

Lindsay Diehl / EVERYBODY'S GOT A PRETTY FRIEND

“When I was younger, I used to think I was on television, like every day. I’d go to the bathroom mirror and announce dinner to my unseen audience.”

I pick my girlfriend up from the ferry. She's been chasing a drummer from a rock'n'roll band. She's coming back from Courtenay. She throws her bag in the backseat and climbs in. She leans her long neck towards the traffic outside. "Thanks for picking me up." Her hair is matted in the back and there's something red on her shirt. She's wearing last night's makeup, smeared under her eyes. Her breath smells like shit.

"Open the window," I tell her, "you smell like shit."

"I hate leaving him," she explains, "it hurts to leave him."

She looks tragic, like the girl in that movie. The one that has to be saved.

She sighs. He's out of town three out of every four weeks. He doesn't call.

"I just wish there was some way to go on the road with him."

She's looking at me because she can't drive.

I met my boyfriend a couple of years ago, disco dancing at the Commodore. He was wearing a cowboy hat that shadowed most of his face, but revealed his thin chin and thick lips. He sort of puckers his lips, when he talks, and when he dances. It reminds me of that rock star, the one with the lips.

My girlfriend's hair is brown, but she dyes it blond. She always has dark roots showing. She buys the dye at the drug store. She takes her time to decide. Frosted Meadow or Sunny Days? "Hey, did you ever notice these dyes are named after strippers?" She's laughing, she didn't use to give a fuck. Now everything is a drama.

My boyfriend has a very good job. He can afford to sit in his living room all day. Sometimes, when I come over, he's just sitting there. He doesn't have a tv. He just sits there for hours.

My girlfriend gives directions to a studio in North Vancouver. I park in some alley behind a Big-O-Tires and she comes out to greet me. "They're all here," she says smiling.

Inside, there's a drum set and some amps. In the corner, there's a bed. Some guy gives me a beer.

"Hey."

His hair is spiky and he's wearing a bandana. He looks like one of those singers. The ones that used to be on the music channel, and paint their faces.

I met my boyfriend disco dancing. We were both in costume. I was wearing a body suit like the ones the dancers used to wear. I had rented it from down the street.

"I remember," my boyfriend says. He smiles in his sleepy way that makes me want to hit him. "You were wearing something silver. You were shiny, the prettiest thing I'd ever seen."

The guy that brought me the beer is the lead singer. He also plays the lead guitar and writes most of their songs. He smiles. By the end of the night, I've agreed to go to Quesnel. My girlfriend's excited. She won't stop kissing my cheek. But we have to bring someone else. It's a three-piece band.

My boyfriend plays the guitar. He busks outside the liquor store and IGA. He writes songs about his travels in South America. About the poor people who have so little, but are so rich. He has a song about me, he says. But I've never heard it. He gets nervous singing, around me.

Quesnel is a seven-hour drive from Vancouver. My girlfriend can't drive. Neither can the girl she brought along. The girl she brought along has a boyfriend, too. What a perfect trio, I think. Except my girlfriend she's kind of different.

My boyfriend works for the movies. He's in the union. Sometimes he builds the set. Sometimes he's the first aid attendant. Once he was an actor. He said something to that guy, the one that does all the action movies. They were in a helicopter or something. My boyfriend was trying to convince him not to jump. Something like this. I never did see that movie. Which is weird, I see most everything.

His dick is thick. One of those ones that's actually thicker on the top than it is on the bottom. But he knows how to use it, like a plunger.

I see us on a table or a counter. And I have long black hair, and asian eyes. I'm looking down at his dick, and damn, it's big.

"Will you shut the fuck up?" My girlfriend says, "I swear, you are such a perve." But she's laughing. And it's fun again. And we're speeding down the highway.

My girlfriend used to talk to my boyfriend all the time. Now, they don't get along. Nothing's really changed, except my girlfriend doesn't like him anymore. He's "pretty-ish, I suppose." But she says he's like "false advertising." What, with his long, tangled hair and his bare feet, he seems like a new Jesus. But he's like that contest on television that promises millions. The one where you order all those magazines, but nothing ever really happens.

The band is playing at a pub in Quesnel. There's no one dancing. Some people are eating. A lot of people are looking at our table. The girls from the city. Like those girls that press their faces up against the limousine windows and scream at the movie stars. My girlfriend is smiling, but she says she hates these people. The table beside us is having a birthday party. They keep hitting our chairs when they pass by, and yelling out the names of Black Sabbath songs they want to hear.

My boyfriend doesn't care about money. He just makes enough so that he can smoke dope for the rest of the year. He thinks it's really funny. He says he's cheating the system. He's flipping the bird or whatever. He says this at parties, wherever we go. Later, when we're making love, he twitches inside me. He bites my ear. "Do you believe in me?"

During one of their intermissions, the lead singer sits beside me.
“What do you want from me?” he asks.
I give him a face like I don’t know what he’s talking about.
The girl my girlfriend brought along is necking with the bass player.
My girlfriend is upstairs with the drummer.
“Chicks,” he says.
And then he says something. Words that seek out the world around
them and create an order. Everything makes sense, and he’s all right
with that. It must hurt to say words like that.
He says, “I’m in it for the Rock’n’Roll.” He says, “Sex, Drugs, and
Rock’n’Roll.”
It’s something he’s heard on tv or something.