

## **Jeanne Cotter**

Submitted 9/21/2020

Account of underage incidents

*Stay away from the wild dogs howling in the woods.  
It's in the cry of the wild dogs the secrets will come loose.  
Stay away from the wild dogs howling inside you.  
Just keep your mouth closed like all the "good girls" do.*

(refrain of Wild Dogs, written during my last months of marriage to David)

### **1980**

I turned 16 on a Wednesday and drove myself the 90 miles to St. Paul two days later. This was my first experience of life "on my own", independent from parents or any other chaperoning adult. The freedom was terrifying and positively exhilarating. But I was still just barely 16. I arrived at the St. Paul Catholic Youth Center in time to sign in for the weekend workshop. After a welcome and staff introductions, the participants (who, except for me, were adults working in music ministry) were invited to enjoy a concert by a new composer named David Haas. He was lanky, with a thin waist and narrow hips. David had a huge nose (which seemed to make him very self-conscious) that he repeatedly pulled on and big, dopey brown eyes. But when he sang I felt a river of tears well up inside of me. David had an effortless, honey-tenor voice that broke my heart as he yodeled into falsetto at the end of "Take All The Lost Home". He sang like he was King David, or Jesus...or at least had a direct spiritual line to God. During that concert, I imagined he was Jesus.

I needed a Jesus at that time in my life and somehow David Haas had the capacity to intuit that or maybe "smell the need" on me. Though he has a terrible sense of smell, he has a keen sense of who has unhealed pain, especially the kind that leaves one separated from one's own body and somatic sense of safety or lack of it! David is an expert at spotting female insecurity...and not just the generic teen insecurity about whether or not one is "pretty" enough. Most teen girls go through the agonizing process of maturing in a society that says we can only have access to power by being an object of sexual desire for men; especially men with power. David doesn't pursue teens/young women with this generic insecurity. His stealth radar and unrelenting attraction is to teens/young women (or any age, really) who have been uprooted from the ground of their own being by trauma. David pursues females who have been severed somehow from their deepest sense of self and thus, their inherent sense of value. Only then does he have immediate access to their vacuum-forced need for affirmation. And David is brilliant at vomiting affirmation. This gift of full-press affirmation is a significant tool he uses to groom mentees and allies of both genders.

## **Jeanne Cotter**

Submitted 9/21/2020

### **Account of underage incidents**

Since I was the only teen at the music ministry workshop, I was given a front row seat and publicly affirmed and questioned how I happened to get registered for the experience.

Before David took to the “stage”, he knew I was 16, attending the workshop alone and was the only teen in the audience.

David had everyone wiping emotional tears, singing along with new songs he taught us and even had us howling with laughter as he acted out his Ladder Story. The laughter got uncomfortable when he sang the “Peanut Butter and Jelly” song. It is a silly kids’ song by Joe Wise: “peanut butter and jelly, that’s what I like in my belly...” But David used exaggerated body humor, rhythm and vocal tone to make it a sexually charged song. It wasn’t a peanut butter sandwich that he was licking his chops for. He was

acting like he was giving oral sex to the microphone, and snaking his cocked hips around the mic stand. Just before singing the final refrain, David stopped playing the guitar and breathlessly spoke the setup lyrics, as if about to orgasm, then “completed” the orgasm as he launched into the final refrain. The oxymoron of watching this inspiring holy man using a kids’ song as a sexual metaphor was really unnerving. He stopped including that song in his concerts by the late 80s. But up to that point, it was a part of his brand. It was soooooo gross and creepy! And because he threw his perversion in front of audiences with such reckless abandon and over-the-top ridiculousness, we all dismissed our discomfort as our own prudishness. I had that feeling at the CYC concert in 1980 and witnessed the same dynamic in audiences for the next several years. It was a part of David’s ‘cover.’ By acting out his sexual perversion right in front of everyone’s eyes he strategically dismantled our ability to name it for the aberration it was. This is just one example of how everyone fell in line with David’s narrative about himself. And thus we all kept on repeating ‘that’s just David being David’.

Most adults attending the CYC concert/workshop were from the Twin Cities and were called “commuters”. I remember feeling both scared and excited, realizing there would be very few people staying overnight. I hoped I’d get a chance to meet David when the commuters went home.

While en-route to the female side of the sleeping quarters I ran into him, alone in a musty-smelling hallway. David said “so, tell me about yourself”. I was shy and awkward, telling him I played the

## **Jeanne Cotter**

Submitted 9/21/2020

### **Account of underage incidents**

piano and helped with the music at my church. He asked me if I'd "show him". He led me back to the empty, shadowy gym where the piano was set up. It didn't feel dangerous or scary to me 'cause this was David Haas, the man who seemed to have direct access to Jesus, who wanted to hear me play. I don't remember which piano piece I played but I do remember David's face, quite dramatically lit up with excitement at what he was hearing. He emphatically said I was "wonderful". He asked if I sang or wrote songs and upon learning I did both, he leaned toward me over the left side of the piano music stand and again asked if I'd "show him". His face was closer and I could see how long his eye lashes were under his very animated raised eyebrows. There was one dark brown ringlet of hair that dropped in the center of his forehead. As I tried to figure out which song I should sing for him I could feel my heart racing and that light-headed feeling I would get when feeling overwhelmed.

I started the introduction to Balloon Man, the first song I wrote when I was 12. (As a child attending our parish mardi gras each February, I absolutely loved the balloon man and the helium balloons he sold. I was sure the balloons were magic because they were the only ones I had ever seen float in the air.) I chose to sing Balloon Man for David because I had a feeling he was like a balloon man for my teenage self. He seemed to have access to magic, too.

*Look at the sun, it's calling us to play.  
What miracles will you give me today?  
I saw you last night, you sang to me in my dreams  
And now that it's light I can see we're a team.*

*When I grow old like Mommy and Dad,  
I'll remember the good times we've had  
For you are the Balloon Man,  
You are my friend.*

*When the sun turns to windy winter,  
Will you have to go?  
Please stay with me through the spiteful cold  
'Cause then we can play in the snow.*

## **Jeanne Cotter**

Submitted 9/21/2020

### Account of underage incidents

*When I grow old like Mommy and Dad,  
I'll remember the good times we've had  
For you are the Balloon Man,  
You are my friend.*

*You are the one who knows the secrets.  
You are a hero to me.  
You give me hugs and tell me the stories.  
You taught me to see  
The rainbow colors your hands hold,  
That the magic of your balloons will never be sold  
For you are the Balloon Man  
You are my friend.*

*When I grow old like Mommy and Dad,  
I'll remember the good times we've had  
For you are the Balloon Man,  
You are my friend.*

David said many affirming things to me. He liked the way I played the piano, he liked my smile, I was so pretty, I was so talented. And he was effusive about my hands, calling them "healing hands". He stretched out his arms, pulling me forward off the piano bench. He kissed me on my left cheek and held me in an uncomfortably long embrace. He was wearing a cream-colored, short-sleeved button-down shirt. The collar smelled of stinky bedhead and ketchup.

My memory goes dark from there. I don't remember where I slept, how I woke up, where we ate breakfast or anything else about David through the Saturday workshop. I have no memory of the day ending, giving David my contact information or driving back home.

Our farm house had one phone in the middle of our kitchen. There was no such thing as a "private" phone call at our house with 10 kids. We weren't allowed to have our school friends call us for chats so I rarely spoke on the phone while growing up. And I have no memory of ever making a long distance call from home because that was considered an extravagant expenditure of money.

## **Jeanne Cotter**

Submitted 9/21/2020

### **Account of underage incidents**

So the phone calls between David and myself could only have been initiated by him. I don't know how many times we spoke between the May 1980 CYC workshop and the October 1980 concert/workshop he gave in Austin, but there were several calls. I remember feeling really self conscious and embarrassed having my two brothers closest in age to me make fun of me during the calls. They'd imitate how I spoke because I tried to sound worldly and grown up when talking to David. He encouraged me to ask my pastor to host him for a music ministry concert and workshop in Austin. My pastor agreed to host and pay the fee. All of this was initiated and promoted by David. I, of course, was honored to know a celebrity and have direct access to him via his calls. Father Gavin was a fan of David's music and thus was very impressed that I had made such a connection with him during the CYC ministry weekend.

### **October 1980 (I was less than 16 and a half years old)**

David drove the two hours from his parish job in Ankeny, Iowa to give a Friday night concert at St. Augustine's church and Saturday music ministry workshop at St. Edward's church in Austin. I distinctly remember what I was wearing that Friday during school as it was a departure from my normal clothes. I had on black dress pants that were too long for me except I also had on my brand new Candies sandals, which had the first high heel I'd ever worn. The pant line fell to just above my toes, making my legs look longer than I had ever seen. I felt great because it seemed that with the extra long-looking legs I no longer looked "top heavy". I remember walking tall down the hall of Pacelli high school, remarkably freed to stand up straight rather than slouch to make my breasts look smaller. I wore my bubble gum pink cable knit wool sweater over a white uniform blouse and added the thin cherry-colored velvet ribbon around my neck, tied in a bow that rested like a necklace on my bodice.

I was incredibly happy during the concert. Many parishioners showed up out of support for me and the teen choir I led. And there were numerous directors of music from parishes in the surrounding farm towns who came with some of their choir members. I remember my choral teacher shaking her lowered head as she chuckled in disbelief during David's rendition of *Peanut Butter and Jelly*. I was really uncomfortable during that song, wondering what my mom was gonna say or do. But Mom laughed at his craziness and orgasmic display. I was sure if my dad wasn't home babysitting the little kids that he would have been disgusted by David's PB&J performance and that would have been the end of my connection to David.

## **Jeanne Cotter**

Submitted 9/21/2020

### **Account of underage incidents**

I was treated like a celebrity from the “old timers” in attendance who told me they were proud of me and “knew I was going somewhere”. And my mom got lots of affirmation that night too. When we were moving the piano back into place David asked me if I wanted to “go out for a coke” to talk about the concert. Mom asked where we would be going and then said yes, I could go. David had a weird-colored greenish early 1970s sedan. We didn’t wear seatbelts then and the front seat was one continuous seat rather than today’s typical bucket seats. David swept stuff off the front seat and I climbed in, resting my Candies high heels in a sea of fast food paper bags on the floor, and directed him to *The Other Place* restaurant on Main Street. We sat in the Northwest corner booth, away from any other customers. We ordered coke for him and diet coke for me, asking for refills. David asked lots of questions about my life and my hopes and dreams. No one had ever asked about my dreams. He again told me I was beautiful. And he complimented me on my ribbon and “especially what was under the ribbon”. I don’t remember my reply but I was flooded with that dizzy feeling and felt my face go red hot. My obvious insecurity seemed very energizing to David. When I got all tongue tied and embarrassed, he did his exuberant affirmation vomit about just how gorgeous my breasts were. Sure, for two track seasons I had endured teasing from the area boys’ teams when I ran my races. My nickname from them was the derogatory, “Jugs”. But no one had ever said anything about my breasts being gorgeous. I was desperate to hear David’s energetic compliments and yet utterly mortified at the same time.

It was a clear, chilly night as we walked out to his car. I didn’t know what time it was but realized we were likely the last customers as there was only David’s car parked in the small lot and one parked on the street in front of *The Other Place*. I assumed we would start driving to the farm as David was to be our overnight guest. But without saying anything David moved closer to the center of the front seat while his right arm slid behind my neck. He used my lower neck like a brace to help hoist his full frame over and on top of me. I instinctively leaned the other way until smashed against the passenger door window just above the lock. It all happened so fast. I was not moving into a receptive position, willing to be “taken” by him. I was reflexively moving away from danger, moving toward my escape.

My right elbow got uncomfortably pinned against the door armrest while my forearm and hand was smashed under my right side. David put his mouth over the lower part of my face. I didn’t part my lips or pucker like I was a knowing participant in a kiss.

## **Jeanne Cotter**

Submitted 9/21/2020

### **Account of underage incidents**

David's mouth was wide open, his slobbery lips sealed under my nose, around my mouth and moved like a slimy slug along the middle of my chin well beneath my lower lip. Screaming in my head was my own voice "oh my God, oh my God, oh my God....it's a SNAKE." Not only had I never been kissed before, I didn't even know what a French kiss was.

David pushed his tongue against my closed lips. It felt like he had put a snake on my face. Then suddenly the snake was in my mouth and starting to move down my throat. I must have made some sort of noise because David pulled his face back and said "this is great" and then resumed. It was only then that I was able to inhale and I realized there was actually no terrifying snake. What was happening was David Haas was aggressively swooshing his tongue around my mouth and grinding it so far back around the top of my throat that I felt I was suffocating.

I was somehow spread out at an angle, my feet closer to under the steering wheel. David's full upper and mid body weight was on top of me as he must have had his feet braced against the driver's side door. His pelvis was pushed and active against the outside of my upper left thigh. David had put his right hand under my wool sweater and was aggressively rubbing and tightly squeezing my right breast and underarm flesh. I had my white blouse tucked into my pants so when David put his hand under my sweater, he was mauling my breast with my bra and blouse in-between my skin and his hand. Everything was happening so fast that I couldn't organize my brain to focus on counting or some other distraction.

Instead I remember trying to be "ok" by tightly pinching a thin wrinkle of my pants material between my thumb nail and second finger tip as it was pinned under my right thigh. I tried to stay alert and aware, but the smell and taste of his breath was so putrid, I just couldn't. Dead animal and damp ash was the smell. Kissing a real salmonella-covered snake would actually have been better.

That's all I can remember of that encounter. I know David was to stay at our home that night. I know he led a workshop the next day on music ministry. I remember absolutely nothing of the drive home, where he slept, breakfast the next morning or any of the workshop day. The only thing I remember is overhearing David say that Austin is halfway between Des Moines and the Twin Cities and that Austin was gonna be a perfect stopping point for him. We all knew he'd be back.

## **Jeanne Cotter**

Submitted 9/21/2020

Account of underage incidents

### **Healing hands**

I don't remember when exactly David visited, but the living room windows were open with lovely spring air blowing in. He had business to take care of in St. Paul and made our house his half-way stop. David made a big deal about the smell of cow manure in the breeze. I can see my younger siblings laughing as he very demonstratively pinched his nose saying "peeeewwww". I had recently experienced my confirmation retreat and was excited to tell David all about it. I was sure he'd understand the intense love for God I felt and my overwhelming desire for the Holy Spirit to work in and through me. I was either about to turn 17 years old or had just turned 17.

David asked me to massage him with my "healing hands". Though I have no earlier memory of massaging David's shoulders, this request seemed very familiar to me. I sat on our yellow flower-patterned couch and David sat on the floor in front of me, moaning as I massaged his upper back and shoulders. At one point he reached back and took my hands and placed them on his heart with his hands on mine. He told me I am a healer, and seemed really genuine when he exclaimed "My God, these hands" as he pushed my hands deeper into his chest.

My parents were in the kitchen and I was nervous one of them would open the door to the living room. I was ok being seen massaging David's shoulders but I really did not want my parents to see him squeezing my hands into his heart, as if I could penetrate his flesh. Or maybe my discomfort was because David's grip on my hands actually pulled my head down so my face was uncomfortably close to his. He held my hands on his heart for what seemed an eternity.

To be called a healer was exhilarating to me. I thought David saw right into my heart and "calling". My journals were full of my desire and prayers to somehow have God use my life for healing people. I had spent countless hours listening to David's song, *To Be Your Bread*, and felt he was speaking directly for Jesus to me. I heard the invitation to be changed, I heard I was welcome at the table and into relationship with Jesus with all that was broken in me, with my life as it was. And I felt hope that I could be made "one again", be healed.

As a 16 year old, I really did think that David was offering to be Jesus' "body once again", to be the sign of God's love for me.

## **Jeanne Cotter**

Submitted 9/21/2020

Account of underage incidents

*"To be your bread now, be your wine now  
Lord, come and change us to be a sign of your love.  
Blessed and broken, poured and flowing  
gifts that you gave us to be your body once again.*

*We come to your table with our lives as they are.  
Heal us, Lord, for we are broken; make us one again."*

(To Be Your Bread...DH)

My immaturity and emotional neediness made me especially vulnerable to David's spiritual manipulation. He didn't just have a beautiful voice at that time, he was also a very gifted performer. He had charisma and disarming vulnerability, even as he communicated 100% confidence in his own role of bringing God's Good News to audiences. His roots are in musical theater and David is excellent at portraying the proper character on stage. One can't help but believe his fervent love and commitment to God. And as David sang of hope, of healing and God's love for me, I received a kind of "hero's elixir". The problem was that David had not done his own psycho-emotional work, he had not gone through the rigors of his own Hero's Journey that would give him the authentic right to bring the "elixir" back to the community, to me. But as a teenager, I was convinced by David's performance(s) that he had actually done the work of his own hero's journey, that the healing "elixir" he bought me could be trusted...that *he* could be trusted.

I told myself that I had to just "get over" whatever aversion I was feeling toward David (his teeth had a line of greenish tarter along his gum line that showed when he smiled). When David proclaimed me a healer, I thought he must be genuinely good and obviously wanted only to connect with the "right parts of me", the "spiritual Jeanne". And besides that, when David begged for my healing hands to touch him and hold his heart, I felt he was showing me his vulnerability and woundedness. This was a big "hook" for me. I was formed in codependent care-taking of the "lost and broken" ones. The familiarity of David's "brokenness" was comforting to me and overrode any unease, confusion or fear that were my constant companions when I was around him.

## **Jeanne Cotter**

Submitted 9/21/2020

Account of underage incidents

### **Christmas robe**

David drove up from Ankeny the winter of 1981-82, staying overnight again on his way to the Twin Cities. Following a blizzard, the temps had turned sub-zero and I remember him complaining about the living room being too cold for any decent piano playing. But all the same, David played and sang for us and thrilled my younger siblings by his silliness. His rendition of *Peanut Butter and Jelly* was far more “campy” and off-the charts goofy rather than hyper-sexualized. David told me I had a really special family. We had adopted two more kids that year, two brothers ages 4 and 5. Ben and Joe brought utter chaos into our already strained home as they acted out their own early childhood trauma. And our town had begun to rebel against having more “problem brown children” brought in by the Cotters. So it meant a great deal to me that David somehow really “got” us. He understood that adopting so many needy children was my parents’ way of living the gospel call to “care for the least among us”. I hoped David would hold some wonderment for me for coming from such a special family. I hoped maybe he’d even write a song about us.

My desire for connection with David remained a very spiritual one. I had a deep personal prayer life and unrelenting desire to serve God. And that drive left me feeling disconnected from my peers. I felt weird and always wanted to hide my faith from my high school classmates and friends. But with David, it was different. I felt like I could be open about the spiritual longing at my core. I didn’t get much time alone with David where I could share this “holy longing”. But with each new song he shared, I just knew he understood. For who could write such songs without having an intimate connection with God? Who could write such songs unless they, too, felt that fire of longing for closeness with Jesus?

The kids went to bed, we said goodnight to Mom and Dad as they went to bed. My two sisters set up their sleeping bags on the living room floor so their room could be the guest bedroom. David and I said our goodnights. I changed into my red plaid bathrobe that Santa had brought me weeks earlier. It was soft and had a zipper from belly button to collar. I used it more as pajamas than robe and thus had no layers of clothing under the robe that night. I brushed my teeth in the downstairs bathroom as David was in the upstairs bathroom. When I opened the door and turned to head upstairs to my bedroom, there was David standing in the dark with his street clothes still on. I don’t remember him saying anything to me. He was likely quiet, knowing my sisters were on the floor just around the corner. Again, everything happened really fast. David’s left arm came around my neck as

## **Jeanne Cotter**

Submitted 9/21/2020

### **Account of underage incidents**

he pressed his body into mine. My head was against the plaster wall across from the clothes chute. He unzipped my robe with his right hand as he aggressively French kissed me. His right hand groped all over my bare skin. He had unencumbered access to whatever he could reach of my body. We were just a foot or so from the front door at the landing of the stairs. The door faces north. David slobbered, groped and rhythmically pressed against me as I left my body. I focused all my attention on the north wind that was blowing hard that night, creating an ominous whistling sound through the line of pine trees outside. I left on that wind.

The next morning the sun was blindingly bright as it reflected off the blowing snow, but it was still sub-zero out. I remember my dad standing at the kitchen windows looking at David's car in the driveway. Dad had said several times that he thought David was a "knucklehead when it came to anything practical." He sarcastically asked David if he thought there was enough tread on his tires to get him to St. Paul. David was visibly uncomfortable around my dad. Something in that exchange felt good to me that morning. I later heard Dad tell my mom that he'd have "pushed the damn car all the way to St. Paul if he had to."

I turned 18 in May 1982, graduated high school and started college at the school David encouraged me to attend in St. Paul. Early that fall...September or October at the latest, I was asked out by David "for a real date". It was not until being asked out on a date that I realized David wanted a relationship where the connection was more than spiritual. He took me to Old Mexico for dinner followed by a movie. It was in the theater parking lot after the movie that David aggressively pulled my head toward him and shoved my face into his crotch, demanding oral sex. I was 18 and know this was the first time my face was near his crotch because I audibly gagged at the smell. I didn't know he smelled that bad in his groin area until then. I also remember the realization that I had to give him oral sex but I had no idea what to do. I had never had my mouth near anyone's genitals. I write this just to verify that genital sex (other than David masturbating against my clothed body) didn't begin until after I turned 18.

This is my accounting of underage encounters with David Haas. How I could have stayed in an intimate relationship with David until I was 31 years old is a complicated story for me to tell at another time.