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English sample translation

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About Sex

The first time I was really terrified by sex was when my mother enlightened me about it.

I was fourteen years old at the time and better informed than she was. The evening she decided to enlighten me, my father was out with his bowling buddies, and I remember that it was summer. We were sitting in front of the TV – the sultry summer air was coming through the window – and we were watching a mystery program. When it was over, my mother sat herself down on the couch right next to me. She used to do that a lot, and it always made me uncomfortable. I tried even back then to get up right away and leave when she held me back.

“Just a minute,” she said, “I have to talk to you.”

Then she began to enlighten me. I don’t know what she told me at the time; I didn’t listen, intentionally, of course, and went absolutely rigid. I only know that, while sitting really close to me on the couch, she spoke in detail and at length about the male member. The more my mother had to work at being objective in her choice of words and at making her voice sound natural, the more I felt sick to my stomach. What she called “the member” seemed to be so naked, so exposed, so red, rough, and shiny, so nauseating beyond belief that I started to gag. None of the vulgar expressions had evoked images in me as terrifying as those.

The second time I was that nauseated by things sexual was a few weeks afterwards, when I was coming home from school and observed two poodles *in coitu*. By the time I discovered them, one poodle was already on top of the other and whetting himself on it at an incredible speed. It lasted maybe three seconds, then they were locked tightly and helplessly together and trying to get loose. Which they failed to do. That’s when the word “member” occurred to me, in all its sticky, shiny radiance. I had to throw up. The third time it made me so nauseated was when I saw G.’s prick. G. was a pimply-faced boy in the Catholic Youth Group. He was obsessed with music, practiced piano all day long and had never, definitely never, had a girlfriend.

He invited me over to their place one Sunday when his parents went out for a drive – they lived on the top floor of what was then the tallest high-rise in Linz – and after he’d played something for me on the piano, all of a sudden he pressed me to his body. Of all the apprentices and working young men I knew, and whose

company so unsettled my parents, none had ever launched an attack on me like that. I went stiff as a board. G. pressed his pimply red face against my flat chest, gasping with excitement. Then he guided my hand down to his pants, and we pulled his member out together. An extraordinarily hard, long, shiny, pulsating member. Then I panicked and ran fast as I could down the sixteen floors and off to my parents' house. I slowed down just before our apartment building, and for the first time I had this two-edged feeling of stimulation and nausea that I was to keep searching for afterwards, again and again. And it was always the outsiders I was attracted to, the obsessive ones, the sensitive ones, the ugly ones.

This is how it was: I could never be satisfied by the men I spent any length of time with or was linked to in a healthy relationship miles away from nausea. I was able to be satisfied in one way and one way only: if nausea played a part; if the member in question was naked and raw and shiny; if the man I was attracted to surrendered to me entirely; in a word, if something clingy, unnatural, nauseating was in play – something that, unless I'd run away from it at the start, I would end up forgetting in that inconceivable excitation, something I would conquer and push to the limit – that was what was ultimately able to satisfy me.

This typified many of my affairs but not my longer-lasting, loving relationships. Which is why I always got restless, of course, like a bitch in heat, especially during a full moon or on a sultry summer evening.

My relationship with B. was of this nausea-producing kind as well.

B. was a very intelligent, sensitive young man, with narrow, fidgety fingers and a nervous laugh. He'd toss his hair back once a minute, just like a girl, and his long, pointy nose had a red sheen. He was a chemist and was in his lab night and day.

I recognize a man of his kind at first sight, and he recognized me as well. B.'s whole body twitched when he saw me for the first time, and he began talking a blue streak, something that appeared to be out of character, and that's how it struck everybody else, too. It's interesting that my friends always notice right off when one of those outsiders, those nervous young men, fall in love with me, but it has never entered any of their heads that *they* could also cast me under *their* spell. Though I never was sparing with the symptoms, because after I'd gotten to know one of those men, then a time of torture for me always followed. Look, for along time I did put up some resistance to affairs of that kind, no matter how tough and unsuccessful it always turned out to be; I would be overcome by uneasiness, by sudden euphoria, then by a dreadful depression; I'd sit beside the phone by the hour, chewing over whether I should call the guy up or not.

None of my friends, admirers, and lovers ever grasped the extent of my torment at those times; the hints I'd drop when telling them about those damn, sultry, summer nights, about my edginess, about my hormone rushes, as I jokingly called my restlessness – all would be met with benevolent smiles or, as it seemed to me, with curiosity.

The man I was married to when this thing with B. happened was usually very jealous. But anything to do with B. was watched with interest, in fact, I'd say with fascination. He'd grin at me whenever B. would phone. I had the nagging feeling that my husband wanted to run a knife through B., as a surrogate for himself.

When I looked B. up for the first time, he was in his lab. He put some cotton on the palm of my hand and lit it. A flame suddenly shot up into the air, over a yard high, and then my hand was empty.

The outsiders would always show me some kind of magic trick like that. One of them could tell where north was from the position of the sun and from the moss on the trees. Another could construct complicated instruments with screws and springs that were no bigger than a sixteenth of an inch.

B. had a couch in his lab. On it we fell, while some sulphurous stuff bubbled away in the retorts. He swore he could make LSD. B. fiddled around with my clothing and let me fend him off. I allowed him just to kiss my neck, my face, and my fingers. His eyes betrayed his devotion to me. His hands were moist and cold.

I ran away, unreleased; on the verge of gagging and happiness, of ecstasy, oblivion, of being satisfied.

A few weeks went by before I phoned him again. I had stopped smoking before I met him but started up in the meantime, at twice the rate. I could hardly eat and was constantly freezing. I couldn't sleep at night, and my body was exhausted the whole day long.

I'd drop hints to my husband time and again about the state I was in, but he'd regard me with mild interest and laugh.

It was also far too late for him to stop me from doing anything whatsoever. Basically, yes, basically, I'm sure nobody can ever prevent me from doing a thing like that. I've learned in the meantime that I fall for ugly men body and soul, and that's how I want it to be.

My husband went away on a trip, leaving me alone for several nights, in summer, during a full moon.

B. carried out the most unbelievable experiments for me in his lab, gave me kisses and did everything I allowed him to do, and I saw I was falling victim to him more and more.

When we went out one evening and had something to drink, B. was telling me that he could tell the quality of water just by tasting it – the chlorine, lime, and iron content, pollutants, and sewage inflow – and I could see that from a certain angle, and with him in a certain pose and with a certain expression on his face, that he was beautiful. His otherwise impassive face came alive, and his whole behavior grew so intimate that a casual observer might think he was telling me the most scabrous things. But when we left the pub and he was dragging along beside me, he dried up once again and slouched along with his pointy red nose. He'd giggle for no reason and whistle through tightened lips with every third step.

When we said goodbye at my door with the customary kiss, he put his long, narrow, cold, moist hands on my hair so exquisitely, tenderly that I couldn't resist him any longer. I let him take me, though I knew it would mean his unhappiness and mine.

In my apartment he pounced on me right away, and his hunger, his passion, his total surrender to me intensified my nausea and my excitement.

I looked at his skinny body, the ribs sticking out of his chest, the legs as thin as matchsticks, the line of his rib cage, his sallow, useless skin. B. knelt down beside me and whispered his admiration in my ear. He said what they all say. That I'm the first woman and the last, and there's no other woman in all the world. And he said – they all say this too – that he was nothing, merely the wind whistling through the trees, the curling of a wave, the scent of a summer night.

"You," B. said, "will leave me, I know that. But," he said, "it doesn't matter. Nothing counts but the moment." And I saw his member grow erect up against his abdomen, saw how long and firm and shiny it was, how red, moist and twitchy, raw, uncovered, genuine.

My stomach contracted, I was indescribably nauseated, my body paralyzed, and I gagged on a wave of nausea as he penetrated me. And then, with his face above me and his pointy red nose, his thick lips and little, myopic eyes, his cold, damp hands all devouring my body, his member inside me, rough, hard, and in spasms, I managed, and without closing my eyes, to overcome my nausea in a maelstrom of an ecstatic effort of will.

Afterwards we went to the lake, in the dark; he tasted the water. "This lake," he said, "is going to die." I took him to the bus; he held my head in his hands once more, his lips were still warm, we embraced again, our bodies still felt intimate with each other, and then we parted.

I saw B. a couple of times later on.

Everything after that was agonizing, cruel, cold – the way it always happens.

A few more times we desperately fell into each other's arms, and for a few more times he entered me.

But only once did I manage to overcome my nausea, and then never again. My scream died in my throat. He kept calling me up, stalking me, buttonholing me, but the more he urged me to love him, the colder I became.

When he put his cold, clammy hand on my arm, I felt nauseous at once, and I couldn't stand him anymore. I shook him off like a pestering dog; that's how it was with all of them.

My husband had come back in the meantime, and he'd grin at me when B. would phone me up.

"Your admirer," he'd say, and I'd feel ashamed.

B. tried a few more times to get me to have a talk with him but then left me alone, probably sobered by my coldness.

I never saw him again. It's only when I go to the lake at night that I think about him. I think about the retorts and the glasses, about the powder and the cotton, and that the lake will die.

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