’m expecting something special from you two young ladies and perhaps on time.” Winking he closed the door behind them.

“Wow, that’s some assignment, huh?”

“Yeah,” Sandy replied, scratching her head. “Where are we going to find an inanimate object we can carry around like that?”

“I have no idea, it better be something that’ll fit in our beds ‘cause we’re going to be sleeping with it.”

“Oh, that will be fun Mel. We’ll take turns sleeping at each other’s houses.”

They decided to take the long way back home along the seashore. It would give them extra time to ponder their new assignment. They strolled up and down the beach for quite some time. They passed the rundown shanties along the strip of beach and they turned their heads away in disgust.

Chapter Seven

RETURN TO THE LOVE SHACK

By now Herbie figured Inga had enough beer. She seemed more relaxed and he could feel the Viagra was beginning to solidify. He slid his arm around her neck and drew her closer, being careful not to scratch her with his beard.

“Here let’s make you more comfortable.” He stood over her and placed one of her arms across the back of the sofa and one leg over the other while sneaking a quick peek up her dress.

“There that’s better.” He sat down, grabbed her in his arms and dragged her onto his lap. Since she didn’t move away he instantly thought, *she must like me*. While enjoying the thought of taking her into his bedroom, he felt as if he was Pinocchio who just told the biggest lie of his life. He wondered if he overdosed on his miracle grow. There was only one antidote and she was at his beck and call.

He could wait no longer with his passion about to burst. He kissed her with uncontrollable emotion as he pushed her down into a flat position. Being unsuccessful with her zippers and catches, he began yanking at her clothing.

All the while Inga was praying with the intensity of her early youth. She realized there was no one else who could save her.

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

“Oh dear God, please help me! Save me from this maniac.”

It was apparent Herbie had to relieve his suffering right that minute or something drastic was bound to happen. His pants had formed a bulge so large that the pressure might cause him to explode like an overinflated blow up doll. His mouth was all over Inga’s neck and his hands followed the form of her rigid breast. Like a vampire attacking its prey, Herbie went for the jugular. His chipped teeth locked around a slice of Inga’s plastic neck. In an instant she began hissing at him. Alarmed by the sound Herbie loosened his grip on Inga. Fluttering like a deflating balloon, Inga blew towards the open window and disappearing into the night. Herbie was stunned and watched in disbelief. He ran towards the window but his oversized woody made it difficult as he knocked over a table lamp. His head drooped downward as he look at his crotch and cursed.

“Damn Viagra.” Looking into the starry night he begged. “Oh, Darling please come back. You can’t leave me in this condition. Come back, please.”

Meanwhile Melanie and Sandy continued their discussion as they neared the last shanty.

“You know I have a problem being creative. I don’t possess a single imaginative bone in my body. Melanie you better come up with something.”

Shoes in hand, they strolled along in the sand, lost in the deep and empty caverns of their creative thinking. “How do you expect me to come up with an idea?” Melanie gazed into the star-filled sky. “Perhaps something will fall from the sky.”

The girls chuckled as a hissing sound filled the otherwise silent night.



## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

“What’s that noise?” Sandy asked. They searched the heavens. Something was making a swift descent toward them. In an instant the unidentified flying object flopped onto the sand right at their feet. Sandy jumped back with a yelp.

Melanie took a tentative step toward it. “It’s still hissing,”

At first they both thought it was an injured sea gull, but it appeared more humanlike. As the UFO went flat Sandy reached to touch it.

“It’s plastic. It’s one of those blow up dolls.”

Melanie reached with caution and pulled back Sandy’s arm. “Be careful. God only knows where she’s been.”

“Well you did say something would have to fall from the sky. Didn’t you?”

They both laughed like kids. Holding onto Inga by her arms and legs, her limp body swinging between them, they began skipping toward home. Their excitement bubbled up and spilled over to Inga.

Inga thanked God for her rescue from Herbie. “What in the world is going on? Well at least I got away from that drunken bum. What the heck does that Gypsy lady have in store for me next.”

Chapter Eight

**TRIP TO THE ER**

“Hey Mel, we can’t take her home like this. We’re supposed to treat our object like it’s real. We have to take her to the hospital and get her patched up.”

“Are you crazy? Who’s going to fix her up, a plastic surgeon?”

“Real funny but I have a plan. You remember that small hospital near my house? Well my uncle happens to be the head doctor in that very ER. I’m sure he’ll help and lucky for us, tonight is the slowest evening of the week.”

“Wow! Sandy. Everything seems to be falling into place. Can you believe it?”

“Yeah, but it seems too easy. Maybe she’s a curse from the Twilight Zone.” Sandy began singing. “Doo Doo Doo Doo Doo Doo Doo Doo.”

“Oh, stop it. You’re spooking me. Pick her up and let’s go.”

The assignment began as the girls flagged down a cab and gave directions to the driver.

“Quick get us to the hospital our friend is hurt.”

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

After a slight delay to load Inga, the driver gave an unexpected response as he drove the trio toward the hospital. “Ah, you girls wouldn’t be students in Professor Ward’s class, would you?”

Neither girl answered. They arrived at the ER and the large doors swept open. Their eyes cased the place hoping to spot Sandy’s uncle. Instead a nurse approached them. As she came nearer she stopped in her tracks.

“What the...? Is this some sort of sorority joke?”

Sandy found herself blushing down to her ankles. “No, our friend was injured. Is Doctor Cheek around? He’s my uncle, I need to talk to him pronto.”

Nurse Ginny stared at Inga all flopped over, her nose touching her feet. Quietly Nurse Ginny backed away muttering.

. “Ohhhhh kaaay, Wait here.”

I must be in a hospital. At least it smells like a hospital. These girls seem truly concerned about me. I should get some help here, I think.

Before the nurse got to the double doors, Doctor Cheek entered the room. The nurse whispered something in his ear that made his head bob up in surprise. He looked in the direction of his niece and her friend. He left the nurse and strode over to the girls.’

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

“What’s going on? Are you all right?” He hugged Sandy and made direct eye contact with both girls, trying to ignore the thing they carried between them but it was unavoidable. He had to shift his eyes to Inga. Sandy and Melanie held Inga up for him to get a better look.

“Uncle Ed are we glad you’re on duty tonight.” All of a sudden both girls began talking at once, trying to explain what was wrong with Inga and why they needed his help.

“Whoa, Whoa! One at a time.” He held his hands up as if surrendering to their requests.

Sandy explained. “Well we were walking along the beach after this weird assignment for our psychology class...”

Dr. Cheek cut her short. “You needn’t say anything more. You have Professor Ward, don’t you? This is your inanimate object, isn’t it? I had the Professor myself quite a few years ago.”

Sandy nodded. “You got it Unk. Can you fix her up? She needs air and stitches.”

Amused at their urgency, Dr. Cheek gave a quick nod to the girls. He reached over and lifted Inga’s head and studied the eyes that appeared remarkably human. He noticed her poor mouth, all stiff and molded into a perfect “O” like an angel destined to sing forevermore.

The girls were sure Uncle Ed was having a great laugh. He had a humorous nature, which he was trying to hold back. The girls were no morons. They knew exactly what was going on and they were sure Dr. Ed had decided to go along with their plan. It was going to be a real comedy show to break up the monotony of the boring ER evening shift. Not only for him but for all the nurses and interns standing around with their hands over their mouths, all trying to hide their reactions. It was the first time Dr.

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

Cheek had heard his co-workers laugh all at one time, which made his attempt to conceal his amusement harder.

He took hold of Inga and yelled over his shoulder. “Gurney here please!” Sandy and Mel handed the limp body over to the orderlies. They placed Inga on the gurney with utmost gentleness and wheeled her away towards one of the cubicles. Dr. Cheek followed along with the smiling nurse, accompanied by Sandy and Melanie.

The first thing Dr. Cheek did was examine Inga, which was not easy given the tangles in her hair, sand on her expensive dress as well as her deflated body, all covered with beach flotsam.

He looked at the girls and in a soft voice said, “she’s going to be all right after I patch that neck. Can’t stitch her up, it would only make more air leaks. We’ll have to use butterfly stitches. Once she’s air tight we’ll administer as much oxygen as she needs to make her feel and look normal again.”

After her body was plumped up with oxygen. She began to regain her sharp image as a model in that velvet dress. All she needed was a dusting off and a good hair brushing. The nurse turned and walked rapidly away. She returned immediately with a whiskbroom and a hairbrush. Sandy grabbed them.

“Wow! How we need these!” She handed the whiskbroom to Melanie who began brushing Inga’s dress from top to bottom, front and back while Sandy worked on the hairdo. Finally they sat her up and admired their work, even Dr. Ed admired his patch job.

“Don’t think there will be much of a scar.” He gloated.

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

Inga began to bask in all the attention until she remembered she was just a plastic doll. She was frightened and worried about what would happen to her next. I don't have to worry about these two girls. I'm sure they'll protect me from further danger. I'm so glad they who found me. Thank you... and she thanked God again. She was recovering nicely, but danger lurked around the corner. A nurse approached the cubicle with a big needle and exclaimed.

"Here's the penicillin."

Inga tried to scream in fear of pending deflation. Dr. Cheek picked up the needle and approached his patient.

"What was I thinking?" he mumbled. "If I use this on her she'll be back in here in minutes." After he put the instrument back on the counter, he was surprised to see what appeared to be terror in Inga's life like eyes.

He shook his head and after a paused he spoke to the attending nurse. "I think I'm going to ask my favorite girl out tonight for some drinks, dinner and whatever else comes to mind, if you know what I mean? What do you say?"

"I'd love it." The nurse replied as she tousled his reddish hair, running her fingers through it.

Good heavens Inga thought they're ignoring me. I hope this doesn't go any further. She forgot them when she experienced the sensation of blushing. Inga noticed that Dr. Cheek was muscular and very handsome. Though he and his love interest made a striking couple, Inga did not appreciate the way they were carrying on in front of her.

"She's looking at us." The nurse said as she brushed the doctor's hands off her body.

"Don't be silly. For heaven's sake! It's a plastic doll." He turned towards Inga catching a gleam in her eyes that

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

would have been fatal if a stare could kill. A chill ran down his spine. It was time to get her back to those two girls and out of sight.

Strange he said to himself, very strange. As he lifted Inga from the gurney, he felt a stirring inside that puzzled him. He would have sworn her arms were down by her sides. Now they were on his shoulders and seemed to be hugging him. He imagined a clawing sensation on his shoulders.

“I really do need that drink,” He placed Inga back on the gurney. “Where’s the wheelchair?”

“They’re bringing it now” A reply came from around the corner.

Inga whispered to herself. I’ve still got it. He’s really rattled, attracted to me. I’m plastic and I can still woo them. Her thoughts were interrupted as she realized she was feeling more human like. Now the feeling of guilt overwhelmed her as she recalled poor Jim.

The doctor stepped out of the room and approached Sandy and Melanie.

“Come to my desk and I’ll write you some prescriptions.” The girls’ heads turned toward each other in surprise.

“Prescriptions?” They mouthed in silence behind his back. He slid his arms around the girl’s shoulders and led them to his cluttered office.

“Don’t worry about your friend, they’ll bring her out in a minute. They’re waiting for a wheelchair.

Melanie and Sandy look at each other and squealed. “Wheelchair?”

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

Dr. Cheek stood at his desk. He took out his prescription pad and began writing handing one sheet to Melinda and the other to Sandy. They read Melanie's first. "Take off patch in three days. Get her into some comfortable clothes and don't try to feed her too much yet."

Sandy's read. "Review instructions on Mel's prescription. If you ever dare tell anyone what I did tonight, I'll never take you horseback riding again. Say hi to your Mom. Love, Uncle Ed."

Sandy flung her arms around his neck. "Oh, thank you so much." She began to explain why and how they had acquired Inga. He stopped her.

"I don't need any further details. I trust you girls will give my regards to Professor Ward. Take Inga home now and enjoy yourselves. All three of you." He winked at Sandy as he leaned in close to whisper.

"I added a little helium to sort of lift her spirit. That'll make it easier to carry her around too."

The curtain to Inga's cubicle opened and the nurse placed Inga in the wheelchair. The girls pushed Inga toward the exit doors as a siren sounded. They passed the EMT's wheeling in a male patient. They overheard them saying:

"His name is Herbie and the poor stiff is suffering from rigor mortise erectus. As you can see, he over dosed on some enhancers."

The incoming and outgoing groups passed in the hall, the man on the gurney mumbled what sounded like "Inga," as he tried to sit up. Fortunately, no one heard him and Herbie was restrained by the attendants.



## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

Sandy and Melanie helped their friend out of the wheelchair, they observed her hands seemed to be covering her face. They skipped down the street arm in arm with Inga in the middle. A waiting taxi pulled forward and the cabbie yelled to them.

“Hey, girls. A Dr. Cheek instructed me to take you home.”

They giggle as they watched the driver’s reaction to Inga.

“Remember we must record this and the reactions of the whole hospital staff too,” Melanie placed Inga between them in the back seat and they yawned.

“Look Sandy, Inga’s yawning too.” Inga knew they were referring to her open mouth and wished she could tell them she was actually yawning. Her head slumped back a little and she fell asleep.

Chapter Nine

**SLEEP OVER**

Melanie called her Mother about sleeping over at Sandy's. The girls told Sandy's smiling Mom the story about Inga, but they still had to get by Sandy's father. They thought it would be a piece of cake until they entered the living room where he was watching TV. They were halted with his unexpected ranting and they almost jumped out of their skins.

"Hold it right there young ladies. Where in the world did you get that...her... it?"

Sandy smiled with a happy feeling she always got when her father paid attention to her. He cared about everything in her life. This time was no different, except he was a little overboard with his loud voice. Sandy sat on his ottoman and pulled Inga onto her lap. Meticulously she explained everything, from the assignment to the ride home, leaving out the hospital caper because of Uncle Ed's threat. Her Dad studied the plastic doll from head to toe with suspicion.

"Where are you taking her?"

"Everywhere." They stifled their laughter and told him again that it was part of the school assignment.

"And you're sure this is all right with Professor Ward?"

Two heads bobbed with vigor. "Yes sir." Sandy kissed her dad goodnight and they walked with Inga between them heading upstairs.

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

“I wonder why your dad was so suspicious of Inga?”

“Got no idea.” Sandy shook her head while she set Inga on the bed.

Inga thought, how lovely it was to lie down on something soft and her eyes began rolling back into her head. Well I guess this is the end of the most incredible day of my life. However, she heard the girls plotting to get her into a nightgown. When is this ever going to end? She pondered? Well not yet I presume, answering herself. They’re beginning to deal cards and they’re dealing me in. Slap Jack? I played that game as a child, but I think I’ll simply close my eyes and they’ll think I fell asleep. It almost worked. Inga dozed off when her arm, propped between the headboard and the wall, slipped out and slapped down on top of the cards.

“Hey,” Melanie yelled. “She’s cheating. We didn’t even flip a jack yet.” They looked at Inga and then at each other.

“Doo doo doo doo....” Sandy’s attempt at comedy fell flat when a pillow glanced off her head, compliments of Melanie. She squealed with delight.

“We’d better get some shut-eye. Remember choir practice tomorrow and Inga’s going with us.”

Inga didn’t hear that. She had dozed off and was in La-la land already dreaming. In the dream she was in some kind of theater in front of a crowd of people. She was trying to smile at them but couldn’t. Her eyes swept over the crowd until she spotted Jim in the back of the room. He was smiling and waving. Inga was content as she sensed a soft cover drift over her body. She was warm and safe with the vision of Jim and the security of her new friends.

**Chapter Ten**

**SOUND OF SILENCE**

Melanie and Sandy were up early and decided to let Inga sleep in while they went downstairs for a private discussion, over a cup of coffee.

Melanie began, "Now remember she may seem real to us but not to others."

"I know, I know, but they'll have to accept her" Sandy replied.

Mel replied, "What makes you so sure of that? They could laugh us out of the church, and maybe excommunicate us."

Sandy thought for a second and countered.

"They have to accept everyone, no matter who or what they are. That's what they teach isn't it?"

"Right," They should be respectful of her."

The girls hurried back to the bedroom to ready Inga and found her still lying on the bed. They dressed her in slacks and a sweater that fit fine and headed out the front door. The girls held Inga by the elbows and kept her a few inches from the ground as they walked to the church. The sensation of butterflies filled their stomachs as they mounted the steps of the church and entered the foyer. All the choir members were already there as the two girls peeped around the door.

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

“Let’s hurry in while they’re still milling around. We don’t want to make a late grand entrance like we do at school.”

“Okay. Let’s just walk in like everything’s normal.”

“All right, but remember we must record our own reactions and the reactions of everyone else. You brought the notebook didn’t you?”

“Yes, I’ve got it here somewhere.”

Inside they smelled the clean scent of furniture polish. No one paid attention to the threesome until they reached the rail behind the altar, where most of the choir was beginning to find their seats. Some turned and stared in disbelief. Others tried to repress sudden outbursts of laughter. Those who had taken psychology from Professor Ward remembered their assignment and realized Inga was the inanimate object for the girls’ class.

Sandy and Mel spotted two girls who had a big stuffed dog on a leash. “Wow,” Sandy whispered, “look at Jenny and Pat’s object. I would never have thought of a dog on a leash.”

“Yeah, it’s creative but gander at what we have.” Pride shone on Mel’s face as they high fived and smiled in agreement.

The choir director had stifled her surprise after hearing the whispers going around about the assignment. She clapped her hands and called for silence. Slowly she turned her attention to Sandy and Melanie the newest members of the choir.

“I see you brought a guest with you today. What is her name?”

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

The girls in unison responded. “Inga, Miss Castle.” Mel repeated, “Her name is Inga,”

Miss Castle treated Inga as if she was a real girl, which seemed to please all the members, especially Inga.

“Welcome Inga. What a pretty name. I’m glad you’re going to be joining us. I take it she’s a soprano so-o-o? Sandy and Melanie, Inga can stand between the two of you.”

They took their places in the back row of the choir loft. Miss Castle turned her attention to the two girls with the life-sized stuffed dog.

“Miss Grace and Miss Smith, you understand pets are not allowed in the church but under the circumstances we’ll make an exception. Your dog can sit between you during rehearsal but he must not howl.”

She acknowledged their agreeable smiles, and proceeded to announce.

“We will begin with Amazing Grace.” Sandy and Mel sang out with joy, along with the others, but Miss Castle interrupted them by tapping her baton on the podium.

“Girls, Girls. You are not giving it your all. Sing from the depths of your being. Not so much loud as strong. You must remember the round shape of the mouth, round like Inga’s.”

Everyone looked towards Inga with her permanently open round mouth. Inga noticed everyone didn’t appear happy with the comparison. Sandy glanced at Mel and whispered.

“She’s getting all the praise for her mouth.” Mocking jealousy of Inga, Sandy bugged her eyes out and stuck out her lips with a big round pucker. Mel swatted at her hand. Sandy

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

could not conceal her laughter. Inga watched all the interaction and even though she was the butt of their joke, she seemed to bond to the girls.

They are so full of life and I'm having a good time, too. I guess I'm having as much fun as a plastic girl can. They all straightened up at the tapping of Miss Castle's baton and they started to sing again. This time they sounded like angels. Inga thought how beautiful the sound and how sweet were the words. Inga drew in a deep breath and squeezed moisture out the corner of her eyes. She tried to sing along, but no sound came from her rigid throat.

When the rehearsal was over, the choir members were laughing and talking. Sandy and Mel propped Inga against the back wall and joined them. Inga experienced a little strain on her body as she tried to shift, so she could mingle with the group. She almost succeeded. Her body leaned forward, instead of walking she fell flat on her face kissing the cool marble

Mel, Sandy and four other girls ran to Inga and picked her up. They brushed off her clothes and looking into her realistic eyes they spoke to her like a real person. "Are you all right?"

The memory of girls and their music stayed with Inga all the way to Mel's house, where they would be staying that night. Mel announced.

"Sandy after lunch we're going to the Yogurt shop for some frozen yogurt."

"With all the toppings?" Sandy added, "but first we must make notes of all the reactions towards Inga today."

"We can do that at the Yogurt shop,"

**Chapter Eleven**

**FROZEN DELIGHT**

They sat in a booth at the Yogurt Shop with Inga across from them. They slurped the frozen delight and licked off the toppings.

Inga stared at the frozen cream dripping down Sandy's chin. They're always laughing, they must be extremely happy, especially while eating that lovely frozen treat. Inga longed for a bite and Sandy sensed it. She began looking back and forth at the frozen treat and Inga.

"Hey Mel, do you think she wants some of this?"

Mel smiled and agreed. "I sure she does so let's give her some."

"You think we should?"

"Why not? What harm could it do?"

"Okay," She scooped a small amount of the yogurt, careful not to give Inga too much. She slid the spoon into Inga's mouth and watched the yogurt slide down her throat and disappear.

Oh, this ambrosia is fit for the gods. Inga experienced the lovely creamy concoction slide across her tongue. She wanted to scream more, more, give me more.

"Let me feed her some Sandy"



“And then my turn again.”

To Inga it seemed the two girls were at the zoo feeding a strange animal. Little did she care so long as they kept spooning in the cream with the flavors of paradise. Oh, this is a wonderful day. It's as good as it can be when you're a plastic doll... I guess? I had the best of things when I was a real person, the best food and champagne, the best cars, clothes and jewelry. I must admit nothing tasted as good as these little portions of yogurt. I remember the time Jim brought me some frozen yogurt. It was raining and his topcoat was soaked though, he was holding an umbrella. I helped him take off his jacket. It was a terrible match for his pants, but it didn't bother me then. I don't know why it bothered me last week at the restaurant. Why did I treat him that way? He had always been wonderful to me. I'm so sorry I hurt him. I'll never be able to apologize. I wish I could go back to being a real woman. I'd treat him much better. I really miss him. Now that I have real feelings for him it's too late. Jim probably hates me. Unknown to Inga, Jim had spent most of his time searching movie sets and photo shoots hoping to catch a glimpse of her.

Returning from the yogurt shop the trio went upstairs. Sandy and Mel laid Inga on the bed while they headed to different bathrooms to shower. Since they were home for the evening, they went downstairs for a second. The duo became enthralled with a good old western movie that was playing on the T.V. When it was over Sandy jumped out of her chair and in an alarmed whisper said, “Inga, “Where's Inga?”

“Oh my heavens Sandy. We completely forgot her. We're supposed to take her with us whatever we do. What would Professor Ward say if he knew?”

“I don't know but we better see how she is doing upstairs there all alone.”

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

At the door of Mel's room they stopped and stared at the doll on the bed.

Sandy was marveled by the life like figure. "She seems so real sometimes."

"She sure does. Especially when she's asleep. Hey, I don't remember putting that teddy bear against her neck like that."

"Maybe you didn't." Sandy in her joking horror voice mimicked and began singing. "Doo, doo doo do, doo doo doo do." She quickly ducked. Mel's fist glanced off her arm.

"Amazing! Sometimes she looks so sad. I wish there was something we could do to make her happier. I bet that western movie would have cheered her up. Wait I got a great idea. There's a way we can make her happy. That new country western bar Rodeo Road opens tomorrow. What do you think?"

"We can walk from here and grab a couple of brews," A few drinks in a western atmosphere might do the trick."

"Wow, I can hardly wait Sandy."

Sandy winked at Mel. "Yeah, me too. Maybe we'll even meet a few handsome cowpokes.

Chapter Twelve

**PARTY NIGHT AT RODEO ROAD**

“Those jeans of yours fit her perfectly, don’t they Mel? And the cowboy hat is great. All she needs is a horse.”

Mel laughing, “Holy cow!”

Sandy exclaimed. “Look up there.” She pointed to a giant cowboy on the roof of the building. “It’s a balloon. Do you think he’s any relation to Inga?”

Inga wasn’t very happy about that remark and the girls sensed it.

“We’re sorry Inga, It’s only a joke.”

They sneaked a peek in the door before entering. The girls recalled the western film they saw the night before. Even the swinging doors were exactly the same.

“Gee whiz Mel, I hope there aren’t any gunslingers behind these here doors waiting for us.”

What did await them was a crowd of people bellied up to the bar, some wearing western attire, everybody wearing smiles. They held their mugs up and toasted the girls and Inga. Most of them laughed about her, but in an accepting way. The girls sat Inga on a barstool and took their places on either side of her. The bartender wore a ten -gallon hat and real chaps with spurs that jingled. A thrill ran through Sandy. She noticed Mel

recognizing the same expression on her face.

“Cold beer,” Sandy ordered.

“Two or three?” The blond mustachioed man asked, as he eyed Inga?

“Three please,” Mel replied as she and Sandy handed over their I.D’s.

The bartender remarked referring to Inga. “I don’t need your friend’s ID. My eyes are telling me she is a fine, mature woman.”

Before they were served their drinks, three young wanna-be cowboys strolled over. Two of them swept Sandy and Mel of their stools. The girls hesitated long enough to reach for Inga since they did not want to leave her alone.

The third guy said. “Oh what the heck. Come on you pretty little filly let’s dance.” He took Inga ever so gracefully and carried her to the dance floor and led her in the “Texas Stroll” Folks gathered around the dance floor clapping and cheering.

He yelled out to his audience. “Hey, she’s lighter than air.” Sandy and Mel smirked at each other stifling laughter.

After the dance they exchanged pleasantries and the girls headed back to the bar, where three cold beers waited for them. The girls guzzled half of theirs before looking at Inga. Finally Sandy put Inga’s glass up to her lips and allowed a little beer to run into her mouth. Inga could only remember how that drunken Herbie had tried to force her to drink beer and how much she hated the taste.

At that moment the cute blonde bartender reappeared and suggested to Inga.

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

“You don’t seem to be the beer drinking type. Why don’t I bring you a Shirley Temple with no alcohol?” Mel and Sandy both thanked the man for thinking of Inga.

“Write that down Sandy. Maybe he saw something in her eyes.”

Shirley Temple, Inga thought. What does he think I am, a born-again? I need champagne or at least some wine. At that exact moment the band burst out with an intense drum roll as the cymbal clashed. Everyone jumped up but Inga. “Welcome to Rodeo Road! Welcome to a night of fun, dancing and lots of drinking. Anybody out there celebrating an anniversary or birthday?”

“Yes, over here.” Sandy yelled, pointing to Inga.

Mel lightly kicked her in the shin.

“Sandy, what are you doing?”

In a fake western drawl, Sandy leaned over and whispered. “We don’t know her real birthday, do we? So today is as good as any. Ain’t it?”

Mel took her cue and chimed in with a “Yes siree! It’s our partner’s birthday.”

The bandleader announced. “We got a birthday girl over at the bar. Let’s give her a hand.” The band started playing Happy Birthday, and two cowgirls came from the kitchen carrying a small cake with one large candle on it.

To Inga’s surprise and glee, the bartender placed a glass of champagne in front of her. Mel picked up the glass and held it up to Inga’s mouth, allowing a little champagne to run down her throat. One sip and Inga found herself being swept away to the dance floor by the same young cowboy who danced with her before. She began to enjoy being swung around and having

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

everyone's attention. She was happy until the swinging doors opened and she saw a familiar figure hesitate, as if afraid to enter. She was sure it was Jim. She tried with all her might to call out to him but couldn't make a sound. Jim stepped back into the night and disappeared. He wasn't afraid, just too down hearted to join in with a bunch of half-drunk people. It was still too soon.

Back at the bar Sandy and Mel were getting ready to leave.

"We better go. The deadline for our report is Monday, and tomorrow we're taking Inga to the beach, right Mel?"

"You got it. It's time to hit the road, right Inga?"

The girls walked to the exit through the saloon doors. They stopped and waved good-bye to everyone. Inga remained dazed from the shock of seeing Jim. She thought, so close yet I couldn't talk to him or touch him. She wondered if she would ever get another chance.

Chapter Thirteen

A DAY AT THE BEACH

Jim checked his watch for the fourth time since climbing atop his lifeguard post. This job was easier than his regular job at the fire station. At the beach he didn't check out all the blondes looking for Inga. He knew she wouldn't be caught dead at a beach with her alabaster skin. His figure of speech *caught dead* disturbed him. What if...? He wondered.

As tears glazed his eyes, he scanned the coral rock jetty that completely circled the beach. It formed a lagoon that kept the children from straying out too far. Very few people admitted that it kept sharks out as well, if any happened to be in the area. He pulled his hat down lower on his face and slid on his sunglasses.

"Wow, this sand is hot," Mel's feet skipped over the beach. She ran to the water's edge to cool them, leaving Sandy behind with Inga. Then she noticed the frown on Sandy's face, she knew she'd better get back up there and help her.

"Sorry, but that sand was frying my dogs."

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

“Oh well, that makes it all right. Come smear this sunscreen on my back. I’ll do yours when you finish mine.”

“Should we put some on Inga?” “Professor Ward said we had to do everything together with our inanimate object, remember?”

Sandy took the bottle Mel held out and began to coat Inga with a light layer. She told Mel to open their umbrella over the blanket. Together they propped Inga into a sitting position.

“There,” Sandy plopped a floppy hat on Inga’s head. “She looks just like a real person in that blue bikini of yours. Hope the guys leave her alone.”

“I hope they gather around her like flies. Then we can take our pick,” Mel chuckled. “You hear that Inga? We’ll keep an eye on you from the bench while we work on our report. Okay?”

She stood there as if waiting for a reply. Mel and Sandy walked toward their temporary desk.

Yes, I’ll be fine Inga thought, as she watched Sandy and Mel hop over the broiling sand. I’m sure glad they put sunscreen on me. Without warning a gust of salty air rocked Inga out of her sitting position and sent her sprawling onto her back. Oh terrific! What a wonderful view of the underside of an umbrella but something else was bothering Inga. Ever since they arrived she felt as if someone was watching her. It’s probably my imagination. A chill ran through Inga as the sun slid behind a cloud. A gust of wind picked up the edge of the blanket and rolled Inga over. A stronger breeze swept her along the sand. Her light-as-air body tumbled, speeding up with each roll, until she reached the edge of the water.

Oh great! Now I’m going to drown, she told herself. Funny if it ends like this. They found me on a beach barely alive. Now they’re going to find me again, this time dead. Just



## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

before she rolled into the lagoon, she caught a glimpse a person who was following her every move. She thought she recognized the woman, perhaps she was just a fan.

Madame Leah had been nursing a crush on Jim since she met him, as a professional she knew a relationship could never happen. Still she was determined to follow Jim and Inga to see if they would cross paths again. On the days he worked the beach area behind the hotel, Madame Leah was there laying her blanket, far enough away from Jim's post, still close within eyeshot of him. The sight of two young girls bringing Inga to the beach played with her emotions. Did she think Jim was ready to see Inga? She wanted to see him happy but was Inga ready for Jim?

Madame Leah followed every movement of the girls with Inga. She took a mental note of how the relationship between the three had turned into a loving friendship, as strange as it might be. Her thoughts slammed to a halt when she saw Inga rolling down the beach. Immediately her heart went out to Inga. She thought Inga probably had enough of this awful curse that she had placed on her. Maybe it was time to lift it. She knew deep down in her heart that Jim and Inga belonged together and now was the time.

The water felt cool and refreshing to Inga. For a moment she forgot what just happened to her. All of a sudden little hands grabbed her pushing and pulling. This was followed by the ultimate plop as two children sat on her belly. Where are the girls when I need them? Sandy and Melanie would never allow anyone to roughhouse me this way. My God. There should be a lifeguard on duty. Where is he? She squinted her eyes enough to scan part of the beach. There was a guard in a stand peering through binoculars however he seemed oblivious to what was going on.

Jim became aware of the commotion and started to blow his whistle to have the raft removed from the water.

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

After a brief glance at the little kids, having so much fun, he changed his mind. The raft was very unusual, it looked like one of those plastic, life-size blow-up dolls. Stranger still the doll looked like Inga. I must be losing my mind. Everything I see is beginning to remind me of Inga, even that plastic float. He rubbed his eyes and sat down.

It wasn't long before he heard a ruckus going on in the same area of the beach. Two men were next to the children. One fellow decided it was his turn to ride the dolly. Tossing off the children he shouted.

“You brats are done. It's my turn.”

The other man shouted back. “Hey, get your hands off my kids, besides it's my turn.” A shoving match ensued and Inga flipped over face down in the water. The altercation continued until someone screamed.

“Oh my God, she's drowning. She can't breathe. She's going to drown.”

Another woman yelled. “Of course she can't breathe, she's a plastic float you idiot.” The remark led to a hair pulling “lady fight.” About the same time Mel and Sandy heard the commotion. Now, Jim spotted the unauthorized action.

The sight of Inga being drowned by a big palooka of a guy sitting on her sent a shockwave through the girls.

“Inga, Inga,” they screamed as they reached her and shoved the men away from their friend. Jim arrived in time to hear the name “Inga.” He blasted through the crowd that had gathered knocking over the umbrella that shaded Madam Leah. He scooped up the drowning victim and held

## PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES

her in his arms. Jim recognized the plastic replica of his missing love, without delay he rushed her to the shore and began CPR. He noticed the cold blue lips of Inga. But the warmth of past memories flashed through his mind as he pressed his mouth to hers. As if possessed he couldn't seem to stop

Shock registered on some of the onlooker's faces as they wondered why the lifeguard was performing resuscitation on a raft. Others viewed Inga as a victim of a horrible accident. Sandy was in numb and remained silent while Mel whimpered. Jim continued beyond the regular time to revive a normal drowning victim. The crowd began to encourage Jim to give up. They murmured, "After all it's merely a plastic doll." Jim couldn't stop even if he wanted to. No one knew that Inga was in a state of revival. She remained motionless, enjoying every moment of having her lost lover returned to her. It was time to let Jim know she was alive and truly his.

With what he thought was his last kiss, Jim experienced the warmth of Inga's lips, as the two remained lip-locked for an extended period of time.

Several people from the crowd tried to pull Inga from Jim's arms. They retreated as Inga began to transform back to life. The biggest shock came when Inga threw her arms around Jim's neck and began to speak. A sound of awe swept through the onlookers. Sandy and Mel froze as their jaws dropped open.

"Oh dear God," they kept repeating, their hands covering their faces, peeking through their fingers. "She's alive. Our Inga's alive."

Refusing to let go of him, Inga whispered to Jim "I love you, I love you." She kept saying, "I'm sorry I treated you so badly. I didn't know how much I needed you, never let me out of your arms."

Madame Leah took in all the action from her rumpled blanket. Was Jim aware of what he had done as he ran to the emergency? She pulled her hat down to cover her eyes as Jim escorted Inga up the beach. Inga whispered something to Jim, then turned and ran towards the two girls. Filled with awe, Jim let her go. He knew she would return to his waiting arms. He needed to thank someone and he turned to Madame Leah. Madame Leah lifted the brim of her hat as he stepped a tanned foot on the edge of her blanket.

“It was you all the time. You knew how this was going to end. You turned her into a doll to allowed Inga to learn to love again. You knew someday she would truly be mine.”

For a moment they stared at each other without speaking. Madame Leah broke the silence.

“She’s all yours. She loves you and she wants to marry you. She’s learned a lot about love and friendship. Look at her with those girls.” Inga stood before Sandy and Mel. The girls still speechless at the sight of Inga being alive. The girls smiled as she hugged both of them at once. “There’s nothing I could say that would be thanks enough for the way you treated. I’ll never forget it, never.”

Jim watched Inga hug both girls, he thought of marrying her and felt a pang in his heart. He thanked Madame Leah and said goodbye, and walked toward Inga and the girls.

Inga’s eyes glistened as she left the girls and then caught sight of Jim walking toward her. She felt emotions she had not known since she was a child. She was filled with the joy of love and friendship and the thought of marrying Jim.

She’d never seen Jim’s face shining so bright. His smile was brilliant. He ran and swept her up in his arms and swung her around.

“I can’t believe you’re here. You said, “You love me.” He looked at her beautiful face with a question to ask. “You do love me, don’t you?”

“With all my heart.”

Jim smiled. “You know I still have that ring in my coat pocket. Tomorrow I’ll take it back and buy you the biggest rock I can find.”

“Oh no, you won’t. I want that ring to go with my wedding band and I want Melanie and Sandy to be my maids of honor.”

Melanie and Sandy had started scribbling without haste in their notebooks. “Wait until tomorrow when Professor Ward sees this,” Mel said.

“Oh my God! He’s gon’na freak out if he believes any of this?” Sandy replied.

“Oh he’ll believe it alright. I managed to film part of the rescue on my I-phone.”

Sandy chuckled, “You’re a sly dog.”

The girls brushed sand off their notebooks and continued writing.

“You know what Mel? I always knew there was something magical about Inga.”

“Me too. Especially when I saw the teddy bear snuggled up to her. That was a little spooky to me.”

In unison, Sandy and Mel turned towards each other, both singing out what had become their theme song, “Doo,doo,doo,doo.”

The End

## GET TO KNOW THE AUTHOR

Philip Marraccini was born in Long Island, in 1946 to his proud parents, Philip Sr., and Mary who were already blessed with a daughter, Filippa. In 1950 the Family left New York to settle on a dead end street known as North Kendall Drive, located in the boondocks of Miami, Florida. Included in their few possessions was a branch from a mulberry tree that was planted on the family farm that would house Summerland Tropical Fish Farm for the next 20 years.

By 1970, North Kendall Drive developed into a six-lane highway leading to a housing boom. The farm was sold to developers however the mulberry tree was transplanted to their new home site, in Homestead, where it remains today.

With a degree from the University of Miami, Philip took a teaching job at a private, college prep school. By 1973, he would return to work the family farm as well as assist his father, with the production of a community newspaper. On several occasions Phil would contribute articles that were published in the Gionalino as well as other local publications. With a creative mind he converted his reporting skills into writing, fiction, comedy and drama but his interests would not end there. In 2004 Marraccini produced and directed his first stage production followed by

several screenplays. He would go on to film some of his stories in order to test the flow of the scripts. This was done with the help of many friends and family members who volunteered their time to display their talents as actors, editors and much more!

After 62 years of operation, Summerland Tropical Fish Farms was sold allowing Marraccini time to open a new enterprise, Phil's Berry Farm. This endeavor would allowed a little extra time to write and display his works while providing fresh farm products to visitors. Products include local honey, produce, fresh shakes and his famous "Monkey Bread." In reality, he created an outlet to gab about his writings.

Philip Marraccini invites you to visit him at;

**"The Red Barn" located at Phil's Berry Farm.  
13955 S W 248 St (Coconut Palm Dr.)  
Homestead, Florida 33032**

Visit my web page  
**[philsberryfarm.com](http://philsberryfarm.com)**

*Visit and mention this book and enjoy some free samples!*



PLASTIC IS WHAT PLASTIC DOES



**COMPLETED WORKS**

*From the Creative Mind of Philip Marrassini*

**POOR LENNY**

(Romantic Comedy)

Lenny, Ed, Ron and Richard were childhood pals whose friendship has blossomed into adulthood as Bowling Buddies but all that is about to change when Lenny's business begins to fail and he's faced with financial ruin. What ensues is a humorous yet tragic tale as one man, seduced by the lure of material possessions, tries to defraud his friends out of a small fortune, unaware he's forsaking something more precious--friendship.

Produced as a stage production. Filmed by author as a full-length movie.

(Screenplay available plus a test film).

**FEEDING FRENZY:** (Murder Comedy)

After murdering his wife, Sally, Richard is forced to kill again in attempt to collect on her life insurance policy. As the investigation closes in on Richard, see if he escapes with the money thus committing the perfect crime.

Written and filmed as a short screenplay. Convertible into a full-length story.

(Short screenplay available plus a test film).

**ISLAND BOY**

(Romantic Drama)

When missionaries discover a talented Island Boy they bring him state side for a formal education however when his mentors deviate from their teachings, it is their student who educates them on the true meaning of the Bible.

(Available as a full-length screenplay).

**BEYOND PAPERCLIP** (True drama)

A true story of an ordinary American, who under a unique set of circumstances became a key player in assisting the escape of 13 German-Russian Scientist to the United States in 1956.

(Completed in rough form)

**Works in Progress**

**RETURN OF THE MASTER RACE:** (Drama)

A World War II drama that transforms into a 50-year global plan for the return of Hitler's Master Race.

(Novel in process)

**HEART OF A NEGRO:** (Drama)

Follows a series of unusable events that lead to the conversion of a Clan Leader thus dividing a small rural Mississippi town.

(Novel in progress)

**GROWING UP KENDALL:** (Historical Comedy)

Follow the growth of the author as young boy as his life parallels the development of a small town into a metropolitan city.

(Novel in progress)