

Requiem for Martin

What happened was that I had gone on a shopping trip to Scarborough, which is a hilly fishing and tourist town in Yorkshire, one of many glistening jewels in a beautiful cove. My Mother and Father had gone off somewhere and I had just come out of Boys, which is a medium-sized department store, with my Grandfather. I was six years old and I remember not being able to see what was on the display tables and not caring because the entire shop seemed to me to be full of the most boring stuff imaginable – except for one small corner that sold millions of different kinds of sweets. We had just left Boys, as I said, having achieved, as far as I could see, nothing – which was typical of most trips to Scarborough that didn't involve a visit to the beach. I had to run to catch up with my Grandfather who was walking, quite quickly, off. I reached him and grabbed his hand and we kept going, with me having to half run and half walk. We'd probably gone for twenty of his steps before I glanced up and discovered that the man wasn't my Grandfather. It was Martin.

I didn't know Martin then of course, but I didn't take my hand away and we didn't stop walking. We kept right on going. He looked down at me and smiled and said "Hello, I'm Martin." "I thought you were Grandpa." I said. "Actually, I am Grandpa." He said and he smiled again. There was something about him, I knew that it was unusual to just go off with someone else's Grandpa, but I could tell that he was much better than mine. I didn't look back to see if my real Grandpa was looking for me. I didn't concern myself with my parents' feelings. I just kept going with Martin.

I lived with him until I was eight and three quarters, which was when the police came and I was taken back to live with my family. My sister, who I didn't remember at all, had turned into a five-year-old and my parents looked much, much older. My Grandfather was dead and buried.

We visited Grandpa's grave now and then, sometimes the whole family went, but more often it was just me, my Sister and Mum. When it was the three of us Mum would usually cry for a while. I remember thinking how that was odd, because Grandpa was Dad's Dad and not her Dad. Me and my Sister would just hang around until she had finished and then we'd walk home without talking much.

Martin was not a Monster. I had a really good time with him in those two and a half years and I wasn't the worse for it at all. Maybe if it hadn't been stopped I would have suffered educationally, but he tried his best to teach me and when I got to school I knew as much if not more than the other children.

Why is it so bad to be sexy together when you're different ages? Martin never hurt me. Why is it that adults can bash their kids and be mean to their kids and make the kids do things that the kids don't like, but other things aren't okay. I don't mind being sexy with Martin. I didn't mind kissing his penis or stroking him. Of course he never put his penis in my bottom, that would have hurt me and he never did anything to hurt me.

Adults say that children shouldn't think about sex. But everyone does. At school it was the main thing all the way through, at college it was the only thing and now at work it's the only interesting thing. It's the most important part of being alive.

Martin and me had a lovely time. We did what we wanted, watched TV, cuddled, cooked, washed up, played, drew pictures, told stories. I had loads of toys.

The village his house was in said, after he was taken away, that they knew something was strange about Martin, but that's lies. They all liked him. He was rich, posh and clever and remembered all their names, and their children's and animals' names and what all of them did. They never asked me any questions, they left me alone. Mrs Whitstable said that Martin told her that my parents had been killed abroad and I'd seen it happen and I was traumatised and please don't mention it and that he was my Uncle on my Mother's side. Mrs Barton said that he told her that I was very ill and had only a few years to live and I was in the country

for my health and please don't mention it to the boy because he's very fragile. Mrs Hoover said that he told her that I was the heir to some great dynasty and I had to hide away until I was eighteen and could claim my inheritance and please don't mention it or the child might be assassinated.

He told other stories to other people in the village. None of them contradicted any of the others but if they were all put together the pieces added up to an impossibly fraught whole. He kept it all in his head, what he told who, and always remembered everything. He was, or is, a very clever and a very funny man. He swore them all to secrecy and he got a lot of pleasure imagining them "revealing and withholding their stupid snippets, playing a gossip game of cards with an absurd deck." I can remember or imagine him saying that. It's getting harder to remember definitively. I miss him and I'm sure I always will.

They tried so hard to make me hate him that in the end I pretended I did to make them leave me alone. They asked so many questions and it took me a long time to figure out what they wanted me to say. They told me that it wasn't the first time for Martin but I didn't really feel less of him because of that. We had a relationship. Of course he had more power than me, but he was responsible, caring, entertaining, inspiring and wise. Of course you can say that he manipulated me, but that's normal isn't it? I look around and I don't see any relationships, emotional, social, spiritual, financial, and so on, that rely for their day-to-day functioning on equality and honesty. That's not what love or faith is about. I loved him very much and he did nothing to abuse that love. People become hysterical when I say this kind of stuff, that's why I learnt not to talk like this, I didn't want the trouble. You can tell people that Mr Jones hits his children and they couldn't care less. You can tell them that their shoes are made by children that are slaves and they're worn for a moment and forget about it. But you tell them about Martin and me and they go insane, they want to drag Martin out and shoot him, hang, draw and quarter him and put me in a nuthouse. They want blood on their hands.

Young children are sexy, they are discovering their bodies and they have no inhibitions. It's a time for play, for innocent fun, for silliness. When they grow up it feels more serious but for me, as a young child, it was just like lots of lovely tickling games.

Of course I'm very sorry that my parents and my Grandpa were so upset for such a long time. And I wish, in a way, that I had tried to contact them or escape. I especially wish that I hadn't told them that I hadn't thought about them much at all. I was trying to make them feel better but, of course, the moment I spoke the words I realised that I should unsay them and never mention it again. Everyone said I was brainwashed and I quickly agreed and, although both Mum and Dad knew that I wasn't, we left it at that.

I'm fifty-three now. My Mum died last month and Dad disappeared when I was twelve. I had a feeling he was going to be at the funeral, but I was wrong. It's time for me to tell the truth. I'm a 53 year-old, well adjusted, credit card-carrying member of the Capitalist Party. I can't change what happened and I don't regret what happened (although I do regret that it made Grandpa so miserable). I understand that what Martin and I had is unworkable in today's society but I will never betray it or belittle it. I, myself, am not attracted to children. In fact I'm not sure if I'm a sexual being at all. Perhaps during that precious time with Martin, the reserves of sexual desire within me were all used up.