

A PEDOPHILE WROTE YOUR FAVORITE SONG

by Greg Stolze

I work out of an antiques store, telling fortunes. I'm a psychic, but I'm not very popular. No matter what I do with my hair or how many rings I wear, I'm not a commanding presence. So the pay's not great even though I really can read minds. I try to give people good advice, based on what's inside them, but to pay the bills, sometimes I just have to tell them what they want to hear.

Like, a woman comes in who wants to cheat on her husband with this exciting new guy at work who's a few years older. My instinct is to say "Yo, don't cheat on your husband, many women get murdered for less," but that's abrupt. Too fast, too clear, too real. "You are confronted by a temptation where the full dangers won't be clear until it's too late" goes down a lot easier, but when it's vague enough that they let themselves hear it, it's also vague enough that they can interpret it any way they like. "An exciting new opportunity has arrived in your house of Venus, but consider carefully and act only when the moon is in Saggitarius, so that you can bring the full weight of your feminine wisdom to the matter." That could mean anything.

I vocalize her doubts and fears, to make them real, and hope they get strong. Getting rid of someone's feelings, it's tricky stuff, that could go *disastrously* wrong. Trust me. As bad as things go, as hard as feelings get, no one is better equipped to handle than them the person having them.

I won't know what she decided, unless she comes back for more advice, which people don't, because I don't have good presence or charisma.

Or, I suppose if I pass her on the street I might know.

Yeah, my "gift," it's that fast and clear. If I take a crowded train, I know who's sleeping around before I know if there's an open seat. I spot the cruelest person riding, and the kindest, and they aren't always who you think.

The confusing part is, the cruelest person on the train, or in the office, or in the apartment block... they might never do a cruel thing. I see it in them, the urge and desire, livid and seething, but some just repurpose it—like they've trained a wolf to be a dog. That fire to overcome, to triumph and inflict defeat? It gets used to win at basketball or play guitar or defeat an illness. And people without much of it? They're the ones just as surprised as their victim when circumstances get bad and they—the person who thought they could never strike a child—do just that.

It's because they thought they never could. The people who know they can are the ones on guard against it.

People are so complex, they have layers and folds and bubbles of irrational wickedness, irrational heroism that even they don't suspect. Most people have some kind of hand grenade inside and many die without the pin ever getting pulled. It's weird.

But you probably want to know what "the telepathy" is like, the sixth sense. Though the idea that we only have five senses is dumb. There's your sense of balance, your sense of humor, your sense of direction, your sense of who's trustworthy... we're all living suspended in a web of senses, and we barely have a sense of how many senses we're using. When you walk by a piano, you see every key, but you ignore them. If you saw a piano with two keys too many, you'd never notice unless you were a pianist and the instrument was hugely real to you. A mason can tell which bricks were laid evenly and well at a glance, where most of us can't see because we don't care.

Some cops think they can tell who's guilty with just a look, when in fact they can tell who's going to give up quickest.

For a while I worked with a cop.

But no, I'm not going to get into that now. You want to know what telepathy feels like. Well, describe a single clear note from an oboe to someone who's stone deaf. You can't, except by metaphor, so I apologize in advance. Right. Imagine everyone sees the world in black in white and you alone see colors. You get... so much more information and can tell the difference between an orange and a baseball from much farther away, but at the same time, it's hard to explain to people because you don't have the vocabulary. Knowing that a man wants to tear people apart, literally feels a strong desire to do violence with his hands, to drop his weight on someone's sternum with the bludgeon of a knee... if you don't have that impulse, you can imagine the act, but not the urge. "Why would that be fun?" you might think, not grasping that fun has nothing to do with it. It's like thirst. Hence 'bloodthirsty.'

I can know, right away, if you have that or if you really *really* want and *need* people to like you, or if you are so empathetic that you love to make others happy and are relieved only when those nearby are out of pain. But unless I get to know you, it's hard to guess what you're going to do with those needs and instincts.

Some bloodthirsty people just strangle that urge every day until it's barely a ghost. Some empathetic people have to do the same thing, just to walk down the street without crying over the homeless. Some people with a drive to be liked do sweet and thoughtful things, and some do profoundly manipulative ones.

That cop I worked with wasn't psychic, but he believed in GOOD people and BAD people, which I absolutely do not. If I told him someone had a sexual

attraction to children, that person was BAD to him, a monster, irredeemable and outside the pale. Even if they never acted on it, never showed it, recognized the wrongness and kept it locked down. A wolf in their heart that wasn't even pulling a cart, just chained up somewhere, unfed, away from daylight.

"They always offend in the end," he would say. Did say, when I asked him. "You can only resist it so long."

I knew people who resisted it until they died. I could see it on them as they lay in hospice. Because I'm psychic, I knew them, always wanting, never doing. That cop would just say they missed their chance, because they were BAD and could never change.

The fact is, there are plenty of people with that attraction who act it out. Maybe a pedophile wrote your favorite song. You know who I'm talking about. Or a rapist. The music industry is full of people who have some powerful urge, and when they can't or won't meet it the most direct way, they put it in their showmanship and skill. All that yearning... people respond. Because who hasn't yearned? And then they get rich and powerful and are surrounded by people who only say yes and never no, suddenly those impossible urges become possible.

You have a comedian who used to be great and funny and sticking it to power, and suddenly he's middle-aged and rich and complaining? Same thing. He can't accept that the audience who liked him for insulting wealth and power don't like him once he's powerful and rich. He got strong pushing against a closed door, and once it opens, he stumbles.

Why did Hollywood have that "Me Too" problem? Because of the same structure.

Structures determine our actions as much as our lusts and fears do, and it's not done on purpose either. I don't think some long-ago gang of old men wanted to bang teenagers and had a conference where they agreed on rules to make that easier.

But.

Children are taught to obey their elders. Which, sure, you can see why, especially when the world was more dangerous. "Don't go out at night, wolf's gonna getcha!" "Don't put that in your mouth, it's not food!" "Don't touch the hot stove!" It's bad enough right now.

Sure. And if boys heard more stories about boys who broke the rules and prospered, well, boys will be boys and they need to blow off steam. Or so I was told.

Girls are taught to stay virgins, far more intensely than boys are, because a boy can walk (or run) away from a pregnancy he started in a way we girls absolutely

cannot. Girls get the “Don’t don’t *don’t!*” message loud, clear and often, to counterprogram all their hormones and instincts saying “...or maybe do, yes, what if we did, or just a little.” Boys get one “don’t” if that, and sometimes with a wink.

I knew another cop who taught his young son to slap women on the ass, because he knew the child could get away with it. It wasn’t the one I worked with to catch rapists and perverts—he never married—but they were in the same precinct.

Back to the rules though. They’re not bad rules on their own. But when you have a girl who’s told not to give it up to the horny boys in her school, and who’s told to listen and obey and respect her elders... what happens when one of her elders puts on the moves? Maybe her hormones say, “Well, I guess, Mr. Gruner the math teacher isn’t as good as Jimmy the quarterback, but it’s something and it’s certainly easier to get away with it.”

Or maybe she’s just too confused by the conflicting rules, so she just goes along, paralyzed into compliance. A lot of what gets called “yes” is just the failure to deliver a fast, decisive “no.” Though of course, many pop and rock songs (possibly written by a pedophiles) suggest that persistence turns a no into a yes. Movies and TV? Same thing. So the me toos keep coming. (Should that be “mes too”? I’m not sure.)

It’s not all the angry ones. The nice ones—the ones who want to be loved and admired, they me too also. Sometimes the idea that she just doesn’t like him, it’s so appalling, that he does... well, whatever he must, so he doesn’t have to believe it was a no, not a *final* no. That passive silence at the end could have been a yes she was just too shy to say, right? That’s what he tells himself. That she really liked it, or was, at least, OK with it. He did her a favor by *understanding* her, because she wanted to say yes but was too embarrassed. Sure. They believe this so hard, these nice men, that they’re puzzled when she won’t meet his eye the next day. Or, or, she convinces *herself* that it must have been OK, that she must have said yes or at least not said no hard enough and long enough because the alternative would be... well, something no nice sweet guy who clearly likes her and wants to be liked would ever do.

You can’t tell, even if you know what’s inside, most of the time. Not just walking by. The ones who did the worst stuff, the ones who had no musical or literary or athletic talent to throw like a chain around the neck of the beast inside... the ones who give in and get a taste for it, yeah, those you can spot a mile off. Or at least I can. But you have to ride a lot of trains to spot someone that deep in wolf territory, someone who can’t even be bothered to work the system any more.

That’s who I spotted for that cop. A real worst of the worst. Taste for early teen Latina girls and cigar burns all over. Papers called him “the panatella killer.”

Actually a volunteer firefighter and worked as a phlebotomist. Nobody would have guessed, until I told. But once the police started looking, a lot of things suddenly made sense, I guess.

I told the cop with the biggest wolf inside, and maybe that was my mistake. He got a lot of attention for the arrest—perp-walked the guy right out of the firehouse as he was coming off duty—and he wanted more. Got a taste for it. Pushed. Pushed me for more names, more gets, wanted me to come down and “scan” suspects, didn’t want to hear it didn’t work like that. Didn’t want to hear I wasn’t a fucking geiger counter for evil, that there weren’t BAD people harming GOOD people.

Maybe if you’re a personable person, you can tell people something other than what they want to hear and have them listen. But that’s not me. I didn’t get charisma and charm. I got an extra sense. My “gift.”

People who think they could never... well, put them in the right situation and they can. I know. Those hidden hand grenades in your soul, sometimes the pin comes out. Or you take one from someone else.

I never wanted to do violence, never wanted to excuse myself from the sofa and go to the kitchen for the big sharp knife, but I knew what was coming. When that wolf cop knocked on my apartment door late at night, after he had a few drinks, I thought something bad was possible. Maybe a... one in twenty chance? That sounds about right.

I told him I was tired and didn’t want to talk and he wheedled and said c’mon and even without an extra sense he knew I’d give in. No telepathy, but he knew I wanted to be liked, that I’d go along to get along. He knew I’d give up quickest.

Once he was inside my apartment, the chances of things going bad, it started to feel more like one in ten. He wanted more, more BAD people, and more from me. Told me he was in love with me and that was when it started to feel like one in four. When he asked, did I feel the same way?

I tried to let him down easy and he was persistent. Fifty-fifty chance. I could see it growing in him because he had that anger, that lust, that thing inside howling to have everything his way, feeling he deserved it because he was a GOOD person, a cop, a protector, and I let him think I was saying yes or at least being silent about the no, I went to get something from the kitchen and he didn’t even turn to watch me come back.

And.

And I.

Maybe telepathy isn’t like colors at all, really. Because you can’t take a color off something and make it yourself, like I did, just that one time. I couldn’t hurt him

myself, as me. I didn't have it in me, I was starting to think it wouldn't be so bad, really, getting raped, it happens. I know it happens. It happens so much.

But all that anger in him was just sitting there, and I needed it, that push, that feeling that it was OK to have it *my way* and if there was a cost to others, well, that wasn't worth considering in the light of that flame, that burn, that urge.

I never did it before or after, taking the wrath. But I took his and when I was done with it, he was spread all over my living room.

Well.

You don't leave a dead Major Crimes cop in your home—a dead *hero* cop, the one who caught the pantella killer don't cha know—you don't do that and get away with it. Not unless you pack up right away and drive three states east.

Not unless you can find the right people to talk with, the people who aren't paying much attention at the driver's license bureau. The landlady who has her own problems and is just grateful to get the money on time. The forger who can sell you a good-enough birth certificate even if you're a stranger. Who could do all that?

You'd have to be a mind reader.