

CHAPTER FIVE

MINDFUCK

"Once I seduced a teacher of mine. The student-teacher relationship is supposed to be a sacred one, like that between parents and children. But sanctity operates only in the abstract, in the realm of ideas. Unfortunately for me, I tried to live by my ideas.

"It is difficult, or nearly impossible, to freely communicate, make love, fight or have sex, with people whose perceived power is greatly different than one's own. Hence the taboos on these sorts of relationships. I respected these ideas and intended to embody them but I had a professor who was so adorable, small and quite round, slightly bald, very funny and smart. He taught us that philosophies are grids of polarities overlaid on, or underpinning, reality. According to him, everyone has a philosophy, whether they know it or not. Personal philosophy is the mental map that we use to get around in the maze of the actual. When an experience is not on our map, then we must change our map or refuse the experience.

"This round fellow had round vision. His map was a globe as far as I was concerned. He brought Hegelian logic back out from its undermost box on the uppermost shelf of the deep and dusty closet of socialist despair. He snuck his students up to a philosophical peephole a la Duchamps so we might peer into the secrets of the modern mind.

"I saw a connection between the public, stated objectives of my culture and the personal occasionally conscious drives of the individuals inhabiting that culture. It was revelatory for me.

"The women's movement was new, lacking its impending internally waged, impending malice. The black and white left was in jail, or underground or dead. My generation came of age in the midst of a polarity war. The grids were up for grabs.

"Would an American political philosophy have to be successful to be true? Would it at least have to have viable, realistic applicability? If American reality could not be shaped by our dreams, should we give up our dreams or American reality?

"I had a boyfriend, a young man my age, radical in thought and appearance, hair down to his butt, in every way the opposite of my teacher, except that they both saw themselves as my instructors. Sometimes I agreed wholeheartedly with the opinions of the round, whole thinking man. Often my perceptual eyes were opened through the piercing visions of the tall, brilliant younger man. But I had

ideas too. The trouble was that I had no cogent way to express them. I used borrowed parts of their concepts, or I used magic, or sex, to get things across, expressed. What I lacked was a suitable way of conveying my perceptions. The modes of communication I was familiar with were frustrating and polyglot. In desperation I used a sort of sexual magic to make an impression on these impressive men.. Still unable to communicate, I did accept the necessity of developing a responsible and responsive language to balance the rigged intellectual scales. Magic works fast, like drugs, it's an easy tempting route. Like drugs, the crash can be much worse than the high. Language takes forever but it provides a temporary portable bridge for folks to get themselves across.

"Most of all, in those days, like Aretha, I wanted R-E-S-P-E-C-T.

"I sat at the back of the room perched on a wide windowsill. It was an ivy league college, ensconced within, from the perspective of an adolescent, an ancient architecture, replete with effusive spooky Adams Family stonework, the complete antithesis to the black and white Bauhausian intellectual strategies we were meant to be absorbing daily.

"The windowsill could fit three people uncomfortably or myself, spread out. no one else ever sat there, though, so I was always spread out, comfortable, able to study external pathways when I needed a break from the redundant vision in the standard archaic patriarchy bound classroom .

"Or I took four seats, one to sit in, one on my left for my coat or jacket, sweater or sweatshirt, one on my right for my books and assorted extraneous paraphernaliae. Not drugs, not yet, just stuff, like books, notebooks, last night's clothes shoved in an infinitely expandable purse, pens, glasses, coffee and maybe a grapefruit. On the seat in front of me I placed my feet.

"Sometimes I secured the seat in front of me with a coat draped on the back spreading my paraphernalia on the seats on either side. Defended? I think so. Frightened? I dare say. Of men. Of women too, probably, but they had so little power in my world at that time, and the power that they did have was social and though I wasn't uninterested in society, I had no experience of it nor any chance of future access to it. In my experience, in my neighborhood, power lay in the hands and the dicks of men, in the roles and desires that men possessed, controlled, determined and designed. Men could do anything their personalities and talents would allow. Women coped, no more, no less.

"Generally I sat at the back of the class. I didn't like the feeling of people staring at my back. But I was conspicuous. My mother had Indian blood. I am a product of American melting. I have the distinct features of mutthood. I stood out, sitting, in the role of director, overseer, of operations, at the back of the room or on a windowsill. My round professor I had now discovered was three times divorced and, more to the point, three times married, and presently divorced.

These multiple marriages conveyed worldliness, social rebelliousness, a restless spirit and a romanticism that appeared to match my as yet unexplored own. I stared at him and thought thoughts focused with love and lust, craving, later craven, I craved him.

"He invited our class to a party at his house. We had done surprisingly well gridding Hegeliana. We would communally spring for a party to celebrate the achievement of high test scores.

"At the party, luck had us in a room suddenly deserted. He reached his arms out and I went. My mind was going proverbial miles per hour. My first love spell had worked. My dreams were realized. True love in the palms of my hands. My body fit snugly wrapped in his, we kissed warm, wet, slightly drunk tongues slid along the surfaces of each. I had not yet had sex with a grownup, not even with a college graduate. Thoroughly enmeshed in his embrace, I was completely overpowered by his mind. His arms held me softly, his touch was sweet and generous. But I could not match his thoughts and that made me feel pushed over. It wasn't sexy. It was scary.

"I gave in to my panic, pulled away and uttered, stammered, gestured, out, my confusion. I said that his mind was too sophisticated for me. He looked sad, bemused and a little embarrassed.

"I could follow his thoughts now. He thought that I thought that he was too old. I wish he hadn't doubted himself. He wasn't too old, he was beautiful. He was too experienced for me. He was a man who would be horrified to rape anyone. I could not allow him to participate in an act which might in any way demean him. As long as I knew that I was not a match for him, then I would be allowing him to rape me. Our awarenesses had to be equal or equivalent in order to make love. That's my rule of the game. Awareness of vast inequalities in sex is rape, theft, damaging. Making love means meeting on equal ground, wherever that ground may be. As long as I could identify myself as overwhelmed, I could not identify myself as a consenting adult. As long as he could not read my thoughts, then he could not be said to be on equal ground either. We were too different, two different species. Socially engineered copulation between species creates monsters, not love, not magic, not transcendence.

"It wasn't until much later in my life that I was angered when men didn't understand that the mind makes love as well as the body. Then I didn't expect my round teacher to know. How could he know? I felt that it was my responsibility to teach him but I lacked the means.

"I apologized. I said something about my lack of sophistication. It was the best I could do on short notice. I ran out of the house, ashamed of my wordlessness.

"I liked and admired that round man. He was a great teacher with a generous soul. I hate that he thought that I thought things that I didn't think. I hate that my inability to express myself left us both ashamed. I dedicate this anecdote to him humbly in hope of restitution."