

ERASING THE BRAIN

By Nina Mansfield

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Cast of Characters

ELLEN, a thirteen-year-old girl

MATTIE, Ellen's ten-year-old brother.

VOICE OF MOTHER, an offstage voice.

Characters can be played by age appropriate children or adult actors.

Time

The present.

Place

A living room or family room. The room has a television console with a video game system, which can be suggested by having Mattie face the audience while playing the video game.

The video game controller can be replaced with a handheld gaming device or remote control device, in which case, the play could be staged on a very, very simple set.

Acknowledgments

The play premiered in April 2010 as part of Turtle Shell Productions' 8-Minute Madness YouthFest (New York, NY), directed by Joel Haberli.

Lights up on MATTIE, who is sitting, engrossed in a video game. The SOUNDS of a video game can be heard, and the LIGHT from the television flickers on Mattie's face. ELLEN storms into the living room. She is holding her diary, which she slams down on a nearby table.

ELLEN
Just who do you think you are?

MATTIE
If you hold on two seconds, I will be...master of the universe.

Ellen grabs the controller away from him; he tries to snatch it back.

MATTIE (CONT'D)
Hey Ellen, give that back.

ELLEN
Why should I?

MATTIE
I was about to reach a new high...
(An electronic rendition of Mozart's "Requiem" signals the end of the game.)
...score.

ELLEN
Put out your hands.

MATTIE
What? Why?

ELLEN
I want to see your hands Mattie.

MATTIE
No. You're crazy.

They struggle. Ellen grabs his hands, and flips them up to look at the palms. He closes his hands into fists.

ELLEN
Open them.

You can't make me. MATTIE

I said, open them. ELLEN

She begins to squeeze his wrists tighter, until he is forced to open his hands up.

OK, OK. Just stop. That hurts. MATTIE

Ellen examines his palms for a moment, and then throws down his hands.

I knew it. I knew it. I'm telling. Mom! ELLEN

She's not home yet. MATTIE

She should be home- ELLEN

She's on a date. MATTIE

Oh. ELLEN

With...what's his name...Hank. MATTIE

Oh. ELLEN

Again. MATTIE

The two are silent for a moment.

MATTIE (CONT'D)
I don't think Hank really exists, do you? I hope he doesn't. I hope he's just...I hope he's just like her...imaginary friend or something. Like I used to have.

Whatever. I'm still telling. ELLEN

MATTIE (CONT'D)

ELLEN

You know perfectly well what you did.

MATTIE

What? I didn't do anything.

ELLEN

Then what's that white stuff on your hands?

MATTIE

(Looking at his hands.)

What stuff?

ELLEN

That fine dusting of white powder.

MATTIE

I dunno.

ELLEN

I do. You see, I was on to you. I could sniff you out a mile away. You thought you could be sneaky. You thought you could cover your tracks. Putting my diary back under my pillow. Placing the key back into my desk. So first I hid the key. That probably screwed up your little plan, didn't it? But then, I knew something was wrong. The way it was laying there, upside down, under my pillow. I would've never left it that way. What did you use...a bobby pin or something? Some tool from your Swiss Army knife? Whatever it was, it scratched up the lock. You probably didn't notice that, did you? So I decided to catch you in the act. Baby power. I light dusting inside the pages. Now, it's on your hands. There's my proof.

Ellen pulls the controlling device out of the video game machine, dangles it in front of Mattie for a second, and then begins to walk away.

MATTIE

He doesn't like you.

ELLEN

(She stops in her tracks.)

What?

MATTIE

Evan Marshall. The man of your dreams. The only boy you'll ever love. He doesn't like you.

ELLEN

Why you little...

Ellen lunges at him; Mattie jumps out of her way.

MATTIE

Don't hit, please don't hit me. I heard them talking, that's all.

ELLEN

What? When? Who?

MATTIE

Sheila Cassidy and her group. The ones that sit at the back of the bus. The ones that wear all that makeup.

ELLEN

When was this? What did they say? When were you ever sitting at the back of the bus?

MATTIE

Last week. You were staying late for band practice. Robbie dared me. But they kicked me out, so I just sat a few rows up, and heard their whole conversation. Sheila said that Evan likes Amy Steinem. That she saw them kissing on the playground last week. And I wouldn't have paid any attention at all except, well...

He holds up his hands sheepishly.

ELLEN

You're just making this up to hurt me.

MATTIE

Do you think it's true?

ELLEN

What?

MATTIE

That there's only one guy for you? That Evan Marshall will be the only boy you ever love?

ELLEN

You are the worst little brother that anyone could ever have.

She leaves, taking the controller and her diary with her.

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