

Clint Burnham / from *SMOKE SHOW*

Yeah well like, she's great. Oh yeah, perfect person for me right now, eh? You know cause she's really focussed, eh? And you know, that's the perfect person for me. You know cause she's like. You know like. You know I mean the other day, she had to register her kid for this class and she like got up, and went there, at I don't know, before 7. I know it was before 7 because I was up before 7 with Sarah and she was gone then.

And mom and dad they're like great. They're really really happy for me.

He sat in his brother's bedroom, smoking a joint, watching the old guy across the yard pile wood. He flipped through the brag book, looking at tight close-ups of an old duffer.

Before they were watching *Cops*. He used a remote with big rubber numbers.

Yeah so we were at the bar eh? And Jessica'n me're there. We went dancing and there was all these guys eh? Real, I dunno, creeps.

Hunh, what were they?

Yeah creeps eh? She looked over at Lucy and laughed. These guys, she shuddered, all touching me. This one guy —

What were they fishermen, cause there wasn't any work so they were in the bar?

Her school when she was 12 or 13 had its dances in the middle of the week so the loggers wouldn't crash it.

Yeah he was a cop eh?

D-o-pe.

Yeah and he kept touching me. Yeah so like. You know.

Well, he was a cop, so?

Yeah. He kept, you know. He was like putting his arms around me,

from behind. Eew. She drew it out like *ooh-hoo-hoo-hoo*. She shuddered again, laughing.

Where was he touching you? On your shoulders?

Yeah. And he should know better, being the police.

Yeah well at least he'd be good for cheap pot.

What? Oh yeah.

There was a skinny guy in some of the photos, with a missing front tooth, scraggly black hair and tinted sunglasses.

Jesse said, so I'm headin' over tomorrow, if you guys want a ride?

Oh yeah, where to, Van?

No, but I can drop you off. Gonna go up to the Interior.

Yeah, you guys going camping?

No, she's going to that blockade. Ray took a sip of beer and put the bottle down, sucking his teeth.

Oh no way! That's so exciting! Jimmy and Lucy were excited.

Well, I don't know, you know, I just want to check it out. But Ray doesn't think it's such a good idea.

I didn't say that.

Yes you did, but I don't wanna argue. I just want to see for myself.

Aw do whatever you want. I just think, you know, with the kid, you're just not just on your own anymore.

Are you going to take Sarah with you? Lucy was trying to divert the conversation, get back to the main topic.

Yeah. Well I'm not going to count on you to protect me, that's not why I love you.

I didn't say that. Why d'you take what I say.

You said — well, hey, why don't you come too?

Not interested.

See? Why not, check it out.

Look, it's just a bunch of idiots. I know those guys.

No, you can just say.

Aw just. He waved his hand and took another drink.

Okay, okay. Sorry guys. Jesse gave them a smile.

Hey, no problem. You gotta work these things out, you know.

Long as you're talkin'. That's what I always say, hey? Long as you're talkin'.

Tom came out at around eight, drinking a cup of coffee, no shirt on. His chest was hairless and his nipples were small brown dots on his chest. He looked in the car and then went back in.

He came out a few minutes later, still just wearing track pants, carrying some masking tape. He took some flowers out of a box and put them on the car, and a doll on the front of the hood. People kept pulling up on the street, three got into the driveway, the rest parked in the ditch. Jeff walked out wearing his suit pants and a shirt and tie.

Hey so that's starting to look pretty good.

Yeah it's not so bad eh?

But we gotta get it done, eh? Getting the ball an' chain on, may as well do it up right.

Later the street was full of cars and trucks pulling in and out. A minivan pulled up, honking, and ushers and bridesmaids got out, the guys with fresh haircuts, in their suit vests, younger brothers, and the girls in dresses, longer versions of the ones the little ten-year-olds were wearing.

Later, the car with the doll on its hood pulled up again. Guys stood around smoking, flicking ash into the flowerbeds.

Mary and her mother came out of the house carrying wrapped stuff in cardboard boxes. Mary perched one on the bumper and her mother opened the trunk. Mary looked at her watch. It was twenty after eleven. Her dad was lining people up on the lawn, pointing his camera like a dog's wet nose.

Jennifer on a common topic: hey you know those rolling papers you gave us?

What?

Oh you know the ones with the maple leaf flag on 'em?

Oh yeah, weren't they funny? Now Lucy and Jimmy remembered.

Oh yeah, my kid's like hey what are these?

Oh no, gotta hide eh? Hide from our parents, 'n hide from our kids. One of Lucy's theories.

Oh no, usually I don't, I mean, I don't get fucked up when they're around but that's the same.

Oh yeah.

Yeah usually, if it's just like regular he just ignores them right? But these were so colourful and they were doing like flags at school or whatever.

Okay, chairs for everyone. Mary carried them onto the concrete apron around the pool.

Up, good pool here though, Tom. Ray was still in the water. Have to do the FOD patrol.

Jesse had some more wine. Oh what's that. One a your military terms?

Yeah, you know, lookin' for garbage. Foreign object debris.

Just relax, grow your hair a bit buddy.

Oh I know. I know I've been hiking around the past few weeks trying to burn off this fat I had in the Forces. You know, all that fucking greasy food they give you, and all you're doing all the time is sitting around. Man, it just builds on you.

Yep, getting lazy. Have to go to the gym next. Well, not tomorrow. Tomorrow I think I'll put my back out moving, have to call in sick.

Yeah sure why not.

Hey so like Finning's looking for mechanics.

Oh really?

Yeah so like you should drop by there. Yeah they're always looking.

Good company to work for.

Yeah. Now that I've learned how to slack off. In the Forces. Got my *if you've got time to clean you've got time to lean* education. Edjumacation.

Yeah no kidding eh? I don't know man, I, man I know you were in it, you know, the military and all, and so you gotta defend it, but when I just figured, you know, there's more submarines at the West Edmonton Mall eh? I mean, our navy doesn't even.

Yeah, you know, well, that's what they've got. I don't care anymore.

Hey so like did we tell you about that party our friend Trevor had? Yeah so he went and got all this stuff from Crappy Tire right? Yeah so he went and got all this stuff from Crappy Tire right, volleyball net, lawn darts, croquet, and we were just like wrecking the shit out of it.

Oh yeah, we're, we were just whaling on the stuff. Broke mallets, and we were playin' some wicked stuff, everyone's totally wrecked, at midnight playing croquet and trippin' —

Yeah I bet you were trippin', that acid pot you're smoking, man this B.C. Bud's freakin' toxic —

— yeah tripping on the hoops. And the neighbours or whatever, they're like calling his landlord, Trev's, cause, and the police, and the landlord calls 'im and says don't worry about it. And the next day —

Yeah yeah the next day they just brought the stuff, on the Monday, back to Canadian Tire and said this is *shit*, what kinda Chinese crap you guys sellin', we want our money back. And no questions asked. So now we call it the Canadian Tire Party Rental.

But like Trev, he was out of control. He moved in that place after his divorce, and so like people are saying hey let's get some rock and roll going, and he's no. Just country. Just wants to sit there feeling sorry for himself, you know? But don't get me wrong, people still came by, in waves, though. We just slept there, had the kid & just crashed. Didn't want to drive after all that.

He helped carry the chairs out to the truck. Okay, and his father opened the back. Alright, we got that squared away. He brushed his hands together.

So, what else you guys up to?

Oh well, you know, your mother and I are planning on maybe checking out the West coast of the Island. We haven't done that much, so we'll just toodle around. See what's there.

Yeah I guess you're all set now.

Well that's the thing.

Said *fuck you* too many times to too many people.

Hey guys did I tell you about her little friend? There's this he's just the cutest little kid right? He's really cute and he comes over and says can Sarah come out and play? So it's good, she's making friends.

Oh she's great Jess.

Yeah she's active, cause she's around lots of different adults, and independent.

Oh I got you guys a present. Here. She passed over a painted rock the size of her fist. Jimmy turned the rock over, it said Jesus Loves You. On top was painted an Indian girl's face.

Oh that's great. Let me see that. He passed it to her. Oh hilarious. Yeah, we've gotta put it in the garden, put it somewhere good.

Yeah so like we were there and she's like just got freaked out by the Happy Rock Lady. You know, she just saw everywhere there's these happy rocks. But Dave was all stressed about it! Yes! It's cause of how he's a really heavy atheist, and he only told Ben about God a little while ago. Cause there was this kid eh? And he was like God made this or God did that or God said it's okay, or whatever. Like God was this regular person. So he had to tell him about it, and Wendy's okay, it's just Dave. We were over there and I just felt like leaving, you know? I mean, he's my brother and everything, but he was being rude, just plain rude. You know I just felt like leaving. . . And everyone couldn't believe it. Wendy was just like, looking at him. I don't know, I mean I know he had things on his mind, I could tell,

but he didn't, you know, specifically tell me. And he didn't have to be so uptight about it. But did he tell you? He was up for the lead role in the play they're putting on, that's why he was so stressed.

So did he get it?

Oh yeah, excellent, eh?

Oh we have to go see it.

Yeah, you should.

Yeah we will.

So what do you wanna do now? You guys want to do something? Go to the beach, the lake?

What lake, no, I don't know.

Oh I don't know, that sounds good. Nice to get out, catch some rays.

Okay I'm going to phone the parks see if it's open. Ray sprang to action, grabbed the cordless.

What?

The lake. They closed it for algae.

So you know Pam's in town, hey?

Hunh? Who? Not —

Yeah, so like Pamela Lee Anderson —

Pamela Anderson *Lee*

Oh really?

Really.

Yeah I guess that makes sense eh? Cause she — anyway, guess her mother's getting some award from the Valley First Nations group, they're, they're honouring her.

They're honouring Pamela? For what, having teepees on her chest?

No, her mom. Her mom is native. You didn't know that?

Oh no, really.

Yeah no yeah, it's true. So.

So —

So yeah so she's in town, think she might be down there. Cause you know Dave went to high school with her.

Oh really, excellent.

Yeah I think they actually had a date or two, back before she became popular.

He pulled the tampon out of her and put it next to the bed. He started licking her and she rolled over, sat on him, closing her eyes.

