

~~I AM NO EXPERT ON THESE MATTERS.~~

EVERYONE IS AN AMATEUR WHEN IT  
COMES TO THEMSELVES.

## MUDDY LOVE

TODAY I GAVE DAISY FINGER-PAINTS, and she was so happy for a little while, it was as if we were newlyweds and had perfect sex and angels watched and bound us into one beautiful thing with their loving vision. I let her do whatever she wanted with the paints, knowing full well she would make a mess of the place. Just let her run through the fields of our house after imaginary butterflies, tripping like that kid in the start of *Little House on the Prairie*. Let me fall into an untroubled rest for like five minutes while I wait for her to play with me.

Today I looked at our wedding picture over the dresser. We were so young then—and that was just last year! Two people dressed up like the figures on top of a cake. Love playing by the rules. A picture of healthy affection.

Except now my head has been replaced with green smudgy thumbprints.

I have a new Daisy but she has a new Eberhardt as well. She is less inhibited now than ever before; she goes about the house in the nude, and fingers herself whenever she feels like it: when I feed her; when she wakes up; in the bath, while eating a bar of soap.

She puts everything in her sexy mouth. She is so oral now, like she never, ever was. Like every man I used to long for some great

deepthroat, but like many wives Daisy was such a missionary girl. Now I can't get her to take anything from her mouth. The new Eberhardt hides pencils so she doesn't get lead poisoning; I stow my cigarettes in shoe-boxes in the closet so she doesn't eat my Marlboros. Do you know how hard it is keeping toxic household products and sharp objects away from a five foot nine inch woman? Did I mention that she licks her tits and feet while sitting on the toilet?

But I won't let her put *me* in her mouth. God knows I can't stop thinking about it, but it would be so wrong. At another time, it was my fantasy. At another time I could say "I love you" afterwards and we'd lie there together like two children watched over by angels. Now I must forget her pussy and her mouth and the scent of sweat that has been fucked right out of its skin.

Why?

Now I'm a parent.



That stupid doctor said our baby was dead.

He was not a person with feelings, he was a white coat and gray hair and glasses that spoke. He told me our girl was born dead, and Daisy was in a coma. I waited at the hospital in weeks of daze, not eating or sleeping, and needing some sort of pills. All I can remember with clarity was a vending machine in the waiting area that was flat out of cupcakes the whole time. I kept waiting for them to put cupcakes in it so I could eat—so much future had been taken away from us. We had bought a crib, toys and mobiles, and a library of parenting books. But we weren't parents now. We were merely a married couple.

When she came out of unconsciousness, she managed a few last words as my loving wife.

"Eb," she said, "take care of me."

Of course I would. I took her home and laid her in bed. She slept deeply. I did not. Early in the morning she awoke bawling like an infant.

I turned on my night-table lamp and her face was cotton candy pink. She cried so hard she almost couldn't breathe. Each breath was like a solid being coughed up.

She had shit the bed.

I used to imagine Daisy and I had shared everything with each other. The sight of that muddy turd intruding on our intimacy stunned me and for a moment I could not think. It was the size of a large croissant and glistened like an internal organ. It smelled like it needed to be disinfected. I was half-asleep and felt I needed to do something for it. It seemed to belong there in the bed with us, an extension of our familial unity. I almost *recognized* it. I nearly called its name.

I ran and got a glass of water, but Daisy thrashed around when I tried to make her drink. The water spilled over us and the mattress. I begged her to tell me what was wrong. Soon I was sobbing, too. Her fit grew worse and she struck me across the face with a reckless fist. I stood by the foot of our bed crying and wet and waited for her to stop.

She began to breathe more evenly and I managed to carry her to the sofa; I undressed her and got her into a new nightgown. Then I threw the sheets in the wash and changed them too.

Changing the sheets was like changing her all over again and it was a nightmare of soiling and washing and replacing, and somewhere through this fevered ritual ran love.

When she woke on the sofa she could not speak my name any longer.

#C!

I couldn't figure out what had happened, so I called a professional.

We had known Dr. Slink for years. He was a friend of Daisy's father and she had gone to him since she was a little girl. I thought him a nice grandfatherly man, but he looked at Daisy with an X-ray insinuation, as though he knew too well the moon shaped beauty-mark under her left breast. Despite these concerns, I felt it would be better for a friend of the family to see her in this horrify-

ing state. I feared another doctor might want her committed—and me too, for not wanting Daisy to ever leave my sight.

He looked surprised when I told him she was in the baby's room.

“Oh, don't worry, I'm not in any denial. It's just that she seems to keep herself most occupied in there,” I told him.

“Of course, Eberhardt,” he said politely, eyeing me like I was nuts.

He preceded me into our little girl's room. I heard his bag drop.

My wife wore nothing but adult diapers, and sat among a pile of stuffed animals. She chewed on some strands of her long brown hair. She played with a boardgame that involved pulling a string to set a ridiculous chain of events in motion:

A small plastic gorilla slid on a track, knocked over a pail, from which came a fish, that jumped along a wire into a cup, that tipped over and set a bowling ball rolling into a bunch of cans which then fell over. At the end of this sequence, the gorilla slid down the track again and set it going once more.

This seemed to be Daisy's favorite toy and she had spent hours with it. Noticing our presence, she cast the toy aside and started to crawl towards us on all fours, cooing and drooling on the floor. Her breasts swayed heavily against the rug and nipples popped out of smooth pink aureoles.

I saw Slink was shaken and offered to get him a drink.

“Scotch,” he said.

All I had was gin. He slurped it down without complaint.

Daisy went over to his open bag to investigate the stethoscope. I told Dr. Slink the little I could think to tell and his wizened head nodded like a cork attached by a spring to his neck.

That was it for the first visit.

Slink came back each week to check on Daisy. He said he had no conjectures as of yet, although the postpartum coma must have had something to do with her condition. This much I knew myself. But it helped to have another person to talk to.

One day I had left Slink with Daisy in the baby's room, where

I now kept her as much as possible. I was in the kitchen, and heard a slight moan. Thinking Daisy was in pain, I found her instead on her knees in front of the doctor, sucking and biting his balls. His old tongue flicked the air as though joining her. He tried not to wheeze and failed as he lost control in her face.

God forgive me, but my first thought was I wished I was getting a sloppy blowjob from my naked wife in the full pornographic light of day. My next thought was to grab Slink from behind and smash his head into the wall.

Even after he hit the floor, with the blood running down his face from the top of his head, Daisy played with his hairless testicles. I had to drag her away crying and lock her in the bathroom. She pounded on the door and wailed and the same racket went on inside my skull.

Slink was dead.

I set to work in the basement, removed the floorboards and dug a hole beneath. I imagined I dug an escape route; I was tunneling away from my difficult love. But when I threw Slink and his bag down with a dull thud, there was no mistaking it for anything but a grave.

I procured some quicklime and water, covered the body with it, threw the dirt back and returned the floorboards. It took a long time, days maybe, I can't remember.



I opened the door to the bathroom and Daisy looked up at me so innocently, I crumpled to the floor in a heap and began sobbing. She twirled my hair with her fingers and pulled on it. Why is there such a special sweetness when those dead cells called hair are touched by the living hand of your love? Even the pain caused by her tugging on it gave me a warmth I missed since the hospital. I wanted to take care of her. With a towel I wiped Slink from her face, and kissed the cheeks that were wet from her bout of frustration, and she smiled and drooled, and snot ran into her mouth. My heart exploded and the hot particles spread through my whole

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body, so I touched her with my heart and kissed her with my heart and when I hugged her tight my heart was trying to wrap her up inside where I could never lose her.

Then I felt my penis swell with heat. I saw Daisy again on her knees before Dr. Slink. I ran from the room. The dick is rarely warmed by the heart.

#C!

Today I will set a new chain of events into motion. Never trust the so-called "professionals" like the late Dr. Slink.

I bought non-toxic finger-paints to distract her from my project. She just learned to walk two weeks ago and now she's stumbling around the house, eyes shining with this new joy. Her hard nipples are purple and green and her face is a thousand colors. She looks like some exotic lost-world tribal virgin princess and I want to fuck her mother's body more badly than ever before.

But I am going to take care of her.

While she knocks over our family photographs in the living room, while Dr. Slink sleeps forever in quicklime, I have transformed myself into a little game.

The stock of a loaded shotgun is attached to the baseboard of the bed by a clamp. A string is tied around the trigger. The string hangs loosely down from the trigger to my flaccid penis. If my penis should become engorged with desire the string will grow taut. It is the sort of string that will start a plastic gorilla sliding down a track to knock over a pail.

They will discover only bodies. Everything else is love, and no one can find that.

It finds you.

THERE IS ALWAYS MADNESS  
IN THE HOUSE OF LOVE  
BUT LOVE IN THE HOUSE  
OF MADNESS IS A RARE VISITOR -