

## First Love

After he beats her, he will rape her. And during the rape she will be glad, or she will be at least relieved. Perhaps primarily she will not be thinking anything, but to the extent that she is thinking something, she will be relieved. Because by the time he's begun to rape her, the worst will probably be over.

She will know that the worst is probably over.

That by the time he has reached the point of trying to fuck her, she can breathe, even rest to a certain extent. By that time really she'll just need to stay quiet. Her goal: to simply let things play themselves out.

Her goal by then: to let things play themselves out.

It will almost be over, and she will just need to lie there. To lie there: very still, very far away, very quiet. Very still like an animal that has been mauled by another animal—not so much out of rage as a desire for dominance, or maybe ownership, or something else she can't articulate at the moment.

D. de la Perrière

A desire for something she can't quite articulate.

She will, by that point, be relatively relieved—may be thinking of how to explain anything that might need explaining: any marks, to her parents, when she gets home that night. She will be thinking of her parents because by this point in the beating (his predictable process) she'll be long past explaining to anyone at the party.

D. de la Perrière

By then there will be no convincing anyone at the party.

New Years Eve, 1977, when they are at a party. There still might've been some possibility when he'd pulled her into the den. The empty den, pulled her in there, hard by her arm. Or even later when his friend had opened the door and said, smiling—a little uneasily (though, in retrospect, not uneasily enough)—“Hey, man—hey, is everything okay in there?”

D. de la Perrière

Smiling, a little uneasily. “Is everything okay in there?”

But by the time he is raping her—after the friend has closed the door, after the sound of her hitting then sliding down the wall, after she’s pleaded with him as quietly as possible (though, in retrospect, not quietly enough)—she is well past the point of making up stories anyone at the party might believe.

D. de la Perrière

Stories anyone really listening might believe.

So she is thinking of what she'll need to say to her parents. Whether she'll get out of there all right, will have visible bruises. She is wondering whether anyone at the party will tell. (She's pretty sure they won't, but it's always a possibility.) And she's not thinking of much of anything that's going on apart from that.

D. de la Perrière

What's going on right then: in the room, or her body.

Or that's what it seems like she might have been thinking.  
Because by now she's not really sure what she was thinking,  
whether in fact she was thinking anything at all.

D. de la Perrière

She has difficulty writing, even imagining, that girl—that girl's body, her life, what she could have been feeling.

(And I know what you're thinking: she must connect with her somehow, but she doesn't. Trust me. In this case, she doesn't.)

D. de la Perrière

She's begun writing this story quite a number of times—quite a number of drafts—none of which ever gets finished.

She can't imagine how to impose narrative structure on this. She can begin it but always finds herself doubling back—to provide context or background, to try to make things cohere.

D. de la Perrière

And the truth is she probably won't finish this time either. At some point she'll stop, tell herself she needs distance, will come back to it later, do it right this time around.

But she won't come back to it, or she will but when she does, she'll just re-read it, not know what to do with it, then put it away

D. de la Perrière