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about 1,500 words

**Pride Festival**  
by Matias Travieso-Diaz

I met Eddie at Louisville's Pride Festival in June 2015.

He was beautiful: not overly muscular; caramel colored, supple skin; a very thin layer of hair covering his chest, the same color as his tight curls; and a face that could have come out of a Caravaggio. He promised to be quite tasty.

As he stepped away, I chased after him. Finally, I corralled him and put one hand on his shoulder. "Hi. I'm Jack. Have you been to this parade before?"

Instead of replying, he asked: "You were casing my body, weren't you?" I panicked. "No, really, I wasn't." He said quietly, "I know what you want... and maybe I want it, too."

I drew him to me and we kissed. Finally, I asked: "Would you like to come to my apartment for some wine?"

"OK. It is far?"

"No, only a few blocks away."

We marched in silence, hand in hand, until we arrived at my apartment. Once we stepped inside, I kissed him, picked him up, carried him to the bedroom, laid him down on my bed, and undressed him. I then turned him on his stomach and took him, and later sucked the first blood off his neck. He bled a little, but took it without reproach.

The following day, the boy could barely walk, and had puffy marks where I had bit him. I asked him: “Did you like it?” and his laconic reply was: “It was OK.”

We went out for breakfast and he told me his story. Eddie was the child of mixed-race parents; his Jamaican father abandoned Eddie’s white mother during the pregnancy. She turned to alcohol, unable to cope with parenting alone a mulatto child in Louisville. Eddie had largely raised himself.

I concluded that Eddie had a total lack of self-confidence, and was unconsciously seeking my complete domination. I diffidently asked: “Do you want to come back to my apartment and stay for a while?” He nodded yes.

He went back to his mother, grabbed a few possessions, and returned to become my lover. Yet, I didn’t want Eddie to be just my fuck and suck buddy. I had fallen in love and wanted him to succeed in life. I discovered that he was a gifted draftsman; thanks to my prodding, he finally decided to go to college.

He applied to several schools and got a spot in the freshman class of the University of Louisville. I looked forward to seeing him make a living for himself.

Then, the Supreme Court held in *Obergefell v. Hodges* that states may not deny marriage licenses to same-sex couples. I was ecstatic, and looked forward to exercising my new rights.

So, I proposed to Eddie:

“I want us to get married.”

Eddie's reaction was unexpected. He looked at me with a haunted expression and gasped: "No!"

I leaned over to kiss him. He shied away. "What's the matter?" I asked. "I don't like the things you do." "But you and I have enjoyed sex and bloodletting daily for over a year." "Well, *you* enjoyed it. I just went along."

I insisted: "I kept asking you whether you liked it, and you always said it was OK."

"I meant that it was OK with me if you did it. I let you, but didn't like it. I really don't. I'm into women, not men, and having my blood sucked is disgusting." I gulped. "Is that the way you want it; no further physical contact between us?" I asked, in despair. "Yes."

All of a sudden it was chilly in my apartment. I saw he wanted out. And I couldn't bring myself to oppose it.

Eddie packed up his wares and fled to his mother. I watched him go through my tears.

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I spent the day in a haze. There must be some mistake, this couldn't have happened. He'll call and everything will be fine again. Tomorrow things would be fine.

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On the second day, I sat by a phone that remained silent. I checked my e-mails every five minutes. Please let him call me, let him send me an e-mail, let him show he cares for me. I'll be good, I won't harass him, if he doesn't want to screw or be bled that's OK, I can wait until he changes his mind.

I sat by the phone some more, and I checked my e-mails for the tenth time. No new messages. I went on sitting by the phone.

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On the third day, I masturbated thinking of Eddie. I beat my meat imagining his whimpering, which I ignored as I penetrated far inside him, and inhaled his blood, in an orgy of despair. He was limp, and trembled, and then cried. I started crying too, and my erection fizzled. I couldn't do it. I loved the ingrate too much to abuse him, even in my desolate mind.

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On the fourth day, I tried to busy myself. I vacuumed the apartment, washed clothes, went grocery shopping, cleaned the car, jogged, surfed for porn. At the end of the day I was worn out. But as I lay in bed at night, I was wide awake, playing Eddie over and over like an uninvited song. Finally, exhaustion won over and I passed out. But I woke up every hour, crying.

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The fifth day was back to work day. I sneaked into my office and tried to concentrate on mindless things. My human cover, doing market research for a brokerage firm is unexciting work; try doing it when you are burying the love of your life.

I went home and reached for a vial of serum that I saved for special occasions and a bottle of bourbon. Well, this was surely a special occasion. Later, I tossed the empty bottles and crawled into bed, to another restless sleep.

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On the sixth day I woke up with a splitting headache. I dragged myself to the bathroom, and threw up. This made things a little better. I poured myself a glass of tomato juice, the vile human cure for hangovers. I dutifully downed half the glass.

I sat at the computer and, quite tentatively, looked at my e-mails. Yikes! There WAS a message from Eddie, two days old. It read:

Dear Jack: Sorry for running away, but you got me really scared with that talk of marriage. Bein with you I've realised I'm not gay. I like women, though I have trouble connecting because girls don't take me seriously. Anyhow, I agreed to live with you and let you do the things you did to me becoz you were weird but nice and I didn't want you to toss me away. So, I ended up becoming your plaything. But when you proposed marriage I knew I had to put an end to it. I'm sorry, but I really don't like you. I find you repulsive, your sharp teeth and that dark hair all over you. Moreover, you're truly ancient and should not be running after eighteen-year old boys. Do yourself a favor and keep to your own kind.

I hope we can stay friends. You've been good to me, and I appreciate it. As long as there's no physical stuff, we can work it out. I'd very much love it if you stuck with me and saw me thru college. Sincerely, Eddie.

I was shaking so badly that I knocked over the rest of the juice. I went back to bed, with only one thought in mind: What can I do now? One side of me said, "you must get over this." Another insisted: "old, you're old. You're almost three hundred, fit to be in a museum. What's the use?" I reached for the sleeping pills, but was too cowardly to take my life.

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On the seventh day, I woke up and gathered enough strength to get out of bed. I took a long hot shower, shaved, put on my favorite cruising clothes, and went down to the dark spots around the Highlands.

I thought of the last scene of Fellini's *Nights of Cabiria*: the eternally optimistic streetwalker steps away from her last disaster, alone on the road and crying. She joins some

young people and walks with them, shedding a single tear. Then Cabiria smiles and gives a nod to the camera, as if to assure that everything will be alright. She hasn't given up hope. And neither should I.

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And I didn't. Soon I found Charlie, a Southern boy who, like me, loves music and movies, doesn't mind being the bottom, and is ok with living with a vampire. We moved together and have stayed faithful to each other for five years. We love and argue, fight and make up. I love the sweetness of his blood.

Life can be full of disappointment, betrayal and loss. But some of us persevere until we find love and sustenance, sometimes in unlikely places.

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