

MAUDE MOLD

#49

by Stanley Lieber

AFTER THE DIVORCE

They had all moved in together. What with the rapacious inflation, the ever-present threat of violent crime, the increasing political divide in the country, the thought of their children having to contextualize all this, latchkey Internets wandering alone on the corporate mesh... All three women decided there would be greater strength in numbers, and so they pooled their resources, cohabitating a Greenwich Village brownstone, sharing their dinners, their chores, and, of course, group-shouldering the ongoing disappointments wrought upon their kids by their good-for-nothing ex-husbands.

It ran for six seasons.

Maude, Kate, Allie, Emma, Jennie, Chip, and TAB3—the latter fresh from space, cranky and still very pregnant. "By my daddy's beard!" Odin had said, when he saw the ragged wagon train merrily snaking into the apartment. Odin had killed his own father, whose origin was in any case obscure.

"You don't live here, you know," Maude frowned, driving a *boshi* fist into his rib cage.

Odin threw up his hands, refused to defend himself. Ironically, for a Norse god, he was at long last weary of the constant fighting.

"At least the Romans respected me. Hel, according to this alert in my visor, new CIA research can make me wealthy in seven minutes! I'm heading back to Germany, you ladies can piss up a rope."

Kate opened her mouth as if to say something, but after a sharp look from Allie she raised her eyebrows and decided to shut her mouth.

Maude frowned again.

THAT OLD GHOST TRILEMMA

At the onset of the seventh year, after the big blowup, Kate, Allie, and their remaining brood all safely moved out, Piro led a raid on the brownstone.

"No fee 'til victory!" he shouted, crashing through the front room window on the end of his favorite throwing rope. Shouting for the benefit of his men, rather than their target. Affirming their acquaintanceship with the rules of engagement. He wanted them all to get paid, even if they didn't really deserve it.

But Maude was already gone.