

Following is a story I wrote that was recently published by the journal Colossus, Vol. 3, "The Body: An Anthology on the Sovereignty of the Self." It contains one small typo on the last line of the second-to-last paragraph: "of all things," should read "of all things," - No biggie. There are other sentences I'd like to re-write, especially toward the end, just to make them less clunky.

The story itself is fiction inspired by the all too true and tragic story of poor Raymond Frolander, from Daytona Beach, FL. I wanted to include a photo of Raymond, just to give some illustration of how horrifically he really was beaten, but I can't find it now. Google his name and you'll see the horrible picture as well as the deeply biased, one sided, one dimensional bullshit account of what was done to him and his good friend by the father of that friend, one deeply demented Jason Browning, who by all accounts used this horrorshow to exploit his son for cash on GoFundMe back in 2014 or 2015. Good dude, this Jason. ~

My story is a suggestion for what young Master Browning's life might have been like before his insane father tried to kill his best friend right in front of him. No doubt every single detail is completely wrong - after all, I just made it all up. But the end is more or less "torn from the headlines", as they say, and I stand by it <sup>as</sup> the most close-to-accurate account of what these two young people suffered that day, which sure broke them <sup>both</sup> and will haunt each for the rest of his life, in their own ways. I feel deeply for both and wish them nothing but the best.



## For Master Browning and Ray

*Dymitri Hubert Haraszewski*

A baby is born, introduced to extra-uterine existence with a solid slap on the tookas. His world is little more than a universe of hands—doctors' and nurses' and parents' hands, some hands rough, some soft, all lifting and poking and squeezing, all pulling him into bosoms or precariously passing him around for inspection... hands eager to be the Guiding Hands that raise up a child in the way he should go. He is a boy who is loved, as loved as any child, and like most children he largely experiences this love as the possession and control of his body by others. Our temptation, of course, is to affirm that it's for his own good, all this attention and ministrations, and truly, for the first and probably also the last time in his life, the intentions around him incline exclusively toward his genuine benefit. All too soon, however, the warping pressure of adult interest begins, starting with baby's first body modification: infant circumcision. He is permanently maimed for aesthetic preferences (or worse), and though he shrieks in pain, the grown-ups just smile and hug one another in a veritable celebration of his agony. Fortunately, evolution is sometimes merciful, and a nifty neurological quirk keeps him from remembering any of this trauma for very long. Welcome to the big world, little guy.

A child grows, faster than anyone grasps, and quite suddenly, now we are six. He's passed through infancy and a Pooh-Bear saturated toddlerhood, wherein his universe of hands did not diminish but merely shifted from cuddling and coddling and accompanying coos to a more stoic emphasis on prohibition and punishment, the Guiding Hands obsessively redirecting his own little ones from an infinitude of forbidden allurements, often encompassing his very self: "Don't pick your nose; take that out of your mouth; stop grabbing yourself there." All restrictions and demands on his body are said, of course, to be for his own good; even the gauntlet of The Potty, which he bravely faced when only three years old to overcome his terror of that ravenous, all-consuming void. Now at six, he's internalized much of the moral judgment against his personal form and function, and is thus anointed a "good boy," heaping ever more bragging rights upon Mom and Dad, as every good boy must.

Soon our boy is eight, which is enough to discover irony. In school they teach Good Touch vs. Bad Touch, and he deems it common sense—Good Touch is what you like, Bad is what you don't. The third grader learns to tell

trusted adults about Bad Touches, because only he may decide who touches him. That is what he is told. That same week, though, his older sister grabs him and jumps into the pool, even though she knows he fears the water and cannot swim. Because this is an obviously Bad Touch, he yells "STOP!" but she ignores him and when he surfaces, sputtering and angry, the adults just laugh at his humiliated and rageful tears. His conclusion? When it comes to his body, teachers are full of shit.

In his early "tweens," the lad has a few girlfriends, and before each "date," his parents insist he must not touch them. Odd; he'd thought the great, oft-repeated message was that only he (like presumably any other kid) could decide who may or may not touch. Suppose she wanted to touch him? Still, he doesn't argue, not after his ninth birthday party, when his mother found him in a tree house where a younger boy was touching his private area through his pants. That child was yanked out and sent home crying, while our birthday boy quite reasonably explained that because the other kid had asked permission first, it was a Good Touch. That's when his father, in a dramatic reintroduction of the recently dormant Guiding Hands, hit him like a grown man. He was told it was for his own good, to control his "smart mouth" (which, he reflected, was clearly not smart enough), and after the fracture was successfully passed off as a zipline accident, the family never mentioned it again. This kept him from touching any of his girlfriends, not even for a hug. He knew better.

Puberty can be rough for anyone, and our young man is no exception. Still not yet a teenager, his chaste "dates" have lost their luster amidst increasing fantasies about all the bodies he's not allowed to touch. He isn't sex-obsessed, far from it, but the thoughts certainly cross his mind. He doesn't even know much about it, sex that is, since usually he's just told he's not supposed to have any. He only knows he wants it, on a deeply visceral level that no amount of moralizing can alter.

Further, he's recently begun skateboarding, which has cultivated a sense of flesh and blood ownership like none he's ever felt before. It stems partly from the primal satisfaction of injuries endured as a cost of mastering techniques that demand months of dedication and bodily sacrifice; partly from immersion in a subculture that honors his personhood and relieves



the industrial drudgery of schooling and all else “for his own good” in a coercively conformist society. Not that he expresses himself with such sophistication at twelve; he’s simply experiencing the world— and himself in it— in liberatingly new ways.

Well into his thirteenth year, our friend bears the scars of childhood (some deeper than others), but he is happy, or as happy as anyone his age. And, like most people his age, many in society still reject his agency and autonomy, counting him a mere child. Yet he is, in fact, an adolescent; a full-fledged person who is smart, wickedly funny, and sublimely sensitive, even if he only displays any of those traits intermittently and in the right company. Also, he’s made new friends.

One sunny, summer afternoon, he’s in his room playing video games with his best friend, an eighteen-year-old skater boi from across town. On this day, his father happens to return home unusually early, and overflowing with paternal entitlement, he presumptuously opens his son’s bedroom door without knocking. Inside, he discovers the two youths *in flagrante*, engaged in what his son quite evidently considers an especially Good Touch. Predictably, father is perturbed, and demonstrates his displeasure by snatching their guest up with his Guiding Hands and proceeding to beat him to an unconscious pulp, prevented from finishing the job with a steak knife only by his beloved offspring’s tearful appeal that he please not murder his best friend. Father relents and graciously calls the police to relate how his heroic son has saved his abuser’s life, so they’ll need an ambulance when they come to collect the gravely injured “molester.” Charges are never pressed for Father’s enraged assault and near-manslaughter, but the diligent crime fighters do move expeditiously to interrogate our traumatized teen about his private sexual thoughts and actions, the intimacies of his body, ultimately informing him that he must now testify to ensure that his battered and bloody buddy is lengthily caged for, of all thing, hurting him.

All of this, of course, is done for his own good. Unfortunately — and perhaps more unfortunate for us than him — evolution has no merciful memory tricks to help teenagers forget, so there’s really no telling what such a profoundly disregarded and disrespected young man will choose to do with his body next... just to prove to us that he can.