

Between Love and Hate

by Marc Lowe

"There is a fine line between love and hatred." This was what his closest friend, Bob Sanders, had said to him many years ago. And it had finally and irrevocably proven to be so.

"You see, when we love someone we invest them with all sorts of preconceptions. We love them for those things we most desire in them, whether or not those elements are in fact to be found in their personality. What we at first believe to be one thing may turn out to be quite another. And when this happens, love can quickly turn into hatred."

These words came back to him now in a flood of recognition. He had loved her. Had really loved her. Had invested her with all of his hopes, his desires, had believed her to be one thing when, in fact, she had turned out to be something totally different.

They had met at a bar in H_____. There was an immediate attraction between them, a spark that neither could deny. And so they had struck up a conversation with one another. One thing led to another, and, both having imbibed a fair amount of alcohol that night, they ended up in a hotel room together. This had been his first time (though definitely not hers, he later discovered, though she played coy and innocent on that first night).

They exchanged e-mail addresses, phone numbers, etc. From the next day forward, he earnestly pursued her. The thought of not talking to her even for a single day henceforth was motivation enough for him to send her a constant stream of e-mails, and to call at least once a night. At first, things seemed to go well. She responded to his enthusiasm with an almost-equal level of enthusiasm, seemed to really enjoy their talks and spoke of future meetings. Although he had some doubts, he was basically happy during these days, though they weren't able to meet in person immediately, or so she insisted. This was, though he didn't yet know it, the beginning of the end.

By around the end of the second week, he started to get antsy. He wanted to see her, he said, even if just for a quick cup of coffee somewhere. But she deterred him with excuses, said that it wasn't possible to meet right now, but that soon she would have more free time and they could see each other. She even inferred that they might have sex again. He was cautiously optimistic; her words fueled him with hope while, at the same time, preventing him from getting any closer to her in the immediate future.

By the end of the third week of their correspondence, things started to wither on the vine. She stopped answering his e-mails (or rather tersely answered them days later, rather than minutes or hours), evaded many of his questions, didn't pick up the phone. And, unless he made the effort to contact her, they might go for days without speaking at all. He became starkly aware of this simple fact.

And then, during the fourth week, it happened. She told him to stop bothering her, said that she was too busy to continue corresponding and that he shouldn't contact her unless he had something really important to tell her, something dire, essentially.

It was at this point that his love for her began to transform into hatred.

Why, he wondered, had she led him on for so many weeks? Why hadn't he realized sooner that he was acting like a subordinate, rather than holding the reins? How come they hadn't met again, hadn't had sex again (or at least made out on occasion)? Why had he felt so encouraged when, in fact, there was nothing to feel encouraged by?

"There is a fine line between love and hatred." It was these words that returned to his mind. How pure they sounded! How true!

Then one day the phone rang, and his heart leapt when he heard her voice at the other end of the line.

And thus the cycle of love and hate began all over again. It continued for months on end until finally, one bleak October day, he walked off of a bridge. She, on the other hand, got married a mere nine months later. She now lives with her husband and three

children in a big house approximately seven blocks from where the deceased used to live.

