

-SIXTY-FOUR-



Stewart finishes a sandwich. He licks a last smidgen of mustard sauce from the polystyrene tray, burps and drags a sleeve across his greasy mouth. He leans back, waiting for Jordan's attention. His demeanor is that of the teacher's pet in the front row of a class, eager to please yet harboring an undercurrent of defiance.

Cheryl starts the camera with a *ping* that resonates in the hushed atmosphere. The room turns from a cafeteria back into a theater of investigation once more, and the suspect, a willing thespian in the drama he aim to direct.

Jordan, expecting David to kick off the inquisition with a pertinent question, is met with a surprising twist. Instead, he spurs her on with a simple nod. It's a silent acknowledgment that the moment has arrived; the spotlight is hers.

Is death this woman's mate?

"What do you want to tell me today?"

"And you wanted to talk about when I was a boy."

"Yes. Tell me about your step-parents. Were they kind to you?"

"Daddy was okay. And Petronella punished me a lot."

"Why did she punish you?"

"And she was angry for what happened at school. She locked me up in the cupboard when I walked in my sleep."

"How old were you then?"

“I think six, seven. And when I pissed in my bed- She put me in baths of very cold water.” Jordan takes down notes as he speaks.

Lock in small spaces. Isolated. Bed-wetter.

“What did your father say?”

“He tried and then he died. And then she put me in Protea Hill.”

“Protea Hill reformatory?”

“And because I bit the teacher,” Steward adds.

“I am sorry about your father, Stewart. Why did you bite the teacher?”

“Other boys bullied and mocked me, so, and then I kicked one in the balls. And she came and hit me. And I bit the fucking bitch! On her tits,” he chuckles, “and on her arms and legs. And the principal grabbed my hair and he and beat me with a cane in front of everybody.”

“What did your mother do?”

“Petronella? Nothing. She tied my hands to the bed and beat me till I pissed and shat myself. She said I must stop biting. And she locked me in my room and I said to myself that I would be my own mother and father and sister and auntie and fuck God and fuck everybody!” Stewart screams, putting everyone on edge.

Silence.

Jordan is the first to speak again. “Tell me about the reformatory.”

“And it's not a reform school,” Stewart laughs, “and it is a fucking prison for children and some big kids were there because they stabbed their mothers and so there are gangs and big boys that have been to prison for long before they go there. And they look at you, and you know-.” He shakes

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his head violently. “And the teachers let the older boys lock us up at night so that we can’t run away. But then, when it was dark and then those- And you hear them, the watchers, the torturers, sneaking in,- but you can’t see; it’s too dark and they start choosing a young boy to rape and you can hear how they hold him and how they all fuck him. You can hear how they slap against him and they laugh. Sometimes it is quick, and sometimes it takes a long time and we can’t sleep when they take long. And the next day that boy cries all day at school and the teacher smacks him for crying and we can say nothing to him. And then sometimes, they come for me and take my clothes off, and if you fight, they hit you, and then those big boys hold me down, and then they rape me, and when one cums on you, the next boy fuck you until they all cum. And you smell like cum all night. And the next day you are crying- And nobody can say nothing to you.”

It’s moments like these that Jordan feels the weight of her own inadequacy, a profound sense of powerlessness in the face of the twisted depravity that lies within the human form. She grapples with the harsh truth that there are depths of darkness she may never fully comprehend. It takes a moment- a pregnant pause in the flow of time, for her to summon the strength to respond.

“Why didn’t you report it?”

“You can’t snitch. Fuck, you will be knifed! Or they say you fell in the shower. You just get fucked when it’s your turn. And you get used to it until new boys come in. And then even at that church. The deacon from Mom’s church, and he saw me smoking marijuana. And he took me to his house. And he told me to lie over his table. I

thought he was going to hit me. And he put his dry cock in me. He fucks a lot of boys, that man of God.”

Jordan opens her mouth, but she isn't able to utter a sound. The synapses between the mind and the voice have lost connection. She feels the weight of responsibility pressing down on her shoulders. The echoes of the depravity she is witnessing, reverberates in her mind, creating a malevolent crescendo that lingers.

“But I have learned from my beatings,” Stewart continues, “and the next time he wanted to rape me, I pissed myself and shit on his cock. And didn't want to touch me again.”

The room, suffused with an unsettling silence, becomes a suffocating shroud. Eventually, David asks, “Do you become violent when you smoke marijuana?”

“With Mandrax in- And I am going to stop that, and that's why I hurt that boy for fucking.”

“How do you hurt them?” David asks.

Jordan finds her voice. “Wait, which boy are you talking about?”

A dire shadow draws across Stewart's hardwood eyes. Compelled by a force beyond his control, his movements become deliberate, each gesture a calculated movement. He leans back.

“That boy. I fucked him before you came to take me from the boat.”

“You had sex with the boy on that same morning? Is his name Benjamin?”

Stewart becomes both storyteller and character, navigating the twisted corridors of his own creation. “I see a lot of them at night- dead, and I can see how they go to God. I

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put my hands or something around the neck, and then I squeeze harder and harder, and then I fuck until they make that jelly bean- effect. And that makes me cum.” Stewart rubs over his groin.

Her stomach churns, still, Jordan gives nothing away.

“Jelly bean effect?”

“When their eyes open up and their lips are blue- How can I say it? When we fuck. It’s when I squeeze and their tongues swell up and their lips and eyes bulge and pop like jelly beans.”

Stewart’s hand goes into his pocket, and he rubs himself. He is detached from his environment. It’s like he’s seeing straight through Jordan. “And I wait for their jelly beans, and that makes me cum, a lot-”

Stewart jumps up. “And I need to go to piss now!” A police officer removes him.

The air remains thick with a palpable revolt. Jordan’s breath comes in ragged gasps, each inhale a struggle against the invisible weight pressing down on her chest. Her heartbeat echoes in her ears, a rapid drumming that threatens to drown out reason.

She grips the sides of her chair, her knuckles turning white as she fights to maintain control. A sharp pang shoots through her temple, a searing pain that makes her wince. Fear courses through her veins like wildfire. Panic.

Is it a stroke?

Jordan’s head drops slowly, almost involuntarily, as if the weight of the world is pulling her down. In a sudden burst of adrenaline, Jordan jerks her head up, her eyes wide with determination.

With a sharp inhale, she pushes herself away from the

Johnny Taute

desk, the chair scraping against the floor as she rises.
The office door beckons like a lifeline, an escape route
from the impending doom.

Fuck the Mariner!

Jordan storms out, her hurried footsteps echoing in the
corridor.