

The Exquisite Pain

By Sabrina Hemken

Scene One



On Curtain Rise: Darkness.

NARRATOR

I'll start this story from the place that I see fit, a moment of time I should have maybe walked away from, a moment from where I probably should have known myself better. Then maybe, just maybe, I would have walked away from all of this chaos. Who knows where I'd be right now? The only thing that I know for certain is that I probably wouldn't be here.

(Starry sky effect cast on the stage.)

When we were young and our eyes were still wide and hungry, our paths collided. You could say it was destiny, you could say it was fate, or you could say it was a curse. I suppose I'm still not sure of it myself. All I know now is how I saw it then and where I'm left now because of it. I'm not even quite sure where I am going from here, but no matter.

(A single blue light appears faintly on stage.)

In the darkness everything looks brighter than it really is. Life sometimes just seems brighter in general in the dark because darkness has a tendency to envelop everything. What is left visible ends up taking on a light all on its own. That's where I met you.

(The single light fades up as the starry sky effect fades down.)

You shined like a diamond then. In my eyes, from the moment I met you, you were golden. I can't recall every detail of that evening but I can still feel that feeling of not being able to breathe. I still remember the feeling but the details may be hazy. There were other reasons to be hazy but somehow I still can always feel that presence when I look back. Your walking ghost lives on.

(Blue lights up around stage revealing the Narrator—she paces around the stage.)

It was a night like many others at that time of my life. Very casual and good-time oriented. That's what all of us wanted back then. I wish it were still so easy. I had, and still have, a fairly large group of friends. I think my friends are like my family because my mom died when I was young. So did yours. That was a heart-breaking bond; maybe it wasn't good to share. That loneliness and a longing for some kind of love that you don't even really know if you remember correctly makes a person a bit skewed at times.

(Red lights slowly rise to mingle with the blue.)

Makes people a bit twisted, not quite straight and narrow besides their best efforts. Sideways.

My friends are my family and I love them all dearly. I always love meeting new people, so when my friends were all told to bring their friends along, I was looking forward to it. When you've known your friends as long as I have, things can tend to get stale and new people make for excitement. And exciting you are. Regardless of everything else, I can say you are still exciting, but maybe not for the reasons I'd hoped.

(Narrator crosses to stage right. Actors emerge from the wings and together with a full light, cue the stage makes for a party scene. The Narrator, alone, is lit by a blue light.)

That night I was planning on having a lot of fun. There were plenty of libations for all to consume. I decided that on this night I was going to have fun, come hell or high water.

(A younger version of the Narrator, dressed similarly to the Narrator, emerges on the party scene, drink cup in hand. Her name is Emelia.)

Cliff had been a friend of mine since we were very young, and so he was like a brother to me. Although we didn't always see each other as much as I'd like, I felt a closeness to him like I felt with no other. He felt like home to me. If he was around I know he would always do his best to ensure my safety and happiness and that was a comfort.

(Enter Cliff and Edward. Edward goes to fix a drink. After he leaves Cliff's side, Sabrina notices Cliff's arrival and approaches.)

Tonight Cliff brought one of his old friends from high school with him. He had told me earlier he had planned on bringing him and I was looking forward to meeting some of the people he had met at the high school he attended. It was a part of his life that seemed like it was in the dark to me. I looked forward to illuminating it.

EMELIA

Hey! I was waiting for you!

CLIFF

Yeah, I'm sorry, tonight has just been kind of a weird night.

EMELIA

I'm glad you're here. I don't think I can handle another hour of Ted's stories. Plus he's getting pretty wasted and you know that could go one of two ways.

CLIFF

Again, sorry. I wanted to be here earlier, but I had to pick up Edward. He's on his own mission tonight....

EMELIA

Okay, well where is this mysterious Edward fellow? I'm looking forward to meeting your old school friends.

CLIFF

I think he's over there fixing a drink. Oh, wait, here he comes now.

NARRATOR

And then you walked over. You were not the most beautiful creature on this planet but something about the way you moved and looked sure made it seem like it. I can almost look back on this and see it in slow motion.

(The following is acted out as the Narrator speaks it. The action freezes to let both a bright light focus on Edward and the narration to catch-up. This sort of interaction between narration and action occurs throughout the rest of the scene.)

NARRATOR

You walked over to Cliff and I, and you smiled at me. My heart melted. You had almost shoulder length messy brown hair that looked soft in the light. You had almost grey eyes that somehow showed their color even in the dimmest of light. You were skinny but not scrawny. Your jawbone was pronounced and sharp and so was your brow bone. In some ways I felt as if I could see through to your skull. You were wearing faded black pants, worn black laced up boots, a plain colored t-shirt, and a brown denim jacket. You were beautiful. You were an angel. If only I would have known then, what I know now.

EDWARD

Hey! Are you Cliff's buddy, Emelia? I've heard a lot about you all of these years. You two had some adventures haven't you?

EMELIA

Adventures? Yes, we've most certainly had many of those.

NARRATOR

He held his hand out to me and as I reached to shake his hand he took it and kissed it. I was flattered and utterly embarrassed. I could instantly feel my cheeks flush. I kept wondering if anyone else had seen my reaction. It didn't matter I felt it and I knew it so therefore I believed it was written all over me.

CLIFF

Hey I'm gonna go say hi to Ted and Annie. Will you be all right?

EDWARD

I'll be more than all right. Go! I'm a big boy I think I can handle a party on my own. Plus from what I hear this girl might know her way around a party too.

NARRATOR

I laughed nervously. I had known this boy for a whole three minutes and already I was terrified to be alone with him. I suppose when it comes to matters of the heart I've never really been able to be open like I'd like to be. I've seen all the other girls do it all my life, but somehow it just didn't seem right to me. I felt inferior and always assumed that a boy equaled a friend. Friendzone. In my life I've never been beautiful, average at best. At least that's the way I feel about it. But boys that I was instantly attracted to scared me. I never knew what kind of trouble I'd get myself into or in what ways I could make an ass of myself.

EDWARD

Let's make this night epic. I feel as if an epic night is in order, how about you?

EMELIA

That sounds like a plan? Do you want to meet everyone?

EDWARD

Lead the way.

NARRATOR

I took him over and introduced him to all of my friends there that night. He blended in well and was immensely high spirited and funny. Boy was he funny. In a real nerdy way, bad jokes and puns are my favorite and he knew them all. He was animated and fun. He also had opinions about things that he wasn't scared to voice. It was a type of bravado I always liked, usually to my detriment.

My friend Katrina walked up to me, she was not a dancer but she was having a good time. Her makeup was a bit smeary and her eyes a big heavy but she was wearing a smile and that's all that mattered.

KATRINA

Oh my god, Cliff's friend is so funny. He had us laughing so hard in the kitchen. He was doing this impression of Cliff that was so spot on. You should have seen it.

NARRATOR

I nodded. She was right. He was something.

KATRINA

I hope Cliff brings him around more often. He told us he's just recently moved back into the area. He has a band too. I told him to talk to you and Annie about playing at The Garden. I think he has a demo of some sort.

NARRATOR

Great he's in a band and he lives around here, I'm officially defenseless.

KATRINA

I'm having so much fun tonight. I wish every party we had was like this.

NARRATOR

Me too, I thought, but not for the same reasons.

EDWARD

You! You have not danced yet. I've been waiting to see some sweet moves out of you all night and here you stand like some unpicked wildflower at a middle school dance. Tell me you have it in you? I feel you do.

EMELIA

I'm kind of a nonchalant dancer. I need to work my way into it.

EDWARD

That is such bullshit and you know it.

NARRATOR

He grabbed my hand and pulled me close to him. I could feel his bones and his heart beating hard and fast. He put me in a tango pose and stuck his arm around my waist.

EDWARD

Tonight we dance!

NARRATOR

I was utterly embarrassed and invigorated at the same time. I had enough substances going through me at the time and the moment felt so in-the-now I couldn't help but dance. I swear it felt like I danced for days. My clothes were soaking wet and my hair looked as if I had just gotten out of the shower. It finally got to the point where I had to get a drink and some air or I might pass out.

(Lights return to mixture of starry night and muted full stage lights.)

NARRATOR

Dancing was so fun with my friends, everyone was so hilarious in their moves. I felt as if I loved everyone so much more. I'm sure there were other variables in that equation. I couldn't believe it was so easy to be free around Edward. He was so free he made me feel it too.

The thought of having to go away from all of this hurt my heart.

All of a sudden, stumbling out of the door came, tripping in a pile, Ted, Cliff, and Edward. They all laughed until they hit the ground, slipping and spilling their drinks as they went.

I died laughing, they had no idea how funny that was.

Cliff and Ted got off the ground but Ed remained. We were all laughing so hard he couldn't get up.

EDWARD

Help! I've fallen and I can't get up.

NARRATOR

He reached his hands out in the dark to me. I helped him up and almost fell myself causing another outburst of crazy mad laughter. He wrapped his arms around me and whispered.

EDWARD

If you tell anyone I couldn't get up I won't name my first born after you.

(All lights off except the blue on the stage and the blue spot on the Narrator.)

NARRATOR

And we didn't. Our firstborn is you, my daughter.

(Lights Out.)

Author Biography: Sabrina Hemken is a member of the Menominee tribe and is an artist, writer, and musician by fate. She is currently seeking her B.A. in Public Administration and her A.A. in Digital Media at College of Menominee Nation.