

TORTURE

My intention was not to hurt her. I wanted to oversee her teaching in a fashion that the lessons would last. This started very early. I needed to make sure that her education would take hold. Thus, she would be excluded from knowing any other way of life. When she falls from grace, she would realize that there was no possibility of recovery. Exiled from realm of heaven, she would have nowhere to turn but to me. I was engaged in a fine balancing act. I had to push her over the edge. At the same time, I needed to make sure that she would had no choice but to seek my help in providing stability to her life. I hated the fact that I was so perfidious, but it was the only way that I could bask in her radiant light. In my heart of heart, I knew that I was damned

I had been first attracted to her on a whim. I was picking up a book in the mall, and a group of school girls in their uniforms were right behind me. I tried to ignore their chatter.

Out of the blue, one of them took center stage, "What are you telling us, Eva?"

"I just know who he is because my friend dated him."

It was perfectly normal to fantasize about their lives. Once, I had felt the same charm enliven my experience. Eva had awakened my from a grave slumber that was the product of my adult cynicism. I wasn't just jaded about my own prospects. I thought that others were buried in the same obscurity.

Eva had sent chills up my spine. When I heard her say the words. "My friend dated him," I became lost in an incredible reverie. Eva was paying tribute to the swooning rapture of her friend. With the lilt in her voice, she was expressing her own ecstasy. I felt as if I shared that feeling. It shook my whole body. I wanted to scream out.

Eva had spent all her short lifetime aspiring after such an explosive moment as this. She wished that she would have her chance at such exquisite happiness. Her teachers had promised her a world of salvation in the afterlife. She would have to save her zeal for a time that it could be truly rewarded by providence. They had pierced her soul with their inculcation. Alone at night, she would become overcome with there feelings. The stirring of her heart were so extreme that no earthly wonders could ever gratify her deepest aspirations. She asked the darkness to grant her some temporal solace for her heavenly longing.

She had seen him with the other girls in her grade. They all seemed to have passed into a level of maturity that was unattainable to Eva and her friends. Eva's friends had all tried to attract boys like that. Some had thrown themselves at the feet of their esteemed conquerors. But nothing would serve in their quest. They were out of their league.

Eva had tried to separate herself from the pack. She knew that she could never be like any of the more advanced girls. But she didn't want to hide in the shadows like her friends. She tried to branch out on her own. Eva was also an acquaintance of a much more sophisticated girl whose father was in business with Eva's dad. This ingenue was rumored to have had boys up in her room. Her father may have even turned a blind eye to the girl's mischief. Fortunately for Eva, the young socialite deigned to impart her wisdom on her impoverished friend. This was all fine and good until Eva learned that her confidant had designs on a boy that Eva adored.

Eva's boy had succumbed to the delights of the lusty sophisticate. Eva felt somewhat mortified. As a consolation, the girl gave Eva a play by play of her antics. Thus, Eva felt that she had an inside track on the boy. After all, no strapping male could keep up with our conniving

ingenue. Indeed, Eva was entirely accurate when she noted; “My friend dated him.” She had used him, abused him, and cast him aside. What remained was Eva’s desire. In fact, that would be the only thing that could raise his corpse from the dead. Eva would apply all the skills that she learned about resurrection.

The more that I thought about Eva’s predicament, the more that I wanted to be that boy. Again, I saw nothing wrong in my wish. If I had had the blessings of a fairy godmother, I would have asked her to take me back to those medieval times. As it was, I needed to be satisfied with Eva’s account.

Eva’s report added a layer of infallibility to the experience of the fallen femme fatale. Of course, she had based her own witnessing on the other girl’s testimony. But Eva’s story was no mere hearsay. “I know who he is!” She had summoned all her divine inspiration to bless her own seeing with a transcendent hue. For all the sinner may have discovered about the boy, Eva had fired his soul. She had bestowed him with immortality. In her mind, she had touched his transfigured body. Her contact was more ideal than any earthly communion. He had become incarnate in Eva’s words. And now she proclaimed to her followers that she *knew* him.

Eva may have been admitting her admiration for the boy. But she was also announcing her own exalted nature. The boy was now in her orbit. He may not have known about her work, but his continued development was contingent on her watch.

I did my best to restrain myself. It was one thing for me to have shared the contentment of these girls. I wanted to keep it that way. Eva’s gentle poetry had lulled my insides. I allowed her to satisfy my own longing. I walked in the footsteps of the boy. But I knew that if I turned my head, I would be sealing my fate for all eternity. I wanted nothing less than to stare the desirous girl in the face. I wanted to admit my own concupiscence with a look that would forever stop her in her tracks. Only then would I be able to accommodate that lively spirit in myself that she had brought to life.

I sighed. I had prided myself on my ability to subdue my wayward emotions. This was a most extreme test of my will. I battled my perversity to the end. For all that Eva had participated in the miraculous character of the event, it had been my doing which allowed her to finally pass through the gates of heaven. I had no doubt about her inherent talent. But circumstances had done a great deal of the work for her. Only a maturity beyond her years would be able to contain all the elements that were a part of her final triumph.

It was my profound wish that she had an understanding of what had occurred. Even if her lack of experience belied this gift, she was still able to dole out her wonders to her closest admirers. From this connection, she could eventually attain the lofty station for which she was destined. At the same time, I needed to deny myself in this search. So much of her splendor had been a result of my gaze. I wanted her to answer for my endeavoring. But she lived in a world of childish pursuits. One misplaced giggle would be enough to bring down the house of cards.

Despite my misgivings, I did not want to let go of the illusion. I could feel it in my bones. She had shaken me to the core. Once I reached such a state, I was relentless. She had given reason to my obsession. Still I was afraid. What if I turned to see my Eva and lost her in the group? My vision would be crowded with the habits of each of the girls. How would I be able to tell who merited the glass slipper.

I continued to feel the warmth of Eva’s words on the back of my neck. She had tamed

my own restlessness. I couldn't live a lifetime in doubt. Eva's conversations with her adventuresome friend had satisfied Eva's curiosity. I equally needed assurance. My head was spinning. I had no idea what was going on. Even if I had charted a clear course, I was already getting off the trail.

"Oh Eva, that is completely dreamy!"

Had I heard right, or was the reply simply my imagination? My task was going to be difficult. I needed to insinuate myself into her circle. I was a stranger. Any words from my mouth would be perceived as a potential threat. If I could just throw them off guard, I could use the surprise to my advantage.

I dropped my book. The girls were following me so closely that they almost bumped into me.

"I'm sorry," I said.

They all apologized back to me."

"Sometimes, I'm so clumsy." I took a second, "Do any of you girls know anyone who does babysitting? My boy Ian's going to be with me for the weekend, and I need to care of some errands in Saturday morning. It shouldn't take very long. And I can pay well!"

Usually an appeal from a stranger would elicit caution in these girls. But they were at an age where they were just starting to test their parents control over them. If they believed that they had the right to make their own decisions, they would exercise their independence. I was careful to appear rational.

I needed to be both clever and resourceful. I had a picture of a friend's child in my wallet. The toddler was dressed as a kitten for Halloween. He was absolutely adorable. One look and the viewer would lose all trace of reason and melt into an emotional muddle. I first handed the picture to Eva. She was already oblivious to world due to her schoolgirl crush. By the time I made my proposal, she would already be in a state of rapture. I had awakened a maternal instinct in the sheltered girl. Her comments about her secret love also indicated that she was living deep inside her head, and she would take any opportunity possible to demonstrate that she should be taken seriously by the world.

I had no idea how I had succeeded. The odds were against. But I only had to look in her face to know that she was the right one. While the other girls played with the picture, Eva was already to commit. I gave her my business card, and on the back, I wrote my home address.

"Call me," I told her.

I bid good bye to the other girls and headed home.

I couldn't think about anything else all day. She would actually be coming to my house. I had never before felt such an intense feeling of elation. This was the perfect meeting of mind and body.

Eva arrived a little before eleven AM. I greeted her with a look of mortification. Once Eva realized that there was no Ian in the house for her to take care of, her terror would set in. I needed to act quickly.

"I'm sorry that I didn't call you. I just got off the phone with my wife. We were in the midst of this nasty argument. She just refused to bring Ian over."

"Can she do that?"

“She just did. I’m going to have to talk to my lawyer”

“She seems mean.”

“It just a bad time for her. She gets in these moods. There’s nothing that I can do to help. I was so looking forward to having Ian here.”

Eva took my side, “She seems like such a bitch.

She saw a record sitting on my table. It had been given to me by one of the kids at work. I’d given it a spin.

“I love these guys.”

“They are great. I’m lucky that I can still play vinyl.”

“None of my friends dig it. I guess that it’s just my thing.”

“Now it’s our thing.”

She smiled; I looked her in the eyes.

“I want to pay you for your troubles.”

I took a couple of bills out of my wallet. This was way more than she would have earned if there actually had been a job for her.

“That’s more than enough.”

She was already in a daze. I had won her over to my side. The album had taken her aback. And she was sympathetic to me in my conflict with a fictional wife over a non-existent child.

There was little to keep her here. I didn’t want to let her get away.

“Let me get you a Coke for the road.”

“You don’t have to do that.”

“I feel terrible having to make you come all this way for nothing.”

“You took care of me already.”

“No big deal.” I added, “Let me play the record for you.”

“I’ve never even heard vinyl. I just downloaded the songs to my iPhone.”

“Vinyl is the best!”

“I really should go.”

Once she heard the music, she froze in her place.

“This sounds amazing.”

I was in the kitchen getting her a drink. It would have been so easy to drug her. But she seemed so trusting of me. I had to use moments like these for their maximum value. At some point in the future, I would have to be more demanding of her so a series of positive memories would hold me in good stead.

I was down to my last few aces. For all my ingeniousness, my ruse could only carry me so far. As much as I could depend on Eva’s curiosity, there would be a point that I would have to make my intentions known. I would have to make sure that she couldn’t escape my grasp.

I shook my head.

“What’s wrong?”

I didn’t even look back at her. I wanted to make it appear that I was deeply absorbed in my own sorrows.

“I was so looking forward to having Ian for the weekend. I needed something to brighten up my days.”

I sat on the couch and stared out the window. I knew that Eva had her own troubles. She would love an ally to help her with her battles.

“There will be other weekends.”

“I know. Thanks for being so understanding.” She was standing close to me. I stood up and gently touched her shoulder as I walked back towards the hallway. I blocked the exit as she was left standing in the living room.

“You really should go. I know that it’s not all that important. But you’ve really helped me out.”

She smiled an enormous smile.

“You have a lovely smile. A ray of sunshine on a cloudy day.”

She still hadn’t moved from her place in the living room. I could tell that she wanted to sit down and just vent about all the silliness that was preoccupying her. But she realized that she had been here too long already.

“You seem wise for your age. Do your friends realize that you are so advanced?”

She seemed dazzled by my comments.

“I bet all the boys hang on your every word.”

“Guys my age haven’t really come around yet. I think they’re intimidated by me.”

“You don’t want to dumb yourself down just so they’ll like you.”

She laughed. “I don’t want to be an old maid either!”

“If I can see all your wonderful attributes, I’m sure that it won’t take long for the rest of the world to catch up.”

“That seems like quite a tall order to live up to Mr. Davis.”

“Call me Brian!”

She blushed. She had no idea what to do next. I was really forward. I kissed her on the forehead. Then I quickly retreated to the other end of the room so that I could allow my gesture time to sink in.

I didn’t want to make it appear as if I had made a mistake. But I also didn’t want to scare her away. Her escape route was now clear.

“Just go! You have nothing to be frightened of out there.”

She was still stunned. She wanted to reject my aggressive move. At the same time, I had hit a nerve. This was unlike anything that she had ever felt before. If she thought that her schoolgirl crush might never bear fruit, my kiss told her that she really did have the power to put boys her age to shame. How could she assert her new understanding?

“Mr. Davis, I need to go.”

I again moved closer to her.

“If you want to hang around and listen to some music with me, that would be fine. Your mom probably isn’t expecting you back for a while.”

She took a risk, “That sounds like fun.”

If her mother was close by, she would have taken knife to my heart. Eva knew this, and it inspired her to defy her mother’s wishes. As well, she wanted to savor my complement. It might not have made her amenable to my desires for her. But it did keep her in my proximity for a while.

Once she started to loosen up, I felt as if I couldn’t get a word in edgewise. I remained at

a healthy distance from her. And she was gesturing with her hands everywhere as she spoke.

“One of the kids was going to bring some wine that she had stolen from her parents. But they saw it in her backpack when she was leaving the house.”

“You’ve never been drunk before.”

“My parents have let me have a little champagne on special occasions. I love it when the bubbles run up my nose. I think that I get tipsy on just a sip. Crazy old me!”

“I don’t believe you.”

“Seriously!”

I thought that I would test out her theory. I got her a glass of wine.

“Only take a little sip. Otherwise, your mom will have me arrested.”

But she had trouble taking only a tiny bit.

“You cheated. You drank too much!”

She giggled.

“You are one naughty girl.” I tenderly slapped her on the hand.

She slapped me back. We were almost in the midst of a slapping fight when she immediately pulled back.

“I want the whole glass.”

“That’s too much for you.”

“I just want to try it.”

As she drank the whole glass, I went to change the music.

A little later she told me, “I hardly feel it. I want some more.”

“You’ve had enough. I’m cutting you off.”

Before I could say a thing, she had already poured herself another glass and had drunken half of it.”

“I’m going to have to drive home a drunk girl. Your mom is going to put me before the firing squad.”

“Don’t you worry about her. She’s just a frustrated old biddy.”

“Not a nice way to talk about your mother.”

“You should hear half of what she says to me.”

It only took a second, but I pulled her over and gave her a kiss. She quickly got over her fear and kissed me back passionately. This was for her boy. Then she realized how foolhardy she had been and backed off.

“I don’t know what I did that. I don’t know why I let it happen.” She just stared into space. Then she jumped up and headed towards the door.

“I should have never...” Her words trailed off.

“You don’t have to go. I won’t do that again. I’m sorry.”

But there was no regret on my part. My every move had been so calculated. I played her from the moment that she walked in the house. I needed one more gambit to make the strategy complete.

She was right next to the door. She hadn’t opened it yet. I calmly walked over and undid the lock.

“You can come for a visit any time that you want.”

What was she thinking? She had been the naughty girl that she had heard about. She

seemed much more advanced than her well-placed sophisticate. She couldn't let the opportunity go to waste. Besides, none of her friends had ever been in this place. None of the other girls of her grade had ever done anything like this.

She still had no idea about Ian. But she had to suspect that things were not right. I was an adult. I knew everything that was going on. And I had enticed her into a game that was way too complicated for her to master. A wrong move this way or that, and she would be crushed for life. She had already done way too much to own up for. She was still buzzed. There was liquor on her breath. And mortal sin in her heart. She might have well taken poison and condemned herself for good.

No mother could ever forgive what Eva had done. She hadn't simply contemplated evil. She had allowed evil to fester in her soul. She had toasted her treachery. And she was about to descend into the lower levels of debauchery. Something had caught her at the last moment. But she could never allow anything like this to happen again.

I was hesitant to use coercion to bring Eva around to my way of thinking. I wanted to feel that she shared my point of view naturally. However, she would occasionally need a little friendly guidance to make up her mind. And I was not averse to applying the rod lest I would have to spoil the child. Despite the lesson's brutal sting, I wanted Eva to recognize my ultimate eternal love for her. My actions would always hurt me a lot more severely than I made her suffer.

It might seem quite an imposition to allow a grand design to dominate my relationship to her. I was seeking complete devotion on her part. This often required me to peer deeply into her soul. I was not simply looking for information or simple agreement on her part. A little arm-twisting came in handy in trying to effect my message. Therefore, my intent in employing torture was to get my victim to express total agreement with my way of thinking.

Behind my belief was a certainty that there was a justification for my actions. Such a bedrock of spiritual enlightenment was based on my direct contact with revelation from above. I knew no matter what that I could admit my sins, and I could be forgiven. I could use all my strength without reserve. If I pushed too far and applied too much force, I could try again and succeed with even more precision.

I may have made an unholy alliance with the dark side to accomplish my aims, but I continued to defend an underlying correct perspective about the world. In the end, I could do no wrong. I was transforming Eva into the person that she was meant to be. It may have been perverse to expect her to accede to my wishes, but I knew what was right for the girl. I was able to peer into things and see the proper order of the universe. I had spent my lifetime trying to put myself in harmony with that system. And I thought that there was nothing wrong trying to do the same for others.

Suffering resulted directly from an inability to accord ourselves with a higher order. Even when we inflicted pain as a corrective, its effects were illusory to someone who had attained a higher state of being. Those who remained in conflict with the universe needed to be reset on the righteous path. I saw it as my sacred task to bring others back into the light. I was not wrong to remind Eva of the character of higher law.

There were moments when she became so desperate for my acknowledgment that she would do anything to restore her former state of purity. She was afraid that I would withdraw my love from her. She did everything that she could to find total accord with her true nature. Even

the first time, after she had ran from my house in fear, she came back to gratify her natural curiosity. She was a girl driven by her desire. She had no shame. Once she learned how to give herself pleasure, nothing else mattered. She would betray anyone to attain her ends. There were times that she would try to blame me for this aspect of her character. She would even do what she could to deny her physical nature. But I would remind her forcibly of the truth.

What was happening really hit home for her when she realized that I never had a son, Ian. She recognized that I had tricked her. But she had already so humiliated herself that she had nowhere to run. If she tried to escape my discipline, I would do what I needed to bring her back to the fold. She would eventually embrace me with open arms. She knew what made her tick. And I did all that I could to give her what she needed. She may not have liked how things turned out. But she realized that there was no other way. And she eventually would embrace her lot. In her moments of triumph, no one could equal her passion. She took this as her badge of honor. She would lick her wounds and jump right back in the fray. I may have been a dear teacher, but she valued my tutelage. It gave her the strength that she needed to overcome any experience. Ultimately, she knew that she could trust me.

I had trained my body to do whatever I wanted. I could control myself through sheer will. I could even imagine the satisfaction of a five-course meal without ever having to leave my chair. It was total mind control. I wanted the world to reflect the same level of control that I had imposed on myself. When I first saw her, she turned me on. The more that I thought about her, the more that I felt that I truly knew her. She had met all these peoples who pretended that they were her friends. None of them cared for her. Down deep, none of this people meant anything to her. When she was alone in her room, she felt total isolation.

I concentrated my will so intensely that I could imagine her being with me. With each caress of her hand, I was becoming more excited. I hadn't even moved at all, but I was becoming so aroused just thinking about her body. We were together. I felt as if we were one.

She may not have known what I was thinking. All that I had to do was say a few words to her, and it would all make sense. It might have been shocking to her how well we did get along. But she was able to grasp very early on how focused was my control of the body. If I myself had submitted to training, I tried to do the same with her. We learned how to make our internal states more or less coincide. She responded perfectly to my touch. It was very easy to communicate to her what I was feeling. If I wanted to satisfy my hunger, I would walk towards the kitchen. And if I wanted her to gratify my desire, I knew how to touch her to get her to do to me exactly what I wanted. It was almost like clockwork.

“When I was inside you, I felt as if I could rule the world.”

“Was that your excuse?”

“I don't think that I could think of a better reason for living.”

“I never wanted to be ruled.”

“Is this you trying to rebel?”

“No, it is me succeeding. You don't really get it. I stopped feeling anything for you a long time ago. But you kept on building this idea inside your head. And you kept asking me what I was feeling? Nothing. I just became numb. To you. To myself.”

“You can't change the world by trying to get out of yourself. You have to live with the

reality that you've created."

"As if you ever did."

"What is that supposed to mean?"

"You change the rules as you go along."

"I've made every effort to teach you everything that I know. What would you have me do differently?"

"This is not about you anymore. You can't change yourself. You can't go back to the beginning. I don't want this anymore. I never did. You just made me think that I did."

"That doesn't make sense. Those were your actions. You kept coming back to me."

"But you knew that I would do that. You programmed to be like that. Like a lab rat."

"Even when you thought that you knew what was happening, you still came back."

"I kept coming until I had the will power to stop."

"Why are you here now?"

"I needed to tell you how I felt."

"Is this our final showdown. What are you wearing? Where are we? What kind of furniture is in the room? What is the lighting like?"

"All that is a distraction so that you won't have to own up to the fact that things are the way that they are right now. You're not a nice person. It doesn't matter whether you're in a penthouse or in a basement apartment. You are always going to be this monster."

"You made me the way that I am."

"I thought that was my line. You never knew when to stop."

"I'm stopping now!"

"You have no choice."

"Where are we? What are you wearing? What are you thinking?"

"I don't know where the hell I am. I don't recognize anything in this room. And the lighting is too faint for me to even make out any of the furniture very distinctly."

"Now you are telling me things."

"This is a torture chamber. This is the thing deep inside your mind. And you want me to be a part of it. This is the world that your dick made. Do you like it like this?"

"I did it for you!"

"I don't have any idea who you are. I'm no longer sure about myself."

"You're Eva Jones, and I'm Brian Davis."

"I might as well be Mary Smith for all that means to me. Have I ever left this place? I have memories of going to the park. I was at the grocery store on Monday. But are these simply memories that you created for me on Tuesday so that I would be happy today. I'm not even sure what day today is. And the more certainty that you claim in my name, the more that gets you off the hook. This happened to me in the museum. Or the college did it to me. Or I got messed up by my mom."

Despite my lofty goals, I often felt helpless next to the immensity of the universe. That only drove me to strive harder to impose my view on my world. I was convinced that I could overcome my forlorn condition. The more that I succeeded in the simplest tasks at hand, the more I became suffused with feelings of invincibility. Nothing could stand in my way. I cast off my shackles and raised my hands in jubilation.

All along, I recognized that my pursuit of the ultimate pleasure was damned. Moreover, my efforts to ground my project in total certainty were doomed to failure. I believed that I could marshal all the power of the universe to bless my craft.

When I was inside her, I felt as if I was invincible. I never wanted that feeling to quit. When it did, I faced the inevitable let down. I was reminded of memories that I had repressed. That was what made me the way that I was. In my heart, I felt as if I could help her out. I tried to work with what she knew. I shared my memories with her. We created memories of our own. I needed her to be myself. I needed her to help me get outside of myself. I felt as if I knew everything that there was to know.

I supposed that different people could have totally different impressions of these experiences. I cherished what had happened between us. She started telling me that what had happened between us was detrimental to her. Her friends agreed. I didn't think that it was fair for her to just change her story like that. We had agreed on the facts. Now, everything was changing right before my eyes."

"I don't think that I can hear any more of this. It reminds me too much of things that actually happened to me in my life."

"Are you telling me that you don't want to talk about this?"

"I didn't come here to be interrogated. The past is the past, and I want to keep it that way."

"Are you willing to sign a legal agreement to keep it that way?"

No one would ever catch me. Even if they did, I knew that I was going to get off. I worked for the state, and no one wanted to mess with the state.

"We only answer to a higher power."

"That doesn't mean that you're not going to be punished."

"I'm still a free man. How does that make you feel? After everything that I've done, I'm still a free man."

"I need you to tell me the whole story."

"I had a book. It deeply affected my life. And I tried to get you interested in it as well."

"I need you to stop reading to me. I can read it for myself. Just let me speak the words."

"Are you ready to confess?"

"Is that all that you think about?"

"No one can hide from us."

"What is that supposed to mean? I thought that you were on your own."

"I always wanted to know what it was like to see through your eyes."

"You never listened to me."

"I'm listening to you now. Are you prepared to start reading?"

"What do you want me to read from?"

"Read from the book that I gave you."

"I don't really agree with what's in there. Do you want me to read it anyway?"

"Go ahead!"

"There were loads of people who could barely pay for their rent even after a full week of work. They weren't shirking. Life had just become too much for them. Do you want me to keep reading?"

“That isn’t in the book. You’re making it up as you go along.”

“It’s in the book. Look at it and see!”

“I don’t believe you. I need you to keep reading. I want you to touch yourself while you read.”

“I have been touching myself all along. For the whole book. I’ve been touching myself and crying. I’m doing everything that you told me, and more. I am adding to the story. I am embellishing the details.”

“But you’re adding things that never happened.”

“What chapter are we on? When was it started? When was it completed? What time of day? What was the weather like?”

“It was raining. It always rains here.”

“I never even bought an umbrella.”

“Who’s talking now?”

“I’m talking. I’m talking about torture.”

“Did you give, or did you receive?”

“It’s not like it’s a game. You can’t just play the pitcher in one episode, and then turn into the catcher. There are consequences.”

“This is not a family drama.”

“Does that mean that it’s not suitable for families? Or is it a drama, but it’s not about a family?”

“What do you expect?”

“There has to be a time in this story when you let me go?”

“You could have left at anytime.”

“And I would have felt bad about it.”

“History isn’t just about feeling bad or feeling good.”

“I think that is my line.”

“Oh, what the fuck!”