

KATE WERBLE GALLERY

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BOUND AND GAGGED AND LOVIN' EVERY MINUTE OF IT: THE EXQUISITE TORTURE OF PAYING FOR YOUR OWN CUSTOMIZED KIDNAP EXPERIENCE

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I was sitting in my living room with Brock Enright, a twenty-six-year-old New York artist who plans, executes and videotapes kidnappings for hire. We were strategizing my abduction. "I'm sort of a control freak," I found myself confessing to the handsome but boyishly creepy Enright. "So I'm looking to confront my fear of chaos. I'm thinking maybe the kidnappers' indecision and lack of organization are what imperil me."

"I like that," Enright said. He gave me a questionnaire that asked me to list my greatest fears: I listed "suffocation," "drowning," "slipping in vomit." He asked if there were any other specific elements I wanted to include. I said it might be "very dramatic" if I were initially approached on the street at an unspecified time and, while held at gunpoint, forced to mask my terror while led through crowded streets. Enright asked if I wanted the pressure of the gun on my back to be theatrical or realistic. I said, "realistic."

Many of Enright's kidnappings have a sexual component; Enright claims that none of the twenty-nine people he's abducted in the past ten years has ever asked for sex with a stranger, preferring it to be with someone they already know. He asked me, "Do you want to specify anything sexually, or do you want to leave it vague?" I admitted, "I don't want to work too – as they say in show business – blue. But, that said, I'm generally made very uncomfortable by the presence of an enormous black dildo."

"So you'd like that?" he asked.

As I left the New York University gym, a man put his left arm around my neck tightly; his right hand, obscured by a jacket, pressed a gun into my back. "Put your arm around me like we're lovers!" he hissed. Suddenly I was scared. My throat constricted. I was unable to look the gunman in the face. It dawned on me: Not only have I given a group of strangers' permission to kidnap me, but I have encouraged them to do it ineptly, and to use a gun while doing it. What wouldn't Enright do? As a teen, the aspiring cineaste snuck up on his aunt one day and filmed her while she was sitting on the toilet. Suddenly I was Enright's aunt, and New York was my toilet.

The gunman guided me into the back of a van, where five masked individuals threw icy-cold water at me, pushed me onto the van's floor and wrapped my mouth and eyes in duct tape. While binding my feet, one of the kidnappers positioned his posterior directly onto my face; a little voice inside my head said, "I can't believe I'm paying \$1,500 for this." They stuffed me into a duffel bag. We drove for about thirty minutes, whence I was decanted from the duffel bag and deposited onto a mattress on the floor of a dark, dusty, fifteen-by-twenty-foot basement chamber whose location, per my request, was unknown to me.

The next six hours were very possibly the most frightening six hours of my life. That I could shut down this production at any moment merely by employing my code word didn't matter. I had suspended my disbelief, I was in the game. After being repeatedly blindfolded and rebound and gagged by the masked men, I was stripped to my underwear and subjected to surprise showers of a variety of liquids – water, beer, and maple syrup. A man whom I would come to think of as the Depilator pulled hairs out of my chest. Footage of CNN fashion commentator Elsa Klensch vamping on about Princess Di was played on a loop. A malodorous skinhead licked me. I had to

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pee into Dixie cups. I was slapped once and manhandled frequently. Some of my bruises would last for weeks.

By the end of the evening, I had cried three times. My one ally was a captor – I was quite certain that it was Enright beneath the mask – who spoke in a high-pitched Tele-tubby-type voice; in a strange reversal of Stockholm syndrome, this fellow had eyes for me. At one point he lay his body on top of mine, hump-style. At another, he told me, “I’ll do anything you ask me to.” He told me he had fallen in love with me... That Enright, who’d seemed nervous and slightly formal in my apartment, could transform himself into this character did not wholly surprise me; as with most actors you meet, you sense that there are two parts to Enright’s being: a large, warm pool of sentiment, moral humanity; and a billboard on a highway reading, simply, WILLING.

Strangely, even though I had just passed the most harrowing night of my life, I didn’t like criticizing Enright in front of his crew; he’s formed a kind of family with these sociopaths – a situation seemingly underlined by the fact that Enright wears the Movado watch that his largely absent father was wearing when he jumped to his death last year – and I didn’t want to – undermine his authority.

I asked him, too, about responsibility. Enright, who has a M.F.A. from Columbia, sees himself as an artist, not a therapist. But given the nature of his work, doesn’t he carry a burden of responsibility vis-à-vis his clients’ psyches? The artist was fairly detached on this topic. He claimed he’s just trying to make a movie and to make sure no one gets hurt, downplaying the responsibility by saying that it’s “the same responsibility I feel toward another person on the subway, or someone at a bar.”... “I think about it like skydiving. Sky diving is scary for people around you, too – unless you know a lot about skydiving.”

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