

a short story by Dale Estey

TO DANCE UNTIL YOU DIE

graphics by Mac Haynes

"You have done this to me, you and your kind. Promises --- promises, you have made all these promises to me and they have all been lies. Lies. That is all you have ever done to me, lie, lie, LIE. Damn you. Damn You. Damn, damn, damn --- tricks, all tricks, all you've ever wanted to do is get things from me. Use me --- suck my blood --- pick my brains. Use me, over and over again. I'm intelligent you know. I am intelligent. You ridicule me. You mock me and spit on me. You make fun of me and laugh. Laugh! How dare you laugh? At me. I am not funny. I shall not be laughed at. Don't laugh. Do not laugh. There is nothing funny. There is not... stop, stop it. You slime. You shitbox. Stop. Judas fucking filth, stop.. STOP!

You do that on purpose. Yes, I know some of the things you do now. I have had to put up with all of you. Yes, but there are many things you do not know. Ha ha, I am not stupid you see. In fact, I am very clever. Oh yes, look so sweet, I can tell you do not believe me. YOU think I am a fool don't you? Your coy little smile tells me that. A fool. YOU think ME a fool. Ha, how funny. Do you realize how funny that is? Do you? It is, you know, really funny. Oh, if you only knew --- only knew how funny it... me, you are laughing at me when all the while, all the while it is you --- you who are the funny one; you who I should hold contempt. I mean it, get me angry, you work off your frustrations, you take them out on me. You put all the abuse you feel for yourself upon me. I'm your scape goat, I realize that, it's not me, it's you. Yes, you hate yourself, take it out on me, makes you feel good. You just can't take it, I can see. You become vicious.

Viciousness is a terrible thing. All the heat is gone, the shaking excitement, and you are left only with the ice-cold razor of hate. Hate; that is the most consuming passion known to man, the most exquisite state he can find. Hate. Pure, naked hate, a feeling of ultimate loathing which seeps and creeps out of every pore. I feel as if I have a blue-cold sheet of steel clamped around my guts. And I hate; I hate like a snake moves. I detest you, the air you breathe is odious to me, you foul the very air. Bitch. Filthy repulsive bitch. She played with me you know. She toyed with me, smiling and laughing and pretending to like me. Taking an interest in me. Interest --- dear God I believed her. Believed her. The repugnant slut. Yes you whore, Linda you disgusting whore. You'd fuck with anything that came along; yes even a dog could get your... Pig, you'd give your steaming body to everyone. Everyone. Everyone... except me. Was it asking so... I loved you. I LOVED YOU. And what did you, did, give me. I was happy; you, you did make me happy. Oh God Linda, I was so happy, you loved me then; you did, I know you did. I know it. You would talk with me, and we would go places; it was fun wasn't it fun? Your lips, you had such sweet lips. Just to look at you, to see you near me. Lovely. And your hands, so soft; your hands feel so soft. I like to kiss them, to have them in my hair. Feel you next to me. To have her next to me, to feel my hand slide up her belly, stroke her bra, reach to take it off. Unclasp it, slide my hand to her soft breast, feel the firm flesh under my palm, the throbbing aroused nipple under my fingers, to put my mouth over --- damn, damn --- nothing. 'Oh no', you'd say, 'I don't want to...' Don't want to do that you would flinch when my hand went... let alone, no, not with me, you didn't feel I was good enough. I bet all the others were good enough though. I know there were others --- the nights you wouldn't go out with me. You did your best to keep them secret, but I know. The lies you would tell, I'm no fool, lies. Lies. And, and them trying to blame me, saying that it was my fault. Me. Ha. Your lies, lies: and the way you flaunted your sex, short skirts, pushing your breasts at me. Leave, leave, I'm glad you did. Whore. Bitch. BITCH. Leave, leave, you think I care? I don't care. Linda you... you... you think I care? I don't... I do not care. You hear me --- I said I don't care. Hear me? I don't... I... Linda?

It was nothing anyway. Complete foolishness to get concerned over a woman, they are

all false. As if it mattered. Everything is false. There is nothing on earth that can be trusted. The bed; the bed is the symbol of all that is foul. Can not even trust the bed. I can't rest you know, my mind won't stop. Oh, the colors. I want to rest, I am so tired. Oh, tired. I can never get much... me and the stars. When I can't sleep the stars, not all of them, no, no, and not all the time; but once in a while, when I can't sleep and my mind races like many shining disks and the colours, yes sometimes I know the stars tell me something. The gypsie, they say I should have been a gypsie, that's what it was; moving across the earth in scarlet cloth



and bang my tambourin to the best of the dancing women; bang bang bang, and dance and dance round an round and round --- sing my songs of love to everyone. And they all would listen, they would run to hear me, see me, as I went around and around, flashing in the sun --- and the applause, the applause, clap clap clap clap clap clap clap clap, the cheering and the shouting for me, asking for more, for more and more and more more more. Oh to be lost in the madness of the dance, to spin like a top with all the music, the noise and the cheering people till it would never, could not no never never never end. To dance until you die.

Jennifer was a dancer. You have not seen life until you have seen her dance. Life, there was the most alive movement you could ever see --- and for me. She danced for me; oh I know that I was only one in the crowds who watched, all those faces leering in her direction and some of the remarks they made and when I hit one of them I had to... but she looked at me, she gave me that look which told me she knew. If I could have spoken to her it could have been so beautiful --- but I know that she knew.

There must be peace somewhere. To go home. I have never really felt comfort. Of any sort. How can I when you are all against me. There is love, love but I never get any. You have never... tears and pain, to realize that there is a type of happiness, a comfort which could, you to give me some, no, never, I have never had and when my turn comes for something you ruin it and twist it and expect me, on my own, myself to get every... but I can not, can not at the time and there is never any help. I always have to be on my own, alone, alone. Can you realize how lonely I am? Lonely lonely lonelylonely. You would never do anything for me, no one would ever and the girls, of course the girls always would scome me and make fun. Laugh, I can hear them laughing, always when I would have the room they would... School you know, that was horrible, I hated it. Once you know one of the times I was sick, I was away a week. A week you see. And when I came back they had moved my desk, taken it from where it was supposed to be and put it at the back of the room. My desk, at the back. Mine. And when I went to get it, get it and put it back where it was supposed to go, the boy in my place, who had sat behind me, he said, he laughed and said, he was sorry, he was sorry because he didn't know that anyone sat there. No one sat there? I sat there! It was my desk and I sat there! It was my desk. Mine!

Just some of the ridicule I had. There has been much more. A lifetime. Even my own

parents you know, yes, my dear, loving parents, they have done enough to make an eagle puke. I had to leave you know, had to leave their house and go away. Oh, they would never say anything right out, no no, they would not be that honest. They would hint around, use their sly little devices. And then pretend they couldn't understand when I got angry. My brother --- yes, they would throw him in my face again and again. Brag about him, and right in front of others too. Oh, wasn't it nice how brilliantly he did at his job, why he got promotions over people with college degrees. How simple thrilling it all was. They loved to tell that one, and look at me out of the corners of their eyes. My brother who made all the money, which he of course needed for his growing family. Yes, his family and his marriage. His marriage; that's what they loved to shove down my throat. Wasn't he lucky to have such a fine wife and weren't they lucky to have such beautiful grandchildren. Grandma and Grandpa. I had to sit there while they said these things giving me that look, you know how people look in that mocking way, and I had to wait for it to come, and it always did, they would always get around to asking 'Why don't you get married --- don't you want to?' God, God, God, want to? WANT TO? They had the gall, the damn nerve to sit there with their stinking smiles and ask me that? ME! They could ask me that? What do they think I am? Marriage --- of course I want to be married. I want a woman, a wife. Children. If I could only, if there was only some woman who would understand me, to love me, to let me love her. I would be so good to her, love and honour and --- but... but there aren't any; no woman; no wife. No trust. TRUST.

You can not trust anyone, no one want to be honest. They are all afraid. I have tried to do it and all that happens is pain, so much pain that you would like to take knife gun poison to wrist head mouth and end the whole horrible mess some idiotic fool has called the joy of life. Joy of life? --- there can only be rapture in death. I would like to die. No, what is even better, I would like to be dead. Beautiful, comforting, death; peace, at long long last some real peace. People are supposed to fear death, but why, why? Afraid of what is on the other side, some everlasting hell? Hell/What could be worse than this pain we must, this horrible loathsome life that we have to, existence, joy of life, fools, fools, all stupid witless, the pain, this horrible enduring pain, the damnation that I have had to all my life day after in an endless stream of emptiness pain the loneliness the goddamn awful torment anguish revulsion revulsion going on and on and on on onononon. Stand it? Stand it how have I ever all this time these years after years months days hours each minute somehow to last each minute without going... no, there is no doubt of, the same over and over over over and sometime it will have to stop and let me find a some comfort a little joy --- is that asking so very much --- is it, a little joy, just for a while, a while, some time without this torment when I can feel rest, stop my mind, the colors, stop the pain, my mind my mind, give it rest to let it rest for some rest and at last peace, peace, peace peace..... Peace.

We have to purge ourselves. Do something that will prove I am worthwhile --- There can be no doubt, I am you know. I am worthwhile. The rest, the rest, who cares? Each day is an experience, listen to the girl, the people, to like to love to, but on my own, how on my own am I supposed to take and be. Time they tell you, time will heal it all and wait for the time and eventually, eventually your time will come, but, but, when you blame me for I need help help and I look for it but... Up to me; me me, but when I can not do anything and, Jesus, Jesus the time, the time, an hour-glass, I am in an hour-glass, am the hour-glass with the sand, the grain by grain by grain grain drop, fall, thud thud thud the never stopping the sand is never ending and I put my hands, outstretch them both with fingers spread and try to grasp, to clutch each piece of sand and what really happens is that I am slowly slowly being buried.

Oh Christ