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## Et tu, Eliot?

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*“Over the course of my public life, I have insisted — I believe correctly — that people take responsibility for their conduct. I can and will ask no less of myself.”*

### – Eliot Spitzer in his resignation speech

The salacious news of our now ex-governor's entanglement with a high-end prostitution ring has been the talk of the town — nay, the country — for the past week.

Unless you've been hiding under a rock, you already know that Eliot Spitzer, our state's former Attorney General and a “law and order” prosecutor, reputedly, and repeatedly, utilized a call girl service to the tune of nearly \$80,000 over the period of a few years.

The particular encounter at the center of the maelstrom involved a young woman only four years older than Spitzer's eldest daughter.

From the moment I learned of the scandal, my mind was drawn to an episode of “The Sopranos” that I found to be extremely disturbing and which haunts me to this very day.

In Episode 32, Tracee, a young stripper employed by Bada Bing, the strip club owned by the mafia and frequented by Tony Soprano and his cohorts, is brutally beaten to death by Ralphie, the father of her unborn child and one of Tony's underlings.

Throughout the episode, Tracee attempts to befriend Tony and parallels are drawn between Tracee and Tony's daughter, Meadow, both of whom are the same age.

Meadow lived a privileged existence, attending college and dating a respectable young man. Tracee, on the other hand, a single mother from the wrong side of the tracks, tried to make ends meet the only way she knew how — by profiting from her youth and good looks. As a stripper at Bada Bing, she was routinely degraded, dehumanized and subjected to the unpredictable and capricious whims of dangerous and heartless men.

Ultimately, she was killed with nary a blink of an eye; yet another casualty exemplifying the harsh reality of the unconnected, unprotected or uneducated women in this world.



This outcome was not unexpected or unpredictable given the show's setting, although I found the juxtaposition of Tracee's existence with Meadow's to be troubling. Likewise disconcerting was Tony Soprano's ability to compartmentalize the two women in his mind.

Meadow, his daughter, was a human being deserving of his respect, love and protection. Tracee, on the other hand, was a second class citizen — a nameless, faceless commodity of pleasure — easily and readily discarded when her mere existence became inconvenient.

That a heartless mobster like Tony Soprano was capable of engaging in such fine tuned hairsplitting was not surprising to me, but Eliot Spitzer, law and order enforcer? Eliot Spitzer, champion of many liberal causes? Eliot Spitzer, pro-choice advocate? Eliot Spitzer, father to three daughters; husband to a beautiful Harvard Law-educated woman?

How does an educated, supposedly enlightened and intelligent man like Eliot Spitzer rationalize paying a young woman half his age for sex, in violation of the laws he swore to uphold and spent much of his legal career enforcing?

In what sort of bizarre mental gymnastics did he engage that allowed him to justify his decision to repeatedly, and in violation of his wife's trust, order the services of a woman for his personal pleasure as though she were an item on a menu? Most importantly, how was he able to look his wife and daughters in the eye the next day?

Spitzer degraded and dehumanized women, violated the trust of those who believed in him and threw away his career and unique ability to leave a positive and lasting effect on the world around him; and all for a few fleeting moments of pleasure.

Inexplicably, like any number of powerful men before him, his unchecked desires were the cause his downfall. I would expect as much from Tony Soprano, but not you, ex-Gov. Spitzer.

Et tu, Eliot? Et tu?

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