

## Fairy Tale – The Empty Box

Once upon a time there was a special place called Tinsel Town. From the outside looking in, it seemed to be a world full of life and possibilities, with lots of beautiful lights, interesting sounds and plenty of action. Its main thoroughfare was called Broadway and it was “the place to be!”

One certain rest day in Tinsel Town, while singing in the choir at the local Salvation-Show Sanctuary, a charming leading man, Director Daddy by name, met his enchanting leading lady, Musical Momma. They did the normal “Tinsel Town” thing, promptly fell in love, married and purchased their own theater on Broadway. They were extremely excited about starting their own troupe.

Director Daddy and Musical Momma were superb performers in their own right. Momma was an accomplished vocalist with many awards and recognitions to her credit. Why, she had even sung with a symphony and got to have a part in making a record. Director Daddy was very smart, athletic, and found being in front of a crowd, as in public speaking, a comfortable place to be. We already know of his singing ability. He was also light on his feet with some “Fred Astaire” qualities.

You can see why these two had such high hopes and high expectation for the members of their own future troupe. They wanted to see them flourish, succeed and experience much applause in their own individual careers. However, like everyone in Tinsel Town, Director Daddy and Musical Momma carried with them tainted baggage because of the theaters from which they had come.

Musical Momma was raised in a loving and well to do theatrical company. She was the youngest actress of her four siblings, but was insecure and had a “trust” problem due to a heart break early in her career. Feeling badly about herself, she looked for affirmation from everyone around her.

Director Daddy, on the other hand, came from a poor theatrical company, was the oldest actor of two and endured a critical upbringing, producing in him a strong drive to succeed. He was an over achiever, with expectations of perfection for himself and others.

Over a seventeen year period, Director Daddy and Musical Momma brought into the world and helped shape 2 actors and 3 actresses of their own. (Petude, Opie, Toodles, Stride and Meadowlark) They did the best they knew how in directing their troupe on their family set. But, as everyone quickly learns in Tinsel Town, life doesn't always play out the way one has it written and planned.

In the early years, Director Daddy and Musical Momma encouraged Petude and Opie, (#1 & #2 performers), to explore many different avenues to discover their Pure Daddy-given talents. There were musical instrument lessons, voice lessons, dance lessons and sports. The productions they put on during those years were amazing. The audiences cheered with excitement as this theatrical company seemed to be happy, healthy, and growing in their talents and abilities, moving into stardom. And of course, Director Daddy and Musical Momma couldn't have felt more proud.

About the time that Toodles (#3) came along to join this troupe, Director Daddy had some financial setbacks and health issues, shattering his own personal dreams of success. These and other things, including poor relational skills, little communication and possible infidelity, put a significant strain on his relationship with his leading lady, leaving many of her dreams unattended as well. We all know that when there's trouble at the top, it's going to trickle down and affect the rest of the company eventually.

When Toodles did enter stage right, she arrived like a normal actress, with unique talents and dreams of her own. Oh she loved music like the rest of the troupe, but her forte was dancing and gymnastics. Her desire to entertain was strong, but in an entirely different direction than Petude and Opie. Now, there was a very limited amount of extra time, energy, and funds that could be spent on new talent discovery. In fact, none! So unconsciously, Director Daddy and Musical Momma began to instill and encourage the development of the talents that they knew about from their own lives, into the lives of their own little actors and actresses. The pressure was on for the little performers to do what they could to present their theatrical company as normal, happy and successful and to keep Director Daddy and Musical Momma stress free and content.

Priorities had shifted and more attention had to be given to keeping Director Daddy alive and the whole troupe functioning. No one had time to consider or pursue what came naturally for Toodles, what she enjoyed and dreamed about. Nothing could be done about it anyway, so why even ask. Oh yes, Toodles got to take piano lessons from a family friend and all, but she was about to burst with desire to dance. That talent and desire was never pursued in any way, except in Toodles' imagination and dreams.

Sometimes she would sneak onto the family stage, turn on her favorite tunes and dance for hours, finding unspeakable joy. One day as she danced her cares away in the empty theater in secret, she noticed a special box out in the audience area. It was a separate compartment, apparently for the comfort and accommodation of a certain person or group. She had noticed it before during family performances, but it had always been empty and she would promptly forget to ask about it when each show was over. Who was it for? Why was there never anybody in it? Maybe someday she would discover the answer.

Eventually, Toodles got lost in the shuffle of life gone wrong and dancing was tucked neatly away, and almost completely forgotten. The entertainer in her began to love and live for the audiences' applause (that included Director Daddy and Musical Momma, of course). So, she dabbled in singing, tried piano, attempted tennis and even took cello lessons. She also discovered that making people laugh was a joy and relieved a lot of the stress and tension that life regularly offered.

Outside of their theatrical company time, there was always the one activity that this dramatic family shared together on a regular basis – Going to the local Salvation-Show Sanctuary every rest day. There they learned about Pure Daddy from the Big Script, what He thought and what He expected. Toodles was especially enthralled with learning about how Pure Daddy had created everything, including Tinsel Town, herself, and every actor and actress. Of course, there was no way that any of them could ever entertain the thought of not using their voices in the Salvation-Show Sanctuary choir.

Toodles was pretty sure she understood what Pure Daddy wanted from her or anyone else for that matter. It was all right there in the Big Script. Just follow His rules, obey His commands, and give the performance He called for and He would accept you. That's how it was everywhere in Tinsel Town, right?

As she grew older, she became more confused about who she was and why she was in Tinsel Town. She lost touch with her own heart, what she liked and didn't like, and became an expert at listening to everyone else. Keeping others happy and keeping the applause coming, no matter what, became her ultimate goal. At least in those moments she felt needed, useful and good about herself.

Before she left Director Daddy and Musical Momma's theatrical company to seek after her own career, Toodles met Jonny Angel, a wonderful leading man. They were perfect together. Johnny really loved music too, just like the rest of her own troupe.

Johnny had a special confidence that drew Toodles to him. He was calm, patient, and sure of himself, never pressuring Toodles to be anything other than herself. Wow, what a soft place for Toodles to land. But scary at the same time. She was used to being given direction about everything. She didn't quite know what to do with this new found freedom. She loved how she felt with Johnny Angel, but was also afraid that he would someday discover her flaws and walk away. Surely they were meant to be together forever.

The time had finally arrived for Toodles to leave home and head for Whatever College, (where Petude and Opie had gone). There she could begin studying to become what someone else had suggested she become. It wasn't long before she had settled in and met some new friends. One day one of them began to tell her about the theatrical company she had come from and about the empty box in their auditorium.

Toodles was shocked. "You have one of those too?"

“Yes” she replied. “Everyone does, you know.”

“But who is it for? Why is it always empty?” Toodles questioned, hardly able to contain herself. She’d been waiting a long time to find out about this.

“Why, that special seat in each theater is reserved for a certain one and Him alone. No one can take His place” Toodles’ friend said with a sparkle in her eye.

“Who is it? Who is it?” Toodles couldn’t stand the anticipation any longer.

“His name is Pure Daddy” her friend revealed with joy.

“Pure Daddy?” Toodles exclaimed. “Why, I know about Pure Daddy. I’ve learned about Him at the Salvation-Show Sanctuary and in the Big Script. He brought everything into existence, including you and me. Does He come to your theater and sit in the special box?, she asked her friend.

“Oh yes! He’s there for every performance and rehearsals too.”

“Why doesn’t He come to my theater?, questioned Toodles. I’ve been going to the Salvation-Show Sanctuary and following the Big Script since I was born.

“It’s not about what you do, Toodles, but about Who you know. Pure Daddy loves everyone, but will only come to the theaters to which He is invited. He doesn’t come just to watch either, by the way. He desires to be the Director and Producer. He wants to be you Everything.” she explained.

Toodles was in shock, but so very grateful that her friend was willing to share the truth with her. So Toodles had a long talk with Pure Daddy right then and there.

I wish it could be said at this point that Toodles and Johnny Angel lived happily ever after. But, no. When Toodles shared her new found faith with him, she was shocked again by yet another discovery. Johnny Angel didn’t believe in Pure Daddy. He didn’t want anything to do with Him. No Salvation-Show Sanctuary for him. No Big Script reading and studying for him. No observing rest day for him. What was Toodles to do?

Toodles knew what Pure Daddy said in the Big Script about this. She knew what He expected for her. There was only one way for Toodles to act this out. Do the right thing. Keep Pure Daddy happy with her. She needed to walk away from Johnny Angel and look for another. One who shared her same faith about Pure Daddy.

You would think that the transition from having everyone else make you decisions to letting Pure Daddy do that would have been an easy one for Toodles. But it wasn’t. She needed help to learn how to do this performance thing with Pure Daddy directing. But she was all alone at Whatever College and wasn’t sure how to put it all together.

One day, Salesman Steve turned up in her life. Like her girlfriend, Salesman Steve knew Pure Daddy and could explain why he believed what he believed. He was the most charismatic actor she had ever met and he had a plan for his life. He wanted to be the Gospel Giver at a Salvation-Show Sanctuary someday and he asked Toodles if she would like to come along.

Well of course, this has to be what I’m supposed to do, reasoned Toodles. Even though she never asked Pure Daddy about it, marrying Salesman Steve lined up with what His Big Script said, she thought. Salesman Steve was a believer in Pure Daddy too and he even had a plan, where she didn’t. This would give her a purpose for her life to help Salesman Steve to achieve his goals.

Well Salesman Steve and Toodles did the Tinsel Town thing, got married, went off to Sanctuary Seminary, purchased their own theater on Broadway and began their own troupe. One precious little actor and actress. In their 8 years of marriage, their performances were a struggle for Toodles, unhappy and lonely. She had forgotten about Pure Daddy’s desire to be her Director and as she looked entirely to Salesman Steve for direction, she became more angry, frustrated and disillusioned.

Salesman Steve, not looking to Pure Daddy either for direction for his troupe, didn't like how this felt so he found a new leading lady.

Toodles found herself alone again, but with two small performers this time. She began to wonder if there was a leading man and a role for her somewhere.

The next 12 years was a challenge for Toodles' performing abilities. Somehow she had to be everything for her little actor and actress: Mother, Father, provider, comforter, etc. And Toodles rose to the challenge. Director Daddy had passed away by this time, so she loaded up her troupe and moved back to Musical Momma's house.

Pure Daddy had more of her attention now and she was learning how to let Him be the Director in some areas of her life. The one big exception to this, though, was her leading man. Somehow she couldn't imagine an acting career without one. And she always seemed to forget about asking Pure Daddy's opinion. Or maybe her problem was hearing what He had to say. Surely His script for her didn't include a production without a leading man? She was afraid to trust Him fully about this.

So Dashing Doug entered stage left. He was good looking, single, had a successful career, and he and Toodles were friends from long ago. He knew Pure Daddy, Toodles was told, and Dashing Doug convinced her of his love for her. He had an Actress and actor in his own troupe and they decided that joining their companies would be wonderful for all involved.

What Toodles refused to see coming, even though Pure Daddy had shown her, was that Dashing Doug didn't look to Pure Daddy either for direction in his career. In fact Dashing Doug wanted Toodles to be the director of their theatrical company. And not only the director, the mother, financier, chief cook and bottle washer, laundress, gardener, golfer, entertainer, hostess and lover. At first, this made Toodles feel so good, so needed. There was purpose in her life once again.

But after 10 more years of loneliness and sleep deprivation, Toodles had had enough. She called a spade, "A SPADE" and ended the craziness. She called out to Pure Daddy and finally found contentment with Him alone. "What do you want me to do with the rest of this career you've given me, Pure Daddy? It's You and me, Pure Daddy. Where shall we go and what shall we do together?" Having no expectations, she rested from all her performing and looking for that one leading man and experienced peace and joy for the first time in a long time.

One day, she received a huge surprise. No Way! How could this be? A letter from Johnny Angle? The leading man that her heart was sure was for her, so long ago. They hadn't seen or heard from each other in over 30 years. This time she went to Pure Daddy right away, with all of her excitement, immediate fears and BIG hesitations.

"You'll have to lead the way on this one, Pure Daddy. Toodles prayed to Him. Help me know what Your script is for me. Help me to listen closely and correctly to You and my heart. You be my Director this time. I am trusting in You."

It wasn't long after they renewed their friendship that Toodles could see that the script hadn't changed much between them over all those years. Except that they each had their own troupes now and they both were showing signs of gray, their hearts were instantly knitted together with only one glitch. Johnny Angel had traveled his whole career without Pure Daddy and still didn't know Him.

Johnny Angel had mellowed over the past 30 years about this subject and Toodles was not in any hurry to make things happen a certain way. She would let Pure Daddy lead the way this time around and He did. He showed Himself to Johnny Angel and led them to do His thing: Marry and set up their own theatrical company in Tinsel Town with Pure Daddy sitting in that special box reserved just for Himself. They are content with letting Pure Daddy be the director and producer of all of their remaining performances.

THE END