

Lolita: Assignment 1

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Throughout the narrative as throughout their relationship HH claims to maintain perfect control. As readers, we tend to disagree. Where in the text can we find evidence to the fact that HH's grip on his narrative and his captive as not as strong as he might think?

Throughout Humbert Humbert's narrative, we see his use of bribery through gifts to maintain control of Dolores Haze (Lolita). He uses veiled threats and fear to maintain control by describing what her life would be without him. He offers no other alternative to her other than to stay with him and thus controls her actions. "In plainer words, if we two are found out, you will be analyzed and institutionalized, my pet, *c'est tout*. You will dwell, my Lolita ... with thirty-nine other dopes in a dirty dormitory ... under the supervision of hideous matrons" (151). However, Humbert Humbert does not have complete control over Lolita's mindset. He is unable to do anything about her boredom when traveling with him and cannot maintain her satisfaction with him. This is evident in his own confession. "By rubbing all this in, I succeeded in terrorizing Lo, who despite a certain brash alertness of manner and spurts of wit was not as intelligent a child as her I.Q. might suggest. But if I managed to establish that background of shared secrecy and shared guilt, I was much less successful in keeping her in good humor" (151). By his own admission, Humbert's control slips when it comes to her state of mind. He is also unable to keep Lolita from flirting with others. "Oh, I had to keep a very sharp eye on Lo, little limp Lo! ... For little Lo was aware of that glow of hers, and I would often catch her *coulant un regard* in the direction of some amiable male, some grease monkey, with a sinewy golden-brown forearm and watch-braceleted wrist, and hardly had I turned my back to go and buy this very Lo a lollipop, than I would hear her and the fair mechanic burst into a perfect love song of wisecracks" (159). This also shows that Humbert's bribery is losing its effect. It shows how Humbert's control over her is slowly ebbing away.