

Ted Kaczynski's Letters to Ellen Tarmichael

August 25th & September 2nd 1978

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Letter #1

Dear Ellen,

You needn't fear that I'll bother you again. In this letter I merely want to clear up some loose ends of this nasty affair, because I always hate having anything misunderstood.

When I talked to you in your car as you arrived at work Thursday morning (August 24), you said that when you went out with me the first two times, you "really thought there might be something in it; friendship, or ..." I seriously doubt whether your statement is true, because your words and actions generally have been so inconsistent. Nevertheless, this statement is probably the only thing that prevented me from attacking you physically. When I got into your car, I intended physical violence of a serious nature - until your statement cast doubt on the conclusion I had reached, that in going out with me you were only using me as a toy, playing with me casually in order to gratify your ego at my expense.

But don't get excited. You have nothing to fear from me now. The storm is past, and even if I were to learn that you were really using me as a toy, I wouldn't care to do anything about it. All I feel for you now is a dull resentment.

Possibly you are shocked at the violence of my feelings. Let me explain further.

I was not out looking for any kind of relationship. When I was alone in the mountains I had no desire for women, and was even somewhat repelled at the thought of such involvements. When I was preparing to come back to the city this spring, I felt uncomfortable and worried whenever it occurred to me that I might meet some attractive woman and fall into temptation.

But it was natural enough that I should get interested in you. You have a very pretty face, and your personality and charm easily make up for your defective figure. Especially, there was something in your personality - let's call it a certain vigor, or life - that particularly appealed to me.

Besides, there were two factors that made me particularly susceptible to your charms at this time. One was my general inexperience with women. (You can well imagine that I had nothing to do with women during the years I was in the mountains; but even before that my experience was very limited.)

Second, there is the fact that the prospect looks very bleak for me at present. When people ask about my plans, I say something vague about Canada and Alaska, but really I have little enthusiasm for any such project. As I remarked the other night, it is getting harder and harder to escape civilization. At the cost of considerable effort

I might still find a corner for myself somewhere - but then after a few years I would probably have to watch it being ruined by airplanes, snowmobiles, recreationists, etc., as is happening in Montana.

Since I can never feel that there is anything worth while in the kind of existence provided by modern civilization, this leaves me with a very empty prospect in life and nothing to look forward to. It would have been very comfortable to have something to put into this vacuum – such as affection for a woman in whom I thought I saw something I could respect.

What did I want from you? Certainly not marriage. (I say this not from any reluctance to commit myself permanently, but because our interests and aspirations are so different that we could never live together.) Perhaps some form of love-affair. But really I had no definite intention about what I wanted from you. It would be better to say that, if I had ever come to feel that you cared for me, I would have found it a great pleasure to give you whatever you might want from me.

I was simply drawn to you and couldn't resist it, or rather, had no definite reason to resist it. But your ambiguous behavior left me in a very uncomfortable state of uncertainty. Were you playing some kind of game with me? Or did you actually like me? I couldn't figure out what you were up to. It was not that I felt I needed you. If you had told me courteously that you had decided not to go out with me any more because there was no future in it, I would have been disappointed, but I would have been as much relieved as disappointed, because I would have no more conflict or uncertainty over you, and my mind could just slip back into its accustomed groove.

Still, I had opened my heart to you, so to speak, and had permitted myself to entertain soft feelings toward you. I thought that I would fall in love with you if I ever felt sure that you were ready to have any real affection for me.

I can well understand the statement you made to me Thursday morning, that on that last date it “just struck you” that you had nothing in common with me and that there was no future in anything between us. I felt the same way about you, often. Yet in spite of this I always felt I would be glad to go as far with you as the differences between us would permit.

But the thing that really turned me off at times was the inconsistency and insincerity (or even duplicity, as I would say after that last date) that I was afraid I saw in you. For example:

The answer you gave when I said “Oh, I like you” was cryptic. If you'd been sincere, you might have said something like this: “I'm glad to hear you like me, but I don't know what to say to it, because I don't think I know you well enough yet to tell how I'll feel about you.”

On the second date, when I asked you why you'd agreed to go out with me, you shrugged your shoulders and said coldly, “It just seemed like a good idea at the time.” Almost insulting.

There were other little things like this. But on the other hand, you seemed very ready to go out with me and to kiss* me. And whenever I phoned you, you always sounded as if you were glad to hear from me.

* Don't tell me there's no sex in a kiss when you put your tongue out and rub my mouth with it, as on the second date. You started the tongue-rubbing stuff, not me. Do you kiss your father that way?

Before that last date, I had evolved this theory about your motivations: Either you went out with me and kissed me merely because it gratified your ego to exert power over a man through your sex appeal; or else you really did like me, but for some reason found it difficult to express that liking directly; or (as I thought most probable) the truth was some combination of the two.

All this left me in doubt But I kept hoping that if I persisted you would eventually be more open and honest with me. I thought you might be worth taking some trouble for.

But on that last date I was forced to conclude that you were intentionally taking advantage of me. I made a special effort to be attentive and agreeable, but you were calculatedly cold from the beginning, retaining just enough friendliness to avoid an open breach. Then there was that silly, transparent deviousness about using two cars instead of one, in order to avoid giving me a chance to ask for a goodnight kiss. It was so obvious that it amounted to a calculated insult, why [sic] couldn't you just explain courteously that you had decided not to go out with me any more because you saw no future in it, if that was true?

When we were coming to an explanation, sitting in the car outside your apartment, I was perfectly serious, of course, while you kept smiling and talking lightly, as if the whole thing were a joke to you. And you were very gay for the rest of the day, as if you were cheerful at having achieved your little triumph over me by getting me sweet on you and then throwing cold water on me. You seemed to have taken my soft feelings for you and used them as a tool to make a fool of me.

Finally, your offer to kiss me goodnight just before you went home was an insult under the circumstances. It was as if you wanted to tease me. You didn't want me, but you wanted to keep me dangling so that you could play with me - so it appeared.

I was mortally offended by all this. The more so because (as you so tactlessly remarked yourself) I am very lacking in social confidence. The trick I believed you had played on me hit me on my weakest and most sensitive side. Also there are other reasons, going all the way back to my early teens, why I am exceptionally sensitive to that kind of insult.

If you had been frank and open with me, you would have retained a friend who would still have had some soft feelings toward you and would have been glad to do you a favor at any time, if you wanted one. As it is, the feelings you leave me with are resentment, disgust, and contempt for you.

After we came to an explanation outside your apartment Sunday, I began to hate you, and from that point / stopped being sincere with you. I controlled myself and

carefully refrained from showing my resentment, because I wanted to think things over before saying or doing anything. I was consciously lying when I said there were no hard feelings.

You can hardly imagine how upset I was Sunday evening. I got very little sleep that night. It was not until Monday afternoon that I decided what to do. I intended to ride you and insult you at work until I made you uncomfortable enough to fire me. And at that point maybe I could embarrass you by dragging the whole business out in the open in front of the whole crew. Thus the insulting verses Tuesday morning. This is also why I pinched your behind on the way out Tuesday afternoon - under the circumstances it was clearly an insult.

What surprised me was the fact that you seemed conciliatory Tuesday afternoon, and didn't even complain that I pinched you. Another example of duplicity? For a couple of reasons, I doubt that your conciliatory attitude was sincere.

Be that as it may, Dave's foolish meddling spoiled my plan. He threatened me, saying that if I posted any more nasty verses he would fire me and maybe beat me up into the bargain. I hadn't planned to put up any more verses, but of course I couldn't back down from a direct challenge, so I posted one up before his eyes and invited him to fire me, which he did. This on Wednesday afternoon.

Dave's firing me not only deprived me of the kind of revenge I had planned, but it seemed to confirm your triumph over me. The fact that you smiled and took a half-humorous attitude when I asked you whether the firing was official, was an additional insult. And in view of your earlier insincerities, I had no reason to take seriously your show of reluctance to confirm the firing.

Thus I was even more upset Wednesday night than Sunday. I felt utterly humiliated, and was fully determined to wipe out my defeat with violence on Thursday morning. I see no attractive prospects for me in life, so what do I care about consequences? But when you said (without a smile, for once) that you went out with me the first two times because you "really thought there might be something in it," it seemed to mean that you took me at least somewhat seriously, that I wasn't just a toy for you. This turned off my anger - permanently. In spite of the fact that I didn't know then, and still don't know, whether to believe you.

When I asked you on that last date why you went out with me, first you said you wanted absolutely nothing from me. Then you said, "I just like to go out and have a good time." Later you said you just went out with me to satisfy your curiosity because you found me such an unusual person. Now you say you went out with me because you "really thought there might be something in it." How do I know which one to believe?

I wonder whether your insincerity and inconsistency are conscious and intentional, or whether they are instinctive and involuntary. Perhaps a strain of this kind of insincerity runs all through the cultural group to which you belong.

If you were telling the truth when you said you "really thought there might be something in it" when you first went out with me, then I apologize, and am genuinely sorry that I insulted you.

But if you were only toying with me, then all I can say is: Watch it! I'm not the only man with a revengeful streak. Next time you tease such a man you may not be so lucky.

Ted J. Kaczynski

Letter #2

Dear Ellen,

I want to offer you my unqualified apology. I am no longer interested in deciding whether you were or were not insincere with me. Either way, I deeply regret that I insulted you, and I am extremely sorry that I took an unpleasant tone in the first letter I sent you.

My only excuse for becoming so excessively upset is that, foolishly, I had come to feel much more strongly about you than I had any right to do. There is something in you to which I respond powerfully, in spite of all our differences. To me you were a ray of sunshine. I didn't realize myself how badly I wanted you until I was forced to abandon all hope in that direction; I find it much more difficult to get over than I had imagined I would.

If I still thought there were any chance that you could ever care for me, I would do almost anything to win your esteem. But you have made it clear that there is no such chance. To my sorrow, I apparently have nothing to offer that is of interest to you.

I hope that you find your new duties at Foam-Cutting more congenial now, and I wish you the best of luck generally. Again, I offer you my regretful apology.

Ted J. Kaczynski

A critique of his ideas & actions.



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Ted's book *Truth versus Lies*, archived in boxes 66 & 67 of the Ted Kaczynski Papers special collections archive, at the University of Michigan. And also archived here:

<thetedkarchive.com/library/ted-kaczynski-truth-versus-lies-original-draft>.

From July 17, 1978, Ted recorded his day to day processing of his infatuation with a woman at his workplace, which includes the journal entry where he says that after being rejected by her, he planned to mutilate her face with a knife. He claimed to have shared these letters between Ellen, his brother and both his parents. The letters included such statements as "I intended physical violence of a serious nature", but sadly there was no effective intervention made in Ted's life to set him on a better path and so ultimately he went on to kill 3 people and seriously injure many more.

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