

BACK WHEN JUDY HAPPENED (AND I DIDN'T)

by Francis Baumli

In the midst of that phase of my life when I was busily dissipating my glandular faculties, there was a woman, about my age (if memory serves), named Judy. She merits no major descriptive except to state that she was a stunning beauty. She turned the heads of men and roused the envy of women. If I sat with her in a public place, men who did not even know me would later take opportunity for telling me how fortunate I was.

It was her beauty, and only her beauty, which attracted me to her. Of median intellect (at best), possessing copious and chronic verbiage, not well educated, dishonest, passive aggressive, and very emotionally shallow, she talked like a hick—a very uninhibited and voluble hick. Possessing many major faults and not many merits (even miniscule ones) other than her physical beauty, she was mired in a morass of vanities, the dangerous vagaries of an overpopulated love life, and she handled it all with a concupiscent and lazy plethora of dangerous flirtations and dawdling dalliances. She knew all this,

didn't care about her demerits, had no insecurities or doubts about her beauty, and manipulated many a man (including me) to get what she wanted. She also was vaguely and occasionally homosexual in her encounters, but this did not seem basic to her personality, and appeared to result primarily from the fact that her preeminent physical beauty attracted women too—especially those who possessed sufficient physical beauty themselves as to think they might have a sexual chance with a woman they could perceive was only occasionally, and by happenstance, homosexual. Moreover, Judy was entirely shameless about her sexual desires, and entirely lacking in patience when that appetite was gnawing. I had only talked with her two or three times—in other words, I barely knew her—when she told me about a recent escapade. She had gone to an expensive restaurant frequented by young fraternity boys, and, as she put it, “I sat alone, and it was obvious what I wanted.” A young fellow who, as she put it, possessed “the face and body of a young god” saw what was obvious, took her home, and gave her what she wanted. Also (what I would soon discover was most unusual) he got what he wanted. At least I presume he did since Judy added, “He had the most beautiful golden body! And the biggest penis!” She drawled out those last four syllables with an appreciation so lascivious she shuddered, then seemed to sink into a mucosal memory more

pleasurable and more prolonged than would ever be considered appropriate for polite conversation. As she reveled in this memory, I made a mental note that here was one more woman who unabashedly, and spontaneously, was quite eager to avow that bigger is better.

What did Judy really want? Mostly, she wanted to be admired. She also wanted to be rich. She thought I was rich (I wasn't) and she openly, crassly, and shamelessly expressed a craven envy about what she perceived to be my wealth. However, she had very uncertain notions about how to go about becoming rich, so she never succeeded with consummating this desire. In fact, her need to be immediately, totally, and even maliciously controlling toward any man who was attracted to her always seemed to sabotage any chance she had of becoming rich off of an admirer's money.

It probably deserves being added that Judy simply wasn't smart enough to know how to get rich by associating with rich men. She was, however, attractive enough to use many a man mercilessly (until her faults drove him away). Her body certainly was attractive, but if her body was a 9, her face was a 10+ that put most 10's to shame. Given that, with such physical accoutrements, she did not know how to manipulate men in the direction of grabbing their money (even though she would have had no scruples about doing so), one should

probably conclude that she not only lacked intellect, she actually was downright stupid—a trait too easily overlooked when one's eyes are fixed upon comely physiognomy.

Allow me to emphasize here that my involvement with Judy in no way flatters me. I didn't love her mind. I didn't love her body, even though I lusted for it. But I did love looking at her beautiful face. Somehow, looking at that beautiful face whetted my appetite for her body. Yes; it was her facial beauty that was primarily responsible for my being attracted to the body that face was attached to. My temptations were base, misguided, perhaps perverse, unquestionably self-destructive, and even (if I may sound ecclesiastical) sinful. I was like a male dog following a bitch in heat. I knew this, and also, I knew that my inclination was given impetus by my curiosity: I wanted to discover just what this sordid journey would feel like as I pursued this woman for no reason other than the one crass motive of hoping to hump her.

I could offer a description of her life, as a kind of overview, but as I have already indicated, there wasn't much to her. So why bother? I need focus only on what counted, at the time, for me. So I will here encapsulate the relationship we (more or less) had by noting that our relating was all discontinuity, discontiguity, interstitiality. On my part it was mostly seduction and waiting and frustration. The rewards

were few, widely spaced, and when they were parsimoniously granted, they then would be hastily expunged from Judy's memory—and hence from our relationship for too long a while. There were copulations, but these were always a conundrum of commotion and control. They were preceded by the meandering minutiae of my crafty but clumsy seductions, then characterized by a shared carnal abandon of colossal proportions bounded by a parsimonious duration defined by Judy, and as soon as that brief consummation came to an end there instantaneously ensued the pretense that nothing had happened—or, if it had, it was not to be talked about, and whatever had transpired certainly must never contain the presumption that this copulation meant the next one would come sooner or more easily, and in fact no presumption was to be made that it would ever be repeated. (One benefit of her conducting herself this way was the fact that she didn't stick around for very long once she got what she wanted. She would peremptorily leave, with neither apology nor propriety. And actually I usually preferred this, since after that kind of copulation, even the allure of her beautiful face did not suffice to dispel, or even camouflage, the repugnance I felt at both her coital pseudo-love and her post-coital amnesia.)

I am quite sure that other men fared no better than me in this regard. Judy spoke openly about her many romantic attachments.

She loved none of these men, was in love with none of them, so they too were deprived of her love, her romantic passion, and any gift of sexual momentum. There was only one man she seemed highly attracted to. He was tall, slender, effeminate in manner, and tremendously strong. With ease he could bend a two-foot length of steel “re-rod” (the type made for reinforcing concrete). I do not remember its diameter, but I do remember that when he handed one to me to bend, I, who consider myself quite strong, could not even flex it. He took great pleasure in thus proving that he was stronger than me, and I admit I felt a little embarrassed, especially since he was so skinny and his body looked so feminine.

Judy was attracted to his (supposed) beauty. To me he didn't look beautiful. He had long scraggly hair, a beard that hung half-way down to his waist, and he would have looked like a hobo were it not for the fact that he always dressed impeccably. In fact, the way he strutted, it often seemed he was a male model on the runway. Occasionally he wore soft cotton in unusual combinations such as a polo shirt with loose slacks held up by fancy suspenders. But usually he dressed like a hippie. In this guise he wore tight-fitting faded jeans, boots with buckles, a fancy shirt, a red bandanna carefully tied at his neck, maybe small flowers in his hair, some beads, and if he was walking toward you he did it one careful slow step at a time, his

head stiff, his rigid arms at his sides, and his body stiff too except for the steps, as if to say, “Here I am in all my beauty. I am walking very slowly so you can drink me in with your eyes.” I do not remember what he did for a living, but he wasn’t rich. It was his physical beauty Judy was attracted to. “Don’t you think he’s beautiful?” she asked me the day after I met him.

“I don’t know. With a beard that long and bushy, how can you tell?”

“But his beard is beautiful too!”

I didn’t think so. I thought it weird and garish. Though still young, his hair already was almost completely gray, and with all that long gray hair on his head hanging down to his shoulders, and that long gray beard hanging down so far off of a smug face affixed to a long body, to me he looked startlingly ugly.

Was I jealous of him? No. But I certainly did not like him. He was bisexual, but, “more homosexual than straight,” as Judy put it, although she might add, smiling, “except when he’s with me.” Was he sexually attracted to Judy? Mildly, I think. I believe he mainly wanted to be with Judy so her beauty would be the bait that would lure other men his way. With Judy as his partner, there had been more than one threesome (with a man) and more than one foursome (with another man and woman). These encounters never lasted beyond the initial

carnal tryst. Judy's beauty had brought them together, this fellow's cunning had arranged the sex, but then the other people would feel they had been duped and would avoid any subsequent contact. There could have been a threesome with me, had I wanted it. Judy brought him out to my place one evening to help resolve an argument they were having about sexual fidelity with one another. We ended up talking about other things. Judy got drunk, then he got drunk, but I didn't. At one point he said, "I think before long we should all have our clothes over there in the corner and be doing something more interesting." I ignored him and quickly brought the evening to a close. Two very drunk people were soon driving off into the night. I didn't notice which one was behind the wheel. Either way, that was an unsafe car that went down the road away from my house. I suspect neither of them were feeling as inebriated as I was feeling relieved. I also suspect that their sexual frustration was soon dissolving into the oblivion of drunken sleep.

When talking about those threesomes or foursomes, Judy would always feel bad about them afterwards and blame everything on the others. I once asked her, "Don't you feel at all responsible for what happened?"

Her reply: "How could I? I just felt so passionate I hardly knew what was going on!"

I thought, “Sure. Until it was over.” But I didn’t say it.

This fellow (I have reasons for not giving his name; it is an unusual one) may have seemed beautiful to other women, but I do not know; I never asked. But like Judy, he was a total hick. He had no education, and he talked like a hillbilly.

Somehow he saw me as being some kind of guru, so on more than one occasion, he arranged matters so he and Judy could come to me and try to resolve their differences. Which of course involved her stinginess with sexual favors.

I foolishly (also voyeuristically) would sit there and listen, mildly commenting and moderating. (Was I at all sexually jealous when they thus talked about their intimacy, filled with strife though it was? No. These meetings were, for me, more opportunities for seeing Judy’s beautiful face. Usually I didn’t even much care about sex with her except that it too gave me one more opportunity for gazing upon that divinely beautiful physiognomy.)

On one occasion, when their arguing became fierce, they quarreled as though I wasn’t even there. “Ah git so ti-yured of how you always aggress me!” Judy said vehemently.

He, with even more vehemence, replied in his hillbilly but passionate drawl, “But ... if you-uh,” (he drooled out the word longly),

“would aggress me-uh,” he stiffened even more, “thin ah wouldn’t have to aggress you!” That last word sounded spat.

I watched them, stunned. It sounded so ugly. A woman with a face that beautiful. A man she thought was beautiful. Talking like that. It was the first time in my life I had ever heard “aggress” spoken as a verb. I am grateful it was the last. (Yes; I know that this way of using “aggress” is grammatically correct. I also know that this way of using it grates upon the ear. “Aggress” used as a verb, whether transitive or intransitive, should be verboten unless that usage is highly formal.)

As matters turned out, Judy’s relationship with this long tall homosexual hippie would outlast her relationship with me, but not by much.

I am alluding to many things, sometimes obliquely and other times directly, but somehow I feel that I am failing to convey what was essential in my relationship with Judy. So I shall attempt a different method by which to describe that conundrum of commotion and control, focusing on the aspect of control: One afternoon, during the Judy months, I was conversing with a friend named Stu (for Stuart) while sitting in his living room. Stu was a man who had bedded many beauties and also had politely pleased many a female who was not quite a beauty. He was a lover of hockey, an astute

intellectual, also a Marxist, very dogmatic in his political views, but too curious to remain dogmatic when encountering views that differed from his own. All this made for goodly company, lively conversation, and a mutual respect that was as gentlemanly as it was enjoyable.

Both of us were inclined toward balancing our intellectual exchanges with some degree of delving into the vagaries of our carnal episodes. For some reason the topic of Judy came up, and I alluded to a recent sexual tryst with her. Stu reacted with surprise. “You mean you’ve had sex with her? She doesn’t seem like the type who’d do anything but lead you on.”

I looked back at him and replied, in a tone that I realized was not nonchalant, “Oh yes. It happened a long time ago.”

Stu merely said, “I must admit I wouldn’t have expected that. She seems like the type who would always play hard to get.”

I thought the matter over. Stu—worldly, one might even say wise in the ways of seducing, bedding, and (even) pleasing women—had been wrong. I could tell it bothered him that he had been so wrong. I also knew, somehow, that he wasn’t entirely wrong.

As is my habit in such situations, I put my head back as if staring at the ceiling, but my eyes were closed. I thought for a minute, then said, “Stu, I’m going to tell you something. I know we both often

take the attitude that ‘Gentlemen don’t tell,’ at least with regard to the details of our sexual encounters with women. But I’m going to tell you something because you deserve to know. But first I’ll say to you that there aren’t half-a-dozen men in the world I would bother saying this to because I’m sure they wouldn’t understand. But you would. So I’ll tell you.”

It was obvious that Stu, though not flattered, appreciated the commendation.

“Also, you deserve to know this, because you are seldom wrong in your judgements about women. Right now you have the impression that you just erred. Well, you didn’t err. You perceived correctly, and you concluded on the basis of those perceptions, but you concluded wrongly. That, however, is understandable because here you are dealing with a unique, weird, and dangerous creature. She constitutes a situation which a prudent man like myself normally would not be involved in. Or mired in.” Now I certainly had his curiosity. “I am far from being a Wittgensteinian. But I do pay attention to how language is used, and I am not so unreflective as to ignore how I myself use language. Did you notice my choice of words in saying that I have had sex with Judy? I said ‘It happened.’ Note both those words. ‘It’ is a word that depersonalizes the act. And ‘happened’ is an odd way of phrasing it. Note I didn’t say, ‘We

became lovers a long time ago,' or, 'Making love is an integral part of our relationship.' I said, 'It happened.' That's an accurate way of putting it, and that way is riddled with implications, while at the same time, barren of content. Let me explain, to the extent something vague and intermittent and yet intense can be put into words." I paused. Stu's attention was quite fixed by now, although he was retaining his gentlemanly demeanor, and politely waiting for me to continue. "She seems to be highly sexed, and yet, she has to be utterly in control of our sex life. As I so specifically said, 'It happened.' But each time it happens, it happens after a long seduction. I give her my attention. I do things to make her life easier. I spend money on her. And still she seems oblivious to me. And then, always—and I mean always—when I am least expecting it, she relents. But no. She never relents to what I am pushing for. Instead, she comes on to me. She wants sex. We'll be sitting in a covered picnic area in the middle of a park, just having finished lunch, maybe talking casually, and suddenly she is all over me, moaning and groaning, always very loud—too loud for my preference—and it happens with ... well, an intensity, a frenzy, even a ferocity. It is very noisy, very quick, she has an orgasm and I've learned to have an orgasm quickly too because the moment she has an orgasm our sex act is over and done with. She is finished with me, wants me out of

her even if I am still amidst the ... shall we say ... act of coitus, and, as I said, I've learned to make sure my arousal matches hers so when she comes I come too. Then it's over. But here is what's crucial, and it's the part I think almost no men would understand, but I think you would—although I hope you've never experienced it first hand. It isn't just the sex that's over. The sexual relationship is over too. I kid you not, Stu, one minute after we have come apart, if I even start to kiss her, she flatly rejects me. She moves away. She puts up barriers. It's as if nothing ever happened! And before it happens again, there will be a long seduction, a long period of waiting, resentment on my part and seeming obliviousness on her part, and then it happens again. She comes driving out to my place in the middle of the afternoon, I answer her knock, and with a big smile on her face she says, "Let's make love." We do, and then it's all over. Or maybe it happens in the hayloft of the barn down behind her house. Or in an unoccupied classroom on campus when it's a weekend and nobody's around. But I emphasize, each time after it happens, it's as though it never happened. The sexual part of the relationship is right back to square one, so to speak, and that's exactly where it remains, without even a small step in the direction of being actually sexual, until she abruptly—one might say instantaneously—initiates, consummates, then abdicates." Stu had a wry look on his face; I was not sure if it

was humor, sympathy, or empathy. I leaned back and stared at the ceiling, again with my eyes closed. “So you see, I felt I owed you an explanation. You deserved an explanation because you were wrong, but you’re a wise man when it comes to women, and you deserved to know you weren’t entirely wrong.” I was looking at him now. “What I mean is, your conclusion—your judgement—was wrong, but your perceptivity was not at all wrong. You thought Judy and I had never had sex. You were wrong. But you thought she wasn’t the type who would ever give in to having sex with me. About that you were mostly right. She has given in to having sex with me when she wants it, but she has never, ever consented to having a sexual relationship with me.”

There was a long pause, and I wasn’t at all sure what Stu was thinking. At last he said, “You’re a strong-willed fellow. I’m surprised you put up with that.”

“I’m surprised too,” I said. “I’ve stuck with her for several reasons. One is obvious. You’ve got to admit it. Whether in person or in the movies or in pictures in magazines, you probably haven’t seen half a dozen women in your life who compare with her in the looks department.” Stu nodded very slightly. I knew this meant he was feeling just a little bit jealous. “Her face is a perfect piece of sculpture made into mortal flesh. She is a true Galatea. Which makes me ...

well, let's forget this analogy before I become more ridiculous than I already am. What I already am involves my damnedable curiosity. I am pursuing her because I truly do wonder at myself, and I am doing this as a philosopher. I am following her scent partly to find out what is going on with me as I do it. Also, I must confess to this, there does persist some small degree of hope in me that the day might come when we actually have a sexual relationship instead of these—What would be the right phrase?—nonsemiotic trysts.”

“I don't think it will ever happen,” Stu said. “She's not the type to ever give up control.”

“I don't think it will either,” I assented. “But when a woman is that beautiful, it's difficult to not hope.”

“To not be blinded by hope.”

“You're probably right.”

Stu had another question on his mind. I knew what it was simply because he hesitated so long before posing it. “We don't usually ask this, of each other, about our women,” he said. “But you alluded to her way of being sexual. So I'll just put it bluntly, though you don't have to answer if you don't want to. Is she good? Sexually?”

“The truth is, she isn't at all. It happens without any preliminaries. In other words, without anything in the way of a

romantic prelude. So when she's in the mood, maybe I'm not in the mood. Or, more accurately, I'm not as much in the mood as I would like to be. Hell, why don't I just use the correct word? It would be nice to have some foreplay. And it would be nice if things were soft and gentle, at least some of the time, instead of so fast and grasping and loud and ... well, it's like having sex with an epileptic who's having a fit. And then, like I said, there's no after-play. None. Certainly no time for savoring what is often called the afterglow. It's just sex. It isn't making love. It isn't even mutual. It's her needs, my quick response, then it's over. It happened and even though it has happened many times—well, several times—it won't happen again until she's good and ready. In other words, when her being horny overcomes her need to be controlling.”

“You make it sound coarse. All animal.”

“Being all animal is fine, once in a while, when it's mixed in with other things at other times—like being gentle, tender, and, in a word, loving. But you're right. With her, sex is all coarse and animal and abrupt, then expunged from the relationship and maybe even from her memory.”

“She isn't in love with you. That's obvious.”

“I know. And it's obvious that I'm in love with her. But not very much. And for all the wrong reasons.”

“Wrong reasons or right reasons, it’ll be over, and you know it.”

“Yes. I know it.”

“The longer it lasts, the more it will hurt.”

“True. But alas,” I thought this through carefully before I said it, “it won’t hurt very much. I may be ‘in love’ with her, but I don’t ‘love’ her, and that’s obvious to me. So yes, it’ll hurt when it’s over, but not for very long.”

“Said like a wise man.”

“Thank you. But you are a perceptive, and experienced, man. That’s why I wanted you to know that you weren’t entirely wrong, even if you were partly wrong. Has what I’ve said made any sense?”

“Sure. I’ve seen women like that. I’ve avoided them. You have too. This time you didn’t. From now on, after she’s out of the picture, you will. What you said makes sense about her. What never made sense was you pursuing her, given how elusive she obviously is. Now I understand.” He laughed. “Not that it actually makes much sense. But falling ‘in love’ and then chasing a beautiful woman just for the sex never does make sense.”

“There’s another factor too. The main one.”

“What’s that?”

“The truth is, there’s something I value in her more than being ‘in love,’ and there’s something I’m chasing more than the chance for sex. I just want to be with her so I can look at her face.”

Again Stu’s nod was minimal. He was not quite succeeding at concealing his jealousy. He had had many gorgeous girlfriends, and he attracted them with debonair ease. There had been one especially, a red-haired beauty named Amy who was truly a celestial creature. Her face had been imbibed by my gaze many a time. But even that young woman did not measure up to Judy.

“I’ve sat in art galleries and looked at a single beautiful painting for over half a day. But Judy’s face is living flesh. It’s about as close to physical perfection as anything you’ll ever see in your life. I’m not going to pass up this opportunity.”

“Until this opportunity passes you up,” he said grimly.

“Yes. That. I am not entirely unrealistic.”

I was fully aware of how the opportunity had already been passing me up during nearly every sexual encounter with Judy. The first time we went to bed she, without a trace of shyness or modesty, asked me to give to her orally. She then lay back, propped herself up on her elbows, and watched with avid interest as I eagerly did my duty. At the loud terminus of her orgasm, she got out of bed, and as it became obvious to me that she was not going to return the deed in

kind, I also became aware that except for our initial kissing, she had not even touched my body as I was giving to her orally.

And yet I put up with that, and did not move in the direction of terminating the relationship. How utterly self-abnegating of me. How sacrificial. How foolish. I had prostrated my pride and was making a mockery of myself even as her selfishness mocked me. Why didn't I abandon that relationship right then?

When Judy and I finally did part, I have to admit that I felt hurt and angry over her leaving me.

But no; she didn't leave me. I left her ("betrayed" her, as she put it to others). I had already nearly reached my limit with her games and constant elusiveness. What brought my patience to an end was an event that was supposed to happen but didn't. I had obtained tickets to a very expensive concert in another city, the plane fare was not cheap, nor was the hotel. Judy was to come with me, and knowing her penchant for breaking commitments at the last minute, I had impressed upon her several times how important it was to me that she come. She had promised that she would not back out. But she did—an hour before we were to leave for the airport. Her backing out was accompanied by an excuse so minor as to be cruel. And now, thinking back, I doubt that the excuse she gave was even the real one. I suspect, instead, she simply needed to avail herself of one

more opportunity for asserting that she was the one in control. She was not going to make herself easily available, even for something as special as what I had planned. It was her way of keeping herself distant, me off center, and herself in command of the relationship.

I felt that her backing out on this major commitment, to a date that might rightly be termed exotic (and definitely expensive!) was an intolerable manifestation of her selfishness—so oblivious she was to the needs and expectations of others, i.e., to my needs and expectations. In this instance she evinced a callousness bordering on malice, and scarcely bothered to disguise it. She hadn't even phoned me to tell me she was backing out. I had called her, and if there was a grim tone in her voice since she knew I would be angry, there also was a trace of bored nonchalance.

I was finished with her. I terminated the relationship right then and there. However, I was aware that, in a way, I had set this date up as a sort of supreme test. I needed to erect a scenario in which I could finally judge whether or not Judy could be counted on. I had planned not only a date, I also had constructed what I knew would be a final test for determining what Judy was, or would never be, capable of by way of committing herself to a romantic relationship with me. In effect I had set up a romantic encounter so elaborate I knew she would be strongly tempted in the direction of following

through with it. But I think I also knew she probably would not follow through because of her usual penchant for distancing herself from me at crucial moments. So I had, quite purposefully I believe, arranged this protracted, expensive, and exotic tryst as a final trial—the acid test—as to whether Judy really was willing to make any serious commitment to a romantic relationship with me. As I had expected, while trying to delude myself into not expecting it, she backed out on our plans. So I backed out of that relationship. Entirely.

I allowed myself to feel hurt for a few weeks. But obviously I was not terribly hurt. I managed, in that hour before heading to the airport, to find a different date. Of course I did not tell this woman (her name was Janet) that she was a second choice; I merely told her I had extra tickets—an extra plane ticket and an extra ticket for the concert. (Plane tickets could easily be transferred back in those days.) Janet—or “Fat Janet” as she was often called behind her back—was most flattered that I would invite her for an excursion so exotic and expensive. In truth, I only called her because I knew she would be available on such short notice. I was “scraping the bottom of the barrel” and I managed to find something in the muck. Shame on me. At least, with Janet, I got what I deserved. Janet was (to put it bluntly

and crassly, for the sake of self-castigating accuracy) the worst lay I ever had. And believe me, there had been some bad ones. Which means Janet had some worthy competition when it came to proving herself the worst of the lot: making of herself such a thorough disappointment for me, and making a ridiculous fool of herself in the process.

(And look at the mistake I just made! Janet wasn't the worst lay I ever had. Judy was! In fact, during those interspersed times when we "sort of" had sex, she was barely a lay at all. And of course, most of the times we were together we didn't even have sex, since it only "happened" when she was in the mood for a hurried, high-decibel discharge of carnal desire. Such a shame, that a beautiful face—or, the memory of a beautiful face—can cause a man to deceive himself so acutely by forgetting how retrograde and superlatively perverse a repugnant wench's sexual failings were!)

However, having duly noted all this, I do emphasize: Given what I was doing, with Janet and to Judy, the conclusion can only be inexorable: Janet was exactly what I deserved. And however gruesome were her faults in bed, I was exactly what she didn't deserve. (Just a few years ago I heard that she, inexplicably, died suddenly of a heart attack. Poor thing. She didn't deserve that either.)

If my hurt over Judy lasted only a few weeks, my anger probably lasted no longer. It is like the ancient myth in which the man befriends a snake, but then is bitten by the snake. He angrily upbraids the snake for having bitten him, but the snake merely replies that he should not be blamed, since, being a snake, he was only following his nature. Such was the case with Judy. I fully knew, already, what her nature was. So why should I have thought that I could be so exalted a human being as to inspire her to better behavior?

Judy did phone me a few times afterwards. The first time she phoned, I did not neglect to tell her that I had found another date for that concert. I was wanting to hurt her and maybe make her feel jealous. Instead, she merely found it funny that a woman would let herself be that “easy.”

I had, however, vowed to myself, and promised to her, that our relationship was over. I kept it that way. She had enough pride she did not come to see me. She knew I had reached my limit and had made a resolve, and she did not want to feel the humiliation of a direct (even hostile) rebuff. So I never saw her again ... romantically.

However, I did see her on two more occasions. I do not well remember how much time had elapsed, but the first situation probably happened about two years later. She called me at my office.

I was busy working, but she had to see me, immediately. She was in the middle of a crisis. So I relented, she came in, and I sat there, formal but not unfriendly, and listened. She was in the midst of a long-standing crisis with a man she was living with, but the main crisis involved her boss and his inappropriate flirtatious behavior. (Which I am sure Judy herself had encouraged.) So we spent a full hour talking about all this, I helped her develop a strategy for dealing with both problems (both men), and she left feeling much better. I was glad she gave no indication that she would want to see me again, but I did not fail to note that she in no way thanked me for taking an hour out of my very busy day and giving it to her free of charge. (Back then my fees as a consultant were \$240 an hour.)

Another period of time—maybe it was three or four years—elapsed before our next encounter. I was in my big pickup, headed for the hardware store, and I pulled into the parking lot. One of those small compact pickups pulled in alongside me. I heard a honk, looked over, and saw Judy waving at me. I got out of my pickup, and she rolled down the window of her vehicle, inviting me to get in. So I did. She said she had seen me driving, half a mile away, and had followed me, presuming my destination would not be far. So we talked for perhaps fifteen minutes. She was friendly, very flirtatious, and her face was just as beautiful as ever. And it was obvious that Judy was

in a horny mood. I was dressed casually—so casually I was scarcely dressed at all. I was wearing “minimalist” shorts, a thin T-shirt, and during our conversation her eyes kept roving over my body with undisguised lasciviousness. She had always been a shameless hussy when she was in the mood for sex, and even though I had encountered this mood too rarely, I had encountered it often enough to recognize it when it was there. Certainly it was there this time, as we talked in the front of her little pickup. She actually, at one point, leaned over and down to stare directly at my crotch while still smiling, for as long as five to ten seconds. I glanced down and saw how clearly—how obviously—my genitals were outlined by my tight shorts. Her eyes, and her mouth too, were scarcely eight inches above me. If we had been in the woods at the edge of a park, or beside a lake behind some rocks, she would have, abruptly and without preliminaries, been all over me, i.e., all over my body. (Like a fly on a turd. If I had let myself be that turd once again.) But this time I was beyond the pale of Judy’s lust. I was married to a woman I was in love with; moreover, I not only was sexually loyal to my wife, I felt thoroughly monogamous toward her. Plus I had lost all that old curiosity which had caused me to want to find out exactly what would happen with my soul were I to pursue a woman simply on the basis of a physical attraction. So I certainly wasn’t in the mood for sex with

Judy. I didn't even want to spend time gazing upon her face, much less, talking to it. So I spent a short while merely being polite, during which time she did virtually all the talking, and never stopped smiling as her eyes kept roving over my body. She made several comments about how trim and fit I looked, and even noted that I still had a body that would put an 18-year-old athlete to shame. In my mid-30's, I appreciated the comment, but also was irritated by it. I knew that if we were at the far end of this parking lot, instead of right in front of the store, I might find myself in the position of surprising her by being so ungentlemanly as to roughly fend her off when she pounced. So I let her do her talking, her looking, her smiling, and then I excused myself on the basis of pressing duties and little time. I exited her pickup and hurried into the hardware store, aware that she did not start her vehicle until I was inside. I knew why. She was watching my body.

I wouldn't be surprised if, furiously and fast, she frigged herself to a frothy orgasm right there in that pickup, so instantaneous and self-centered was her sexual desire when it came upon her (before it then would so immediately depart, abruptly and completely). Yes; I would not be surprised if she did all this before going on her way. Such was the spontaneity, the urgency, and the shamelessness of her sex drive.

Yes; I could have suggested we drive 200 feet to the far end of that parking lot, and sex would have happened. Happened. But I wasn't interested. In fact, I found her boring and disgusting. Her face was still just as beautiful, but looking at that face was not worth spending time with a shallow, shameless, amoral creature. Much less having sex with it.

If the words "Shame on me!" appropriately apply to that initial attraction which took me a few months to expunge from my life, then the words, "Blessings be upon me!" deservedly apply to my soul during this last encounter. I not only was freed of any attraction to Judy, I was thoroughly disgusted. Her talking had not even succeeded in boring me because I found myself thinking my own thoughts and scarcely paying attention to her. I merely nodded my head politely as she talked. I murmured a few irrelevant words, maybe smiled mildly a couple of times, then negotiated the necessary proprieties for a speedy exit. My main thought, as I walked away from her, was that I hoped I would never see her again.

I did, however, remain somewhat curious about her, and I suppose I still am. I have always wondered at her extreme need for control, coupled with such an extreme sex drive. But maybe herein lurks the answer. I call it a "sex drive." In truth I am not sure she even had much of a sex drive. What she had was sexual impulsiveness

which would instantaneously flare up and then just as instantaneously extinguish itself. What she mainly possessed was sexual promiscuity. When one thinks of it in these terms: “sexual promiscuity” and “need for control,” one would tend to wonder if perhaps she was sexually molested at a very young age and the trauma was later being “acted out” in the manifestation of this dualistic personality. Perhaps it bears mention that the last time I was with her before what was to be our big date, Judy said that when she saw me the next time, she was going to tell me a secret she had never told anyone. She did not hint at what it would be. But I have wondered if this secret was to tell me that she had been sexually molested at a young age.

However, although Judy was primarily controlling and only secondarily conniving, she was not entirely lacking in perceptivity. She was probably aware that I was beginning to reach the limits of my patience with her games and her insistence that, after each time sex “happened,” the relationship, in essence, had to start all over again from the beginning. Also, she surely could perceive what was then (and perhaps still is) my most major fault: curiosity. Curiosity can consume me, put me in ridiculous situations (as with Judy), and often in dangerous situations. Certainly it can ensnare me, and cause me to do things I otherwise would not do. What better way to keep

Baumli dangling a little longer than to proffer the bait of a secret that has never been told to anyone else? Likely she reasoned that this would arouse my curiosity, and that my curiosity would perhaps be the most effective tool for keeping me in her company a little while longer. Her ploy might have succeeded, except I already knew Judy well, and while I thought it quite possible that she had a secret she had never told anyone, and while she had said she would tell it to me when next she saw me, I did not believe she actually would. Instead she would likely use this proffered bait to keep me chasing her even longer. I had already become so accustomed to her lies, her irresponsibility, her “forgotten” promises, that I thoroughly believed she would not even tell me the secret when she next saw me. She would claim she had no memory of having made the promise, or didn’t remember what the secret could have been, or (most likely) she would claim she wasn’t yet ready to tell me, and so would merely use this ruse for keeping me in her clutches even longer.

Still, that amazing combination of uninhibited promiscuity and unyielding control—it does make one wonder if these were the result of her having been sexually molested at an early age. Although now that I have been wounded by her, have easily and thoroughly recovered from those wounds, and have matured, I do not now much care. (Which may be callous of me, but I don’t care about that either.)

Besides, there is another possibility which, to me, makes more sense. I think it possible that Judy's combined need to be so sexually promiscuous, and her need to be sexually controlling, may simply have been a reactive and learned behavior. She, at a young age, likely possessed a normal sexual personality and a strong sex drive (which is normal too). Also, her virtually unparalleled beauty likely attracted many, many people to her. When beauty is that seemingly empyrean, the attraction is strong and people move in the direction of that beauty with too few inhibitions, too little propriety, and too much avarice. In short, I suspect that from a very young age Judy was overwhelmed with inappropriate sexual attentions, directed toward her by boys her own age and probably by much older men too. I suspect these attentions often felt like an avalanche. Doubtless, in the course of dealing with all this attention—much of it inappropriate and sometimes even manifested in undisguised lewd behavior—Judy learned many techniques, which she became reflexively adept at, for fending off this kind of attention. But since she liked and even needed this attention for her own sexual cravings, she also learned and used many techniques for keeping that attention at a comfortable distance, i.e., keeping it under her control.

Stated in a different way: When someone is that beautiful, they need to learn ways of keeping the clamoring hordes at bay. Judy had

learned how to do all this, while also becoming very adept at parceling out a few sexual favors at a rate which would keep men both sexually interested and sexually frustrated, i.e., controlled. Judy succeeded in doing all this by keeping herself within these men's olfactory range—giving them only a whiff of what they actually wanted. In her vanity she did not want to drive the hordes completely away; instead, using those practices learned while young, she remained adept at keeping these men at a safe distance—but within plucking range so that if a moment arose when her libido bestirred itself, she could quickly and deftly satisfy her sexual desires, then instantaneously depart these men's company. Thence these men lusted for her all the more ... until they tired of playing by her rules and went away. In the course of all these games, I am sure Judy's normal sexual personality and normal sex drive got bent askew, repressed, and uglily malformed.

There also is a third possibility: Maybe it is the case that, in terms of her innate character, Judy was such a moral low-life that she simply liked using every ploy she could for the sake of frustrating, controlling, and hurting other people. She was fully aware of how beautiful she was. I had well learned that she was her prime admirer. Given the paucity of her moral character, she did not at all use her great beauty for good ends—for the benefit of other people. She did

not choose to become a goodwill ambassador for a charitable organization. She was too selfish for that. She was beautiful, sure of her beauty, and her vanity was so colossal as to correctly be called arrogance. She put herself on a pedestal above everybody else. However, like everybody else, she had her sexual feelings—her sexual needs. She needed other people for sexual pleasure, but she also needed to arrogantly assert her supremacy. So she very simply conducted herself so that she managed to fulfill her sexual needs while very carefully making sure no one else got more than a morsel of what they wanted her to give. She would dole out only as much sex, to another person, as was necessary for getting her own pleasure and she would give absolutely nothing more. People could gaze all they wanted; this flattered her and added to her arrogance. But they could not partake, except when she momentarily consented on her own behalf, because giving of herself—giving her sexuality—pricked her pride. She could not let herself be that available, that generous, that conjoined to anybody. Put simply: She knew she was supremely beautiful, she was arrogant about this, so she satisfied her sexual needs by relating sexually with other people only to the extent it would in no way compromise her arrogance—her sense of superiority.

So which of the above three explanations of Judy's two-fold manifestation of sexual promiscuity and sexual control is the most likely candidate? Judy's beauty gave her a confidence which might cause a person, at first encounter, to think she had an impressive intellect. But interacting with her would soon make it impossible to overlook the fact that Judy was emotionally shallow, startlingly unintelligent, and very uneducated. Given these characteristics, I think it likely that the simplest of the above explanations would explain that odd and unpleasant duality of her sexual personality.

But which of the three is actually the simplest? If, in my usual penchant for thick and wordy prose, I set forth the above three explanations as though they are complex, actually they all are quite simple: Judy was sexually promiscuous and controlling because: a) she was sexually molested as a child, b) she was a gorgeous little girl who would soon have to learn how to get sex while keeping her admirers at bay, c) she was a moral low-life who was so vain about her beauty she gave only enough sex to get the sex she herself needed.

All of these explanations are simple, any of them could suffice to explain Judy, but at this late stage in my life I do not much care which of them applies. (Even Baumli's curiosity sometimes has its limits.) The fact is, whether Judy's soul was damaged by someone

else, or shaped askew by herself, the fact remains that it was an ugly soul and I should have stayed away.

Above I stated that I did not ever see her again. Actually I did see her once more, but this time it was indirectly. Many, many years after that encounter in the hardware store's parking lot, I had a pictorial encounter with Judy. Although I had moved many times, and by now lived far away from where my last encounter with Judy had taken place, one day in my mail a thick envelope arrived with her name and return address on it. She now lived in a different locale too, but obviously (given the services of the Internet and the uniqueness of my name), she had easily located my address. In that fat envelope there was no letter, but there were many photos. They were just like the ones she had always taken: The subject would be posed too far away, with no attempt on her part to frame the subject well, or even get any detail. Not all the pictures in that envelope, however, were taken by Judy, although whoever took the others exercised her same lack of technique with the camera. In her awkward writing style, Judy had printed the names of the various people in the pictures on the back, and she described how they were related to her. I would spy that she had two daughters. Were they by a husband? I doubt it. Most of these pictures showed Judy attending the wedding of one of the daughters. At this time Judy looked like she would have been in her

mid-50's. (It is telling that I do not remember her age, during the time she and I were "together," with much degree of close approximation.) The bridal daughter who was there (Were there other siblings not in the pictures?), was sporting a white gown and a new husband (whose looks matched hers). The bride was the central attraction; the other daughter stood off to the side. A close inspection of the pictures (and their tiny subjects) coerced a conclusion I would not have anticipated; namely, although I would have preferred to not judge their merits or demerits in the physical realm, it was obvious that Judy's get got not one iota of the plenitude of physiognomical blessings she herself was so unjustly gifted with during her youth. (So unjustly apportioned, these gifts were, as to constitute an almost grotesque irony.) The fact that her two daughters did not receive these gifts is a small matter if they also failed to inherit her intellectual and moral deficits. (Putting all this in a simpler way: I merely hope they turned out to be nice people.) Judy had not been a nice person, and I doubt she was ever motivated to undergo any grand spiritual awakening or conversion.

(It just now occurs to me that perhaps the reason those two daughters did not inherit Judy's good looks, in fact did not even resemble her, is because she adopted them. As already noted, Judy was her most enthusiastic admirer. I doubt that her vanity would ever

have allowed her to risk getting stretch marks on her belly from having biological children. So yes. I think she adopted those two daughters. Of course, come to think of it, being able to adopt children would have been difficult for a single woman to bring off. Perhaps they were the offspring of a dead relative? Or perhaps she got them from an orphanage? But I suppose it isn't impossible that an outright adoption could have taken place. Given her good looks, and her lack of scruples when it came to manipulating men, Judy might have succeeded in accomplishing this feat by leading the right man on when traversing the legal difficulties and all those bureaucratic hurdles.)

As stated, there was no accompanying letter. There may have been a calculated and clandestine reason for this, but I did not really care to ponder the matter. However, I did wonder why she would have gone to the trouble of sending me the pictures.

Although I am not sure, I can guess: I suspect Judy was going through a kind of crisis over her fading looks. Perhaps she had small hopes that I was no longer married, and would again be interested in her. More likely, though, she was doing what I have witnessed many beautiful women do when they know they are losing their beauty. She was attempting to transform her image of herself from that of the femme fatale into the exalted female role of venerable mother. And

even though she had never loved me, or been in love with me, I do believe (with the advantageous perspective of obscure hindsight) that she found my intellect impressive, my athletic body very attractive, and even though she had no qualms about disappointing or hurting or angering me, she did relish my being attracted to her. Knowing that such an attraction, at this stage in her life, would not be likely even if I were no longer tethered by marriage, she wanted, in effect, to say with these pictures: “See? Maybe I am not the beauty I once was, but I succeeded in becoming a mother!”

In those pictures, if Judy’s beauty was slightly attenuated by the years, and if her body was showing a hint (only a hint) of having become plump, she still looked very attractive. I am sure she still had a line of eager dogs trotting close behind her. I am sure, too, that for several of them it sometimes happened (sic) that she now and then stopped and briefly raised her tail. Revolting, it is, to now remember this Judy of yore.

And disgusting, it is, to contemplate all this. I am most disgusted by myself, because I, at one time, was one of those eager dogs following her. It is even more disgusting to realize how I not only was eager, I also was so degraded—so slovenly of soul—as to be that patient and persistent.

Yes. Baumli the scholar, the artistic creator, the workaholic, squandered time, money, and soul, all for the sake of chasing a piece of cold pussy that could flare hot—spontaneously combust—then instantaneously turn cold as raw liver on ice. Although, put in a better light, he squandered himself primarily because he was chasing the opportunity to spend time beholding that beautiful face which was attached to the body that was attached to that cold pussy.

As for those pictures Judy sent: I kept them for a few days, and then went to the long-unexamined file of our correspondence, which mainly consisted of pictures of her. Looking at those old pictures I thought to myself, “She truly was a great beauty! But now? A boring beauty.”

I threw the entire mess away. I did not want any pictures of her in my house, either old ones or more recent ones.

So now they are gone, and I do not regret having gotten rid of them. I truly felt no desire to keep any reminder of a beautiful face which I had, years before, used as a means for perverting my own soul. Besides, I do not need pictures. Memory is enough. I contemplated her beauty many an hour, and then I reached a point where I did not want to contemplate it because this meant being in the presence of her entire personality. So I contemplated her beauty long ago, and sometimes, in my memory, I contemplate that same

beauty of yore. But not often, and seldom with pleasure. (It warrants mention here that Judy was always supplying me with new pictures that had been taken of her. Even though she was her alpha admirer, she made sure, whenever she could, to whet the appetite of anyone else who admired her beauty. Especially if they had a camera.)

I will not pretend that I have left my contemplative practice behind. But now I have the prudence to take myself to more beautiful and available aesthetic forms: paintings by Botticelli or Rubens, photographs by Stieglitz or Lee Miller, the face of the woman I know as my wife (whose beauty entirely eclipses that beauty Judy so confidently possessed). I wonder if my wife would forgive me my past, if she fully knew how sordid so much of it was.

For now, and for many years previous to now, I can judge who I have become against what I once was. And now I can truthfully say: Blessings be upon me! I salvaged my body, my dignity, even (I would later learn) my reputation. Those trysts with Judy were close encounters with hell. I ascended from that inferno, and even though I felt hurt and angry, my spirituality was intact. After a short while, I could even say that I was unscathed.

According to the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, Christ Himself descended into hell, but then, on the third day, He arose up out of hell and ascended into heaven. I have not ascended into

heaven, I do not even know if there is a heaven, and do not know if I would be worthy of ascending to that realm if indeed it exists. But meanwhile I am content with occupying this earthly realm, while sometimes troubling myself with the small task of giving thanks for the fact that I came to my senses, and instead of being attracted to Judy's face was repelled by her soul.

(Written: September 20 to September 28, 2013.)

(Posted: Dec. 31, 2015.)

It warrants being noted that the above piece is the sort of thing I usually would write in only a day or two. However, I ended up spending no fewer than nine days writing it, attending to this gruesome piece every day, i.e., every night, for such a lengthy portion of my life! Why did this task take me so long? Because I found it unpleasant, disgusting, revolting. I started writing it and found that really I did not want to continue. In an unexpected way it was sullyng my soul all over again, unsettling me emotionally, making me again feel like a wastrel with my emotional and moral faculties. So why did I go ahead and finish it? I think that sometimes I need to indulge my masochistic proclivities, miniscule though they be. Also I need to remind myself, and humbly confess to others who know me, how stupid, how emotionally untethered, and how morally bereft my own interior can sometimes be. But even these self-deprecating motives did not inspire me to work as hard as I should have at improving this piece. I applied to it my usual hours of polishing and proofing, but this task felt so onerous that I procrastinated working on it, or when I did work on it I worked slowly. Occasionally I even allowed myself to forget about it for a while. Look

at how much time has elapsed between when I wrote this piece and at last have finally been able to go ahead with making it public. I am tempted to believe that I should have abandoned this tale the moment it became disconcerting and oppressive. Or, better yet, I suppose I should never have begun it. (Of course, a stern moral judgement might assert itself here: that now the best choice would be to abandon it, not publish it, discard it forever. But since I am too vain about the depths of my baseness to follow a twinge of conscience, I here present this account to the public, so they may judge me with the sneering execrations I well deserve.)