

# A Love That Is Pure

by Andrew Lafleche

**WHY WE LIKE IT:** *The comfortable stereotypes we all carry around in our heads are turned upside down when an underage girl takes it upon herself to seduce a male neighbor old enough to be her father. The dangers of this inappropriate relationship and its horrifying consequences are viewed through the man's eyes as he finds himself at the crossroads where passion pressures reason. The wisely chosen 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular POV effectively distances the reader from the narrator (and the narrator from his temptations) and accounts for the necessary gravity of tone. A powerful short that is as compelling as it is unsettling.*

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People don't take responsibility for their actions anymore, so when someone does, it's shocking. If the outcome had been any other way, it might have debuted on To Catch a Predator. People sitting in their living rooms after dinner, eyes fixed on the TV screen as Chris Hansen's voice narrates all the inappropriate things one twisted individual forced on another. Terrible stories of older men raping younger women. This story might have been one of them.

Outside your patio doors you can see the neighbor girl kicking a soccer ball in her backyard. You think to yourself how much she's grown since her family moved in just those few years ago. It was your birthday. After they finished unloading the moving van you went over to introduce yourself and welcome them to the area. Their daughter must have been nine years old at the time. Too shy to say 'Hi,' she just looked up at you with those bright blue eyes peeking out from behind her father's leg, before she turned and ran inside their new home. She reminded you of innocence. She reminded you of when you were a boy, too young to have learned the cruel lessons of life. Too young, period.

This neighbor girl, she's thirteen now. Three weeks ago, she had a party for her birthday slash end-of-the-school-year. Over the years you've come to realize that her parents are the types who will do anything for their little girl, and the type of parents who will let her do anything—as long as she does it at home so they can keep an eye out. The parties are always at their house; the barbeques, the sleepovers, everything always there. The only reason you know this last party was her thirteenth birthday is because her and one of her little girlfriends knocked on your door and invited you to stop by. Obviously, you didn't, because she's thirteen.

Since that first shy introduction, she and her little girlfriends have knocked on your door plenty of times. Asking permission to fish from your shoreline. She asks to snowboard on your hill in the winter. She asks you to buy her Girl Guide

cookies; to sponsor her Jump Rope for Heart. To buy her cookie dough. You don't even bake the stuff but you buy it anyway because that's what good neighbors do.

She knocks on your door to collect bottles for her school's Bottle Drive.

She knocks on your door and then runs away giggling.

Out back she's kicking the soccer ball around and you can't help but notice how her tits have really come in. You notice how your once shy neighbor girl has really developed. Every once in a while, as she skips through her yard with the soccer ball, she looks up toward where your deck is to make sure you take notice. She's the kind of girl who knows she's becoming a woman and wants people to take notice.

At night you see her peeking out her bedroom window down to where you're fishing. Her bedroom window overlooks your yard like your deck overlooks hers. That night when you catch her peeking through her bedroom window, ducking out of sight whenever you glance over your shoulder, that night, you've had a couple drinks.

You imagine what it would feel like to have her tiny little hands stroking your cock. You know you shouldn't let your mind entertain these thoughts, but what the hell, you can't get in trouble for the things you think. Besides, it's not like you would ever act on it, it's just foolish wonderings.

The sun has set for the evening. In front of you, the still water of the lake reflects the moon's glow. Behind you, the light from your neighbor girl's bedroom creeps across the yard. She's left her blinds open, and she's dressing into her pajamas. You can see her silhouette in the window and you imagine running your hands over her newly teenage body. She clicks her light out and you realize you've had too much to drink.

The next day she knocks on your door and asks you for some newspapers so she can have a fire in the back yard. Schools out for summer and she and her girlfriend want to have one last bonfire before her family leaves for vacation. Her parents own a home in Vermont. Each summer, on the Saturday following the last day of school, your neighbors pack up and drive off only to return the last Friday before school begins again. You tell her to wait there and you'll bring the recycling in from the garage.

When you return to the kitchen, she's exactly where you left her, except she's taken off her clothes. She leans against the front door, naked. She locks the deadbolt and tells you she wants you to take her. She says she's seen the way you look at her and that it's the way she wants you to. She tells you that she's loved you since she was a little girl, since the very first moment you met. She tells you that all the girls in her class talk about their older lovers, and how she needs you to be the one to take her virginity.

All of this she tells you as she advances.

Pressed up against your body, her hands cupped around the outside of your pants, you're throbbing. Her white skin smooth and taut. She's perfect. Her tits have life in them, plump and perky; like you imagined. She looks up at you with those widened blue eyes and tells you if you don't, she's going to tell her parents you tried.

She smiles.

She says this like a girl who knows what she wants and always gets it.

She says it and begins to sink down to her knees. The curve of her hips rest against her naked legs. This neighbor girl moves slowly to undo your belt and unzip the fly of your jeans. She moves like she's waiting for permission, testing how far you'll let this go. Her hands find their way into your boxers. She grips your dick and you feel like exploding. You stand there frozen, expecting at any moment for a battalion of police officers to come crashing through the door like they do on TV, forcing you to the ground, smashing your face off the linoleum, your dick exposed, hard, and being bent under your body in excruciating pain. You imagine her bawling, telling them how you made her do it. How you told her if she didn't you would hurt her. Your neighbor girl thanking them for saving her before you made her do unspeakable things. Her parents running over to your house, frantic and screaming. Her dad yelling how he's going to kill you. Her mom scooping up their little girl while threatening how you'll be treated in prison. Both parents yelling how your ass will be torn open because you're just like Ted

Bundy. Constable 'I-Eat-Pieces-Of-Shit-Like-You-For-Breakfast,' advising you your right to remain silent. He recites that everything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. It's all the lines you hear on TV while he slaps the cuffs on your wrists and smashes your face off the roof of his cruiser as he shoves you into the back seat, dick still hanging out, mashed and bloody.

All of this flashing in your mind as your neighbor girl continues to look up at you, hands full and her mouth resting on the tip of your penis. Her eyes begging for consent.

"It will be our secret," she whispers, then kisses the tip.

You drop the newspapers on the counter and like any man with a gun to his head about to lose everything, you say, "Fuck it," and carry her into your bedroom.

You tell yourself she doesn't look thirteen. Her breasts, her eyes. You convince yourself she's a woman; this neighbor girl, she came on to you. You thought she was older. Anything that you might use as a defense, knowing each to be about as strong as your self-control.

You don't even bother rationalizing anymore. She did it. It's her fault. At the very least it isn't your fault, and then you press yourself into her pouting lips.

You can see she's in a bit of pain but she doesn't complain. Instead she moans a light moan; a moan like she's seen in the movies. She arches her back so

that her stomach lifts off the bed. She presses the side of her head into the mattress.

Bottom lip bit, your neighbor girl, she glows.

You want to fuck her hard to teach her a lesson for this stunt she's pulled. You think about fucking her to have her pain become digging her nails in your back, but you suddenly realize you're about to blow and barely have time to pull out.

A light flow of red trickles down her thigh.

At least that part of her story was true.

When you fall on the bed beside her, she reaches her arm across your chest and asks you if she did okay. You assure her she did and kiss to the top of her head.

After a few minutes of lying on the bed, you clean her up and send her home with the newspapers she came for. As she leaves, she reaches up to kiss you on the cheek and whispers, "Our little secret."

That weekend her family is packing their Trailblazer and getting ready to leave. You're thankful for this tradition of theirs because it will give you time to figure out what happened. It will give you time to prepare a defense. Give time to wonder if it might happen again, if you would do it again, if you should do it again—how you could do it again. If you could get away with it and how far you could keep pushing the envelope. Take that inch and make it a mile. Before your

neighbors even leave their driveway, your fear of getting caught has been trumped: you're a man and you'll do whatever the fuck you want.

That whole summer you picture your neighbor girl coming home: her pleading eyes and sun-kissed skin. You imagine her sneaking over during the day, at night, whenever her parents aren't home. Your mouth waters at the thought of how clean she tasted. You throb thinking of her.

The week before her family should have returned home you get a letter in the mail. The handwriting on the envelope is gentle, the kind of rounded letters that make you happy to read. You guess it's from her and open it.

The letter is addressed: My first and only.

In this letter she tells you how all summer she hasn't stopped thinking about your one time together; how she never told anyone and wasn't going to.

She writes how even though you probably didn't believe her when she said it, she loves you.

She tells you about all the fun things she and her parents have been doing in Vermont: the nights under the stars, the days at the beach, their shopping trips into town. She tells you about all the things a thirteen-year-old girl would write to her boyfriend.

As casually as she recollected her summer vacation, she tells you how she missed her period. How one day in town, when her parents weren't around, she

bought a pregnancy test. She wrote how her parents would kill her if they ever found out and how they'd kill you—or worse.

She loves you and so she could never let this happen. She meant it when she said, “Our little secret.”

In this letter she tells you that she's going to kill herself before they return home.

Teenage girls are insufferably dramatic.

She described it as a romantic tragedy, a very real Romeo and Juliet, and signed the letter, “Always, our little secret.”

The following week, when your neighbors were supposed to return home, they didn't. It's not until sometime in September they do and it's then you hear that their daughter is dead. That she killed herself. How she didn't leave a note.

Your neighbors are devastated.

You hear about how she did it.

You assumed it was swallowing a handful of pills, but you assumed wrong. Your neighbor girl went out hard. She was strong. She gave herself no way of retreat.

If you want to take the island, you have to burn the ships.

Your neighbor girl, what she did was, she drew a bath. At their summer home, off her parent's bedroom was an oversized bathroom with one of those old

claw-foot tubs in the center. Three sides of the room are lit up by the sun that shines through the white framed windows. The view is the lake.

Your neighbor girl, she drew a hot bath. As the tub filled, she opened the medicine cabinet of her parent's bathroom and swallowed two Aspirins. She took out her daddy's shave kit. He's one of those types of men who wet shaves with a badger brush and a straight razor. She removed one of the wax-wrapped doubled edged blades from inside the kit and set it on the ledge of the bathtub before undressing. With the tub full she shut off the water then folded her clothes and set them on the chair.

Bath drawn, Aspirin popped, and razor blade resting on the ledge of the bathtub, she eased her naked body into the water. Her white skin turned pink from the heat as she allowed herself to soak. A Mona Lisa smile on her face as she looked out the windows to a world whose condemnation for love is death.

As she soaked in the hot bath, your neighbor girl picked up the razor blade and ran it up the length of her arm.

If it was a cry for help, she would have scratched across her wrist.

The razor blade split the skin with ease and opened her veins as effortlessly. Wrist to elbow, one straight line, your neighbor girl, she was something fierce.

With the Aspirin thinning her blood and the water warming her body, blood poured from her arm like it was waiting for its moment to escape.

As she started on the other arm, she passed out. Her body slumped in the hot bath in the claw-footed tub; it's when her parents returned from town.

They found her soaking, hair hanging over the ledge, and the merlot water steaming the sweet copper scent of lifeless beauty.

They didn't know about her being pregnant.

They didn't know anything.

Your neighbor girl, at least she did the right thing.

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** *I wrote A Love That Is Pure with the intention of immersing the reader, almost forcing the reader, to enter into the story and contend with the landscape separating circumstance and choice. It's messed up, but fiction lets us go to a place where we can start to think about issues we might never choose. That, with the help of writing in second person. Literary influences: Raymond Carver, Anton Chekhov, Hunter S. Thompson, Charles Bukowski.*

**BIO:** *My previous short story credits include The Merrimack Review, Metonym Literary Journal, Phenomenal Literature, Haunted MTL and CommuterLit. He is the author of the short story collection A Pardonable Offence, available on Amazon. Visit him at [www.AJLafleche.com](http://www.AJLafleche.com)*