

TASTELESS

Forewarning

The intent of *Tasteless* does not lie in the characters or the story, but in confronting our common desire to look away. This rape is a real crime. The story of the couple using an infant as a sexual apparatus has never left me, and when challenged to 'go beyond the pale', it was the greatest taboo and most difficult story to address in my mind. Information about the crime was scarce. Mara* (*name changed) was charged with rape, however, and not simply condoning Stuart's* (*name changed) actions, so along with the physical logistics of an adult penis entering a twelve-week-old girl, I had to theorise and imagine what she could have done to the child that would be condemned as rape. This was a particularly difficult aspect of the story to write. The rape goes beyond damaging a frail body to the destruction of it for sexual gratification. Once again, the worst of it is that it really happened.

The inevitable question arises: What's the point of this story? I might say that I wrote it because people should be aware of what happened and be outraged, as we are outraged by war and persecution. Perhaps the story is a comforting reminder that though these two monstrous people are a part of our population, there are millions around them who are not so depraved, and that these events are rare.

Or there could be no point. If all knowledge is power, then some knowledge is of how much we can endure before we have to look away. The piece is a coached endurance run set in awful, negative knowledge that does not seek to masquerade as entertainment. Perhaps a story that only serves to defy with its purpose in the reading of it, rather than the content, is the truly transgressive thing here.

I don't recommend that you, or any one, read *Tasteless*. But no one is going to stop you.

There is no safe word. If you shout *red*, the Master isn't going to stop rubbing ginger spice between your thighs and pulling at the clothespins on your nipples. If you throw up on the ride it won't stop and your vomit will continue to soak through your clothes until the duration is up. Everything must run its course.

Hempel lies north of London surrounded by arable farms, and a proportion of the thousands of residents regularly hire babysitters so that they can go out without their children. Mara is one of those babysitters: nineteen, chubby and inoffensive. She has a twelve-week-old girl to look after, and has her significantly older boyfriend come over for tickle and touch. Stuart brings a camera.

Don't shy. The fly is going to burn inside the blue glow. The shark is going to rise up from the black waters and take the seal. Knowing is half the battle, and we all like to see results.

Stuart is about to penetrate the baby. It is already crying because Mara has been holding its bawling face to her vagina.

Stay in the moment.

The girl is eighteen inches long from head to toe. Stuart's penis is five and a third inches long. He has taken a pot of Vaseline from Mara's purse because he knows the baby's vagina won't secrete any lubricant, and that to push dry would burn and chafe him. He touches at Mara's vagina with greasy fingers and feels how wet she is. Her labia have already lain about the girl's small nose and gaping mouth like too much meat hanging out of too little sandwich, mashing and muffling. Now she is going to photograph him.

Stuart holds the baby in both hands. Her head lolls back weakly and she's still screaming, balled up fists trembling stiffly against her chest. He shifts her around to rest in the crook of his arm, probing a finger to her tiny genitals. She has no labia like Mara, only cream coloured lips that sit like a shut clam. Her vagina is the same size as her urethra and barely visible. It takes a few seconds of stroking firmly for his fingertip to catch the hole. He pulls at it, stretches it so that it stays dryly exposed when he holds her like a rugby ball again.

Don't run to lesser things. Where do the schoolchildren eat their sandwiches at Auschwitz? Can they smile in the photos with their friends? Thousands of photos of the camp reside in boxes, away from the family albums, all the same: all devoid of a human subject by mutual agreement. Evil exists easily in concrete walls. But this is a home. This place has a thick carpet that feels like stepping into loose earth. There are radiators with socks hanging over them. There is an empty crib and a main bedroom with lilac curtains. There's an extra blanket on the bed, pulled aside and heaped in a square pile on the floor.

Stuart penetrates the baby and a new, foreign pitch wails out of her stiff body. Her legs kick feebly. Her tiny vagina splits and merges with her colon. He keeps going. Now he's in her uterus, the size of a thimble and cracking apart from his girth. There's only enough room when her lower intestine ruptures and leaks viscera and creamy excreta about his penis.

The camera flashes and Stuart groans, feels his balls tense, and finally begins to slowly piston.

Is it worse to be the one who hits the cyclist first, and feel his skull compress like cracked ice under a tire whilst the car bounces; or the driver behind who can't avoid the mangled body and skids in the gore as they swerve?

Her body is changing, her abdomen becoming malleable as it is squashed and pulped inside.

Is it easier when the victims are faceless and lie in their thousands, in their millions? When they dig their own shallow graves to be shot with the hope they'll die immediately and not be suffocated by the bodies and wet earth piled atop them? Is a massacre easier to swallow than a murder? More like an efficient, mechanical process than the knowing and heated killing of a single person? The Nazis must have gotten up very earlier to rack up such high figures.

Come back. Everyone is still conscious. The judge will later tell the papers that this has *shocked and outraged public opinion*. Stuart and Mara will go to prison for no real time, though Stuart for longer because he penetrated whereas Mara only mounted the baby's face and squashed herself down on it.

But come away from this comfort of meagre justice. Stuart's hips are rocking as he kneels on the bed, the baby around his penis shrieking spasmodically now as her tiny brain begins to shut down. Mara doesn't notice that it has turned quieter. She roams around the

pair with the camera, snapping action shots and capturing the fluids dripping from where the two bodies are fused.

Did Myra Hindley sweat when she raped those children? Did Ian Brady?

Stuart comes, semen disperses through the newly forged cavity and the baby is mewling, grey and prone. Mara gives Stuart the camera and takes the baby, raising her like a cup to nestle her face into the wet stretched crevice. Her pelvis is skewed and vivid bruises darken her distorted belly. Mara mouths her boyfriend's semen and the blood. She puts the baby down, tells Stuart to take another photograph to complete the set they will masturbate over later with wine and music, and then she begins to dress.

Stuart dresses and takes the camera, going back home where he will see her later. He is not unseen in the neighbourhood where not just cats twitch the curtains. Mara cleans the baby with a dishcloth and puts the soiled sheets into the washing machine, seeking out the airing cupboard to put a fresh set on. The baby wouldn't settle and then vomited on your bed when I took her up. I'm very sorry, but the sheets are drying on your radiators now. A nappy goes on and the crib is full again. Mara goes back downstairs and turns on the television, waiting for the parents to come home and give her money.

You hope for an infant's death, but there is no such happy ending. Intensive surgery, removed uterus and she will remain incontinent for many years. There is a short debate about whether they should ever tell her, if some instinctual memory could possibly have been forged that will need to be pre-empted. The doctors are confident that she will not remember. When she asks why she is sterile, she will be told she was born a freak. They hope her pelvis can be reformed enough to let her walk.