

Epstein, in man-who-can-have-everything fashion, has, for many years, ordered up a daily massage following his workout sessions.

“Often these were massage massages,” explains Epstein matter of factly, “but sometimes these were happy ending massages, especially in Palm Beach, where there are many massage parlors—‘Jack Shacks,’ they’re called—that do outcalls. There was no sex. An often there was no happy ending. Often I would be on the phone for the entire massage. There were however a lot of massages and a lot of girls, with one girl recommending others.”

It is after Epstein’s round of publicity and widely touted association with Clinton, that the mother of one of the massage parlor girls who have gone to Epstein’s house (most of the girls return to Epstein’s house many times) calls the police. The police interview the girl, Sage Gonzales, who then supplies names of other girls. Some of whom are found to be younger than 18.

In the end, the police track down 12[WHAT NUMBER?] girls who give depositions describing scenarios not terribly different from Epstein’s description above, except each is laid out in clinical, lurid, and near-identical detail—a cold and forceful Epstein demanding that unwitting juveniles (though they have come here for this very purpose) perform repulsive (or at least repulsively described) acts on him. (Although the nature of the allegations will operatically grow, none at this point allege that he did anything to them.)

Epstein, vastly raising the stakes, calls Dershowitz, who flies into Palm Beach to put the local authorities in their place—alienating Palm Beach officialdom—and, doubling down on the profile of the case, bringing in Roy Black the famous criminal attorney who defended William Kennedy Smith in his rape trial in Palm Beach.

Here’s the narrative: the shadowy rich man, friend of the disgraced President, at all times surrounded by a retinue of gorgeous retainers doing his bidding, is now found to be recruiting a network of wrong-side-of-the-tracks Palm Beach girls for weird sexual services.

Palm Beach Police Chief Michael Reiter is reported to say: “This is bigger than Rush Limbaugh,” who, in a storm of publicity, has just been arrested in Palm Beach for possession of controlled drugs.

On one side are some of the nation’s most powerful defense attorneys (who, increasingly, seem more stumblebum than effective), on the other side, a round-up of hapless girls, with sensational tales of perversion and infamy (in the telling they are not so much sex workers, as Dickensian victims), relatively speaking giving the Palm Beach authorities the choice

between utter capitulation to the powerful or standing on the side of the exploited and powerless.

Still, with a critical eye, it also quite appears to be a straightforward tale of prostitution. And even though some of the girls are minors, age is not a distinguishing factor in a prostitution charge in Florida, nor in most places (in New York, for instance, paying for sex with anyone over the age of 14 falls under general anti-solicitation laws).

Sage Gonzales will later testify that she lied about being 18 because otherwise she would not have been hired for the job.

Dershowitz rejects a series of lower-level plea deals and Palm Beach District Attorney Barry Krischer empanels a grand jury, which returns with a recommendation of a single count of soliciting a prostitute—a charge without jail time. (Epstein can apply to have his record expunged after a year.)

At which point, Reiter, the police chief, at odds with the District Attorney, recruits the involvement of the FBI. This is of course the Bush-era FBI and Epstein presents quite the Clinton-connected scandal. Still, solicitation, even of a minor, is not a federal crime. The FBI's way in is to expand it, by way of Epstein's planes, into a trafficking charge, and a deep dive into Epstein's friends, many of whom receive subpoenas and who are threatened with prosecution as a party to Epstein's actions.

It's quite in the eyes of the beholder: On the one end, Epstein is paying for sex acts (Epstein paid \$200 for a massage with or without happy ending), on the other, he is abusing teenage girls. Epstein finds himself caught in an escapable moral quandary: how can a girl not old enough to vote be a prostitute? And yet, many girls not old enough to vote are prostitutes.

Or, when is a prostitute not a prostitute? When the anonymous acquires an identity.

Compounding Epstein's predicament, the world outside of his carefully constructed and controlled environment is someplace that he seems not just ill-equipped to handle but in which he seems to be blindly grouping about. I visited him once during this time and found him weighing the conflicting advice of some of the most vaunted and egomaniacal lawyers (along with Dershowitz and Black, celebrity criminal attorney, Gerald Lefcourt, and Clinton prosecutor, Ken Starr) of the day—anyone with new advice, Epstein seemed to hire—as well as a catchall of the leading crisis managers, who he seemed to retain at will, all wrangling for fees and primacy. If it was a Dickensian world, he was caught in its legal system.

Certainly, the upshot of his dealings with the Justice Department seem to involve a farce-like logic. The government threatens to prosecute him (with the possibility of a 20-year sentence) and various friends, associates, and lovers, or offers an ass-backwards sort of deal in which Epstein has to go to the Palm Beach authorities and convince them to charge him with an offense that will send him to jail and get him a sex offender status. Except that a prostitution charge won't produce that result. Therefore he has to agree also to a procurement or pimping charge (even though he has paid money, not received it—the sine qua non of pimping). What's more, he has to agree to pay the legal fees of any of the girls who want to sue him—and, not to defend himself in their suits—forcing him to settle with each of the girls for what are reportedly high 6-figure sums or more.

He goes to jail in 2008 for 13 months.

This hardly ends the legal catch all. Epstein's butler, Alfredo Rodriguez, steals and tries to sell an alleged journal or calendar with Epstein's activities—but he tries to sell it to an undercover agent. Rodriguez is sentenced to 18 months in jail on a charge of theft and of withholding evidence. Scott Rothstein, a lawyer whose firm represented additional girls in their suits against Epstein, also goes to jail for recruiting investors to pay for these suits on the fraudulent basis that settlements had already been reached.

Then, Brad Edwards, Rothstein's former partner, sues the government in 2008 for abridging several of the girls' rights under the Victim Rights Act (under which victims have the right to be consulted). In 2014, Edwards tries to ad ██████████ ██████████, one of the original complainants, who is said to have settled with Epstein for over \$1 million, to the long-running suit—and is now, with Edwards, further suing Epstein for \$50,000,000.

██████████ who has been the most vocal of the accusers, with the Daily Mail as her prime outlet, emerges now, more than ten years after the fact, with a diary from her time with Epstein supporting her charges of “sex slavery.”

It is hard to find a more hyperbolic intersection of media and lawyers then in Epstein's case.

Edwards, over the six years of his law suit, tries to depose Clinton, Donald Trump, and Dershowitz—almost all of his targets coming directly from the original Vanity Fair and New York Magazine articles about Epstein.

In addition to Clinton being the early hot button (and continuing now in his role of potential Hillary-spoiler), Prince Andrew emerges, first

through ██████ interview with the Daily Mail in 2010, as a particular British hot button.

A story that might be dubious in the US—unverified charges in a long-running law suit—becomes in the U.K. a feast of certainty and scandal, where Prince Andrew is a particular bet noir of the Daily Mail and royal sexcapades tabloid gifts. The words themselves are enough of a story: sex slaves (as though women kept in basements), peodo (an obsessions with pre-pubescent children) and registered sex offerender (that human end of the road). Indeed, U.S. court documents circumvent the usual UK restrictions on legal proceedings. Hence the Daily Mail is free to repeate ██████ tales of Island visits by people (notably Clinton) who Epstein avows have never been there. With its massive Internet arm, the Mail has now managed to reintroduced the story back into the U.S., where Dershowitz, in a paroxysms of rage, has managed to himself revivify the story with countless interviews and new law suits.