

THE CONFESSION OF EVA

“Why did you go back?”

“I felt as if it was the only way that I could be whole. I tried to explain it to other people. None of them understood. Only he would listen. And he apologized for treating me so badly.”

“Was that OK with you?”

“None of it was OK with me. That’s what made me feel terrible. But the more terrible that I felt, the less that I wanted to tell someone else about it. He had really messed with me bad. Not only had he been the one who hurt me, but he was the only person who I felt could make it better.”

“You needed to just get away from him.”

“That was easier said than done. There was no place away from him. He lived in my head. If you could tell me a place that I could go and escape, I’d be there in a heartbeat.”

“You have to find that place.”

“He had this way of getting in my head. Every time that I try to put him out of my mind, he’d just sneak back in.”

If I really tried, I could tell myself that none of this ever happened. There were the old wounds that I had repressed. I didn’t want them welling up. If I ignored their influence, then the whole thing would be gone for good. That didn’t mean that I was any less erratic in my behavior. I just didn’t try to control things.

He had turned me into a basket case. My personality was a series of buttons that he could press to get the result that he wanted. Only when he was gone for good would I be able to recover any semblance of normality. And it was a long road before I could ever get to that stage.

It was too easy for me to admit the role that I had played in my demise. Every time that he was gone for good, he’d reappear on the basis of my own self-doubts. He had been too good at working his magic.

I spent a lot of my time being angry with him. This was an important part of my healing process. But it had been a big step. Before that, he was able to use my emotions against me. If I got fired up, that would be an eventual motivation to return to him.

When I finally left him, I wasn’t sure if I had enough strength to hold to my resolution. He had made me feel unloved. And that fact alone had made me hidden to the world at large. I didn’t feel as if I could just walk out on him for good. I kept expecting one of my cravings to take me back to his house. I had to disentangle all my emotions from the hold that they had over me.

Once and for all, I needed to convince myself that none of this was my doing. He was a master at his craft. He had the whole routine laid out before I ever walked through his door. I danced for him like an expert. And he played his tune with such flair that there was little else that I could do. I wanted to get my life back. But I never knew where to start. He had taken everything from me. He had been my love and my hate. He had ripped me apart.

What did I have to do to pick up the pieces? I didn’t have the means to get my world back. My devastation had been thorough. My only purpose had been trying to reconcile myself to what was going on between us. I had tossed away my school work. I had alienated my mother. I had distanced myself from my friends. Even in my recovery, there was no way that I

could get back what I lost. I really had nowhere to go. I had to go back to myself. That was going to be rough!

There was no way that things could have happened the way that they did without total deviousness on his part. He pretended that my curiosity had been the driving force for my actions. Sure, it may have been a factor. But he took advantage of me at every stage of the game. He would tell me things that weren't true in the hopes that I would go along with his plans. If I tried to call him on his inconsistency, he would claim that I was making a big deal out of nothing.

In the beginning, he was all over the place with his stories. This should have tipped me off, but I was very naive. Just at the moment when I was about to catch him at one of his tall tales, he found a way to change his version of what had happened. And this made me oblivious to the facts of what was going on. He was an expert at mind games, and he had no shortage of tricks up his sleeve. I was ever prepared for what was going on. But he always stayed a hundred steps ahead of me. At times, I felt that I was dealing with a mind reader. He kept me immersed in a constant wonderland. If I started to doubt his intentions, he could charm me with goodies from here to the ends of the earth. I really believed that I had overcome all the restrictions of childhood. I thought that I was doing exactly what I pleased.

It took a while for it to dawn on me that he was always getting what he wanted. If he asked me to do something that I found a little embarrassing, I did not hesitate to follow his lead. From the get go, he would use sex to intimidate me. He would push me to a point of no return, and when I tried to recover my composure he would find a way to blackmail me emotionally. I wanted to pretend that I wasn't afraid of him. But in the stark reality of his confining house, his word was the law. And he always found a way unambiguously to impress his will. Our initial physical contact hadn't seemed like such a big deal. I was a little drunk, and he was able to push things. After that point, things seemed more or less automatic. This was where it became really tricky. Not only did he start to expect little things, he took his small victories as a cue that he could go for broke. Through it all there was this undercurrent of violence. He never knew when to stop. From early on, I tried to draw the line. But that didn't do me very much good. Whenever I was serious about my resistance to his forays, he would match my opposition with a much more desperate appeal on his behalf. At this point, I could sense that he was ready to do me harm. So I would acquiesce. That would only make him demonstrably aggressive so that I would have to accommodate his moods.

He did not hesitate to exploit my sense of shame. He knew how I depended on sex to help me overcome my melancholy. I would pretend that our closeness spoke to a deeper concern on his part. All along I realized that this was simply an illusion on my part. But I needed the boost that I derived from our contact to help me maintain a sense of balance.

I didn't have a chance. He stripped me naked so that I had no dignity to my name. I was his plaything. On the other hand, I would pretend to be the dutiful lover and try to make up for his emotional hollow. He noticed my weakness, and he would attempt to bring me to my knees. Pleasure was never enough for him. He thrived on humiliation. I would constantly be devastated. But he couldn't let me catch my breath. Otherwise, I would put it all together and be out of there in an instant.

I would spend most of the time miserable. But I couldn't break his hold. I would

constantly do his bidding. And he would never appreciate my effort. In sex, I would try to make up for what I lacked in the rest of my life. But I was never good enough for him. He took my vulnerability as a way to maintain his superiority. I would feel totally empty without him, so he came to assume my fidelity.

After we had had sex, my guilt overcame me. I felt on the verge of suicide. I tried to analyze what had happened, but I couldn't make heads or tails of any of it. I went there without thinking. Something else had been bothering me that day. It might have had something to do with school or a fight that I had with my mom. But I ended up rushing over to his place.

He knew that I would eventually come back. And he had decided that this time we were going to have sex. There was nothing that I was going to be able to do to resist his overriding intent. I started to realize that something was up. And I did what I could to distract him. At every turn, he was ready for me. And there was no way that I was going to be able to escape. Once he made clear his intentions, it was even harder to hold him off.

Before I knew it, he was inside me just banging away. It was all so sudden. I didn't know what was going on. He was totally oblivious to what I was going through. I didn't want this to happen at all. But he never gave me a chance to say no.

Immediately, I started to cry. He pretended to comfort me. Ultimately, this was only a ploy. Given the opportunity, he would do the exact same thing over again. He went through the motions. When he realized that this was all becoming too much for him, he just left the room.

I was now completely alone in the world. I was huddled in a corner. I had the sheets pulled around me. I remained ensconced in my cocoon.

My friends would consider some kind of freak. And my mom would think of me as the devil's child. She would finally disown me.

When I was finally able to shake myself out of my trance, I put my clothes on, and I ran home. I rushed up to my room and tossed my clothes in a pile on the floor. Then I took a long shower. My mom had some pills for stress. I took a couple of those. I wanted to take them all. Then I went back to my room. I was completely empty. There was nothing inside. I just stared into space.

I felt as if all this was meant to be. I had been a naughty girl, I had tested my mother. And this had been the result. I had always been isolated from the world. Now there was no one who could understand. I didn't need some adult trying to impress a deep moral lesson on me. I already felt guilty enough. What else was I supposed to do?

He had made me do things that I didn't want to happen. I tried to make him stop. I found that I was playing back the events in my head. I wanted them to turn out in a desired fashion. But there was no way to get over the inevitable. I was never going to find happiness anyway. There were guys at school who I liked, but they didn't like me. If they had have, I would screwed it up in the end. I was just repeating what had happened to my mom.

I wished that I could have made my own way. That was what kept me so long at his place. He made me think that I was an adult. For once, things seemed to be right in my life. But he was just tricking me. There was nothing that I could do to make it otherwise.

I hated him through all this. I didn't have the energy to do anything bad to him. But I wanted him to go away forever. I clicked my fingers as if I was evoking a power to make him vanish. At least, I could escape from him in my mother's house.

After trying to deal with my pain, I was less prone to self-destruction. But there was nothing that I could do to get myself on the right track. I went back to lying on my bed and letting my mind wander. I was a total zombie.

Even as it became later, I just stared into the darkness. The drugs had calmed down the more absurd mood swings. I was numb to the world. When I finally became tired of being tired, I passed out.

There were days when I told myself that nothing had transpired between us. I avoided the house altogether, and I did my best to concentrate on my schoolwork. I'd close myself off in my room and concentrate all my efforts. For a while, I would be successful in this task. But I would have trouble fighting off my boredom.

My textbook would stay open on the same page for an hour or so. I would just stare at it not making sense of anything. It really didn't help to go downstairs and take a break. My mother would be in the kitchen, and she'd find some excuse to nag at me. I couldn't stand her interrogating me all the time as if I was some kind of criminal. I had no idea what to say to her. It wasn't as if her life was such a picnic. She had chased away the only man who loved her. And she was in danger of losing me.

Back in my room, I would do my best to recover. My head would be spinning. My body would reflect my nervousness. I wasn't sure what I needed to do to regain my focus. At first, I thought that my break had given me the needed distance from my work. So I'd plow ahead on the basis of my renewed inspiration. Then a couple of pages into my endeavor, I would feel the same old let down. My mind would wander.

I would turn my thoughts to sex. If only I could meet a guy who really loved me. The last time that I had been interested in someone from my grade, things simply took a turn for the worst. Nevertheless, I was getting myself excited. I wanted something to drink. I needed to get out of the house.

I would rush over to his house. I had that sinking feeling that I had given in again. I had done my darndest to resist my attraction. It wasn't him so much as it was the permission that he seemed to great me to do anything that I wanted. He knew that he could have his way with me once I was high. That wasn't really why I was there. But once I was in a weakened state, he would have little difficulty in forcing his will on me.

I would get an extra drink for courage. Momentarily, I was suspended in this no man's land. I wanted to run out the door. But I told myself that I had come her for a reason. And I still hadn't gotten over the restlessness that had exiled me from my mother's house.

He was somewhat gleeful how easy things were for him. I would almost come out of myself while the whole things was happening. If a friend had observed me, they wouldn't know me at all. I became this ravenous creature who was compelled by her own desires.

For his part, he would claim that I was freely doing what I wanted. He seldom needed to constrain me in any way. This only reinforced his point of view. He never gave any credibility to my age. This was way too much for me to deal with. He didn't care. He could use sex as a weapon. And I always turned my hunger against me. I knew that I was drinking the poison. But I did it anyway. He knew when I needed to feed. And he would make it impossible for me to resist. He never encouraged me to talk out my feelings. He used my confusion as a stepping stone to a more profound hold over me. As well, he would become abusive simply to prove that

he could get away with it. That would justify further treatment of that depraved nature. He would implicate me in these scenes because he knew how badly I thought about myself. The very intensity of these experiences would dull some of the pain. At the same time, his pressure would increase my tolerance for suffering. I found these enactments cathartic.

I was learning a great deal about myself. And what I saw was frightening. He was getting me to go along with this madness. I wanted to think of myself as a helpless observer. But he made me take an active part in my own demise. I didn't have any resources to stand against him. I often took such behavior to be the norm.

I never wanted to believe that I was unable to control my own behavior. But there were these gaps that I couldn't make sense of. I would catch myself doing the stupidest things. And I could never explain what had possessed me to act in such a silly way. All in all, I thought that I was lucky to move ahead each day one step at a time.

I often felt on the verge of blacking out. I would use these episodes as a way of consoling my deeper misgiving about what was going on at his house. The building itself seemed haunted. Just walking by gave me a sense of fear. Like in any tale of horror, I constantly ignored the warnings, and I was motivated by my need to explore. Even if he wasn't there I would still feel these terrible associations with the place. It wasn't simply the bad memories that went along with my time there. I had a premonition of something greater affecting me. I would have dreams that reminded me of this dreaded presence. Now and then, I would feel that I had a special kind of seeing. That thought would offer me a refuge against what was occurring. I had discovered a way to overcome the demons. I myself was becoming absorbed by the dark side. My unique abilities gave me an edge that I used to cushion the blows.

There was moments when I felt myself taken over by forces that I was unable to control. Sometimes these otherworldly influences made me more turned on by sex. I would become another person. And this spirit would invigorate my every action. At times, I would imagine that I was looking down on myself having sex. I couldn't stop myself. I became a fiend. He had no idea what was happening to me, but he would find a way to direct my actions in his favor. All this was becoming more and more complex.

I had trouble holding together these various incarnations of myself. I didn't even bother trying. The only hope in my favor was that he couldn't control every manifestation of my inner self. Just when he thought that things were going his way, I would let something slip out. This made him more frustrated, and his anger became a flash point. Things would really spiral out of control.

I really believed that the devil had finally got control of my soul. If I had truly descended to his lair, there was no hope in trying. I might as well give myself totally to the ill-fated events. It wasn't as if I was casting spells. I didn't think of myself as a witch. But I knew that I was messing with powers that were beyond me. At times, I coasted along as I was able to get what I wanted. Then everything would again become bewildering. I would be on the verge of losing consciousness. My craziness ensued.

Since I was so weak, I needed his support. I knew that he was ignoring what was actually moving me. And I didn't want to let him in on any of my secrets. So I took things as they were. This gave him an added sense of strength that he lorded over me. When I was alone, I tried to tell myself that I was pulling a fast one over him.

If I had looked at myself in the mirror, I would have run from the apparition. I had let myself go. I looked gaunt. My clothes were a mess. But I was also using my new found beliefs as a way of transforming myself. I needed to wear my uniform at school. But I accessorized it in a fashion to demonstrate my wicked nature. People were afraid of me. At least, that was what I told myself.

The wall between me and the outside world was becoming higher. I didn't let it bother me. I just gave in. Even as I was discovering a distance from him, I was still depending on his counsel. He was freakier than ever. I needed to do what I could to keep up. I was so deep in this that there was absolutely nowhere to turn. I railed at the heavens for abandoning me. My woe was becoming eternal.

Despite my own weakness, I finally recognized the source of his power. He used sex to make himself believe that he had control over the universe. Otherwise, he was quite a pathetic human being. It was difficult for me to recognize this fact. His seductive manners had opened me to a whole new way of thinking about the world. Here were people who spent their every waking hour trying to enhance their romantic lives. Often, there was very little else to keep them preoccupied. Sex reminded them of their own emptiness. So they had to make an elaborate game out of their satisfaction.

I was getting caught up in the same sort of behavior. I did what I could to dress the part. I believed if I turned him on, that I was enhancing my own self-worth. I could see the changes that I induced in him so I felt as if my efforts were paying off. My performance lent further validity to his approach. Rather than doubting his superior nature, I was only adding to his haughtiness. As he thrust himself inside me, he held my wrists tighter. With his own eyes, he could now observe the far reaches of the universe.

I did what I could to shake off this influence. What would it be like to live without dreams? If I was gripped by my utter cynicism, I couldn't leave any room for the alternative. Seen in this light, he was laughable. I had temporarily broken him down to nothing. His spell could no longer hold me.

Even though I had disengaged myself completely, I still wanted him. Why was that? I had to face the raw character of my desire. I had become nothing but this appetite-driven individual. Therefore, I was unable to cast off the very thing that had kept me whole. I couldn't abide with this situation. I didn't want to spend the rest of my life pursued by the same grim vision. I needed to discover some way to assert my independence once and for all.

It would be difficult to wall myself completely from my painful experiences. But I didn't want to carry around these shackles for eternity. I wasn't the source of the hurt. I simply suffered under his mistreatment. Even after I did everything that I could think of, my depression lingered. I had the fortitude to carry on.

I had to wonder about his own history. There were hints here and there. When he showed his most intense brutality, I could see the cracks in his facade. I was feeling sorry for this monster because I continued to see the image of a small boy being victimized by someone more powerful than himself. And I couldn't get over this picture. That spoke little to my own victimization. And, he knew that I didn't have the same killer instinct that had been bred into him. Ultimately, that was his calling card. And he tried to burn the same sensibility into me.

With no provocation whatsoever he would make these remarks that demonstrated an

incredible cruelty. This was all part of his strategy. He didn't want to be known. He was afraid of himself. Once I finally saw this face, I was able definitively to make the break from him. He was no longer the all-powerful wizard who was ready to lay waste to the world. He was now the pathetic little boy trying to pull the levers of the *Chamber of Horrors*.

When a particularly frightening scene would well up inside me, I needed to remind myself that I was being mesmerized by smoke and mirrors. Once he was banished, he was gone for good. So his threats no longer mattered. And his worst excesses were indeed part of my past. I was turning the taunts back on him. I was stripping the myth of its terror.

I knew that one day I could get it all together. For now it was simply a long process to put enough distance between him and me. I never wanted my weakness to be my source of motivation. This was a lot easier said than done. I could only reference my past. And the only part of me that was still fresh were my experiences with him.

As we drifted apart, I tried to treat it like a normal breakup.

"You never wanted me. You just wanted one of me?"

"What is that supposed to mean?"

I had never been able truly to be myself around him. And I had been with him so long that I didn't know who I really was. He had made me dirty. I didn't have any real interests. I had forgone my childhood to play his adult games. I allowed myself to be manipulated by his mean streaks.

I was the star of his movie. And the scenario became more and more convoluted. I constantly needed to top my last performance. He wanted to see his china doll revolve around on her perch and always look glorious for the world. I was the unsurpassable turn on. After he got off, there was nothing more for me to do. I had led him to paradise.

He tried to speculate about some higher state that could justify all his fuss. Afterward, he would just lie there and pretend that he had been assumed into heaven. If things weren't so painful, I would have burst out laughing. That would have only resulted in some kind of beating. So I held by tongue.

It must have been rough for him when he realized that the Hollywood set was shutting down for good. With no starlet to reflect all the light, his place seemed more like a tomb. A wail of hurt echoed throughout. My face was filed away with the other glossies.

He was reversing the exact process that had drawn me to him in the first place. I knew that there was some kind of theory behind it. But it made sense to me when I imagined him mooning over a pin up. He wanted to see one of these images come to life. Even when he watched a movie, he tried to store up a repertoire of gestures that he could employ in his life. He was hardly the leading man. He was clumsy and lacked any natural grace. But he made up with this by his skill for mimicry. And he could take on any role that was necessary for the situation.

I got taken in by his fast-talking. He knew how to dazzle a young girl. He might as well have told me that he was a big-time producer, and he had a role for me in a feature film. I would have fallen for his line of bull. Like any girl, I wanted the ticket. But I felt like a geek. If some stranger told me that I had the eyes of a superstar, I would lose it completely. I'd try to pose right there before him. I would live off his flattery.

He was able to twist me around his little finger. It was so obvious. But I couldn't help

but fall for him. I wanted to feel special. I needed attention. I just never realized that once that I got it that it would be all-consuming for me. He was trying to transform me into a little flirt. At the same time, he was ready to punish me if he felt a twinge of jealousy. I was performing for an audience of one. I was the emperor's concubine. I was living for nothing but him.

One day, I just felt myself skidding on ice. I had zero traction. I had been going too fast. And I thought that I never would be able to slow down. He loved to rev me up. And I thought that I could handle it. He would try to take me through the paces. But I was running out of energy. And I had no control. This complemented his sadistic stripe. He was whipping me into shape. Things finally spun out.

It was as if I was orbiting around nothing. He really wasn't there for me. And I was living my every waking moment for him. What did he want? He craved human sacrifice. He wanted to bring me close to the point of asphyxiation. I never thought of any of this literally. But he was saving something in reserve that he meant to use against me. I had to be ready for his fury. I had seen him over the edge. Nothing matched that total disregard for everything. I needed to prepare myself for a coming storm.

I resented him making some kind of spectacle of me. He was always staring at me through a magnifying glass. And I was the prize for his collection. All along, I was just like an award-winning poodle who was ready to catch kitchen scraps in my mouth. He kept training me for more outrageous stunts. I believed that there was something behind the spectacle. It was merely part of his ritual. He couldn't have planned it any better. And I was totally convinced that had been his intention.

He picked me out from my friends because I was the most impressionable. They were all a little maladroit. I fit in well with them, but my eyes wandered more. He could sense that I was living in my dreams. And I fell hook, line, and sinker for his bull. My friends didn't really have the confidence to venture out there. For me, it was simple stupidity.

I wasn't the one what wanted to admit that I was wrong. He kept piling it on, and I kept eating up whatever he was dishing it out. It allowed me to realize how pathetic I really was.

A more mature girl would have required more trinkets of affection really to make it a go. And my friends were just too sheltered to take a chance. They were timid about what they have. It only made them more trapped in their shells.

I was ready to break the mold even if I was breaking myself in the process. I also felt that I was getting back at my mother. Her discipline had little rhyme or reason. It was all part of her effort to reach out to my deadbeat of a dad. He had cleared out when he saw the true nature of her calling. He let his prospects fizzle. And he felt his concern for his family suffer a similar nosedive.

Mommy Dearest was going to make sure that I wasn't road kill for a world of bad news guys. But due to her meddling, I could never get my spark lit. So I was just waiting for any run-of-the-mill sociopath. And my prayers were deviously answered.

"Let that be a lesson to you, Mommy!"

I never wanted to feel sorry for myself. For that reason, I has no desire to dwell on the effects of his actions on me. Some people might have been critical of my inability to work my way deeper to the roots of my psychological discomfort. But I had refused to serve as a guinea pig for his perverse experiments so why would I want to be an experimental subject for someone

else's research. A psychiatrist might have maintained that my future mental health depended on getting to the bottom of my dilemma. But I already had enough on my plate. At any moment I needed to be ready for an explosive replay of my past troubles. It seemed foolish to give a therapist the license to stir up the hornet's nest. I could only imagine the theater of cruelty that would eventually play upon the mind's stage.

I solved the problem in my own way. And that was that. Except for an occasional flare up, I could be quite content with my present state.

With all my wonderful learning, I was sure that I could wrap up my story for good. I had it with flashbacks to the mad Halloween costume party at the asylum. And I no longer wanted to be some Dorothy while the witch chased me around Oz. So I was ready for a good-old fashioned boring life. But I kept clicking my heels, and the magic wouldn't ensue. Who did I have to bribe to free me from this endless penance?

I had started with a solemn task before me. Now, I was wise-cracking like a rabid dog at an improv. There was no hope for me. No wonder I had become side-tracked in an introspective moment. I had resisted the efforts to shine a light on my abuse. I didn't want to see myself as a statistic. And it was all so overwhelming to think about it in any other way, I wasn't sure where to start.

He would have finally rejected me because I wasn't perfect enough for him. So I exited the premises before he had the chance. I felt as if no one else had to endure as much as I did. I would forever be marked by my time in captivity. So I would bear my cross with pride.

I couldn't see myself as a teenage alcoholic. But I still hadn't figured out how to come down. And he had used alcohol to get me in the mood. So I had no idea where I was going with any of this. I needed some way not to crumble down completely. And I couldn't keep repeating a litany of my woes.

My mother wondered why I was home so much. She hadn't disowned me for nothing. I should have shown her my scars. But the deepest cuts were inside, and I wasn't sure if I wanted to go there with her. So I just played it low-key and pretended that I was coming down from some exotic drug. That way she's be afraid to touch me and just leave me alone. In my own way, I did need some time to detox.

I kept returning to the fact that a true confession required me to enumerate my sins. This seemed almost like one of *his* ideas. Nevertheless, I started to scrutinize my past offenses so I could document where I really went wrong. I would have found special company among a group of addicts. I hadn't been laid low solely for his misdeeds. I was a child of Satan. And I needed to see my sorrowful path. My knees were becoming weak from all that kneeling. But I couldn't lie prostrate forever.

I screamed out from my room. My mother ran in to realize that it was all a nightmare. She was even more unsure that she wanted a raving lunatic inhabiting her daughter's room. But she again left me to my own devices. She would have really lost it if she had seen me foaming at the mouth. I decided not to oblige her.

No wonder I had trouble sorting things out. I had this feeling that I should be making headway. Instead, I was turning around in an even larger circle. And he wasn't there to induce my inevitable resolution. For once, I was trying to stand on my own two feet.

I felt as if I was in the midst of one of those struggles that always saw me going back to him. This time I was successfully fighting that impulse. But that made my struggle appear to be some form of withdrawal. In all fairness to myself, I was trying to kick a nasty habit.

After all this, I wasn't ready to apologize to anyone. My mother hadn't made this a hospitable place. She had practically driven me out of my own place. I didn't come back with open arms. It wasn't as if I ever left. I had just been spending inordinate amounts of time with him.

I was my own person. But I was still too young to claim much of a life for my own. I had little choice but to resume my old life. So much went unanswered. I could hardly be the person that I had been. There was no place for me. I didn't have friends to support me. And my former pursuits were all a thing of the past. I needed a place where I could become myself.

I wasn't meant to beg for a life for myself. This was how things had turned out. And that was that! If my mother now expected more of me, so be it. She had enough trouble just dealing with her imaginary illusions about me. I needed to take advantage of her fear before she really tried to restrict my activities.

I spent my days reading. I did what I could to help around the house. But most of the time, I was this emaciated who maintained that I was my mother's long lost daughter. For the time being, I had a century to catch up with, and I had no help to do it. This was the kind of solitude that had proven too much to take. And it had always pushed me back over the edge, and into his arms. That was never going to occur again.

I felt like a figment of his invention. I was battling back just to attain my integrity. There was a time when I had been able to create my own world. I had built on the lessons from the books that I read. I saw deeply into the workings of things. I felt as if I had crossed eons to catch a glimpse of the creative impulses of the universe. But my journey had been a solitary one. And I wanted some kind of acknowledgment for what I had seen. My mother hardly understood my quest. While I marveled at the intersecting orbits and sheer majesty, she did everything that she could to drag me down to her pedestrian reality. She mocked my preoccupation with a higher realm. And she let her own frustration get in the way of my infinite reach. Her weariness made me subject to the most bizarre appeals. And he used my doubts against me. I wanted recognition. For my substantial efforts, I needed some kind of material validation. He appeared to offer me what I craved the most. He reassured me that there was a purpose for my search.

Of course, he used me in his own way. I became completely subsumed to his will. He had crafted his own agenda. And it was based on truths that were central to his being. I was simply an appendage to his way of thinking. He lived with one goal in mind, to maximize his own pleasure. He believed that visual images provided him the means to sustain his levels of excitement. They enlightened him with regards to a more profound harmony that moved the planets. When he saw me, he felt that I embodied one of his fundamental principles. I was his vision incarnate. At the same time, he could force me to submit to his fundamental order. I was not corrupted by the outside world. Instead, he took it upon himself to degrade me. Thus, I was beholden to him. My psyche could no longer claim an independence. I had become a victim of his programming. Therefore, it wasn't simply the negative effects that had overcome my spirit. He was able to extend deep into my soul and alter my nature. I could no longer be myself

without paying tribute to some aspect of his grand plan.

With so much experience to sort through, could I ever attain a unified perspective about my own behavior? My intellect had been crafted by a concern for the intricate processes that moved the cosmos. I had nurtured these sympathies so they came to speak for details of my daily existence. He had taken my voice from me. Now, when I spoke, I could hardly enliven the world around me. I was a shell of a person.

I could still use my basic instincts to guide me minute by minute. But I was more than ever subject to the occasional gusts that tossed me in every direction. Sure these influences were not his, but that was a sorry consolation. I needed more constancy to make my way.

I promised myself that I wouldn't let someone else try to assume a surrogate role for my former master. I was not meant to be disciplined by others. This had become my primary directive. But I needed more than rebellion to anchor my personality. And I had lost my ability to be tender. All that I saw in the world were the broken edges. I kept my distance from any future involvements.

I knew that I couldn't survive much longer in my mother's house. I needed a plan. But I wasn't sure how to get it going. For the time being, I needed to hang on the best that I could. If that meant tolerating her nonsense, that was my new burden. I simply needed to make sure that she didn't interfere. As well, I couldn't let her catch on about the full effect of his actions. This was going to be difficult as I had no unifying perspective to guide me.

The fog around may have dissipated, but there was little clarity. It wasn't going to help to go over the same things again and again. I was on my own. There was no recompense on his part waiting to be claimed. I had to squeeze the gold from my past discoveries and use it to barter for my new life.

I was a skeleton making its way through a wasteland. If I was going to tap dance, I needed to learn the steps.