

"Stories by JoeyVapes"

MR. BLACKSTOCK

Years ago, I was the nighttime front desk clerk at a hotel (and as anyone who has ever spent enough time in the "hospitality industry" can tell you, hotels are breeding grounds of  what the christ). It was a pretty sweet gig. . .pretty much involved sitting in a comfy chair, smoking, and watching bad movies on cable for hours on end. The few customers I'd get were generally hookers and their tricks ("What do you mean, I have to pay for a full night? I only need the room for two hours, tops!"), rednecks too drunk to drive home from the bar down the block, what have you. A man can do worse than getting paid to watch shit TV and get fat.

I eventually moved in to one of the "down rooms." \$30 a week, and my commute involved walking down a short hallway. The pay wasn't the greatest, and I had to deal with some pretty sleazy characters. But hey, beats digging ditches.

Over my time there, I got to know several of the "live-ins." These were people who, for whatever reason, decided to make the hotel their permanent home. Some had been there for a couple of years, paying by the week. Can't say I blame them. Sure, the weekly rental adds up, but factor in maid service, free cable including all the major movie channels, no utility bills, etc.

One of these live-ins was Mr. Blackstock. He was an elderly black gentleman who got by doing odd jobs around town. Very polite, very educated. Went to church every Sunday without fail, every week of the three years he lived there. Never missed a rent payment. He was a nice, friendly old man. I liked him quite a lot. He'd come keep me company on some of the more boring shifts, watching my shitty movies through the office rental window, sharing my beer, cracking corny jokes, and just being an all-around cool motherfucker.

He always refused maid service, claiming he didn't like the idea of someone poking around his room when he was out working. No big deal. . .for three years, he had been an ideal customer, so we let him have his privacy.

Then, Mr. Blackstock moved out.

I was the first to enter his room. Literally. . .in three years, the man had never had any guests.

The smell hit me immediately. Sharp, stinging reek of old urine. It didn't take me long to find the source: seven hotel wastebaskets beside his bed, filled with cloudy, old piss, with god knows how many cigarette butts floating.

One of the two beds was stripped bare, and the mattress was a mess of oily sweat stains and a crazy-quilt of skid marks and cigarette burns. The wall was so plastered with old, crusted semen that it looked like a Jackson Pollack. In the corner was a massive pile of semen crusted children's clothing (we later theorized he would hit up Salvation Army and the local consignment shops, buy the clothing, come home, and beat off into it. We hoped).

Then, I noticed the other bed. It was neatly made, except for an odd lump under the blanket. I carefully pulled back the covers.

He had cut open the mattress to expose the springs in the middle. Affixed to the heavy

coils by a couple of zip ties, was a homemade dildo. A massive one, secured to point straight up. He had taken several plastic shopping bags, and had wrapped them tightly around an old Glade air freshener can. The whole thing was held together by stretching some condoms tightly over it, and was about as big around as my wrist. The hole in the mattress around it was dark with what looked like three years worth of old shit and dried blood.

Between the bed and the wall, I found a fuckton of old, empty Crisco cans.



DONE MESSED

A woman rented a room in my last few months at the hotel. She paid three weeks in advance, requesting a room in a relatively empty and out of the way corner of the first floor.

Over the next several days, I didn't see much of the woman. She'd pop in once a day with a few groceries, spend an hour or two in the room, and leave. I didn't think much of it, until one night, the phone rang at my desk.

"Front desk. This is Joey speaki-"

"HAAAAALP!"

"Ma'am, is everything okay?"

shaky muttering "Oh, lawd. . .Jesus Lawd, I done messed. . .no good girl, done lef' and now I done messed. . ."

"I'm sorry, say again?"

"I said HALP! Sarah done lef', I done mess, lawd, fell off the bed. You call Sarah, tell that no-good get her country ass back here, lawd, such a turrible mess, SHAMEFUL mess. . ."

"You need assistance, ma'am?"

"HAAAAALP!!!!"

I grabbed the room key out of the cabinet, and raced down the hall. As I neared the door, I could hear sobbing coming from the other side, punctuated by "Lawd, lawd. . .done messed. . .shameful girl. . .lef' me 'lone and I done messed. . .wicked, shameful Sarah. . .Lawd Jesus, done messed it good. . ."

I knocked loudly, announcing I was there, asking if she needed help. No answer, just her batshit mantra, "Lawd, done messed. . .messy, messy. . .Lawd Jesus, help, done messed. . ."

"Ma'am, I'm about to come in. "

Now, as you probably could tell from the OP, I've seen some fucked up things in this place. I've found stashes of kiddie porn Polaroids, mountains of cocaine, dead animals, Mr. Blackstock's "little friend," all sorts of vile, sick, heartbreaking things.

Nothing could have prepared me for the sight of a nude, obese, legless woman in her mid to late 70's writhing on her back on the floor next to a shit-stained bed, caked in fecal matter, tracking a snail-trail of shit on the carpet, scabbed leg-stumps flailing pitifully, frantically trying to scour poop out of her enormous ass-crevice with a once-white pillowcase, softly chanting "Lawd, done messed. . .done fell and messed it good. . .Lawd Jesus, what a shameful mess I done made, yes lawd. . .done messed. . ."

I found out the next day that the daughter had been caring for her senile, dementia-addled mother after her legs were amputated (I guess diabetes), but she decided she wasn't equipped to provide round the clock care. So rather than put her in a facility where her mother could get the care she needed, she just dumped her, completely alone, unmedicated, helpless, and scared out of what was left of her mind, in a locked hotel room.

For fuckssake, the woman didn't even have a wheelchair. She was a prisoner on her bed, with a case of bottled water, bags of junk food, a bedpan, and a five gallon bucket to empty it into.

Her cunt of a daughter had the nerve to ask if we were going to bill her extra for the cleaning.

MY FIRST (AND LAST) "DATE" WITH A CRACK WHORE

As I mentioned before, hookers were just part of the job. It was one of those things where you just have to leave your personal morals at the door: Yeah, I could have refused to rent to them if I spotted them. But money is money.

My first week on the job, I was 19. Young, dumb, and full of cum, as they say. It was a cheese job, and I'd often sit behind the desk with a 12 pack of Busch, maybe sneak into the employee toilet to cop a few hits off a joint of skunkweed.

This particular night, Busch had the night off. His rather disreputable cousin, Mad Dog 20/20, had agreed to cover his shift. And he had invited a few of his friends.

At around 2:30 AM, a woman I had rented to earlier in the evening came down to the front desk to buy a 20oz Mountain Dew. When she checked in, I thought she looked like a skeleton slathered in a thin layer of mayonaise, her sunken eye sockets adorned with two dull yellow grapes. She was missing her four front teeth on top, and appeared to have no teeth on the bottom. Her tits, two soggy grapefruits sloshing in her ill-fitting tube top, tried desperately to hide their shame at being seen with her.

But now, Mad Dog 20/20, the worst possible friend a 19 year old virgin can have, was up to his tricks. "Dude, she's pretty hot," he whispered softly into my ear.

She noticed me staring, and with a voice that could curdle yogurt, she oozed the words "What time do you get off?"

I played it cool. I gave her my best smile, and with all the charm I could muster, I uttered the three most romantic words I could think of.

"I got money."

I stumbled out of the office, and lurched down the hall with She-Gollum in tow. I somehow managed to get my door open, and she came in and lay down on the bed.

Doing my best to sound sexy, I whispered "BAHHHHHH. . .HOW MUSCH IZZAT?"

"How much you got?"

My brain ground to a halt. "Wait," I thought, "this doesn't seem right. Not only was she obviously trying to take me for a ride, but she had actually pulled her pipe out of her purse, and was loading a fresh rock.

"Dude, just roll with it," whispered Mad Dog.

"Alls I got is a hunnred."

Before I knew it, my wallet was empty, and she was naked. Her body was a mass of scar tissue and bruises, her chicken-skin legs were in the air, and my face was between them. Her vagina. . .well, remember Odo from Star Trek: Deep Space Nine? Remember his mouth? Okay, picture that, but with a beard.

"Ooooh. . .fuck yes. . .you're so good at that!" she moaned between deep draws on her pipe. An obvious lie, but, as Mad Dog kept whispering to me, "Fuck it. You're gonna get LAID."

Finally, my jaws (and sense of smell) could take no more. I lay back, undid my pants, and waited for bearded Odo.

"Shit, I gotta drive my kid to school."

At this point, even Mad Dog was confused.

"Sorry, baby. I'll be back in twenty minutes. And then, I'm gonna fuck your brains out.."

She left, and I lay there waiting, my dick lazily weaving back and forth like a boxer in the eleventh round.

Waiting.

Waiting.

Wait. . .

. . . she's driving her kid to school.

At three in the morning.

Where the fuck are my room keys?

That night, I learned several lessons. Among them, MD 20/20 is a LIAR. And so are crack whores.

Useful lessons, indeed. And they only cost me a hundred bucks, a four alarm hangover, and the five TVs she stole with my keys on the way out of the building.

Ah, memories. . . .

LARRY

Another live-in was Larry. Larry was a nice enough guy. Older man, dressed nicely, would bring me tiramisu some days. I used to sit and drink coffee with him at the end of my shifts, when he was just getting up for the day.

Larry was a veteran (he was always making a big deal of showing off his purple hearts, military ID, discharge papers, etc. To just about anyone. Odd, but harmless). He drove a nice late model Ford pickup, and was always bringing his grandkids by. Nice kids. A boy and girl, aged seven and nine. I'd give them free snacks out of the breakroom vending machine (I had the key), and, with Larry, they'd come down and watch Disney movies on the DVD player in the office.

Twice a week, Larry would buy up tons of steak, and fire up the grill in the courtyard, inviting anyone who cared to to come down for an impromptu party. The grandkids would chase each other through the sprinklers, and Larry would watch, laughing and grinning proudly, in his kindly, grandfatherly way.

Then, one day, Larry was gone. His truck remained outside in its usual space. We held on to Larry's belongings for the legally-required 30 days, before tossing some, and donating the rest to Goodwill.

Months passed. Larry's truck remained untouched, but Larry and the grandkids never came back.

One day, I was returning from the library, when I saw a woman in a pantsuit and two uniformed police officers examining the truck. I ran up, and asked what was going on, and if something had happened to Larry.

The officers exchanged glances, and told me the situation.

The woman was from a rental car company. The car had been rented by a man named Larry three years prior, at one of their branches in Arizona. Three weeks later, Larry had been found dead in a parking lot, stabbed multiple times. They held up a photo of an elderly black man, who they identified as Larry.

The Larry I had known was white.

They then showed me two more photos. Larry's grandkids. They said they didn't know who they were, but that they had linked them to "Larry" through a series of videos they had come into possession of when they busted some people who downloaded kiddie porn. They asked to see the room Larry had stayed in. One look told them enough. Many of the videos had been filmed in that room.

"Larry" had killed a man for his truck, stolen his medals, adopted his identity, and was using both to hop from state to state, hotel to hotel, filming child pornography.

I never found out what happened to the kids. They'd be grown by now. I hope they're okay.

After that, I stopped making friends with the guests.

LUKE THE GOOK: TAKE ME TO DA RIBBA!

A pretty common, though not at all ethical, practice in hotels is "freelance rental." Say a friend is too drunk to drive home, and is almost broke. Or he's got a girlfriend he doesn't need the missus finding out about. Whatever. He passes you ten bucks, maybe a couple joints, some pills, whatever. You give him the key to a "down room" (a room that, for whatever reason, is unrentable. Leaky roof, broken bed, needs painted, smells like piss, etc.), and let him spend the night. As long as he cleans up after himself, and sneaks out before the maid starts her morning rounds, no harm, no foul.

Word had spread through my circle of friends that I could be relied on to provide this service. And then those friends told their friends. Doing this, I nearly doubled what I was making every week doing legit check ins.

Enter Luke The Gook.

Luke the Gook was an old Vietnamese man who fled to the US after the war (rumor had it that he had been a Viet Cong soldier). The name Luke The Gook was apparently self-applied, and he was very proud of it. He was a very small man, with a shock of white hair and a permanent, toothless grin splitting his face in two like a sliced melon. He had spent his entire life in this country in Alabama, and spoke with a heavy, surreal mix of Vietnamese and broken English, with copious amounts of southern twang mixed in.

And man, oh, man, did he ever love his whores. He was pretty regular at the joint, and every time he was there, he was with a different whore. His preference was for ladies of the darker persuasion, and the heavier, the better. He confided in me once that he liked them to sit on his head, and suffocate him while beating him off.

This one particular night, Luke The Gook came in, carrying a paper bag, and dragging along the single most obese whore I had ever seen. If you've ever seen the first Deuce Bigalow movie, you get the picture. With his usual, sloppy, toothless grin, he asked me for our usual arrangement.

"So, we doing this cash, weed, beer? Whatcha got?" I asked.

His grin got even wider. "Eben BETTAH, hoss. Lookit!"

He removed the object from the bag, and placed it on the counter slowly, with the reverence of a monk placing an offering at the feet of Bhudda.

A fucking Big Mouth Billy Bass.

I just stared at Luke for a few seconds.

"Dude. . .wha-??"

"Is good trade!" he insisted. "Bring good luck!"

"Dude. . .WHA-??"

"Watch dis!" he said proudly, pushing the red button on the plackard. The fish jumped to life, thrashing, singing his song. Suddenly, Luke The Gook began dancing gleefully around the lobby, happily singing along at the top of his lungs.

"TAKE ME TO DA RIBBAH! DROP ME IN DA WAH-TAH! TAKE ME TO DA RIBBAH! PUT ME IN DA WAH-TAH!"

For those few seconds, it was the single most positive thing I had seen in all my time at that shithole.

Needless to say, Luke The Gook got his room, and Big Mouth Billy Bass hung proudly in the office for the remainder of my time there.

THOSE ARE NOT PILLOWCASES

Estella, our maid (who will probably feature pretty heavily in a future story or two), was screaming her head off in the laundry room. She was a slight waif of a black lady, and usually very soft-spoken and calm.

So when I heard her screeching "WHAT. . .THE. . .FUUUUUUUUUCK?!", naturally, I tore ass down the hall to see if she was okay. I flung the heavy double doors open, to find her backed against the shelves of detergent and floor degreaser, staring at a pile of linnens, panting, clenching and unclenching her fists.

I walked over, and began poking carefully at the sheets and pillowcases, unsure of what I'd find. I noticed two of the pillowcases had holes in them.

And were triangular.

. . .

Once linnens are piled into the maid's rolling basket, there's no way to tell what room they came from. And so there was no way for me to return the two Klan hoods that had gotten mixed in with the laundry to their rightful owners.

As you'd probably guess, no one came forward to ask about them, either.

THINGS LEFT BEHIND IN ROOMS

Cocaine

Marijuana

Laptops

Dildos

Handcuffs

Bloodstained underpants

Tampons stuck to the walls

Homemade pocket pussy (tube sock stuffed inside a jelly jar, lined with a latex glove, secured to the jar with rubber bands, stuffed between the mattress and box spring, with a pillow on the floor to kneel on. The rubber band had several pubes twisted in it)

Several hypodermic needles filled with blood

Boxes of old Danish porn mags (Rodox, Color Climax, and many I can't name)

A doberman's head

Dismembered cats

Semen-crusting baby dolls

Soiled adult diapers (found these CONSTANTLY)

A magic marker mural of furry porn completely covering a wall (Sonic The Hedgehog blowing Elmo)

A rubber fist

A car engine

A kiddie pool filled with filthy water

Three dead kittens in Tupperware

Pillowcases filled with poop

A full sized Pepsi machine

A still

A wall plastered with photos of Kirsten Dunst with her eyes blacked out with marker

Goat skulls

A moped

A cat's hind leg

A chihuahua so rotten, it was fused to the carpet

Photos of the inside of MY room in a scrapbook

A male love doll tied to the bed, dressed like Batman

It pretty much goes on and on like this.

BUNDLE OF JOY

Two of our live-ins were Brad and Janet (I don't remember their names, so just work with me here). They were a nice young couple in their early 20's, who were staying with us during Janet's pregnancy. She was expecting a girl, and were planning to get a proper apartment soon after Janet delivered.

Janet delivered a gorgeous baby girl, who they named (okay, this, I DO remember) Brianna. For several weeks, they kept to themselves inside their room, as is to be expected for new parents.

Things didn't go as planned. Brad lost his job, so their apartment savings were going to feed Brianna and pay for their room. We would all chip in to buy them Enfamil and just help them out from time to time.

One day, Estella came to the desk, and pointed out that when she would go by the room to pick up the trash outside the door on Thursday mornings, she rarely saw diapers (the garbage bags we provided our guests were clear). It seemed a bit odd, but not odd enough to worry about.

Until August.

Guests were starting to complain of a foul odor at the side of the hotel, near Brad and Janet's room. I went outside to investigate, and found a HUGE pile of shitty, reeking, waterlogged diapers between the hedges and their window.

I knocked on their door, and confronted them. They got angry, denied knowing anything about it, claimed "some blacks" were dumping their kid's Huggies.

"How'd you know they were Huggies?"

No answer, guilty looks.

I told them it had to stop. If not, we would evict them.

And it did stop. They stayed there for six more months, until Brad had saved enough at his new job to get a small apartment. They said their goodbyes, and turned in their keys. The room was spotless.

It was weird, though. Even though the diapers were gone, I could swear the smell never completely went away. I just chalked it up to a sensory memory.

That month, a few of the rooms had developed roof leaks, so my boss hired his brothers to redo the tar roof. I was helping them buck cans of roofing tar up the ladder, and was the first one up.

Directly above their room, surrounded by hundreds of flies, was a truly enormous mound of soggy, shitty, rain-soaked Huggies. For months, they had just been flinging them up there from their window. As we shoveled them into a dumpster the next day, we guessed there had to be at least two hundred pounds worth.

FANCY A DIP?

I was sitting in the office, having a smoke, drinking Busch, watching Mystery Men on HBO. It was past one in the morning, and dead as hell. Nobody was up and about, and we generally closed the courtyard at night, so I flipped the breaker to the courtyard lights off.

The movie ended, and some romcom starring Meg Ryan came on, so I flipped off the TV, put a BACK IN FIVE MINUTES sign in the window, grabbed a flashlight, and headed to a dark stairwell in the back to cop a quick toke.

As I neared the exit, I heard giggles, whispers, and splashes. Someone had snuck out, hopped the fence, and was in the pool, in the completely dark and closed pool in the courtyard.

Oh, CHRIST.

I stuffed the joint in my shirt pocket, clicked on the flashlight, and ran out to the courtyard. Shining at the pool, I saw several empty beer cans and two small piles of clothes on the concrete, and two very elderly and VERY naked people splashing around. They froze like two wrinkled deer in a single headlight.

"What the FUCK are you doing?!"

The woman, very drunk, spoke up. "No one is out here, we weren't hurting anyone, and we just wanted to use the pool!"

It was the first time in my life I ever remember actually facepalming. They became very irritated when I started laughing.

See, the pool wasn't closed for the NIGHT. . .it had been closed since before I started working there. Two years prior. Because the filter pumps were broken, and the drains were clogged.

I busted two drunken old pervs trying to fuck while up to their chests in two year old rancid rainwater and filth. I can't tell you how many times I've caught people pissing into that pool, or how many dead squirrels I've had to skim out of it. And to this day, I have no clue how they failed to smell it.

THINGS LEFT BEHIND IN ROOMS 2 1/2: THE SMELL OF FEAR (fear smells a lot like poo)

A six inch figurine of a bear made out of poo on the bathroom counter

A cardboard cutout of Boba Fett (I claimed it)

A bong in the shape of the USS Enterprise made out of PVC pipe and two frisbees, with the bowl in the saucer section, and smoke chambers in the warp nacelles

The complete paperback collection of Gross Jokes and Totally Tasteless Jokes

Amputee porn videos

A vibrator. A large one. With a power cord. The plug had a fucking GROUND (and will feature in it's own story)

A large stack of magazines with pages stuck together, ranging from Penthouse to HIGHLIGHTS

An ATM

A TV and fridge from a completely different hotel (our rival a few streets over)

A cucumber wearing a cock ring

No less than FIVE VHS COPIES of The Net with Sandra Bullock

A box of sealed bootleg DVDs with professional looking covers. Among them were Star Wars: Episode I, Episode II, and Episode III (this was in 2001 or 2002)

A New Kids On The Block poster featuring Donny (again, this was 2001 or 2002)

BETAMAX TAPES

A payphone that someone had unsuccessfully tried to open the cash box on

A 2 liter Coke bottle filled with diarrhea

White Supermecist literature

A Bat'Leth

A Fender Stratocaster that had been broken halfway down the neck

3 live catfish in the tub

1 butchered deer carcass in the tub

Gallon ziplock baggies in the fridge containing varying amounts of poo

A pile of poo on a paper plate with an American flag toothpick sticking out of it, with croutons

Four truck tires, with rims still in them

An empty room. I mean, no bed, no TV, no nightstand, no table, no chairs, no light

fixtures, no carpeting, no curtains, NOTHING.

Edible panties. With skid marks.

A three ring binder filled with awful Star Trek TNG fanfiction

WHY YOU DON'T OPEN A HOTEL NEXT TO AN ACE HARDWARE STORE

My first day behind the desk officially. I had spent a week being trained how to check in and check out customers (no computer, no credit card machine. Cash only, and an insanely complicated paper records system). Anne, the day clerk, felt confident enough to leave me to run it while she went to run errands.

Within an hour, I had checked in my first guests, and was taking them down the hall to their room. Lovely old couple on their way to Houston to visit their grandkids.

I opened the door to the room to show them in, only to find two extremely large, naked, and immensely endowed black men blowing each other while fingering their asses.

I slammed the door, apologized profusely to the shocked guests, and yelled for Estella to call the police. Meanwhile, the two men climbed out the window to the courtyard, jumped the fence, and escaped through the cemetery.

And this is why you don't open a hotel next to a place that makes copies of keys. . .some people may be tempted to come back unannounced.

ANNIE SPRINKLE, Part I

No, not THE Annie Sprinkle.

We had a live-in named Grace. An obvious crack whore, her eyes were severely jaundiced, skinny as a rail, missing all of her front top teeth so that her bottom teeth would jut out in a Looney Tunes bulldog underbite. Her stomach, while devoid of fat, was wrinkled and saggy, like a weeks-old balloon that had slowly leaked out the last bit of air. Her tits looked as if they had once been nice, perky little globes. Now, they drooped and sagged, formless and wobbly like fried eggs stuffed into the toes of a pair of nylons, one drooping lower than the other by quite a bit. Quasimodo's eyes come to mind.

The odd thing was how she carried herself. She didn't shuffle from foot to foot, scratching her arms, mumbling every word. Her rheumy, yellow eyes didn't shift wildly from side to side. She didn't wear the usual uniforms of her trade, the tube tops, Daisy Dukes, and the like.

She carried herself with confidence and authority. Her voice was strong, pleasant, and her laughter was like the tinkle of windchimes. She never cursed, and her speech was educated and unaccented. She dressed in modest blouses and slacks, with conservative pumps. Her smell was perfumey, and almost pleasant, once you got past the undercurrent of burning polystyrene.

I honestly had no fucking clue what to make of her.

Men would stop by constantly asking for her. Every third call to the hotel was someone asking to be transferred to her. She never left the hotel for long, and never came in with anyone. I never could figure out how she did it. As I said, she wasn't anything to look at, but men would flock to her. I REPEAT, MEN WOULD FLOCK TO **HER**. She may have looked like Janis Joplin's corpse, but to her gentleman callers, she may as well have been Princess Grace of Monaco.

Ah, the Gentleman Callers. Men from all walks of life: construction workers, business types, a couple of the local TV weather guys, local political figures, and occasionally, cops. All equal in their enthusiasm, and, on a few occasions, adamant that "You never saw me." The latter was sometimes followed by slipping me a hundred.

Aside from whatever the hell she did in that room, she was the model guest. And her "friends" always behaved themselves, and never bothered anyone. And, like Mr. Blackstock, she always refused maid service. In the two months she lived there, nobody had been in her room but--

"Are you in charge here?"

I looked up from my comic book with a start, to see two rather sour looking men in pressed, black suits peering at me from behind mirrored Aviators.

"Um. . .right now, yeah. Can I help you?"

The man on the right handed me a business card with the police department logo in the top left corner.

"We need to speak with you. In private. Now."

ANNIE SPRINKLE, part II

"Do you have a guest here going by the name Annie Sprinkle?" asked Detective Michaels. Detective Robbins remained silent, eyeing me sternly from the foot of my bed.

"Annie Sprinkle. . .the seventies porn star?" I asked nervously, hoping to god the two men didn't notice the roaches in my ashtray. Detective Michaels scowled. Robbins nodded approvingly, as afficianados of classic porn often do when they meet their own. Detective or not, he knew the score.

"Not THE Annie Sprinkle," Robbins answered, slight amusement in his voice. Michaels shot him a disapproving glance, and Robbins returned to silently scowling.

Michales cleared his throat, and continued. "Annie Sprinkle, also known as Jeannie Pepper, Ginger Lynn, Nikki Charm, Christy Canyon, Vanessa Del Rio, Barbara Dare, Nina Hartley, and Gertrude Hansen."

I let out a laugh. "Yeah, I know all those names, except for Gertrude. They live in my sock drawer."

Robbins' face began to crack, and he began giggling madly, clutching his abdomen. "Can it!" snapped Michaels. He turned back to me. "This woman, smartass," he spat, holding out a mugshot.

The face was bruised, and a bit younger, and the hair was lighter. But it was--

"Grace. Yeah, she lives downstairs. Hooker, I think." Michaels seemed taken aback by my candor. "She hasn't been around in a couple days."

"She's more than a hooker," Robbins chimed in. "She's running a prostitution ring up and down the gulf coast, with girls stationed in shithole motels from here to Biloxi. No offense."

"None taken. It IS a shithole."

"We think she's been using this hotel as a base of operations for weeks, if not months."

"Probably."

"So either you can help us, or we can compel--"

"No problem."

Michaels and Robbins exchanged glances.

"Yeah, no problem. Like I said, she hasn't been here in days. But our day guy, Dan, has a room right next to hers. She came in with a ton of luggage, and if she had skipped out, he'd have known. I can give you a call when she gets back, and you can send some guys over to collect her. Hell, I can even make sure she stays put until you get here."

Michaels eyed me uncertainly. "How exactly do you plan on doing that?"

"I'll have Dan knock on her door with a couple hundred in his hand. They'll negotiate. Dan's a stubborn bastard, so that should be plenty of time."

"How do you know he'll go along with it?"

"He won't know about it. I'll pass him some bills, point to her door, and say 'Happy Late Birthday, have fun.' Just promise me you won't book him, and you have my full cooperation."

Robbins grinned. "Won't he be pissed?"

"Fuck him, he's an asshole."

Michaels was visibly suspicious. "Sounds like a good plan, but I don't get why you're so eager to do this. What'd she do to *you*, kid?"

I grimaced. "Nothing. Not HER, anyway. . .let's just say I have my reasons.

"I fucking hate crack whores. Let's just leave it at that."

ANNIE SPRINKLE: part III

Dan The Army Man was about the most useless man you could ever meet. He was, as his name would imply, retired army. He lived on a steady diet of Kool-Aid, incredibly old MRE's (Meals Ready to Eat. . .things like chipped beef, mystery meat in mystery gravy, etc., cooked by popping a bag of chemicals that would heat up into a cardboard box with the food).

He would rail on and on about gooks, niggers, kikes, and spics, and how they were all in league with the Taliban to put queers in public schools, or whatever nonsense he was spouting any given week. He constantly smelled like gaping asshole and feet. He spent most of his free time in the shooting range in the abandoned wing, firing at crudely drawn targets of Muslim men in gigantic turbans, while shouting "Die, camel jockey!"

He constantly bragged about all the women he slept with. His stories ranged from Letters To Penthouse Forum (he was angry that they never published his letters, and claimed Larry Flynt was a Jew, in spite of my insistence that Larry Flynt published Hustler) to the grotesque (claiming he fucked an elderly woman in her colostomy hole while her granddaughter rimmed him).

He was a subscriber of Soldier Of Fortune, and would obsess over it like a speedfreak Dale Gribble. He worshipped Ronald Reagan, and would sit in the office watching The Gipper's westerns with an obvious, raging hardon. And when a man wears sweatpants damn near every minute of every day, you become painfully aware of every hardon.

For example, the day Grace checked in, Dan was wearing sweatpants.

Grace returned three days after my visit with Michaels and Robbins. She walked up to the desk, and asked if anyone had come to see her. I bit my tongue, and said no. She thanked me warmly, got a cup of coffee out of the break area, and made her way down the hall to her room.

I waited two minutes, took a deep breath, and picked up the phone.

"Dan? Joey. Hope I'm not bugging you, but it occurs to me you had a birthday two weeks ago, and I just plum forgot! Tell you what, man. . ."

ANNIE SPRINKLE, part IV

"Detective Michaels? We spoke at the hotel. About Miss Sprinkle. She's in the room now, with Dan."

"Good. We'll have some men there in a few minutes. I'll fax you the arrest warrant, and you can deliver it to the officers when they arrive."

Sounded good. I gave him the fax number, and hung up. I walked to the back office, to the fax machine.

Not only was it not hooked up, it didn't appear to have any cords or cables. For fuckssake, why put a fax number on the stationary if the fax isn't fucking hooked up?

I called back. "Bit of a problem. The fax is fucked."

"Shit. . .I can drive it there, but I'm a half an hour out. Just wait for the officers, and I'll handle it."

The officers arrived five minutes later. There were six officers total. I led them down the hall to the room, and stood to the side as the lead officer banged on the door.

"Gertrude Hansen, police. We are here to execute a warrant for your arrest."

Cue sounds of breaking glass, rustling paper, and toilet flushing.

"Do you have anyone by the window outside?" I asked the lead officer. He pointed to two men, and they exited the building. None too soon, as I heard the window open, followed by an officer's voice yelling "FOR THE LOVE OF GOD, MAN, PUT SOME FUCKING PANTS ON!" The window slammed shut, and I could hear Dan's voice on the other side of the door, panting "Ohfuckohfuckohfuck. . ."

One cop had his tazer out, with a big grin on his face. "Been dying to use that, haven't you?" I asked.

"Yup. Just got 'em this month."

"Think you'll need it?"

"Oh, god, I hope so," he said, grinning even wider.

"Mind if I watch?"

"Knock yourself out, bro."

At that point, an officer walked up. "Sir, I was just on the horn with Michaels. There's a wreck on South Liberty. He's stuck in traffic."

"Sir?" I asked. "Do you need the warrant to get the door open?"

"Unless an occupant willingly lets us in, yes."

"And if you're in there, and there's evidence of illegal activity in plain sight, you can act on it without a warrant, right?"

"Right. But I doubt very seriously she'd just let us walk in."

I jingled my keys. "She might not. But unlike you, I don't need her permission. This is a hotel, not an apartment complex. I'm authorized to enter any room for any reason, and I'm damn sure authorized to grant you entry."

The officer grinned, and stood aside. I found the key, unlocked the deadbolt, and tried the door. It opened a crack, and was stopped by the chain. Through the crack, I could see Grace trying frantically to stuff various dildos and smoking devices into a suitcase, and Dan struggling to put his sweatpants back on while trying to eat a handful of pot. The air was a thick mix of pot and crack smoke, and I stepped back to get my face out of it.

The officer glanced at the chain, and back to me.

"Go ahead. Kick it in, break the chain. I've got a whole box of 'em in the office."

"Thanks, kid," he said, and kicked the door hard. The chain snapped, and there was a loud THUD, followed by a shrill shriek. The officer started laughing uncontrollably.

"Oh, fuck. . .she was trying to look out the peephole when I kicked. . ."

ANNIE SPRINKLE, part V

Dan, as per the arrangement, was not booked for soliciting. He was, however, booked for the drugs. And hitting an officer, but I wasn't present for that. He was fired and evicted.

Annie/Grace made bond, and showed up at the hotel a week later, shouting at my window from the parking lot. Saying she was going to sue me for letting the cops in. I just put on some headphones, cranked up some Floyd, and ignored her until she left. I never saw her again.

After her arrest, the police went through her stuff, and went over the evidence. They said to keep everyone out of the room, and touch nothing until they bagged and tagged everything. That night, curiosity got the better of me, and I crept in for a peek. The room had been decorated like a brothel in a bad movie. She had put up velvet curtains, paintings of fat naked chicks, red satin sheets on the bed, fake marble statuettes. Her belongings were neatly organized on the bed and table. Every sort of sexual device and smoking apparatus imaginable was present, including the biggest vibrator I had ever seen. It was almost horselike in size, and had a wall cord with a grounded plug.

FLICKA, NOOOOOOOO!

I grew up in a rural farming community. I didn't live on a farm, but farms were all over the place. Wheat, barley, and milo fields were everywhere. Cows grazed lazily everywhere you turned, slack jaws and bored stares offered to passers-by, tails lifting every now and then to deposit their commentary on the state of human society at large.

My friend James was a fifth generation farmer's kid. While I'd rattle off my favorite X-Men characters, he'd gush about his dad's new tractor. While I'd be drawing my illicit naked pictures of April O'Neal and Gadget from Rescue Rangers (Fuck off. I WAS A KID, and I knew nothing about Rule 34 and furies. Take the mouse ears and tail off her, and she was just a chick with buck teeth), he was sketching designs for bigger and better grain silos.

We used to play Army Men on his land, using old rusted out husks of tractors and trucks as bases and forts. Our clubhouse was a derelict semi trailer. The old Studebaker was our Millennium Falcon.

One day, for his 13th birthday, James got a horse.

She was a beautiful pony. Pure white, with a proud mane, and powerful muscles that twitched tightly with every confident step. She was a younger horse, not yet fully grown, and she trotted happily in her enclosure, head high. Her name was Flicka, after the children's book.

"Want to pet her? She's REAL friendly," offered James, opening the gate a bit.

I was thrilled. I'd never been close to a horse. I slowly entered the pen, and approached Flicka. I offered my hand as I got closer, in a friendly gesture.

Flicka snorted, and her eyes fixed on me intently, wide and frightening. It was then that I saw two things.

One, that Flicka had begun to paw the ground in front of her.

And two, that she appeared to have an erection.

I looked back, in time to see James closing the gate with an evil grin.

"James. . .you son of a BITCH."

I slowly started walking to the gate, not wanting to make any sudden movements. I could hear Flicka pacing me, gaining on me. I picked up speed. Flicka matched it. I broke into a run. . .

WHAM.

Flicka rammed me, knocking me to the mud. I tried to stand, only to be pinned down by two hooves to my shoulders. Something firm poked my buttocks.

Oh, CHRIST.

"JAMES YOU SON OF A BITCH!!!"

James continued laughing, and did nothing, as Flicka's penis jabbed and rammed the back of my jeans. Each thrust was like getting punched in the ass, and I was afraid my jeans would split.

"James, GODDAMN YOU HELP ME!"

More giggles. The pounding increased in frequency and intensity, until--

NEEEEEIIIIGGGGHHHHHHHHHHH!!!

There was one final thrust, hard and prolonged, and the back of my pants were suddenly warm and wet. Flicka took his front hooves off my shoulders, and with a contented snort, he trotted off.

James was laughing his head off. He entered the gate, and reached down to help me up. "OH, MY GOD, you should have seen you--"

With every ounce of strength I had in me, I punched him in the balls. He went down like a sandbag, and I stood up, and gave him three hard kicks in the nuts. As he lay there screaming, I yelled through clenched teeth:

"YOU. . .LET ME. . .GET **RAPED**. . .BY A **HORSE!**"

I gave him one final kick, and began my long walk home, covered in muddy hoofprints, and stinking of horse spunk and shame.

GONE FISTIN'

Life can be pretty lonely in a hotel. There was a strict rule against fucking the guests (not that I really cared), and girlfriends were out of the question.

I mean, would YOU want to bring someone you cared about to a place like this?

A year into my time, I discovered telephone dating. You've seen the commercials on late night cable. So I tried it for a few weeks. Fuck it, it was something to do. Every other night, I got to talk to this girl named Emily. She had the sweetest voice, and lived about five minutes from the hotel. Phone sex was a common theme in our conversations, and she was good. REAL good.

After a couple weeks, we decided to meet. She came to the hotel, and we made it to my room. She was a bit on the chunky side, but not what I'd call "fat." Just thick thighs, huge tits, round ass, and a bit of a belly. As soon as we got through the door, she was on me like a velour tracksuit on Joey Buttafuccho.

Her tongue thrust into my mouth, probing and embracing mine. She placed my left hand on her breast, and my right down the front of her pants. She was totally shaven and smooth, and was already very wet. I was amazed at the heat that came off it. I slid a finger inside, and teased her mercilessly.

"God. . .I want more. . ." she panted. She pulled down her jeans and panties, and knelt down on the bed, ass in the air.

I obliged with two fingers.

"More. . ."

Okay. I slipped a third in. Her quivering slit sucked greedily at them.

"MORE. . ."

Kinky. Okay. Slowly, I slipped my pinkie next to the others. She clenched hard, hips bucking wildly.

"MORE. . . ."

"Jesus, girl, I've already got four. . ."

"I SAID MOOOOORRREEEEEEEEEEE!!!!"

I shrugged. It was HER snatch, not mine. I spit on my thumb and wrist, and plunged further, deeper.

Now, I cannot even BEGIN to describe what it's like to have your entire hand in someone's fuckhole up to the wrist. Tight comes to mind. Her vaginal walls were very tight and muscular, and there were a couple moments where I thought she was going to break my fingers. Also, a great deal of suction gets built up, and it gets increasingly harder to pull your hand free.

And the QUEEFING. . .I have heard queefs, but if a queef is the squeaky, friendly voice of Tiny Tim, these queefs were the demonic growling of Corpsegrinder from Cannibal Corpse.

She was VERY into it, moaning and screaming, biting the pillow. Her ass quivered with

every stroke, and she pushed back, forcing my hand in deeper, and deeper, and. . .

What the fuck is this?!

I stopped thrusting, puzzled, as my fingers curled around something inside her. I withdrew slowly, and examined the object in my hand.

"Hey, Emily, did you know you were PREGNANT?"

And yes, I just totally made that up. I have no fisting stories.

TERRY

Terry was a friend of my father's. He was a redneck and a drunk, like most of my father's friends, but otherwise a normal enough guy. I'd give him slightly discounted rates every so often, when he'd be too drunk to drive across town to get home.

This particular night, he was reasonably straight. He obviously smelled like beer, but his eyes were clear, if a bit tired, and his speech was unslurred. He seemed a little edgy, but otherwise okay. I assumed he was just a bit sleep deprived.

I gave him his key. He had requested a room by the side entrance, so I pointed him in the right direction. He thanked me, walked out to his truck, and drove toward the side door.

I turned my attention to the TV. That's My Bush was on, and I chuckled as our Fearless Leader was talking Jack Kevorkian into killing the first lady's cat. I began to light a cigarette, when I heard grunting and banging down the hall.

I ran to the side entrance, to find Terry dragging an unconscious woman by her arms to his room.

"Terry, WHAT the FUCK?!" I hoarsely whispered, trying not to wake any guests. "Who the fuck is this?"

Terry's head snapped up like a shot, and he froze.

"Terry. . .what the fuck is going on?"

He swallowed hard. "She's. . .my date," he began. "We was at the Zebra, throwin' a few back. We was gonna hit another bar, but she passed out in the truck."

"So why did you bring her HERE? Why didn't you take her HOME?"

"You know how my neighbors talk."

"No, I mean HER home."

He glared at me for a minute, and then got a better grip under her arms. "We ain't ready to go home yet, ya hear? Now are you gonna get her legs, or do I have to lug this drunk bitch myself?"

I sighed. "Jesus, dude," I whispered. I shook my head, and took her legs, leading the way to the room.

When we reached the door, I held out a hand. "Gimme the key," I said. He obliged, and I opened the door. We carried her in, and lay her on the bed. It was then that I noticed how heavy Terry was breathing. It wasn't from exertion, she wasn't that heavy.

It was the heavy breathing of anticipation. Nervous sweat was already beading up on his brow, and his hands were shaking. I glanced at his crotch. An erection was clearly visible.

Jesus fucking Christ, no.

"Hey, Terry, I've got some beers in the office. You wanna come get some to bring back?"

"What-? Uh, yeah. Sure. Thanks."

We exited the room. I closed the door, locked the deadbolt, and put the key in my hip pocket.

Terry spun around, and looked at the door, then to me. "Dude, give me my fucking key."

"Not a chance, Terry."

"I'm not fucking around, asshole, give me that goddamn key!"

"No."

"FUCKER, I PAID FOR THAT ROOM."

I undid the clasp on my Maglite's belt pouch, and slid it from its holster. "Terry," I said calmly, "this can go down a few ways. One, you get a different room, and I don't charge you double for hers. Two, I give you a refund, you drive home, and she stays here. Three, I caved your fucking skull in with this heavy aluminum sonofabitch right here, you go home empty handed and in need of stitches, and she stays here. What is NOT happening is you going anywhere near her unless she's conscious, and says she wants you there."

Terry puffed up his chest, and advanced toward me. "Now, you look here, you mother--"

WHAM. I brought the Maglight across his face, knocking him to the floor. He looked up at me, dazed, blood trickling from his lips.

"That one was a warning, Terry. Next one's gonna HURT. So I want you to think REAL hard about what you're gonna do next. No matter how this goes down, you're not raping an unconscious chick."

At the word "raping," all the fight seemed to leave him, and rage ebbed from his face, replaced with fear. He got up, spat crimson on the carpet, and without a word, went to his truck and drove off.

I stood in the dark hallway for a few minutes. I'm not violent. Never have been. But I wasn't thinking about that.

All I could think was. . .

. . .I could stand up and protect a complete stranger from this. But when it really counted. . .why the hell couldn't I have done the same for myself?

As soon as I could stop shaking, I walked to the employee toilet, locked the door.

And cried.

ABYSSINIA, ESTY / GOODBYE, FAREWELL, AND AMEN

It was afternoon, and I was working the desk. After the departure of Dan The Army Man, I had been pulling a lot of double shifts, meaning a lot of 17 hour nights. The owners didn't seem in too big a hurry to replace him, and it wasn't as if I had anyplace better to be.

Around 3:00 PM, the phone rang.

"Joey? It's Matt at Hilltop Pawn. You asked me to call if any more of your TV's and fridges showed up. I got a lady at the counter trying to unload two TVs and a fridge, all with your logo and phone number stamped to the side."

I chuckled. Usually, the crackheads were at least smart enough to sand those off first.

"Okay, Matt, don't turn her down. Say you'll buy them, but make sure that, during processing, you start to have 'computer problems.' I'll be there in a few."

Hilltop Pawn was about six minutes away at a brisk walk. As I approached, I could see a figure at the counter, gesturing wildly, visibly agitated. I got to the door, and crept in quietly.

". . .how long this gonna take, anyhow? I coulda got twice that from Royce Pawn and Gold down the street, AND been outta there by now. . ."

I tapped her on the shoulder.

"Hello, Estella."

She froze, and then slowly turned. Her mouth opened and closed a few times, but she said nothing.

I held out my hand. "Keys."

"You can't fire me, you ain't authorized to fire anyone."

"You're right. I'm not. But I'm sure as shit authorized to call the police if someone steals from the hotel. So the way I see it, you can either deal with the cops, or you can just hand me those keys, and quit."

Her nostrils flared, and she looked about ready to speak. But she thought the better of it, and thrust the room keys into my hand.

I put the keys in my pocket. I then turned to Matt. "Go ahead with the deal." To Estella, "Think of this as your last paycheck. Don't come back."

Seven months came and went. Boo replaced Estella, and was the best damn housekeeper we ever had, until her son was killed by a drunk driver, and she left town to be with family.

We never got a replacement for Dan. The hotel struggled on with two desk clerks, and our business steadily dwindled. It got to the point that we had six regulars left, and no new business.

The other clerk quit, and left me alone at the desk. I called the boss in Florida, and asked

him to at least send one of his brothers to lend me a hand.

No one came.

I had to start closing the office in the mornings, keeping it running from 3:00 PM to 8:00 AM. I was running on fumes at this point, but I didn't know what else to do. Had I quit, I'd have been without not only a job, but a home.

Then, the cable got disconnected.

One by one over the next two weeks, the regulars were leaving. Things were just falling apart. The phone got disconnected. Then the power, and the water.

I later learned that the owner hadn't paid a single bill in months. He KNEW, and just left us to rot.

Eventually, he stopped taking calls.

One day, there was a knock on my door. It was a policeman, saying that the owner had called to complain about about a vagrant. That he had been asked not to arrest me, but to please make sure I vacated the premises.

He gave me a few minutes to gather what I could into a duffle bag, and escorted me out. It was the coldest night of the year, and I had nowhere to go.

So I walked. . .

. . .And walked. . .

. . .And walked.

END.

CHAPTER 1: CHAZZ

I had just moved to a shithole town in the midwest. I had found a small efficiency apartment for \$300/month, which I was paying for with a job at a local Wendy's. It was at this Wendy's that I met Chazz.

Chazz was a few years older than me, and had just moved into town himself. His hair was done in greasy dreadlocks, and his porcine face was a minefield of erupting pimples and lakes of grease. He had a perpetual glassy-eyed look about him, and smelled constantly of stale body odor and Aqua Velva.

His teeth were constantly yellow from chain smoking, and drinking nothing but booze, and a bargain bin soda I had never heard of called Faygo. He was a friendly guy, and would talk your ear off for hours about parties he had been to, concerts he had seen, women he had supposedly bedded, all punctuated with an odd WHOOP-WHOOP! noise.

Now, keep in mind, this was 1999, and I had never heard of ICP. I didn't know much about rap in general, nor did I care. So I just humored him with a smile and a nod, even when he would start dancing around, chanting "MAGIC, MAGIC NINJA, WHUT? MAGIC, MAGIC NINJA, WHUT?"

So he was a little weird. Big deal. Who wasn't?

We weren't exactly buddies. He'd come over, smoke me out, and stay all hours of the night. We'd eventually just pass out where we sat, and by the time we came to, it was time to get cleaned up and head to work.

This went on for about two weeks, and I didn't think anything of it. Until. . .

"We should get a bigger TV, bro."

I paused in mid-toke, as my mind slowly digested the sentence.

"We?"

He took the joint, and took a deep drag. "Yeah. For our apartment."

Our. . .apartment. . .

I sat there silently, feeling suddenly dizzy. He was rambling about how he knew where to get cheap TVs, where the TV cabinet could go, the house parties we could throw, how he could MC. . .

OUR. FUCKING. APARTMENT.

I had a roommate?

How the fuck did this happen?

Welcome to the longest four months of my life.

THE JUGGALO BESIDE ME

CHEF CHAZZ

PART I

As I mentioned before, Chazz just sort of decided he was my roommate. He was a friendly guy, if a bit dumb (and dirty. And smelly. And ill-mannered. And smelly. And dumb), and had nowhere else to go. I didn't have the heart to tell him to fuck off.

We both worked at the same Wendy's, me in the payment window/dish tank, and he at the fryers. He enjoyed his job, and always bragged about what a great cook he was, describing his cooking with words like "tight" and "WHOOOP-WHOOOP."

Money was in short supply then, and what little actual cooking there was consisted of ramen noodles, grilled cheese, and the occasional chicken breasts stolen from work. We never went hungry by any stretch, but I did all the cooking.

"Ah, man, I should make some chili, bro. My chili's fuckin' tight. Toss some onions in that bitch, some peppers, fuckin' beans. . .make that shit all Iron Chef style, man!"

Every day, it was something like that. Talking about dishes he SHOULD make, while choking down the same flavor ramen we had eight times that week.

One day, I'd had enough.

"Motherfucker, I do all the cooking. All you do is talk, and eat my fucking food. Why don't you take some of that money you spend on dope and booze, buy some fucking groceries, and put up or SHUT up?"

He cringed, and withdrew like a whipped puppy, staring at his feet. We barely said two words to each other the rest of the night.

Until I got up to turn out the light. "Bro," he said softly from the couch. "I'm sorry. You know I appreciate the fuck outta you. I want to make it up to you. I'll think of something. One of these nights, real soon, you'll come home to a fancy fuckin spread."

I nodded, feeling like a schmuck for going off on him. "Don't sweat it, Chazz," I told him, flipping off the light. I got in bed, and drifted off.

Three weeks went by, and we didn't speak of it. I was able to save enough for some good groceries, and was able to do some actual cooking. Chazz was gracious, and enjoyed every meal. He was no longer bragging about how much better his cooking was.

He had really been making some improvements. He was even bathing regularly, which was a major plus.

Although, the area near his couch, in spite of this, smelled worse and worse every day. I'd do my best to cover it with spray and incense, but the sour decay smell persisted.

I'll talk to him about switching up deoderant, or maybe get him using a better laundry detergent, I thought, as I drifted to sleep that night.

CHEF CHAZZ
PART II

I awoke with a start, clawing at my nose. Something was IN there, burrowing deep into my sinus cavity. I stuck my thumb in my clear nostril, and blew whatever it was out. My skin felt like it was literally crawling. I had no idea what was going on, but something was VERY wrong.

I tore the covers off, and ran to the lightswitch, flipping it on. It took a few minutes for my vision to clear. When it did, I couldn't see anything out of the ordinary. I raised my hand to rub my eyes, when I saw it.

Little grains of rice on the back of my hand.

My sleep-deprived brain couldn't quite process what I was seeing. I brushed them off, only to see four more on my other hand.

In fact, the carpet, couch, and hide-a-bed seemed to be peppered with rice. I looked over to Chazz, who was groggily rising from the couch. He had grains of rice on his shirt, his pants, in his hair.

There were rice grains stuck to the walls, on the screen of the TV. They seemed to be grouped in greater numbers at the foot of the couch.

I went over to the coffee table to get my glasses. As I put them on, I noticed rice stuck to the lenses.

The rice was moving.

CHEF CHAZZ
PART III

Maggots. Fucking MAGGOTS.

I felt something tickle my ear. I swiped at it, and two of them fell onto the coffee table. I raked my hands through my hair, which was quite long. About a dozen more joined their siblings.

I ripped off my shirt, and shook god knows how many of those little shits out onto the carpet. I could HEAR them wiggling, a slimy, wet oozing, like thrusting a hand into a pot of cold macaroni and cheese.

The stink of rot was stinging my nose. I opened my mouth to speak, and a maggot that had made it to the overhead light fixture chose that moment to fall squarely on my tongue.

My stomach exploded, spewing its fetid stew of bile, beer, and last night's cheeseburgers onto my feet. The smell of vomit, mixed with the overpowering stench of decay, made my insides churn with hot acid, racing up my esophagus, burning like lava as it gushed out of my open mouth. I closed it, trying to stem the tide, only to have it shoot out of my nostrils.

I ran to the bathroom, ripping my clothing off, and leapt into the shower. I rinsed the horrid mess from my mouth and nose, and scrubbed every inch of me to ensure I didn't have any more wriggling hitchhikers.

I quickly dried and dressed, and went back to the living room, to see Chazz pulling a soggy mass from underneath the couch.

It was a bag of rotting chicken breasts, swimming in pink slurry, with maggots dripping from the mouth of the bag.

"Oh, fuck," Chazz said between gags, "I forgot all about this!"

As he tossed the bag into the yard, dripping maggots and rancid chicken slurry onto the carpet in the process, he explained that he had stolen the bag from work, to make good on his promise of a "fancy spread." He wanted to keep it a surprise, but I had come home early, and he stashed it under the couch, intending to put it in the freezer when I wasn't looking.

". . .but then you smoked me out, and I forgot, bro."

This had been three weeks prior.

Choking back a fresh wave of vomit, I threw some clothes into a bag, stepped out the door, and walked down the block toward a payphone.

"Dude, where are you going?" he called after me.

"I'm catching a cab, you dumb fuck," I answered, still walking. "I'm spending the night at a motel. YOU'RE staying here and cleaning this shit up. I don't care if it takes you all night.

"If this place isn't liveable by the time I get back tomorrow, your shit better be packed, and you better be gone."

CHEF CHAZZ

EPILOGUE

When I returned the next day (late afternoon, giving him time to clean, and ME time to cool down), I found Chazz on the porch, crying, a half empty bottle of vodka next to him.

He had cleaned up, and had managed to get all the maggots out. Unfortunately, he tried to kill them first, to make them easier to clean up.

He did this with bleach. I had two gallons under the bathroom sink. He had used all of it, ruining the couch, my blankets, and half the living room carpet.

He was sobbing like a child, shaking, snot running from his nose, babbling incoherently. He was terrified. He thought I was going to hurt him, beat him bloody when I found out. He thought I was going to kill him.

But he stayed. He didn't run. He sat down on the porch, and had been waiting all night, and most of the day for me to get back, terrified of what I would do.

But he stayed.

I looked down at him, fists clenching and unclenching. He was looking up at me, rocking back and forth, sobbing, like a frightened kid, terrified of a bad storm. His lips were trembling, softly babbling, "I'm sorry. . .I'm sorry. . .fucked up. . .fucked up bad. . .I'm so sorry. . ."

I took a step toward him, and he shrunk back in terror, hands flying up to protect his face.

He thought I was going to beat him to death.

He stayed.

"Ah, Christ, Chazz," I sighed, and sat down next to him. I took a pull from his bottle, and rolled a joint. We sat and smoked in silence, passing the bottle.

Here's a bit on Chazz.

He was originally from Detroit. He drank vodka like it was water. After being fired from Wendy's, he sold blood to pay for more vodka. He'd hit multiple clinics in one day, so much so that his right arm pretty much became useless for giving blood after a vein collapsed, or something.

He would drink for days without eating, and had to be hospitalized for alcohol poisoning more than once.

He would bring home groceries twice a week. I later found out that he was going to the Catholic mission's food pantry, and was claiming to be homeless. I made him stop, because that was food that wasn't going where it was really needed.

And he did to me something that I can never forgive: he talked me into watching ICP's movie, BIG MONEY HU\$TLA\$. Not even Harland Williams and The Jerky Boys managed to make that turd funny.

The one good thing he did was introduce me to Faygo, which is actually pretty damn tasty. I'm partial to Pineapple.

