

## TWENTY

*A change in lighting.*

*His eyes remain closed. The fingers of the left hand, still affixed to the chair, have become slightly more cramped. Otherwise, same as before.*

Right then, all I wanted—  
 Despite my eager, throbbing hand  
     Which still  
 Yearned for the delirious  
     Knowledgeable  
 Magic of her touch—all I wanted was for her  
     To leave—  
 Right away, without explanations,  
     Without kindness.

If only she would just stand up and go—  
     Walk back over  
 To her own bench, pick up  
     Her ridiculous  
 Set of plaid luggage, the make-up kit,  
 The carry-on, the weekender, the garment bag—  
     The next  
 Goddamn size, whatever it was—the trunk  
     And the pullman—throw  
     The plaid  
 Lot of them on some train  
     To anywhere  
 Or nowhere, I didn't care which—as long as I never  
     Saw her again.

"I'm sorry," she was saying, "I just hadn't  
     Expected..."

"Don't bother," I said,  
 Honestly if gruffly, and then, for some reason,  
     I decided  
 To tell her a lie: "I'm used to it,"  
     I said.

"Please," she said, "I still want to.  
     Even more now.

Really I do—let me go ahead—  
Please."

I didn't bother to look at her then, didn't feel  
Like subjecting myself  
To her saintly, self-sacrificing  
Smile of pity.

But I thought to myself, why the hell not?  
My hand  
Was still throbbing, ready to go...

"All right," I said. "But you'll have to  
Do it  
Over here. It doesn't move."

The hardness in my voice—was that  
What made  
Her manner so grave, her step  
So slow  
As she stood and walked around my knees, took off  
Her shiny black pumps  
And knelt before my hand, before my rare  
Exquisite instrument  
Which she claimed so much  
To admire?

With grim satisfaction I watched her kneel,  
Knees  
In nylon  
Stockings on the unwashed  
Marble floor—  
And I knew then that my hand, that tumescent  
Appendage,  
Would feel no pleasure from her touch, for pleasure  
Was something I could not  
Allow  
Myself to feel, would never again  
Seek, so swollen  
Was I  
With insult and injury.

*(He opens his eyes.)*

That was when I opened my eyes—  
The better, I suppose, to observe the ceremonial  
Humiliation  
I was planning for virtuous  
Artistic  
Sexy Miss Two—her comeuppance  
For not being  
Turned on  
By my undetachable hand. Before she played a note, before  
Any music  
Had a chance to perform  
Its healing function, I opened my long-shut  
Eyes, and there  
Kneeling before my hand, my vindictive hand, I saw  
No one.  
Nobody. No Miss Two  
At all. Her luggage, as well, when I looked for it—  
It showed no sign  
Of its plaid selves, not could I detect any remnant,  
Trace  
Or residual piece of litter telling the tale  
Of Mr. One's  
Nap on his bench.

My hand was still heavy, still foreign, still  
Puzzling, and it looked  
Not the least bit  
Rare or exquisite. It hurt, in fact, ached  
And annoyed me, which proved  
I suppose, that now it was really a part of myself, part  
Of my body—  
Fully, from now on, a part of my person—  
A person who had  
Surprised himself  
With his talent for cruelty, with his knack for calculating  
Even in fantasy  
The maximum value  
Of another's  
Pain.