

Liberté

Lex was handsome; Lex was arrogant; Lex was charming; Lex was injurious; Lex was dead.

Lex died on May 20th in a dingy refurbished basement in a little cabin near our house. As I stood there at the Lakeville Ridout staring at his lifeless body made up to resemble an atrocious porcelain doll, I remembered all of the times we had. I suppose it is common for the significant other of the deceased to reminisce on the finer times and important life lessons experienced while one's lover was still living. I stared at the deep purple line around his neck that had been barely covered up by the makeup and thought of the man that Lex was, the times that we had, and the things that he taught me.

He was the man who held me at gunpoint on a drive to White Castle to inform me to not leave without telling him. He was the man who caused me to lose a precious little boy to teach me a lesson in not living outside of my means. He was the man who set my right eye a half inch deeper into my face to advise me that I had better learn to defend myself soon because I had no shot at living if someone ever tried to kill me. Surprisingly enough, I didn't miss him at all, but no one else knew that. My performance given to the police officers at the obvious news of his passing was similar to that of Brad Pitt in the last scene of *Seven*. It was executed remarkably with no hint of falsity. The sheer devastation shown in the way that I froze in shock and collapsed to the ground was worthy of at least a daytime Emmy. Lex taught me a bit of that as well. The skills of deception you pick up while living with a man who takes a baseball bat to your body multiple times a week are incredible. For instance, I could cover up Lex's little bruise in about 5 minutes with the right foundation and a scarf. I didn't mind seeing the bruise as much as everyone else, though. The bruise was a symbol of a job well done. The bruise reassured me that it was over. I had escaped the terrible world I had been thrust into during junior year of high school, and I had no one to thank but myself.

After a while the idea of living the rest of my life in fear and confinement became a real drag. 7 years of cracked ribs and broken fibulas could have lead anyone down a dark path. I started planning elaborate escape plots to sneak away with our 4 year old daughter under my wing. Saying "Oh, Ava has a fever. I have to go get her some medicine," or "you just take a nap right here on the couch. I'm going to check on Ava and go to sleep." Every time I would get caught packing or sneaking out and, of course, I'd be beaten mercilessly. Eventually I began to envision fantastic murder schemes. They were incredible, really. One of my favorite plans was going down to the Brix's farm and having Lex accidentally be charged by a bull into the path of the tractor as I helped till up the land. The comic relief in that angry bull and the amount of excruciating pain he would feel promoted that one to a ten on the Richter scale. There were a lot of plans like that, but none that would work for my daughter and me. You see, I couldn't get caught. There could not even be a hint that I had done it or else I would lose Ava. If I ever lost my darling little girl my life would be more meaningless and shattered than before. She may have come from the seed of an evil human being, but Ava was nothing like her father.

She was my cherub; my sweet baby girl. She was empathetic and kind and seemed to understand the complexity of never-ending love at only age 4. Ava deserved to be freed from her father before she got too old and loved him too much. I thought over arsenic, acid, guns, knives, hit men, cutting brake lines, and numerous other methods, and then it hit me. Suicide. Suicide is the easiest option. No one will be suspicious of a 30 year old drunkard committing suicide! That was it! I eventually decided on a hanging. My intuition told me that if he ever were to murder himself, this would be his most probable technique. The act itself wasn't in the least bit difficult. On my way to put Ava to bed I whispered in Lex's ear that we should go to the cabin after she fell asleep. The cabin was where we used to go when I was a teenager to fool around, so I knew he wouldn't say no. Using a place with such nice memories seemed such a shame. I nearly pulled the old "Nevr mind, I'm too tired." on him after a tinge of doubt, but I couldn't talk myself out of the freedom that stood before me. My heart was yearning for this vile human to be out of my life and 6 feet under. I looked out the window of our house as I stroked Ava's hair and sang her lullabies to see Lex walking through the back yard with what seemed to be a little skip in his step and a six pack. I looked at my daughter and thought of her father bathing her in the sink and planting occasional raspberries on her tummy. Oh, how she would giggle. I thought of the first time she said "Dada" and Lex's eyes pooled up with tears of joy. I also thought of the time he accidentally knocked her into the open door of the oven while drunk and yelling for God knows what reason.

I made sure Ava was sound asleep, kissed her on the forehead, and headed out with nothing but a bottle of apple pie moonshine and some rope. My blood began pumping ferociously and my heart began to flutter with a multitude of emotions: the fear of being caught, then a flash of confidence, the joy of being set free, and the guilt of taking another's life. I began to compose myself and regain focus. It was almost over. After we arrived at the cabin I quickly got him boozed up, and told him we were playing a fun little game I had read in *Cosmo*. Blindfolded and naked on a stool, I observed this man who had controlled my existence for 7 years. His body still resembled his muscular 21 year old stature. His thighs were covered in crude tattoos and were nearly as toned as they were back in his baseball days. His forearms were meaty and screamed masculinity. They were the type of forearms cave women looked for in a good hunter-gatherer. He smiled his crooked little smile and revealed the tooth I had chipped on our vacation to the Grand Canyon while drunkenly popping a champagne cork in the car. I had always thought it was sort of charming. He was a beautiful specimen with rotten insides. I had really adored him. As I looked over him a final time contemplating escape plans again and beginning to change my mind, Lex showed his true colors once more. "Hey babe, can you hurry this up?" An hour and a half later I was home taking a bath with a glass of sangria being serenaded by the crickets outside of my window.

Sure, I get sad that he is gone sometimes. Just the other day I needed someone to help me carry groceries up the stairs. I sure missed him then. My lack of regret or remorse may come as a shock to the normal Joe Shmo, but has Mr. Shmo had his own teeth knocked down his throat for changing the television channel and nearly choked to death? I think not. If some day I should have a conscious feeling of guilt, then perhaps I will report myself. For now, I will diligently keep my Meryl Streep level façade up in hopes that no one finds me out and that my daughter will soon overcome the loss of her father. She is young and resilient and we will cope together. If anything this loss will bring us closer. This day and age a woman has to take her life into her own hands. If necessary, take it back at any cost if someone has deprived her of her humanity. I can only hope that in Lex's last few minutes, I could return the favor and teach him a life lesson of his own. Just remember fellas, this is a man's world, but it would be nothing without a woman or a girl.