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Excerpt from *Whiplash Girlchild*

I wonder why I still think of her so often. What was it about her that lodged itself so wilfully in my psyche all those years ago, so that a decade plus later, she lives in my mind as if she were of tremendous importance.

She is not a friend. She is not even an acquaintance. She scarcely ever thinks about me. I know this because I never see a word from her about my exploits, my updates on my life, my non sequiturs &c on that excuse for friendship Facebook. When I put up a new photograph she remains silent.

I know she scarcely thinks about me because I regularly check up on her. I leave comments, such as ‘You look amazing in this,’ remarking on one of her Nan Goldin-esque highly stylized high art self-portraits; but she very rarely responds. I wonder if she just assumes that I too must be part of the fan club that adores her and therefore it makes sense that I would be leaving adulations for her.

When she was in Libya, when the first strikes started, I was truly alarmed that she would have been there that very week. Why does she go to Tripoli, why does she have this strange fascination with Libya? Why Libya? And also, how very cool of her. I left my two-bits, saying she would have been there, wouldn’t she. I think she did respond to that one, agreeing that this was in fact an unsurprising turn of events.

I try not to leave too many traces of my visits though. I realize that often on this forum, people can be seen to be ‘butting in,’ on conversations that have nothing to do with them. I myself don’t have conversations of this kind on my own page, but am of the thought that if it’s there for me on other’s pages to see, I am allowed to

have my say.

But I do know better.

I know about the silent social pact that we have with each other; I will 'befriend,' you in this vacant lot of relationships but you must promise not to embarrass me, or piss me off, or let on that you're in fact not a friend but a stalker.

I have often wondered if I actually just wanted to be her friend, for her to like me and if that is a large part of being continually drawn to her. The thing is she has never, ever shown any genuine interest in befriending me.

I think that this is the root of it all. I was used to people wanting to be around me. I was the cool kid at school. I was also the hot girl at school, granted I was also the cool, hot girl at college, however, I was also unfortunately representative of the hot Asian chick that all the Senior boys were betting on who would bang first. So, it just wasn't the same.

The first I heard of her was when He told me about her. I hadn't seen her myself. He asked, 'Have you seen that hot freshman girl from San Francisco with the big eyes?' I said no I hadn't as we lay in bed naked. 'She's cute,' he added further wedging his way into Red Flag territory and I incapable of drawing boundaries just nodded along.

When I did finally see her, I thought she reminded me of a doll; a doll made in the 1950's. Her satin black hair framed her pale skin so her eyes looked alarming. They were doll eyes. Not blue, but dark. I admitted to him on another night in bed that I did think she was cute, having never discussed another girl with a man I was seeing; I thought perhaps this was what he wanted.

She was no great beauty, but she was like a vision that lodges itself in your consciousness. He said to me, 'Those eyes. They get to me,' and I knew what he meant.

She pranced about campus with her frilly skirts and extraordinary shoes, her hair often tied in two ponytails on either side of her head. She was cute as a button alright. It was ridiculous that I only a year ahead of her, just one year older in age, started to feel very, very old.

I was not even 21 yet, but I felt like the advent of Trinity and her other cute-as-a-button freshman companions signified the End of My Nubile Youthiness. There was Aiko the Japanese girl with shoes that put shoes in a different genre from footwear perhaps one more akin to space transportation. She exuded that natural Lolita-Goth enchantment that so many young Japanese girls who spent their high school days hanging out around Harajuku station saving up thousands of yen for the next ultra-hip Lolita Goth accessory seemed to. Perhaps I wanted it. That.

And then there was Trinity's sidekick, the girl with the rainbow dreadlocks and equally fierce boots. Her dreadlocks weren't mangy though, they were that particular kind of dreadlock that a certain kind of girl pays 300 dollars to have carefully and lovingly installed into her hair.

It was ridiculous but I felt utterly up –staged by this assortment of 'young,' things, even though I was ostensibly no different. I wore insane wigs to parties, curated costumes that put everyone to shame, including using plastic lanterns and stretchy rubber ropes with hooks on the end to construct a bustier.

I would wait for him in the evenings. He said to me he was a 'back door,' kind of guy, which he said to mean he didn't want Primary Boyfriend Status. I had understood what he meant, but when I relayed this to a few world-wise American friends they cracked up, telling me that the 'back door,' was actually also used to refer to sex that wasn't as they put it, 'strictly vaginal'.

I had no idea, having been raised in a repressed society with next to no exposure to half the things these chicks knew about. They laughed at me for not getting the reference, but I explained, that as deviant as it sounded, he did in fact mean that he was a man who came in and out via the metaphorical back door of the relationship house, perhaps even when the husband was out.

He was like that and I allowed it. Some evenings he wouldn't show up and even though he only lived in the house across the lawn, I knew that I couldn't try to find him. He would show up when he wanted. Like a cat. None of us had mobile phones in 1996. There was no texting, no endless calling, no instant portals to link us

together. It was a silent time.

When he did come to my room, he wouldn't talk to me much; he just wanted to get into my bed. For me, it was his eyes. They were like stinging rays of sapphire light under black arching brows, making him oh so devilish.

He was a strange one, older than all of us; a drifter. He often referred but never disclosed much about some 'incident,' in his teenage years that had forced his father to pack him off to the military. He had been in the Navy, floating around the seas, hating every minute, hating his life, hating his family, till somehow he had landed on the shores of this elite, private liberal arts college in New England to finally take his place as a 'normal,' American kid.

Edward was a large man and I remember in the dark suffusion of my room, being suffocated under him on my standard-issue college student futon. Wishing to keep him there forever, knowing he'd never stay the night. Lapsed promises to meet always followed.

I wanted to know what dark, dangerous things he was doing. We never socialized with his friends. I wanted desperately to. If of an evening my friends and I found ourselves in his house, in the rooms of people he frequented he was usually uncommunicative - off his head on Tanqueray No. 10 or whatever, which was his and his mates' drink of choice.

All our worlds somehow did come together, past the butt end of a rager, one night. Around 3 a.m. all of us found ourselves wasted in a car being driven to the local diner for pancakes. Edward was in the middle, his friend on the other end and I at the other of the backseat.

Like a fan girl, I was excited. So when I felt a hand coming over and attempting to clumsily feel me up, I thought it was him. Only for a moment though. I wasn't as inebriated as everyone else and caught on pretty fast that it was his bald friend, another older guy who came to the undergraduate party late. He was a dick.

So this slimy friend of his kept reaching over him to get to me. Edward did nothing. I swatted the creeping hand away, a number of times before this molestation ended. I won't lie, it felt pretty grim.

I should have told him where to get off after that but I didn't. I didn't even mention it. My friend whom I told

about it was disgusted though and I still recall that she decided on-the-spot never to speak to him again. So loyal was she. I was too weak-willed to do the same.

Still, most nights I waited for him. Total Fucking Sucker.

There was some ill-conceived plan to do acid. It was my first time, I'm pretty sure 'cos I was nervous. I mentioned it to Edward. In a rare moment of benevolence he offered to take care of me.

'Come and find me when you drop the tab...and I'll make sure you don't bug out!'

What led me to this decision to do acid or why the friends that I was doing it with weren't around, is uncertain. This was just how it went down.

It had been an hour since I gingerly placed the slip of acid-soaked paper on my tongue and had set off obediently to find him. It was well into a brisk New England night about 11:30 p.m. or so when I crossed the lawn that separated our campus houses and entering the front door went straight to his room.

The hallway was darkened, bathed in a violet light. His posse, all residing in that wing of the house had replaced the bulb with a purple one, hanging a large paper mache spider clinging to the ceiling for good measure.

Knocked.

No sound.

Knocked.

Waited.

We all had post-it notes on our doors. That was our primitive form of communication.

YO! Where You At Fool.

Fuck You.

Went to buy pig's blood. Backson.

Shit like that.

Squinting, I made out a chain of yellow post-its, attached to each other, glowing eerily fluorescent, stuck on top of the older ones. A fresh trail perhaps.

In a florid, curling hand it read:

Edward, I am very drunk

and feel

ing sad. Please come

and find me

Love, Trinity (with a significant flourish at the end of the y).

I felt something drop from my chest deep into the pit of my stomach with a splash. As I made out the words, I was struck by a totally weird sensation of unquestionable gnosis. I knew he had been basically hunting this girl from the very first time he mentioned her to me.

He had been on her tail. This was the very thing he had been waiting for; the time to pounce, the freshman with the crazy eyes, exactly when she was vulnerable and expressed a need for him *-of her own accord*. He had engineered the whole thing and I was witnessing the proof of his ‘win’. What the Fucking Fuck.

I can’t remember if I was tripping or not at that point, the acid almost seemed subsidiary to the poltergeist of emotion I was experiencing.

I didn’t know what to do or where to go. I wondered when she had left this note and when he had seen it. I could almost see him kissing her in a room somewhere, she with her eyes at drunken half-mast. I started running up the stairs of the dark house to find someone, anyone.

That was when I saw her, Trinity poised at the top of the stairwell *wearing a fucking wedding dress*. I froze. It was a frozen moment. None of us seemed to be breathing. In her right hand, she held a light, flowing, gauzy train. With her left hand she held up the bottom of her dress, whilst navigating the topmost stairs that were bathing in a red hue.

Her eyes were wide and bright like an anime character, the black line of her sharp fringe framing them as she looked at me, while I took this mirage of horrors in. Trailing behind her a second later was Him. As I registered this spectacle, it dawned on me with a cold sensation that he was wearing what appeared to be a formal black suit, not unlike a groom.

It was safe to say that time had stopped for me as this image burnt itself onto my retina. I couldn't say anything. I think I mumbled something as inauspicious as 'Oh hey,' (Or was it him that said that) or the like whilst staring at my feet, so intimidated was I by this random confluence of things. It never occurred to me to say something like:

'Where the fuck were you Edward?' or

'Why the fuck are you dressed as a bride and groom?' Or just a general,

'What the fuck?'

I can't remember a damn thing after that. Except perhaps for running through a hallway in a trench coat with a water gun, but that was later and that was the acid and I digress. I definitely *don't* remember him saying anything like:

'I'm so sorry. I decided to play dress up with this doll of a girl in the hopes that she's just drunk enough to let me fuck her, instead of being there for you as I said I would in case you lose your mind on acid'.

No, he definitely didn't say that. And as for her? She always behaved as if I wasn't really there. Why would this be any different?

I didn't imagine for a minute that he might have mentioned me to her. That would be too respectful and that would taint his image. Why tell her he was 'doing' someone? After all, the unwritten contract of 'doing,' someone clearly states that one is under no obligation to reveal the person they are 'doing,' if a better opportunity presents itself. And he was in fact 'doing,' me, he wasn't 'going out,' with me and it was an utter delusion on my part if I believed any different –

but that is the kind of wisdom that only comes from hindsight.
