

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 by themselves... 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 said, when he saw the ragged wagon train merrily snaking into the apartment. "Do your husbands know about this?" Odin had killed his own father, of course, whose origin was in any case obscure.

"You don't live here, you know," Maude frowned, driving a *boshi* fist straight into his rib cage, separating sagging bone from so-called muscle with her thumb.

Odin threw up his hands, refusing 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*," *he interrupted himself, "According to this recent 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, the final dissolution of the commune, Kate, Allie, and their remaining brood all safely moved out, Piro finally led a raid on the brownstone. It was about time.

"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.

Wait, where did everybody go?