

Boyhood

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I met up with her in front of the chapel and we walked. I had no idea where we were going; she had said that some soccer fields by the river would do. Beforehand, I had sat on my bed getting ready. I threw on some comfortable sweatpants and a tight shirt to impress anyone we passed by on the way down.

I looked at myself in the mirror.

Hair fine. Muscles fine. Shoes, these will have to do. I thought to myself, *I should frame these clothes afterwards*. I drenched himself with Hugo Boss cologne and walked out the door. Now I was striding along next to her. We walked past the faculty housing on the edge of campus, and to the tall grass afterwards, and through the patch of daisies right before the fields. I looked to the girl I was walking with. I was going to have sex. I couldn't fucking believe it. In no time I would lose my virginity.

The first time I'd heard the concept of virginity was when I was around 13. I remember sitting in a dirty alleyway somewhere at home, my friends standing around probably smoking cigarettes, flicking bottle caps, and cursing out each others' mothers. An older guy named Ahmed was telling us about a girl he had met over the summer. He was rattling off about their encounter, and then he said it.

Virginity.

Our necks immediately snapped left and right. My friends and I almost communicated telepathically. Could it be that some sort of reincarnation of Jesus itself was in our very midst? Or was Ahmed a fallen angel?

Holy Shit.

Immediately my mind warped, like I was high on some hardcore psychedelic shit. I curled up next to a wall and gazed at Ahmed. The boy became a man before my eyes. He shot out of the ground on a pedestal. Not just a pedestal, a fucking spinning pedestal with stripes and shit. Kind of like the "Family Guy" intro. It's the moment I'm sure that a lot of young boys have, a moment that plagues their minds forever. A colloquial saying goes, "Don't hate the player, hate the game." From that moment on, I became obsessed with "the game."

The game ruins relationships forever. It's a societal thing really. Sex, virginity, those concepts become synonymous with being a man, with being respected. A few years later I found myself at boarding school. But it's not just the environment of having boys and girls in close proximity for days on end that gets to you. For me it was America.

I'm an international student. I always have been, and I always will be. I grew up in a compound in Saudi Arabia, a small American suburbia in the middle of desert. Sure, laws there are different, but it's not just the laws we can read and interpret and put into practice. It sounds fucking stupid to say, but there's something in the air, cultural ideology floating around that is much different from "the land of the free." One thing floating around was the idea of sex. The idea just wasn't very big where I lived. Of course my young mind thought of sex, put the idea of losing my virginity up on a pedestal, and dreamed of sexual encounters that would make me a "savage," but these were only thoughts, figments of my imagination that seeped through my fingers. Coming to America made these figments attainable. Attainable, but pressured.

It's not just the story of me walking to go experience my "first time" that are pressured, it's been my entire life. Non-virgins and virgins, the categories become similar to 'us' and 'them'. We put each other in groups, and those groups define us. More importantly, these groups, the concept of virginity, these ideas are taking over what it means to have a healthy sexual relationship. So to all the 13 year old boys out there sitting in alleyways with free thinking minds, *Ahmed doesn't have to be you.*