

# Pleasure Tips

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In the beginning when everything was very sexual we talked about our fantasies. She thought about having a guy for some of it. She thought about having a gun. I had gone through a lot to get away from guys so I admit that the thought of going back to them, even for a little adventure, was surprising and disconcerting, but wanting to fulfill her every wish I went out to Red Hook and talked to my friend Eric whom Heather liked – she had bought one of his great paintings, “Race Car,” – and who had guns. I’ll never forget his face – we were driving across the Manhattan Bridge – and his head whipped around with his mouth wide open when I explained our scenario. I thought he was going to drive off the bridge and then we were both very embarrassed but charged and he agreed to give us the gun. He agreed to more than that.

When I got home and met Heather at 103 on 2nd Avenue she was waiting for me at the bar drinking a martini. “Where were you?” she asked. “I was worried.”

“You’ll never guess what just happened,” I said.

“What?” she asked.

My heart was still pounding a little. I opened the menu and said, “Let’s order some oysters.”

They came. I slurped one down and told her what I had just done. She gave me the same stunned look that Eric had and suddenly I felt like an idiot and had to call him back and tell him to forget the whole gun thing. The whole guy thing. I’m sure he was very relieved, as was I.

“So what’s it like being with Heather?” my friend, Amy, asked. We hadn’t seen each other since Fire Island. I can still see her face when I started to describe it to her. We were sitting outside at Benny’s Burritos in the East Village having lunch.

“Is she a top?” she asked me.

I was a little taken aback by her candor and didn’t know what to say. I remember stammering something about how we were pretty flexible in our roles and kind of traded off. She looked skeptical. I couldn’t keep myself from telling her then about how Heather sometimes went into a complete trance when we were having sex and how I found it to be a big turn on. I thought she looked shocked and maybe even a little disapproving and suddenly I felt strange about having said anything. It made me feel creepy about the whole thing.

Sometimes it would take days for her to come back to herself. These episodes only happened a few times in the beginning – but not the very beginning. When they started I could never tell until it was too late and by then she would be gone. I’d never seen anything like it before in my life. The first time it happened was at her new apartment on 1st Avenue and 7th Street. There was music playing and I could hear voices coming up from the garden below and see the laundry flapping on the line from the apartment across the way. We were on the couch and I had my hand on her

leg and she leaned her head back. Then it got very quiet. Too quiet. I didn’t know what was happening. She turned her head away and suddenly stared blankly into the distance. She wasn’t there. I felt scared and alone. I thought maybe she was having a seizure or that I’d done something wrong. I called her name. At first she didn’t answer. I didn’t know what to do but in a few minutes she came back to the moment and answered me. I was overcome with relief. It didn’t last very long but it took a toll. She got very fragile and started to cry like she’d been through hell and come back. I asked her what was going on and if she was all right. She mumbled, “Don’t worry. It has nothing to do with you but I can’t talk about it now. I have to go to sleep. I’ll tell you in the morning.”

In the morning, I tiptoed around trying not to wake her. I was very upset about what had happened. This was a side of Heather I had never seen before and didn’t want to see. It almost made me want to run away. I remembered how she once told me about her Post Traumatic Stress Disorder from the abuse, but I had no idea how it affected her whole life. As I started to get dressed, she saw me and motioned me to the bed. I went over and sat down on the edge feeling shy and uncomfortable.

“Are you going somewhere?” she asked.

“I was just going down to the store,” I said.

“Not now,” she said. “I want to talk about last night.”

She explained how her therapist, Meredith, called it a “fugue state” that happens sometimes when something touches off a traumatic memory and a person disassociates from the here and now and goes far away because it’s too painful. It made me feel very tender towards her and sad as well as confused and bad. Eventually I could tell when it was about to happen and could stop what we were doing and sometimes catch her before she slipped away.

Once it happened in Las Vegas when we were at the old Stardust Hotel. We thought it would be fun to stay in Sin City for a night or two before and after the Chance Convention in Stateline, Nevada. But things weren’t as fun as we planned. American Airlines lost my luggage, which contained my manuscript from which I had to read the next day. I learned something. Never travel with your manuscript in a bag that’s not attached to your body. I was in a complete panic, worried and distracted. We couldn’t leave the room until the luggage had been found and delivered and I had no idea how long that would take. That’s why we were watching so much t.v.

The Stardust was a classic 50’s hotel with modern amenities. Probably out of nervousness Heather started fooling around with the



remote. When we saw what our t.v. options were we decided to order some porn hoping it wouldn't show up on our bill though we suspected it would. We started to have sex and that's when it happened again. There must have been an incident in the porn that triggered something traumatic. The fugue states generally seemed to involve something anal and she wrote in NOTICE about someone sticking a gun up her ass and threatening to pull the trigger. Fortunately there was a knock at the door. We stopped what we were doing. I turned off the tv and threw on some clothes. Heather pulled up the covers. She was half-way out of it, kind of sleepy and curled up in a ball. I went to the door and peeped out. It was the guy from the front desk. "I've got your luggage!" he said.

I opened the door wider. I was in such conflict. I was overjoyed that it had come but worried about Heather slipping away. "Do you want me to bring it in?" he asked.

"I'll take it," I said. I tipped him, shut the door and immediately went through my bag and pulled out the story. Heather had fallen asleep as she always did after one of these episodes. I let her rest, lay down next to her and started to read my story, "Baby," in preparation for the event the next day. I must have fallen asleep too because when we awoke it was dusk. I opened the blinds. The desert stretched far into the distance. We stood at the window side by side and watched the sun set and talked about how we might like to move to the desert.

We went downstairs for dinner and ordered sliders. I had never had them before and the waiter looked at me as if I were crazy when I asked for mine rare. I didn't realize that the food like the menu was prefabricated. Heather still wasn't feeling well so we headed for the elevator. I hadn't been in a casino before. There were slot machines everywhere and I had never heard that maddening continuous sound like Philip Glass gone wrong. The lobby was full of six-foot chorus girls in feathered headdresses swaying around topless on six-inch heels. We were happy for the quiet of our room and went to bed.

We got up early the next morning and drove to the Chance Convention, which was held at a casino called Whiskey Pete's, which was in Stateline, Nevada. It was organized by my friend, Chris Kraus, from Semiotext(e) Press. The headliners were Jean Baudrillard, Diane di Prima and D J Spooky. I remember hearing about Baudrillard running around Vegas looking for a gold lame jacket so he could look like Elvis for his reading. He had to settle for silver with sequined lapels.

At the end of the event, I bumped into him in the parking lot of the casino. I was a little star struck. On the last night of the convention, he had done some dark theoretical reading in front of a rock

band. He approached me and I thought he was going to say something about my reading, but instead he asked, "Ou est l'auto-bus?" and I pointed, "Ici," and took him there. After leaving Baudrillard at the bus stop, I discovered my favorite Deisel jacket was gone – it was a kind of off-white ribbed heavy cotton blazer and it was my all-purpose spring and summer outerwear for years. I must have left it on the hood of our rental car and I guess someone stole it. I was heartbroken and Heather spent years running around trying to replace it but for the moment we let it go and decided to explore the desert countryside.

We got into the car and left Whiskey Pete's and drove and drove and then had to stop and wait and wait in the desert heat at a railroad crossing in the middle of nowhere for almost an hour while a train carrying nuclear waste passed endlessly by. Nevada is one of the few states where it's legal to transport it. When the gates finally went up we saw a little run-down shack by the road that looked like a store in an old western. We went in and there were guns all over the wall and two big thuggy-looking cowboys in ten-gallon hats sitting with their feet up, drinking beer, giving us the eye, or maybe the evil homophobic eye or both and I imagined for a bit that we would never make it out alive.

Eventually we escaped with a couple of bags of chips and sodas and drove back to Stateline for the Chance Convention closing party. I remember being in a hot tub with Diane di Prima, an early idol. I kept my bathing suit on.

For me, Heather's fugue state colored the whole event. I had to worry about her and take care of her and keep her from feeling left out when all I wanted to do was focus on my reading.

By the next morning, Heather was more like herself and I felt relieved. We had breakfast early and made the long drive back to Vegas, passing the Hoover Dam, which was spectacular.

The whole trip was such a mix of things but staying at the Stardust was a gas. They sold cinnamon buns the size and shape of women's breasts with so much white icing poured over them that between the size and the amount of cream the whole thing was obscene. They were delicious and I couldn't resist bringing one back to New York City in my suitcase. I kept nibbling on it for weeks till it was impossibly stale.

-Ann Rower from *Can We Go Home Now?*. A slightly different version was published in Chris Kraus's *Animal Shelter*.













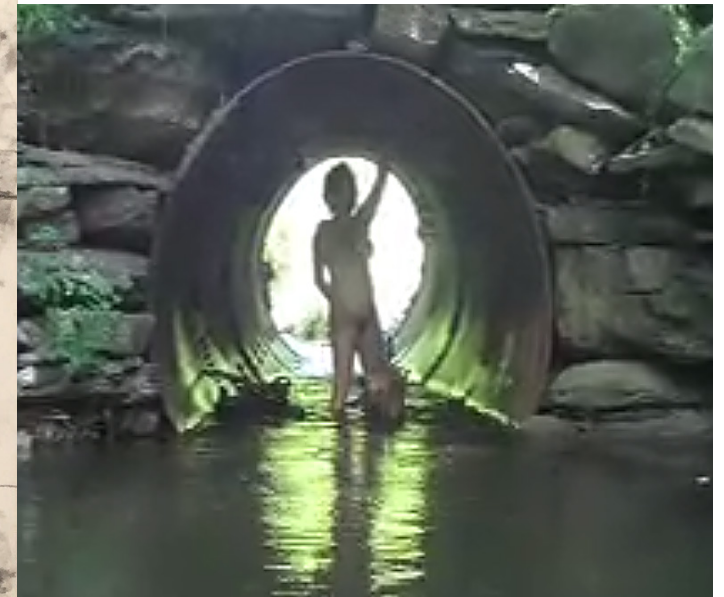
















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