

Interhabitrapment

by Tod Foley

(PAIN!)

Cassandra gritted and bore, relaxed; squeezed without using her body, encircling the pain, putting it at a distance.

(good)

(so far)

(shut up)

That small amount of backtalk had cost her her control; the pain returned, on the left side this time, every bit as deep.

(NNG!)

(so sexy... so... sssss... sssss...)

(what's ha-)

(AAH!)

Were the pains and the arousal REALLY interlinked?

(God, no... please...)

(HUH!)

A spasm shocked her from somewhere on her right. Her arm (*yes, my right one*) lept into peripheral view and crashed beside her. Her tensed abdomen shivered, tightened as an aftershock rumbled through her (*...where?*); finally relaxed.

(breathe)

(breathe)

(breathe)

"I've got to control it. I've GOT to conTROL it!"

She answered her unvoiced question: "Just shut up and mind your own..." - and then, "Oh god, I'm really slipping..."

She looked down at herself, laughed; stopped suddenly, still.

(God?)

(oh God?)

(need you ask?)

(am I...)

(need you ask?)

THAT stopped her.

Only residual trembling remained. She stood - had forgotten she couldn't - it worked. Whatever it was that had her in its grasp (*but no, I have IT in MINE*), it was bored, or sated. She walked across the darkening room; her wide eyes wandered, seeing nothing. What had she been doing when it started?

(what?)

A glimmer on the cover of a book; her body moved toward it. "Yes. Keep the mind occupied. That's what I n-want . . ."

(really?)

She snapped her fingers to distract her echoing (*need-want*) and seized the book with an abrupt motion that startled her, distantly. A few automatic maneuvers carried her back to the bed; cool air touched her moistened skin, standing tiny hairs on end.

Keeping her thoughts very still until she prepared what seemed like a comfortable spot, she nestled down with knees pulled up to breasts. She started to rock herself calm.

(MMM.)

(mmm.)

(MMM.)

(mmm.)

She flipped through the pages of the book, trying to remember where she had left off, squinting to adjust her vision. She glanced at the light switch beside the door, considered it, looked almost instantly down again. There was a dull throb in her (*where?*) core. She rallied her attention, coming back to the printed page.

(what's that?)

(oh yes - CHAPTER IX)

Sentences whispred into her head, their meanings quickly dissolving. She pictured them quaking, losing their tails (*or their heads?*) one word at a time.

(i want a cigarette)

(there aren't any more)

(shit)

This wasn't working.

(what is this?)

(he can't do this to me. i can't)

(i'm the one doing this)

(I'M the one doing this)

(why would i do this to myself?)

(good question)

THAT stopped her, too.

In time she regained herself and gave the matter some rational thought. She decided to chalk it up to some twist of her own guilty conscience. This line of reasoning felt strangely reassuring, perhaps because of the ultimate underlying sense of self-responsibility it engendered; if she had brought this all on, then ostensibly she could undo it, too.

(okay, good...)

But she could not resist taunting herself.

(but if you did this, you did it for a reason)

(we all have our reasons)

(shut up)

In her mind she was smoking a cigarette, lazily lifting it, toying with it.

(maybe you're just crazy, and nothing really happened)

(i'm tired)

She raised the phantom cigarette to her lips.

(nothing wrong with crazy)

(sanity's a social term)

(that's what he'd say)

(i've served my term)

(ha)

Her fingers relaxed, loosing the page. Sheaves fluttered back to form. She closed her eyes and half-rolled back, feeling warm.

(cigarette...)

(making me sleepy...)

Without opening her eyes, she fought, she thought, sleep off.

(he hates me for what i've done to him)

(what did i do?)

(i helped him)

(or did you help yourself?)

She pictured him stretched out beside her, a scene from the recent past. His broad chest rose in peaceful preparation, and his arms spread slowly, opening wide. "Help yourself," he smiled - his eyes smiled. And she had.

(help yourself...)

(physician,)

She turned to rub her cheek against the pillow, enjoying the cool smoothness of it. She lifted her hair away from her neck absently, and calmly laid her arm down again. A warm, comfortable feeling was timidly exploring her insides, cautiously spreading throughout. She centered on it delicately, a tiny spark within her, as her skin flushed and she responded with a small murmuring sound of which she was unaware. She pictured him again and pushed her leg out, turning onto her back. A soft breeze lifted the gauze curtains and caressed her quietly.

(MMM.)

(mmm.)

(MMM.)

(mmm.)

* * *

*Adrift within an dream of bubbles, Cassie found a seed.
It was the only one of its kind, and she knew it would be hers.
Cassie loved it, and felt its love returning, unconditional.
The seed grew in her hands, under her wondering gaze.
Cassandra grew up and forgot all of this.
The seed was not real.
That was also forgotten.*

* * *

(PAIN!)

Her body broke into awakesness, hot and sticking to the sheets. Somewhere deep inside her, muscles half-tensed in defense.

(ohnonoitsback)

"Hh..."

(noitsback)

"Ungh!"

(no)

"Hh..."

(GOT to!)

"AAH!"

(Con...TROL...!)

WHERE IS IT, DAMMIT WHERE IS IT?

It was a hole within her, in the center of her being.

It was a growing emptiness nibbling her to a vacuum, piece by infinitesimal piece.

It was so far inside, it was nothing really physical at all.

And it wanted more.

It was nothing physical at all and it wanted more...

THERE!

(breathe.)

Cassandra gritted and bore, relaxed; squeezed without using her body, encircling the pain, putting it at a distance, breathing hard.

(Now I Build My Wall Around You)

(Now I Build My Wall Around You)

(Now I Build My Wall -)

But this feeling was not quite pain, either, and a subtle but familiar sensation soon crept up her delicate center. She could not resist teasing herself, toying with the intruder, exploring the barest tingling touches of its boundaries...

(feel it...)

(nothing really physical at all...)

(Oh... Oh...)

She was starting to slip, closing her eyes, drifting into the soft tingling, building...

(gently... oh...)

(so... sss... so... sss...)

(MMM.)

(mmm.)

She turned at the waist, only half intending it. Beads of sweat trickled down her skin, sticky, tickling. She pictured his face, his mouth. Her body quivered as she tensed her strong legs, raising her hips up off the mattress, thighs rigid, trembling. Her hips began describing the subtlest of circles, barely physical at all... Tears welled in her eyes and rolled freely down her face, wetting the pillow beneath her as the intensity of her motions mounted and a central spasm hiked her hips even higher... For a moment she forgot that she was resisting, and then it had her again.

(NGAAAH!)

It burst into her being, neurons exploding in sequences, firing blasts of scrambled data through every nerve, ganglion, synapse - it was lightning and it shot up the center of her soul, it was the devourer, held gently, astrally, within delicate folds - she wrapped herself around it mystically, coming dangerously close, caressing her own tender inner walls on the tongues of its flames - it was growing; it was GROWING - she expanded her walls, barely physical at all, fluttering upon the flames inside, coaxing it, riding it, balancing...

a razor's edge...

shooting past...

abandon...

falling...

falling...

his face...

his mouth...

* * *

It's dark here, and cool.

He rolls to one side and pushes the sheets down, keeping his eyes closed. He stretches

his right arm out, feeling the muscles awaken, flexes his hand; open, shut, open, shut. His head hurts, and his thoughts are chaotic, fuzzy. He considers opening his eyes, discards the idea; he needs more sleep.

A breeze softly stirs the room. He rolls over on his back and lets his tired thoughts guide him: *Comfort... Cassie... oh, damn...*

Inside, the familiar aching divide is both widening and tightening. A trickling signal arrives through delicate wiring, liquid and lightning, lifting his hips as one hand downwardly drifts, almost idle, inquiring, waking and tiring, fingertips tickle, grip, sensitive skin tenses, taut, a moment of thought, flickering and slipping into space, he pictures her face, her mouth...

A subtle shiver runs through him, and a pain he cannot name.

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