

Good Idea at the Time

t'Sade

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Curious Cabbit Press

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All characters engaged in, witnessing, considering, or thinking about sexual acts are eighteen (18) years or older.

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Michael tapped the polished bar in time with the rock beat from the pathetic band in the corner. Ironically, he could keep more in time than the drum player. In his other hand, he sloshed the large glass in his hand, watching the amber liquid swirling around as he considered getting a refill. After a second, he decided he could stop at four. Besides, he had a big day tomorrow.

Looking up into the mirror, he caught sight of his reflection. Twenty-three and right at the peak of his life. He smiled to himself, hoisting the glass to salute his reflection. Pale green eyes sparkled back with just the right touch of ethereal that lured more than a few women into his bed. He pushed a strand of black hair from his face and tucked it behind his ear. His hand dropped down to his tie, tugging it up to his throat before standing up.

“You safe to drive?” asked Rachel, an older bartender who smoked a pack a day. Michael turned around, feeling the world spinning right on the edge of a good buzz.

Digging into his pocket, he pulled out the keys to his over-priced import. Setting them down on the bar, he waved to her.

“I’ll be back tomorrow for these, Racks.”

The bartender smiled in approval and pulled his keys behind the bar.

“No problem, Mike, need a cab?”

He thought for a moment and shook his head with a wry grin.

“Only a few miles to home. I could do it blind, naked and drunk.”

“Well, you’re one of those...”

He chuckled, “But, I’m not blind yet.”

She chuckled, “Don’t go celebrating too much more. I’d hate to see you in the wrong section of the newspaper tomorrow.”

“The only way you see me in the newspaper is if I just won the case of the century. And when I’m fabulously rich, of course.”

“Just keep dropping by, okay? You know, when you get famous and all.”

He dropped a few bills on the bar.

“Always. I’ll be coming here until the day I die.”

Outside, the rain drizzled down. Steam rose up from the asphalt from the searing heat only a few hours before. He breathed in the intoxicating smells of ozone and rain. His feet tapped against the gravel as he hopped off the short flight of steps and aimed himself down a dark and winding road.

As he walked, he let himself dream of the future. Of where he would go after getting his foot into this new law firm. He dreamed of his non-existent girlfriends and a trophy wife. It got into pure fantasy somewhere between winning the lotto and slamming the book on the case of the century, but he didn’t really care anymore.

He just got to the end of his fantasies—two stints of a senator with a chance at the presidency—when he finally reached the opposite side of the road from home. A rental, it stood dark in the night. No cars, no lights, no one else. Just an empty home for a man obsessed with his career. He yawned and crossed the road. He already could feel his bed and counted down the minutes until he fell asleep.

Near the yellow line, something glittered on the ground and caught his attention. Curious, he knelt down and picked it up with unsteady fingers. A gold ring of some sort. He turned it around in his hand, trying to identify it. Despite being crushed repeatedly by cars, he could see the twinkle of diamonds sparkling in the light. Inside, he could barely make out some words of adoration inscribed in a flowering script. He held it up to the light to read it.

He blinked, then realized the light sparkling in the diamond didn’t come from the moon or even the city lights. It came from the bright lights of a vehicle racing along the asphalt. He looked up, blinking through the rain on his face into the twin lights of a SUV.

He managed to scramble to his feet, but instead of dodging aside, he froze in panic. He felt his stomach lurch violently but even that

wasn't enough. The ring dropped from his fingers, ringing out loudly, but he couldn't take his eyes off the oncoming headlights. Flashes of his fantasies mixed in the hard reality of his own life, then ended with the simple realization Michael wouldn't survive.

An explosion of light and impact. It happened so fast for him to feel pain, but he heard the horrible sensation of bones cracking deep inside him. It wasn't until he hit the ground that he had a chance to catch his breath. Then, the pain caught up with him. Agony ran through his nerves like a bolt of lightning, running from eyes to toes in a single, burning blast.

He struggled to breathe, his lungs refusing to work as he tried to pull himself up. He couldn't move but his body kept trying. His arms and legs flailed, skittering on the slick ground. He could feel panic tearing through his thoughts but no matter how much he tried to calm down, he couldn't. Nor could he force his lungs to move, to draw in even a single gasp of fresh air.

Black spots swam across his vision, startling clear and terrifying. He could feel them crowding his vision and blinding his sight.

Then, like a switch being turned on, his lungs worked. Drawing in with a gasping sob, he gulped at the humid air. The scent of gas, urine, and blood choked him but he simply focused on drawing in breath after breath until his head cleared.

Car doors slammed in the distance. He heard someone talking in a shrill voice, but couldn't understand the words through the pounding in his ears. He tried to push himself up into a sitting position, but his arms wouldn't move. He frowned and focused his attention on his right arm, turning to stare at his limb. Only a single left rested in his palm, but as he tried to move it, it didn't even shiver.

A whimper tore from his throat. He tried to move his hand again. When it refused to move, he bore down with all his strength. Muscles rippled in his shoulder, but felt like they were being torn from his limbs. He stopped immediately with a scream.

“Damn it!”

His hoarse voice cried out. He felt a few errant tears burning in his eyes as the pain faded quickly. He made a small effort to move his other hand. Like the first, his limb refused to move. When he pushed even harder, he felt the same agony ripping through his

senses. Sobbing, he forced himself to still and let his head slump to the ground.

“Damn it,” he gasped in defeat.

He lifted his head—at least that part moved when he wanted—and peered up from the ditch. The headlights of the car speared through the mist and drizzle. He could see shadows of someone moving on top of the ridge.

“H-Help!”

The shadows stopped moving and he could feel the world stopping for the merest of moments.

“Help me!”

A voice drifted through the mist, a woman’s voice.

“D-Do you hear that? Did you hear someone?”

“Yes, help me!”

“Oh my god, I said you hit someone!”

Feet pounded against the ground and he slumped back, calling out to them until he heard them crunching through the underbrush. He blinked at the tears.

“Hello?” the woman called out.

Michael swallowed before calling out.

“I’m here.”

“Oh my god, are you okay?”

She knelt down next to him. There was no questioning the terrified look on her face. The gray-streaked brown hair trembled with her emotions as she reached down. He could feel her grabbing something, his arm he thought, but couldn’t feel anything until the sharp pain cut through his senses. He couldn’t help it and screamed out.

She jerked back.

“I’m sorry!”

Michael sobbed, “I-I can’t move my arm!”

Another person dropped to the ground next to him. He looked up to see an older man, probably in his forties. They were both pudgy with age but had the looks of at least a moderately well-off couple. Micheal guessed they were married from the look of it.

The other man grunted.

“Can you move your other arm?”

Micheal tried to move it again, then hissed out in pain as the agony flared up. He tried his legs but they remained as dead as his arms. Michael desperately tried again, but nothing would move.

“I... my legs won’t move either.”

“Oh, god. You have a cell phone?”

Micheal grunted, “Front pocket, right.”

It terrified him that he couldn’t feel the man digging through his pocket. Then a disappointed sigh scared him even more. The man held up Michael’s phone, cracked entirely in half. Michael groaned.

“Fuck. Do you?”

He looked up at the man who shook his head. Michael peered over to the wife, but she only sobbed as she tried to tug on his arm. He didn’t realize she was doing it until he looked.

“P-Please stop that.”

She released him with a gasp.

“S-Sorry!”

The husband peered at the wife.

“What do we do?”

“We have to get him to the hospital.”

“Do you think it’s safe? You know, to move him?”

Her voice grew shrill, “We can’t leave him here!”

Michael felt completely ignored as they spoke above him. Their voices grew more frantic with every passing heartbeat. He tried to move his legs, but no matter how hard he tried, they refused to budge.

The husband pounded the ground next to Michael’s ear, ignoring him as he snarled at his wife.

“What do you want to do? Drag him up into the car and rush him to the hospital. They have people to move people like him.”

The wife pointed angrily up the hill.

“We can’t leave him! We have to take him. It should be okay, right?”

“Are you kidding?”

“No, I’m not!”

They argued for a few more minutes before Michael cleared his throat. As one, they looked down at him.

“Excuse me?”

When they said nothing, he cleared his throat again. He gulped as he tried to move.

“Look, I’m not really in a lot of pain unless I move. And I’m very scared and frightened and I would very much like to go to the hospital.”

The husband shook his head.

“We should move-”

“We’ll take you,” interrupted his wife.

The husband sighed unhappily.

“Fine, let me get the blanket from the trunk.”

It took them almost twenty minutes to hoist him up to the car. Twice, they managed to wrench one of his limbs and send him into a screaming fit, but it ended thankfully soon with him stretched out on the back seat, balanced on the edge of the seat.

“He’s going to fall,” the husband said while panting for breath.

“I’ll,” she stammered, “I’ll sit in back with him.”

She slipped into the back seat, lifting his head so she could slip her legs underneath him. He shuddered at his helplessness, like nothing more than a manikin. She tried to give him a comforting smile as she settled into place. Her padded legs almost felt comfortable on the back of his neck, but the humiliation burned brightly on his cheeks. She peered down and smiled.

“Don’t worry, we’ll get you safe in no time.”

Michael smiled, trying not to let the edge of pain reach his eyes.

“Thanks.”

In the front, he could hear the husband tapping on a screen built into the dashboard. A few moments later, the GPS spoke up with directions. He tapped the screen before leaning back.

“Looks like about forty minutes, can you handle it?”

Michael moaned and nodded, “Yeah, I think I can.”

The husband pulled the car back into the road and started toward the hospital. Michael moaned as dull aches began to catalog in his body. He felt sweat dripping from his brow.

The wife surprised him by pulling out a small cloth. She dabbed up the sweat.

“Sorry about that, we didn’t expect to see you there.”

“It’s okay, I was looking at a ring.”

“A ring?”

“Yeah?”

She smiled, “Got a girl for that ring?”

“No,” Michael started to shake his head, but a sharp pain stopped him, “no girl.”

She was silent for a moment.

“What’s your name?”

“Um, Michael.”

The wife smiled down to him.

“What you do, Michael?”

“I, um,” he panted before answering, “I’m a lawyer.”

He blinked and almost missed her sudden fear-stricken look up to the front of the car. Frowning, he blinked again to confirm, but she looked like she forced her face into an impassive one. She gulped and patted his forehead.

“Oh. That’s, um, nice. What type of lawyer?”

He groaned, missing the change in her voice, “Injury law. Actually, I just got a new job this week. I start tomorrow.”

She started to say something, then looked up at the front. Michael glanced over, wincing at the effort to move, and saw the husband quickly looking back to the road. Then, through the crack between the seats, he saw the man’s hand reach up, pressing a few buttons. Michael saw a message flash silently on the screen: “Guidance canceled.”

Michael stared at the screen in shock, an icy feeling pooling in his stomach. His breath came faster, rapid and terrified, as the message disappeared from the screen. He tried to shift his leg, but even with the growing fear, he couldn’t even twitch his toe.

“How long,” he said, terrified more of the answer, “how much longer?”

The husband grunted.

“Not more than twenty minutes or so.”

As soon as he spoke, he made a right turn and headed down a dark street. Michael turned to look at the woman above him. She had a frown of confusion herself. Her mouth opened.

“Um, J-”

She froze at the sound of her husband’s head turning sharply. The sound of her voice stopped instantly.

“-oh.”

They drove in silence for five minutes. He felt the car merging into the interstate, then watched the signs flashing by. He tried to keep calm, not sure if the husband canceled because he knew the destination or something more terrifying. His thoughts bounced back and forth, struggling with the feeling of helplessness and the fading adrenaline.

Then, he spotted the bright blue “H” symbol for the hospital over one of the many exit signs. His heart fluttered as he held his breath, waiting for the husband to pull off the interstate. Long seconds passed, then he watched as the streetlights faded and the car plunged into darkness again.

“Um, excuse me?”

“Yes,” came a distracted reply from in front.

“Didn’t we just pass the hospital?”

The man hesitated before he answered.

“No.”

Michael glanced. He saw a terrified look in the woman’s face as she steadfastly stared out the window.

“What are you doing?” he whispered.

She swallowed, but didn’t look down. He whimpered pitifully.

“Oh, my god, are you kidnapping me?”

“What?! No, that isn’t-”

But she hesitated. He saw the fear in her eyes and something snapped inside him. Michael screamed out shrilly, desperately hoping that a car or the police happened to be driving by.

“Help! Help me! Oh, god, please-”

The car jerked violently, then the husband bellowed into the backseat.

“Keep him quiet!”

The wife struggled to keep Michael’s hands from flailing as she screamed back.

“How?!”

“I don’t know, just shut him up!”

The wife struggled as she made exasperated sounds. Then, she slapped Michael hard on the mouth. He gasped in shock, growing silent for only a few seconds. Then, he inhaled deeply and yelled out as loudly as he could.

“Damn it, shut him up!”

The wife grabbed his face with both of her hands. The edge of her nails, smooth from nail polish, scratched his sides, right near his ears as she jammed her thumbs under his chin. He felt her forcing his mouth shut and he threw everything he could to making as much noise as possible. She gave up after only a few seconds and just slapped both hands across his mouth.

He jerked his head away from her, but froze as pain slammed into him, stealing his breath away. She took advantage of that brief pause to position her hands. He felt her palm, soft and delicate, caressing his lips. But, her caress turned painful as she pushed down with her hands.

She bruised his lips as she clutched his face with her fingers. Fingernails digging in, he could feel the pressure building on his jaw and skull. She crushed the ridge of his nose.

Michael managed to recover from the pain of moving and inhaled through his nose. It whistled briefly, then he yelled again. He felt his vocal cords cracking from the effort, but only a pathetic and muffled noise escaped the pressure on his face. He felt the spark of fear poisoning his thoughts as he inhaled again.

This time, his muted scream didn't even echo in the car. She still ground down on his face, leaning forward. He couldn't feel anything but her hands on his face. Her upper hand slipped off her skin, then drove down on his nose. He felt it nearly cracking the cartilage. The fleshy edge of the wife's hand jammed up to his nostrils.

He tried to inhale to scream again. To his horror, he found out he couldn't breathe. He tried again and again, but not even a single wisp of air slipped into his lungs.

Surprisingly fast, he started to feel a burning sensation in his chest. He pushed it aside, like the pain from his arms and legs. But, the pain only grew with every passing second until he could think of nothing else but one desire: to breathe.

Agony fueled his panic. He thrashed violently, forgetting about the pain from his paralyzed limbs. Searing pain, sharper than he ever thought possible, cut through his nerves, freezing his thoughts as he tried to breathe through it.

"Michael?"

He didn't quite understand, focused too much on the pain in his body. He felt her hands lifting lightly, then pressing down. Almost

massaging, but it drew his attention up. His eyes snapped open, staring up into her eyes.

“Michael, stop it.”

He whimpered, pursing his lips. He could taste her skin and feel the tiny ridges along her palms. He could almost imagine the little ridges rubbing against his lips. She whispered again, pleading as she looked down.

“Calm down, I’ll let you breath.”

His body wanted to tear her hands off his face, but the throbbing sensations warned him of consequences. Sweat dripping from his brow, he bore down on his thoughts and forced himself to remain still.

Michael never knew how hard it was to remain still while suffocating. Her hands shook from their place, her fingertips pressing painfully into his jaw.

Shaking, he managed to hold still until her hand finally came up. The first breath of air, incredibly smooth and cool drifted into his lungs. He gasped, breathing in deeply as tears dripped from his eyes. He stared at her through the haze, watching as she peered down.

Then, her top hand lifted from his face. He drank in the air, ashamed at his desperate need to breath. He sobbed and slumped his head back. She sighed and relaxed her hand, but didn’t remove it from his mouth. He pursed his lips, unconsciously exploring her skin. She shivered.

“Stop that.”

He obeyed in fear. She sighed and shook her head.

“Just be quiet, we aren’t going to hurt you.”

She looked up at her husband, but Michael couldn’t see a response. He closed his eyes, feeling the tears burning at the tips of his lids, and took a deep breath.

Her skin felt so warm and smooth against his face. He also knew she would be weaker than him. If he had his arms and legs, he would easily overpower her. But now, utterly helpless, this weaker, older woman held his very life in her hands. Just a few seconds of suffocating and he was crying like a baby.

He fought back the tears. Unconsciously, he opened his mouth to breath, but her hand ground between his lips, right against his mouth. He could feel her fingers stretching the edges of his mouth.

And, he couldn't even stop her. The utter helplessness and humiliation tore through him far worse than the pain. If he could just move, he knew he would win, but now... now he was utterly and completely at her mercy.

With tears in his eyes, he nodded.

She hesitated, then switched hands. The one over his mouth rested on his chest as her cooler hand pressed down against his mouth. It was a light, almost caressing, touch but there was no doubt that a single loud noise and he would suffocate.

"I'm sorry, Michael."

Crying, Michael could do nothing else. The car bumped along the interstate. He tried to say something, but she lifted her hand in warning. After a few attempts, he stopped trying to speak. Without any idea of their location, he just stared at the lights and up into the face of his kidnapper. The wife remained silent and refused to look down at him. She just adjusted her hand occasionally. But, even with those brief moments of freedom, he could feel her hands on his mouth, warning and threatening. When he remained still, she rewarded him by parting her fingers by less than a tenth of an inch.

It was a tiny little gap between her fingers, but it was air and Michael didn't risk dare it. Even the smallest of movements to look around brought a warning clasp around his mouth. Only enough to threaten him, but he quickly learned to just remain still.

Unable to move, Michael could only stare into her face. The harsh headlights lit up everything in her expression, her fear and her thoughts. Her eyes, a murky green from what he could tell, would flash down right before she switched hands over his mouth. He grew to anticipate it, feeling the skin of her palm growing hot and slick with his breath. Then, that brief moment of fresh, unlimited air, then cool skin resting on his lips. Her hands were soft and pliable, but after with her gagging him so long, he could feel the crevices of her palm and the little nick on her left hand. He wondered about the callouses on her fingertips, trying to figure out her profession, but he couldn't ask any questions.

Instead, he just remained in silence and tried not to think about his fate. He passed the long, painful minutes forcing himself to work on the other little details. Her engagement ring, clicking right

against her wedding band, drew his attention as much as the scars on her hands and the pulse of her body through her thumbs.

Even with his mouth held tightly together, Michael couldn't help tasting her with every desperate breath of air. The sticky flavors of sweat and their combined fears. It overpowered his senses and he could do nothing but draw in more of her taste with every breath. It didn't take long, though for the taste to fade away. Then, he began to pick up new flavors, like her dinner—lobster and wine—and even her perfume. He couldn't help it, any more than he couldn't resist feeling every ridge, crevice, and scar on her body.

The car ride became his personal hell. Time passed painfully slowly and a hand threatening to suffocate him in a moment's heartbeat. Every sense grew razor sharp but his world grew smaller, until all he could think about was her hand. He couldn't focus on her face, seeing nothing but blurs and lights

Michael felt the fear slowly subsiding as time passed. He couldn't tell if an hour or three had slipped through him, but he could remember every second of her hand covering his mouth.

Finally, the car pulled into a garage. As soon as it stopped, the garage door closed with a rumble. For a long moment, no one said anything as the engine popped loudly in the garage. Then the husband turned around.

He said, "Look, we're going to just put him in the house. At least until we can figure out what to do."

"W-What do you mean?"

"Just for a few minutes. We can," he sighed, "we can always take him to the hospital, but I have to think."

Michael tried to talk into her hand, but she ground down on his mouth. Her hand covered his nose for a moment until he silenced again. Carefully, she slipped out from underneath him. Her hand remained on his mouth, twisting his lips. She pushed down with her weight as they tugged on the blanket to pull him out. Michael clamped his mouth down, refusing to make a noise. He tried to act as submissive and quiet as possible. After a few hesitant jerks, she released his mouth to pick up her end of the blanket.

He waited until they struggled to bring him into the house. Wincing at the pain from jolting him, he took a slow, deep breath. Then, with all his strength, he screamed out as loudly as he could.

“Help! For god’s sake, please help me!”

They dropped him in panic. Michael kept on screaming, calling out for all his ability. His voice grew high pitch.

The husband bellowed at his wife.

“Keep him quiet!”

“H-How?!” she screamed back.

“I don’t know, do something!”

The husband spun on his heels and dove back into the garage. The wife dropped to her knees, crawling over Michael to slap her hands over his mouth. He couldn’t even feel her crushing him, but she caught him with his mouth open. Desperate, he kept on screaming into her palm. To his surprise, she shuddered with revulsion and almost lost her grip. He screamed out, then realized she responded to his spit. Swallowing, he got a full mouth of saliva and lapped at her hand.

She screamed out herself and lost her grip. He bellowed out again, screaming at the top of his lungs. She fumbled to silence him, but he couldn’t stop her as she slapped both hands over his mouth. The stinging sensation burned, but it was the humiliation of a weaker woman silencing him so easily.

“Couldn’t you keep him quiet?!” snapped her husband as he stormed back in. His wife whimpered, straddling Michael’s chest as her face twisted up from Michael’s frantic licking.

“I’m trying, damn it. He keeps licking me! It’s disgusting.”

“Grow up!”

“You put your hand here.”

“Fine,” snapped the husband, “here, use these.”

The husband jammed his hands into a laundry basket and pulled out a small handful of socks. Pink and blue, they looked like woman’s low rise ones. Bundling them up, he knelt down next to Michael.

“Open his mouth,” he commanded. She forced herself to pry open Michael’s mouth with her slick fingers. Tiny whimper noises escaped her throat. Michael tried to clamp them shut, but she jammed her fingers into his gums and he couldn’t stop them.

The husband took the socks and jammed them into his mouth. Michael gagged at the overpowering smell of the socks. He didn’t think a woman’s socks could be so nasty, but the acidic taste burned

at his taste buds. He couldn't help breathing in the musty smell. He choked on it, struggling violently with his gag reflex as he tried to avoid throwing up.

He froze at the sound of duct tape ripping off the roll. He looked up with a panicked look on his face. The husband jammed it down over his mouth. Instantly, the tape stuck to his face, tearing at his skin and sealing the horrible socks into his mouth.

Michael screamed as loudly as he could, but no sound came out. His mouth watered involuntarily, which soaked into the socks prying his mouth shut. He closed his eyes tightly as they grabbed the blanket, picking him up to drag him down the stairs. He tried not to swallow, but his saliva soaked into the socks, then began to drip down his throat. The taste brought tears to his eyes.

They dropped him in the middle of an unfinished basement. Michael winced at the pain, then looked up at the couple as they stared down at him.

"What do we do?"

The husband shrugged, "I don't.... I don't know. I have to think. Come on."

"Where?"

"Upstairs."

"I'm hungry," she said in a little girl's voice.

"Fine, we'll get pizza and figure out something by the time it shows up."

"O-Okay."

She didn't sound convinced, but together they turned away from him and walked up the stairs. Michael moaned, struggling not to taste the horrid socks.

At the top of the stairs, they paused. As one, they peered down the stairs at him and he felt terribly alone and frightened at the look in their eyes. Then, the husband reached across his wife and flicked off the light.

The basement plunged into silence and darkness. It felt like a blow to his chest and the breath froze in his lungs. A tiny whimper drifted from this throat, muted by duct tape and the socks.

Just thinking about his gag brought it into sharp focus. The last thing he wanted to think about was scratchy fabric burning the back of his thoughts. He felt his mouth watering and did everything he

could to jam his tongue in the back of his throat to prevent the noxious taste from dripping down his throat.

Tears burned in his eyes and he felt the bile rising up in his throat. The back of his throat grew dry and he tried to swallow, but it watered his mouth even more, soaking the fabric. Like acid, he could feel the taste of her horrible socks trickling down his throat.

His chest shook and he felt his gut spasming. The more he tried not to taste the socks, to feel it burning down his throat, the more he gagged. His throat tightened violently and he felt vomit rising up. Horror stories of asphyxiation sent a sharp terror through his thoughts—too much television—and he swallowed frantically to keep it down. It burned almost as much as his gag and he swallowed again to clear his throat.

With the next breath of air came the stench of the socks. It tore at his throat and gagged him. He struggled to keep breathing while balancing the urge to throw up with the need to not taste the sock and tape.

It felt like hours, but he could tell that not even minutes had passed. Thinking about the seconds only drew them out even more. Noxious trickling down his throat and he felt the bile rising up once again.

Closing his eyes tightly, he struggled with his own reflexes, fighting with every mote of his being to avoid throwing up or tasting his gag. No matter how much he tried, he could feel the fabric growing wetter with every passing seconds. Every heartbeat, he could feel droplets forming on the ridges, threatening to pour down his throat as soon as he relaxes even a second.

He sobbed. Blind and alone, he felt so helpless and so pathetic. He gagged again, fighting the constant surges of nausea, struggling not to feel the sharp acidic taste.

His senses continued to sharpen in the endless hours between the ticks of a clock. To his horror, the taste of his gag finally muscled their way down his throat, tickling down his throat and assaulting him violently with the taste. At first, it just felt like acid burning in his gut. It was musty vinegar and he heaved violently from the taste. But, it only grew worse with the passing heartbeats.

The vinegar taste grew more complicated. He couldn't help exploring the fabric with his tongue, trying to push it out while not

tasting it. But, as he pushed it around, new scents and tastes rammed into him. He could smell her toes and the various perfumes. But, he could also taste asphalt, floor polish, and even oil from a car. He couldn't help wonder how so many scents could be impregnated into the fabric and even more how every ripped through his senses. It didn't matter if he kept his tongue away or unconsciously explored it with mouth, it just kept on getting worse.

He tried to push at the sock, burying the tip of his tongue into the slightly crusty folds. Tears pouring down his cheeks, he tried to force his lips open against the tape. It held to his skin, tearing but not releasing. The only thing that came was the pungent stench driving into the back of his throat. He fought so hard against it, but it was a losing battle.

As time passed on, he struggled even more. The flavors mixed together and dribbled down his throat; his body forced himself to swallow no matter how hard he tried.

Michael could only distract himself by listening for short periods of time. Upstairs, he could hear the couple moving around. The husband paced back and forth and their voices rose up with arguments every few minutes. Then, the doorbell rang out, nearly stopping his heart.

Knowing they would come down after dinner only made time slow down even more. He gagged on the socks, straining to hear them bring the keys down so they could take him to the hospital. He let his mind drift toward fantasies, maybe of them just leaving him by the front door of the hospital, or on a bench and calling them anonymously. He found solace in practicing his speeches. It felt like a tiny measure of control in his life, just thinking about talking his way out of something horrible.

Then, he remembered where they threw him. Alone in a basement, helpless and paralyzed. He began to sob and gag at the same time. It was too late to force the taste from his mouth, but he kept on trying. But, his body kept swallowing at the bile, torturing him with time and helplessness.

He could feel sharp pains coursing through his body from his attempts to move. The minutes grew painfully longer but he couldn't tell if hours or even days passed. In the darkness, he drifted to sleep only to wake up gagging on the socks. The duct tape tore at

his mouth, but he couldn't even work his jaw around the thick fabric to free himself.

Helpless.

Terrified.

Panic finally caught up with him and he started to gag violently. And, no matter how hard he tried, he couldn't stop heaving. His body shook with every gasp of air, barely bringing in enough to keep him conscious as he felt the vomit rising up in his throat. Blind eyes stared out into the darkness as he tried to stop the gagging and coughing, but he lost the battle with those terrible socks, that horrible gag.

The light startled him. He blinked at the naked bulb above his head, trying to work his stiff tongue around the vinegar taste in his mouth. Footsteps came down the stairs hesitantly. He cleared his eyes and peered at them as they stopped above him. Both wore jackets and the husband held a shovel in his hand.

"Ready, Barb?"

Michael looked up in fear at the husband's words. He realized they never called each other by their name, but now. It sank in with terrible clarity, but he couldn't stop gagging and sobbing. His eyes moved from the jackets to the shovels and back again.

Slowly, he shook his head. He renewed his efforts to free his mouth, jamming at the sock with desperate strength. Barb knelt down next to him, her eyes shimmering with tears.

She grabbed the edge of the duct tape and tore it off. Michael shoved the sock out of his mouth, gasping loudly. Then, he leaned over and vomited on the floor. She let out a shriek of disgust and pushed him away until the last of the heaves tore out of him. He swallowed, gasping for air, and looked back at her.

"No, please don't, please—"

She slapped her hand over his mouth. He realized at the last moment all those speeches he rehearsed. He tried to pry his mouth open, but she ground her palm into his face. It felt cool and foreign on his lips. The sting from the tape faded quickly, but having her hand over his mouth felt worse than the impersonal duct tape. He breathed in cool air through his nose, trying to plead with his eyes.

Barb ground down her hand over his mouth, jamming her fingers into his mouth and putting her weight into it. Helpless, he pleaded with her eyes.

Tears ran down her cheeks.

“I’m sorry, Michael, but this is for the best.”

He tried to shake his head, but couldn’t move. She shifted her other hand to press against his nose. Crushing it, she cut off his breath. Her hot tears splashed down on his face.

Michael whimpered, staring at her. She sniffed.

“I pulled the straw. I have to do this. Don’t worry, don’t panic. It will be over,” she swallowed as she struggled with the words, “it will be over soon.”

She spoke as if she was trying to calm him, but the urgency to breath made it hard not to panic. Paralyzed, Michael couldn’t resist anything she did. The seconds grew longer as the need to breath increased. It felt like his lungs burned with fire deep inside. He tried to breath, to force air into his lungs, but nothing came past her fingers.

Tears poured down his cheeks. Stars appeared in his vision. He watched Barb’s figure grow hazy, not really fading but his mind seemed to struggle with focusing on her.

With terrible clarity, he saw a black star sliding across his vision. He frowned as he tried to focus on it. A second, then a third burned across his vision. He whimpered and tried to focus on her face.

Her hands ground against his face. He felt the world growing dark but couldn’t focus on it anymore. He used the last of his strength to try pulling her hand away, but even in that moment of pure blind panic, fueled by adrenaline, his body refused to move and the searing pain his lungs only increased. The rushing in his ears drowned out everything but Barb’s whispered words of sweet nothing.

And then, he couldn’t hear anything more.

About the Author

t'Sade has been happily using third-person singular since the late eighties. Besides that strange quirk, they enjoy writing a brutal combination of sex and violence for decades. Most of their stories explore the fringe edges of sexuality in the epic quest of trying to write a story for every fetish and turn-on known to the human libido.

It's going to take a long time.

Their writing can be found on their website, tsade.com. Most of it is free to read and enjoy.

t'Sade

About the Publisher

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