

## Berni Stapleton / OFFENSIVE TO SOME

### *SCENE THREE. CONFINED SPACE. THE SHACKLES ARE OFF.*

It runs in the family. There's a whole string of us, right? The first one we knows of was in eighteen-thirty somethin or other. Sylvie, her name was. She lived in Port-De-Grave too, if you wants to call it livin. Livin on the bay in that stink of salt fish and smoke. I should know. I grew up there too, right? So. Sylvie, she's fourteen and her husband's sixty. His first wife died havin, like, their thirteenth kid or somethin, so he went and got Sylvie. Men did that then, right? They could get two or three wives cause wives was always dyin from havin youngsters. So. This old geezer, he wants Sylvie cause she's right cute and young and she got this long pretty hair. But then once he gets her, he won't let her do nothin! Like, he won't let her play on the rocks, or run through the foam on the beach. It's not fittin, he says. He won't let her go out with her friends. It's not fittin. He won't let her wear no nice dresses and he won't let her braid no red ribbons into her long hair. It's not fittin. It's fittin for him to climb on top of her every night and stick his his thing into her, and her cryin and holdin on to her dolly until it's over. Then, one night, she goes and clocks him over the head with a big old geezly pipe iron. Now that, is fittin. She pitched his body over the wharf. Gave him to the sea.

### *OPEN SPACE*

I knows all that cause I learned from the best. That's all mudder gets on with sometimes. 'Be good or ye'll end up like Sylvie! Be good or Sylvie will come and strangle ye with her noose!'

Yup. Sylvie got hanged, right? Oh yes my dear. They went and took her into St. John's and sentenced her to swing from the rope until she was dead. Sylvie fucked em up though. Turns out she was pregnant. So.

They lets her have the baby before they strings her up! Big hairy deal right? They keeps her locked up for the nine months, into a big grey stone place. The only company she got is her dolly and her red ribbons. She spends all of her days playin and braidin them red ribbons into her hair. Finally she haves the youngster. A girl. One hour after she haves the baby, in they comes to get her. 'Time Sylvie! It's time! Say goodbye to that youngster!' Sylvie picks up her daughter, and she puts this blessin onto her, and then she puts this curse onto her. Into one ear she whispers 'Listen to yer heart.' And into the other ear she says 'But don't go doin what it tells ya to do or ye're fucked!' And nobody knows which was the blessin and which was the curse! Way to go Sylvie!!

#### *ELEVATED SPACE*

Then they marches her off to the gallows. She's crippin along cause the afterbirth is still runnin right out of her, right? And there's this priest waitin for her at the very top of the steps. He says 'Does ye repent Sylvie? Does ye repent afore ye goes to burn fer all eternity into the steamin scaldin flames of hell?!' The crowd is all lookin up at the gallows, waitin and waitin to hear what that young girl says. She got red ribbons streamin down her back and red blood runnin down her legs. And the priest says 'Ask fer God's mercy child, on ye and yeres, repent afore ye swings!!' The crowd gets right quiet and Sylvie draws herself up right proud and she smiles right sweet-like. And she says, 'Kiss me arse.' She had a noose around her neck but she had them red ribbons in her hair.

#### *OPEN SPACE*

I always wanted a daughter. I was right disappointed when I had the boys. It's a queer thing too. Nobody says what happened to Sylvie's daughter. Now my boys is . . . they're great . . . just great. I likes to walk on the beach and dream about Sylvie. I'm like her. Born in me own grave. Port-De-Grave. Our beaches is not nice. Not like you sees on t.v. and stuff, on that-there Baywatch with sand and fucken life-guards runnin around. Our beaches is fulla kelp, Jesus that stuff stinks, and

dried up old jellyfish and stuff. I can't wait to get back on the beach. That's the first thing I'm gonna do when I blows this pop stand. I got this game I likes. The tide is comin in, here comes the waves b'ys . . . here comes one, here comes a big motherfucker, jump! Wicked! Yeah!! That's the first thing I'm gonna do. Fuck this for a game of cowboys.

David. That's me husband, David, he's not no ugly old geezer or nothin. Not like Sylvie's husband. David's really really handsome. He's dead too. Sylvie had the right idea. Givin her old man to the sea. I woulda give my old man to the sea too, only the sea woulda spit him right back out.

Dead stuff washes outta the sea all the time. Man. There's strange stuff under the water, right?

That's how come I don't know how to swim. I'm not goin swimmin around with no dead stuff. There's weird things in there, I'm tellin you! Like, one time, this giant turtle washes up on our beach! It's dead, right? It got a big bite taken out of its guts. It must weigh, like, three hundred pounds. I cried, right? I fucken bawled like a baby when I seen that big old dead turtle. There's stuff in the water we don't know nothin about. Secret stuff. Pretty stuff. Dead stuff. Dead pretty stuff. I loves pretty stuff cause I ain't pretty meself. Mudder says, 'Ye're a hard lookin old skeet ye are!'

*END SCENE THREE*

*SCENE FOUR. CONFINED SPACE.*

I'm not no slut. I'm not no slut. I'm not no slut no slut no slut.

O.K. I'm a slut. When David seen me wearin me brand new spandex pants, he goes 'Only sluts goes around dressed like that!' That old slut in me was always poppin out, and I'd stuff it back down and then it



would pop out again and I'd stuff it back down and stuff it back down and stuff it back down. Hey! Oprah! That's how come I am the inspiration I am today! I let out me inner slut. I wants to inspire people to let out their inner slut!

I'm after learnin so much from you Oprah. I feels like I knows you all to pieces. I learned about how you lost all that weight. I mean, that's how come I'm educated so good, right? Cause I watches t.v. I'm, what-you-calls, self-educated, right? I wanted to go back to school and get me grade ten, but David said no good wife should be out goin around where men can look at her and stuff. He wouldn't let me do no home courses neither. Jesus, the kids is smarter at books than me. So I says, frig that! I watches you, and Phil and Regis and Kathy-Lee, don't *she* get on me nerves, and I watches Ricki and Gerry and all the rest. Sure ye talks about everythin. Ye are way better than books. I learns from the best! The way I figures it is, watchin Ricki Lake and Jenny Jones and that crowd is like goin to high school, and watchin you and Phil is like goin to college. And I'm some good student too. I watches t.v. every day from nine to three. David never found out.

Yeah, I seen how you lost all that weight. Maybe you could get me one of them-there make-overs? I'd love to look nice now that I'm famous. I went to aerobics one time, like you said, right? I didn't like it. I went in to me first aerobics class and I couldn't find the friggin ashtray! Hey Oprah! I believes in smokers rights. I got rights. When I feels the burn, I wants it to be from havin a smoke stuck in me face, not from havin to do nine hundred friggin sit-ups with me legs stuck up in the air. Them positions they makes you do ain't very lady-like. You know what I thinks? Aerobics is a lot like sex! Well, you looks a lot better goin in than you does comin out. And all that-there sweatin and rollin around and tryin to suck your gut in, wonderin if it's over yet. But at least after aerobics you haven't got to pretend it was the best class you ever had in your life! Right Oprah?! Anyway, I goes and drops five pounds just for to go on t.v. and Alma goes and tells me the camera adds fifteen pounds. Lord dyin frig!

Alma's next door. Don't look, she's lookin! O.K. now look. Ain't she

cute? She don't like nobody lookin at her. Alma says skinny people should be shot. She's after shootin up a whole buncha people but she never killed nobody or nothin, so she's not famous like me. She got it easy. She's one of them-there, what-you-calls, paranoid schizophrenics. What a fucken mouth full, right? Alma likes to talk, but the thing is, when Alma talks the fucken furniture talks back to her. Go figure. She's fucken nuts, right? That's the best way to be if you asks me. I don't hold it against her. She got a good excuse, right? Now me, they can't find nothin wrong with me. Man, they're tryin so hard to find somethin wrong with me they're goin cross-eyed with the strain.

They says I killed in cold blood Oprah.

Yeah, well . . .

Yeah. I killed in cold blood. I didn't even work up a sweat.

*END SCENE FOUR.*

*SCENE FIVE. OPEN SPACE.*

I'm a turtle.

Ye can't see me.

That big old dead turtle is lyin all big and dead and rotten and smelly and squishy on our beach. I climbs right up on top of his shell. I lies right down across it. The smell don't bother me none. We had to use the outhouse til I was twelve so I learned how to breathe through me mouth, right?

I'm lyin on top of that turtle. I'm thinkin, how grand to have a big mother-fucken thick shell. People is comin in from miles around to look at that turtle! Did you ever hear tell of a famous turtle? I'm lyin on top of that turtle thinkin, how friggin excellent to be famous. Hi! Hi! Hi! Oh yeah, I'm up on top of that turtle wavin at everybody and mudder is screamin at me to get down.

Now I am a turtle. Now I'm famous too! Except the turtle was dead.

And Sylvie is dead. What's the point of bein famous if you're dead?! I ain't dead. Am I?

David was a werewolf. Honest.

When he gets mad, he looks at me like I'm lunch. I locks the kids in the attic but I don't got no silver bullets. Oprah? A werewolf bit him and that's how come he turned out to be one too. I puts the kids in the attic. 'Be right good, like quiet little turtles.' Cause David says 'Make them youngsters shut-up or I'll fucken kill em!'

He hates me when I'm on me period. He thinks I has a period on purpose just so he can't have sex. No, he won't come near me when I'm on me period. He finds it offensive. I mean, it is offensive to some. I mean, you can pound in your wife's face til you drives her teeth right through her lips. You can stub out your cigar on her nipples. But you don't want to have to stick your thing into her when she's on her period.

My period is over. He starts howlin and I'm the moon. He's takin what he wants and he don't ask. He's sproutin hair and growin fangs and the kids is in the attic but I'm not, I'm not, I'm not I'm not I'm not-

'Please-God-just-let-him-hurry-up-and-finish-this-let-him-hurry-up-god-I-don't-feel-nothin-got-a-thick-mother-fucken-shell-don't-this-ain't-happenin-to-me-God-the-kids-is-in-the-attic-the-kids-is-in-the-attic-'

'I knows. I knows you didn't mean it. I knows. I'll get the kids and we can all go out for ice cream or somethin. Honey can I please get dressed now?'

One time he peeled off three of me fingernails cause I was wearin red nail polish.

'I knows! I knows I ain't allowed to wear no red nail polish! I won't do it no more! It's not fittin, right? Oh-God-don't-be-hittin me in the face! It, don't-don't-don't, it leaves marks! It's not fittin. It's not fittin



not fittin not fittin.'

It's O.K. Oprah. Look, see? Fingernails grows back. Sure, that wasn't nothin! You should see the nipples on me. I'd show em to you, only I knows this is a high class show. Probably I might show me nipples on Gerry Springer. It was me own fault. I bought him the wrong kind of cigars by mistake. Stunned see, that's me. I could get skin grafts, I knows, I seen it on rescue 911. But I don't want none. What do a big old turtle want with skin grafts? I never feels nothin. I got a big thick shell on me.

One time, oh ye'll get a kick outta this, right? One time I couldn't eat or breathe or sleep, the fear was stranglin me like a big noose, the fear in me while I waited for him to beat me up.

'I can't take this no more! Have a bit of pity! Come on! Come on come on come on! You wants to smack me, friggin smack me! I don't feel nothin! What, you wants a good reason today, do ya? Here! I'll give you a good reason. Here's your cuppa tea, all over the floor! You like that?! I was out to the mall today, trottin me fat arse around in me spandex pants, and men was lookin too! C'mon, take your best shot! Afraid you'll spoil me good looks are you?!'

Jesus. I couldn't walk for a week. I laughs now, when I thinks on it. That was the bravest I ever was in me whole entire life, and look what I wasted it on. You know Oprah, sometimes I'm me own worst enemy.

*END SCENE FIVE.*

*SCENE SIX. CONFINED SPACE.*

SHUT-UP! SHUT-UP! SHUT-UP!

I told you, I ain't talkin about that. I gotta right to keep me mouth shut, right? I gotta right to be silent, ain't that a fucken joke. Sure,

you're sittin in a house all day long watchin t.v., you forgets how to talk to real people, cause that t.v. don't talk back. If that t.v. talks back, well, then I guess you're Alma!

What, you wants to know all about me lousy childhood or what?

When I was born, I couldn't hold down milk, right? Mudder would feed me and me stomach and bowels would swell right up and I'd go into fits and throw up all over the place. So they gets the nurse to come in and she says I'm allergic to cow's milk, right? She says 'Don't give that infant no more cow's milk!' So, Fadder says 'Go on! That youngster is pure obstinate, that's all is wrong with her. She was born solid stubborn!' Fadder says 'We got no money for goin out gettin special milk! If she gets special treatment now, that's all she's gonna expect her whole life.' So. Cow's milk is what I got. It didn't matter how sick it made me, right? And I swear to God, by the time I was a year old I could hold it down! Did you ever hear tell of a child who could be so good as that! Mudder and Fadder was right proud of me.

Mudder and Fadder done what they knew how to do. They reared up me and me eight brudders and sisters. We all got a big filthy mouth on us. When you got eleven people in the one house you got to figure out some way to get your voice up above the crowd. Our house was always fulla cursin and swearin and laughin and shoutin and jokin and lotsa . . . you know, lotsa huggin and lovin and stuff. None of us kids never had to go in no attic.

*END SCENE SIX.*