

TB

Chasing Amy.

by

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INT COMIC BOOK STORE - DAY

A pile of COMIC BOOKS are on a shelf next to myriad others. The most prominent one is called 'BLUNTMAN AND CHRONIC'. A hand reaches in and pulls one out of frame.

HOLDEN opens the comic and flips through it. He shakes his head. BANKY looks over his shoulder.

BANKY

Felt like this fucking day would never come. Issue two - on the shelf.

HOLDEN

Yippee.

BANKY

Don't start, alright? This is a cool moment, and I'd appreciate you not trying to ruin it. How often does a guy get the opportunity to purchase something with his name on it?

(points to name on cover)

Banky Edwards - right?

(points to the other)

Holden McNeil.

HOLDEN

I know my name.

BANKY

C'mon, sour puss. We got the rest of our lives to be artists. But it's supply and demand. And right now, the unwashed masses demand this.

HOLDEN

(off comic)

I just don't want you to forget that this is easy, and right now it pays the bills. But we're better than this.

BANKY

I'll tell you who we're better than: these two fags right here.

They approach the counter, where STEVE-DAVE, the store manager, and WALT, the Fan-boy, play a card game.

BANKY

(lays books on the counter)

Alright, Old-Maid's - take a break from the Crazy-8's marathon and ring us up.

STEVE-DAVE

(not looking up)

Well, well, well, Walt. Did you see who it is? The local celebrities. Quick - get them to autograph one of their books so we can sell it for triple it's value.

WALT

Come on, Steve-Dave - do you really need fifteen cents that badly?

They snicker and high-five one another. Holden rolls his eyes.

BANKY

You guys operate the smallest, ladies' bridge circle I've ever seen.

WALT

For your information, we're playing 'Crimson Mystical Mages' - an overpower card game. Not that either of you would give a shit about something as advanced as this - there are no dick or poopie jokes involved.

BANKY

(to Holden)

I don't think they're fans.

WALT

No, we're not. You're both a couple of fucking no-talents that got lucky.

STEVE-DAVE

And obviously your handlers or hangers-on convinced you that your first comic was good, which it was not - it was thoroughly mediocre with a few spiky bits of dialogue. And when you get your foot in the door of the business, what do you do? You turn out a piece of shit like 'Bluntman and Chronic'.

WALT

Tell him, Steve-Dave.

STEVE-DAVE

(off comic)

'Bluntman and Chronic'. Pah. What was that thing the little stoner pulled on the villain in the last issue?

WALT

The Stinky-palm.

STEVE-DAVE

Stinky-palm. You give comics a bad name. I tell all my customers not to buy it, to spend their money on a real comic book.

WALT

Fucking dime-store Frank Millers.

STEVE-DAVE

This is the reality at Comic-Toast - you're not going to get your ass kissed here, because both me and Walt think you suck.

WALT

And me.

STEVE-DAVE

I said that.

Steve-Dave offers the boys his two middle fingers, then goes back to playing his game with Walt. Holden and Banky stare, shocked. Banky nudges Holden and they both exit. Steve-Dave and the Fan-boy slap hands and go back to playing.

WALT

I've got a dragon card - forty power-ups and twelve life points! Ha! I get your elf card!

STEVE-DAVE

You're such a bitch! But thankfully, I've saved a dark forces Shaman card for just such an occasion.

WALT

You suck! Eighty six life-power points to my twenty two!

STEVE-DAVE

I schooled their asses, now I'm schooling your's.

Suddenly, a trash can crashes through the front window. Steve-Dave and Walt hit the deck like bitches, covering one another. They look up slowly. Steve-Dave leaps to his feet and looks at the shattered mess. He pulls something off the garbage can and reads it.

WALT

You know it was those two fucks! Let's call the cops and have them busted! I know where their studio is! Or better yet, let's sue! You can sue them, Steve-Dave!

STEVE-DAVE

(still reading note)

That won't be necessary.

WALT

What?! Why the hell not?

STEVE-DAVE

(holds up check)

Because this is a check for three times what that window cost.

(reading note)

"Dear critics - thanks for the insight. But like my grandmother always said - 'Fuck 'em if they can't take a joke... and break their window.' Kiss it, Banky the Hack. P.S. - Your card game blows."

WALT

He said "Kiss it"?

CREDITS

INT COMIC BOOK CONVENTION SIGNING BOOTH - DAY

A physically large FAN - sweaty brow, tote bag bursting with comics - leans forward, smiling.

FAN

Could you sign it "To a really big fan"?

Holden sits at a table, across from the barely-managing-to-stand Fan. He offers him a patronizingly kind, half-smile in return.

HOLDEN

You bet.

We're at a Comic Book show, specifically at a book-signing. Behind Holden hangs a large banner, heralding HOLDEN McNEIL AND BANKY EDWARDS - CREATORS OF 'BLUNTMAN AND CHRONIC'. Beside it is a large mock-up of the comic book cover, which features two stoner super-heroes who bare a striking resemblance to a pair of very familiar friendly neighborhood drug dealers. Holden hands the book back to the Fan.

FAN

I love this book, man! This shit's awesome. I wish I was like these guys - getting stoned, talking all raw about chicks and fighting supervillains! I love these guys! They're like 'Cheech and Chong' meet 'Bill and Ted'!

HOLDEN

I like to think of them as 'Rosencrantz and Guildenstern', meet 'Vladimir and Estragon'.

FAN

Yeah!
(beat)
Who?

BANKY signs the book of another COLLECTOR.

COLLECTOR

So you draw this?

BANKY

(signing the comic)

I ink it and I'm also the colorist. The guy next to me draws it. But we both came up with the characters.

COLLECTOR

What's that mean - you 'ink it'?

BANKY

Well, it means that Holden draws the pictures in pencil, and then he gives it to me to go over in ink.

COLLECTOR

So you just trace?

Banky freezes up. He composes himself and continues signing.

BANKY

It's not tracing. I add depth and shading to give the image more definition. Only then does the drawing truly take shape.

COLLECTOR

You go over what he draws with a pen - that's tracing.

BANKY

(hands book back to Collector)

Not really.

(calling out)

Next!

A LITTLE KID steps up, but the Collector lingers.

COLLECTOR

(to Little Kid)

Hey man, if somebody draws something and then you draw the same thing right on top of it, not going outside the designated original art, what do call that?

LITTLE KID

(shrugs)

I don't know. Tracing?

COLLECTOR

(to Banky)

See?

BANKY

It's not tracing.

COLLECTOR

Oh, but it is.

BANKY

(to Little Kid)

Do you want your book signed or what?

COLLECTOR

Hey - don't get all testy with him just because you have a problem with your station in life.

BANKY

I'm secure with what I do.

COLLECTOR

Then say it - you're a tracer.

BANKY

(grabbing Little Kid's book)

How should I sign this?

LITTLE KID

(grabs book back)

I don't want you to sign it, I want the guy that draws
Bluntman and Chronic to sign it. You're just a tracer.

COLLECTOR

Tell him, Little Shaver.

Holden accepts the comic from another fan.

HOLDEN

(off comic)

Who do I sign it to?

Before Holden can finish, a loud crash is heard. He looks to his left and freaks.

Banky is throttling the Collector from across the table. The Collector attempts
to fight him off. Security Guards pull them apart. Holden grabs Banky.

COLLECTOR

Jesus! All I did was call him a tracer!

BANKY

(to Collector)

I'LL TRACE A CHALK LINE AROUND YOUR DEAD
FUCKING BODY, YOU FUCK!!

HOLDEN

(to Security Guard)

Could you get him out of here?

The Security Guards drag the collector away.

COLLECTOR

Hey, wait a sec! He jumped me! And you're
dragging me away?!

(exiting)

Fucking tracer!

BANKY

(calling OC)

YOUR MOTHER'S A TRACER!!

HOLDEN

Can I explain the audience principle to you? If you
insult and accost them, then we have no audience.

BANKY

He started it! Fucking cock-knocker! He's lucky I
didn't put my pen through his thorax!

HOLDEN

Need I remind you...

(holds up watch)

Curtain's in ten minutes.

INT COMIC BOOK CONVENTION LECTURE HALL - DAY

HOOPER fills the frame. He comes off like a typical, pro-black/anti-white homeboy.

HOOPER

For years in this industry whenever an African-American character - hero or villain - was introduced - usually by *white* artists and writers - they got slapped with racist names that singled them out as negroes: Black Panther, Black Lightning, Black Goliath, Black Manta, Black Talon, Black Spider, Black Hand, Black Falcon, Black Cat...

VOICE FROM CROWD

She's white.

HOOPER

She is?

(beat)

Well bust this - regardless.

We're at a panel discussion. The room is full. Five creators sit at a long table, their names on placards in front of them. (One of them is a very striking Girl.) The banner behind them reads 'WORDS UP - MINORITY VOICES IN COMICS'.

HOOPER

(holds up comic)

Now my book, 'White-Hating Coon', doesn't have any of that bullshit. The hero's name is Maleekwa, and he's a descendant of the black tribe that established the first society on the planet, while all you European mother fuckers were still hiding in caves and shit, all terrified of the sun. He's a strong role model that a young black reader can look up to. 'Cause I'm here to tell you - the chickens are comin' home to roost, ya'll! the black man's no longer gonna play the minstrel in the medium of comics and Sci-Fi/Fantasy! We're keeping it real, and we're gonna get respect - by any means necessary!

During the speech, Holden and Banky enter and sit up front.

HOLDEN

(calling out)

Bullshit! Lando Calrissian was a black man, and he got to fly the Millenium Falcon!

Hooper whips his head around, looking for the source of the comment.

HOOPER

Who said that?!?

HOLDEN

(standing)

I did! Lando Calrissian is a positive black role model in the realm of Science Fiction/Fantasy.

HOOPER

Fuck Lando Calrissian! Uncle Tom nigger! Always some white boy gotta invoke 'the holy trilogy'! Bust this - those those movies are about how the white man keeps the brother man down - even in a galaxy far, far away. Check this shit: you got cracker farm-boy Luke Skywalker; Nazi poster boy - blond hair, blue eyes. And then you've got Darth Vader: the blackest brother in the galaxy. Nubian God.

BANKY

What's a Nubian?

HOOPER

Shut the fuck up! Now Vader, he's a spiritual brother, with the force and all that shit. Then this cracker Skywalker gets his hands on a light-saber, and the boy decides he's gonna run the fucking universe - gets a whole *Klan* of whites together, and they're gonna bust up Vader's 'hood - the Death Star. Now what the fuck do you call that?

BANKY

Intergalactic Civil War?

HOOPER

Gentrification. They're gonna drive out the black element, to make the galaxy quote, unquote 'safe' for white folks.

HOLDEN

But Vader turns out to be Luke's father. And in *Jedi*, they become friends.

HOOPER

Don't make me bust a cap in your ass, yo! *Jedi* 's the most insulting installment, because Vader's beautiful, black visage is sullied when he pulls off his mask to reveal a feeble, crusty white man! They're trying to tell us that deep inside, we all want to be white!

BANKY

Well isn't that true?

Hooper explodes. He pulls a nine millimeter from his belt, draws on Banky and fires. Banky goes down, falling forward onto the stage. The crowd screams and starts to scatter. Hooper jumps over the table and raises his fists in the air.

HOOPER

BLACK RAGE!! BLACK RAGE!! I'LL KILL ANY WHITE FOLKS I LAY MY MOTHER FUCKIN' EYES ON!!!

The crowd is gone. Holden sits in his chair, laughing. Hooper steps off the stage and picks Banky's head up off the floor.

HOOPER

(breaking character)

'What's a Nubian?' Bitch, you almost made me laugh!

Hooper sounds different. Actually, he sounds gay. Actually - he is. Banky smiles.

BANKY

Well what about you? You didn't tell me you were going to scream 'Black Rage'. I nearly pissed myself.

HOLDEN

I can't believe they let you get away with that shit.

HOOPER

(off gun)

How? She full of blanks. Believe me - I know how 'WWF' it is, but I need to sell the image to sell the book. Would the audience still believe the 'Black Rage' angle if they found out the book was written by a... a...

BANKY

Faggot.

HOOPER

When you say it, it sounds so sexy...
(he kisses Banky full on the lips)

BANKY

(wipes his lips)

Hey, hey! I'll play your victim, but not your catcher.

VOICE

How is it that you sound like Minister Farakhan when you're on stage...

They turn to see...

A beautiful, blonde, ruffled-haired angel swinging her purse in a circle. Her name is Alyssa. She's the striking Girl from the panel who didn't get to say much.

ALYSSA

...and the King of Pop when you're not.

HOOPER

Look out, boys - this kitten has a whip.

ALYSSA

(shoves and slaps him)

Always before I get to speak! I swear - the next con I attend and they ask me to be on the minority panel, if I see your name anywhere near the list, I'm passing.

HOOPER

(defending himself)

Holden, Banky - this pile of P.M.S. is Alyssa Jones. She does that book 'Idiosyncratic Routine'. This is the fourth panel we've been on together, and even though she knows my publisher sets this up and pays for the event, she still gets mad when it ends with my act.

ALYSSA

I just wish I was the one who gets to shoot you.

HOOPER

That's what my father said when I came - nay - leapt out of the closet.

(off guys)

These boys do 'Bluntman and Chronic', which outsells both of our books put together, hence they're never on a panel with the likes of us. They slumming right now.

BANKY

I've read your book. It's cute. Chick stuff, but cute.

Holden hits him.

BANKY

What?

HOLDEN

(shoots him a look; to Alyssa)

Sorry about him. He's dealing with being an inker.

ALYSSA

(to Banky)

Oh. You trace?

Banky seethes.

HOLDEN

(shaking her hand)

I really enjoy your book. I'm surprised we've never met at any other Con's before.

ALYSSA

Lose the dick or change your skin tone and we can get to know each other on panel after panel while the Pink Black Panther here plays Chuck D. for the fanboys.

HOOPER

Hey, jealousy.

(to the Boys)

I told Alyssa I'd buy her a post-rave drink. Do the Garden-Staters have to sprint to the Lincoln Tunnel, or can you stay for a round in the big, scary city?

BANKY

We're gonna take off soon...

HOLDEN

We'll go.

Banky offers Holden a puzzled glance. Then he nods to Hooper.

BANKY

We'll go.

INT BAR - NIGHT

Holden, Banky, Alyssa and Hooper sit around a table drinking, talking, and smoking.

BANKY

Archie, alright? Archie and the Riverdale gang were a pure and fun-lovin' bunch. You can't find dysfunction in those comics, because they were just flat out wholesome.

HOOPER

Archie and Jughead were lovers.
(sips his drink)

BANKY

Shut the fuck up.

HOOPER

It's true. Archie was the bitch and Jughead was the butch - that's why Jughead wears that crown-looking hat all the time: he the king, of queen Archie's world.

BANKY

Man, I feel a hate-crime coming on.

HOLDEN

He's got a point. Archie never did settle on Betty or Veronica.

BANKY

Because he wanted them both at the same time, you assholes! He never chose *one* because he was trying to get *both* of them into a three-way!

HOOPER

(pulls out a dollar and hands it to Banky)
Here. I want you to go down to the corner store and buy yourself a clue. Go on.

BANKY

Eat it, Urkel.

HOOPER

I told you to watch it with that Urkel shit. Face it, girl - Archie's a sister.

BANKY

(getting up; to Hooper)
That's it. You

HOOPER

Moi?

BANKY

You are marching back across the street with me, and we're going to pick up a shit load of Archie books. I am

going to prove to you - beyond the shadow of a doubt - that Archie was all about pussy. Come on.

HOOPER

(sliding out of booth)

This boy is conflicted. I shall play mother-therapist for him. You two sit tight. We shall return promptly.

Banky and Hooper exit, leaving Alyssa and Holden alone at the table.

ALYSSA

Is he always like that?

HOLDEN

For years now. Started back in third grade - a nun was teaching us about the Blessed Trinity. She's going on about the three persons in one God thing - Father, Son, Holy Spirit - and he just goes ballistic. I guess it was too big for him to grasp. They got into this huge fight.

ALYSSA

Please. How bad could it have been?

HOLDEN

You ever seen a nun call a small child a 'fucking cunt-rag'? Wasn't pretty. Shit like that's bound to happen when you make a kid wear a matching tie and slacks everyday.

ALYSSA

And your parochial school misadventures?

HOLDEN

Limited to wine-tasting prior to mass. Turned me into a grade school alcoholic altar boy. I couldn't tell you how many mornings after serious benders I'd wake up next to strange priests.

ALYSSA

Aren't you the sharp wit?

HOLDEN

Sharp? No. I'm just a fan of clergy-molestation humor. Probably why the extended family quit inviting me to First Communion parties.

Alyssa laughs. Holden smiles.

ALYSSA

(looking OC)

You play darts?

HOLDEN

Not professionally. You know - only in bars.

AT THE DART BOARD

A dart hits the board. Then, one hits the wall beside the board.

Alyssa winds up with another dart. Holden watches. Her's always hit. His never do.

ALYSSA

So your new book seems to be selling like mad.

HOLDEN

All goes back to something my grandmother told me when I was a kid. "Holden," she said. "The big bucks are in dick and fart jokes." She was a church-goer.

ALYSSA

Uh-oh - the cry from the heart of a real artist trapped in commercial hell - pitying his good fortune. I'm sure you can dry your eyes on all those fat checks you rake in.

HOLDEN

I'm sorry - did I detect a note of bitter envy in there?

ALYSSA

Nope. I'm happy my stuff gets read at all. There's very little market for hearts and flowers in this spandex-clad, big pecks, big tits, big guns field. If I sell two issues, I feel like John Grisham.

HOLDEN

(looking out window)

It's all about marketing. Over- or underweight guys who don't get laid are our bread and butter, people like those two outside are yours.

Through the window, we see a COUPLE making out on the hood of a car.

HOLDEN

And sadly, there are more of our core audience out there than your's.

(smiles)

Look at that, though - kind of gives you a little charge, to see two people in love. And all over Banky's car, no less. That car's seeing more action right now than it's seen in years.

ALYSSA

Bubbly guy like that, it's hard to figure out why.

HOLDEN

(still looking at OC Couple)

You've gotta respect that kind of display of affection. It's crazy, rude, self-absorbed - but it's love.

ALYSSA

That's not love.

HOLDEN

Says you.

ALYSSA
That out there? That's fleeting.

HOLDEN
Fleeting.

ALYSSA
Uh-huh. You wanna hear about love? Oh, I'll tell
you about love.

HOLDEN
A story?

ALYSSA
The story. The *original* love story.

HOLDEN
'Doctor Zhivago'.

ALYSSA
Nope. My mother's uncle. He was a millionaire.

HOLDEN
Get out.

ALYSSA
I kid you not.

HOLDEN
Explain.

ALYSSA
All through high school, he dated this one girl. They
were inseparable. And when they graduated, she
went off to Carnegie Mellon...

HOLDEN
In Pittsburgh.

ALYSSA
I'm impressed. So he stays in the home town, and they
begin their long-distance relationship. The plan is, on the
third Sunday of every month, he'll train out, spend a
week, then train back. They do this for four years.

HOLDEN
That is love.

ALYSSA
Not nearly finished. Two months before she's going to
graduate, he's got this job digging graves, and he comes across...

HOLDEN
A stiff.

ALYSSA

A steamer trunk containing silver ingots.

HOLDEN

Get out of here.

ALYSSA

Many, many silver ingots. Now, my mother's uncle - being quite the ingenious chap - he buries the trunk again and heads up to the main office, where he proceeds to purchase a cemetery plot. Guess which one?

HOLDEN

Clever.

ALYSSA

So now he owns the plot and all of its contents. Two days later, my mother's uncle is worth three million.

HOLDEN

At which time he marries the high school sweetheart and lives happily ever after.

ALYSSA

Not even close. Inside the steamer trunk, stenciled into the wood, or something like that, is a curse.

HOLDEN

Someone wrote 'Fuck' inside his new steamer trunk.

ALYSSA

Not that kind of curse. A cryptic curse: "Great fortune means great loss" it said.

HOLDEN

What kind of asshole writes that inside a steamer trunk?

ALYSSA

The same kind of asshole that buries silver ingots. The day my mother's uncle is heading out to see the girl, he stops at his accountants to grab some cash, and winds up missing his train. So he has to take the next one - which he does - and he gets there an hour later than his usual time of arrival, whereupon he sees lights.

HOLDEN

A hero's welcome for the new millionaire.

ALYSSA

It seems that while she was standing on the platform waiting that extra hour for my mother's uncle to show up, the girl was dragged into the bushes by an unknown assailant, raped and gutted.

Holden is silent. Alyssa downs her drink.

ALYSSA

The assailant was never apprehended.

HOLDEN

(beat)

That's a love story?!

ALYSSA

Yes, and here's why: my mother's uncle rode that train every day for the rest of his life. One day up, the next day back. Did that 'till the day he died. He donated the fortune he'd acquired to the train station in Pittsburgh, to have a well-lit terminal built. The train line let him ride for free after that.

HOLDEN

I should hope so. Jesus, that's the saddest tale I've ever heard.

ALYSSA

That's my love story.

Alyssa tosses her last dart. Holden seems a bit dazed. He looks out the window.

HOLDEN

Those two aren't on the hood of Banky's car anymore.

ALYSSA

I told you. It wasn't love.

(grabs her purse)

I gotta split. It was really nice meeting you. I wish you the best of luck with your book.

(shakes his hand)

Tell Hooper I'll call him later. And tell your friend to calm down.

Alyssa exits to the right. Holden stares after her. Two beats later, Hooper and Banky enter, holding an 'Everything's Archie' comic between them.

BANKY

You're insane. Archie is *not* fucking Mister Weatherbee!

HOOPER

Deny, deny, deny.

(to Holden)

Where's Alyssa?

HOLDEN

Huh? Oh. She left. She said she'd call you later.

BANKY

(off comic)

He's just offering to help Archie with his homework!

HOOPER

Read between the lines.

BANKY

(shoves book at him)

Fuck this.

(to Holden)

Let's go. Traffic.

(no response from Holden)

Holden!

HOLDEN

(shaken)

What?

BANKY

Let's go.

HOOPER

(looking out window)

D'you see that dent in the hood of your car?

BANKY

(looking out window)

What the...! Son of a bitch!

Banky runs out. Holden shrugs at Hooper.

HOOPER

Let me guess: you like her?

HOLDEN

Who?

HOOPER

Miss Alyssa Jones.

HOLDEN

She's alright.

HOOPER

As long as that's all.

(finishes drink)

Maybe you can convince that partner of your's to drop me off downtown before you scurry out the tunnel?

HOLDEN

(beat)

Mister Weatherbee wasn't really trying to fuck Archie, was he?

They begin exiting.

HOOPER

Hell no. Weatherbee was Reggie's bitch.

INT STUDIO - DAY

We're in Holden and Banky's studio. It's a rented loft-style place with high ceilings, wood floors and sparse furnishings. There are posters on the walls, a sort of kitchenette, a hockey net, a basketball hoop, two drawing boards with adjacent desks (littered with pencils, pens, coloring pencils, paints, erasers, etc.), a big t.v. (with all the trimmings - VCR, Laserdisc Player, Sega, SNES), and a huge, comfy couch - upon which sits Banky. He's watching 'Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid'. The remote control's in his hand, and he's eating a sandwich.

Holden draws at one of the drawing tables. He's penciling a page.

HOLDEN

(not looking up)

There are two pages you could be inking.

On t.v., Sundance shoots a reptile of some sort. It falls off a rock.

BANKY

Look at how fast The Kid is.
(rewinds it)

HOLDEN

(gets up and stretches)

I hate to break it to you, but the editor's fast. Redford didn't really shoot that lizard.

BANKY

Show's what you know - that's a snake.

HOLDEN

It's a lizard.

BANKY

It's a snake.

HOLDEN

Back it up again and go frame by frame.

Banky does. They stare. It turns out to be a lizard.

HOLDEN

See that? Those are legs. It's a lizard.

The phone starts ringing. Holden goes to answer it.

BANKY

(beat)

It's a gecko.

HOLDEN

(answering phone)

Bank-Hold-Up.

Crosscut between Holden and HOOPER, on a phone in a club.

HOOPER

It's a lizard.

HOLDEN

I keep telling him that. What's up?

HOOPER

I know how you burb-fiends hate the city, but there's a club shindig going down that I think you'd get into.

HOLDEN

Where is it?

HOOPER

Place called Her-Story - I'm temping as bar-keep for a friend.

HOLDEN

I don't know, Hoop. We got our big M-TV meeting in the morning, and I should get some work done. So should he.
(kicks couch, stirring Banky)

HOOPER

I told her you wouldn't be interested.

HOLDEN

Told who?

HOOPER

Alyssa.

HOLDEN

Alyssa from last night Alyssa?

HOOPER

How do you begin and end a question with the same word like that? You got skill. Yes, that one. She asked me to invite you. Now here's the part where you say...

HOLDEN

I'll be there.

HOOPER

Thought so. Ten o'clock. Later.
(both hang up)

BANKY

Who was that?

HOLDEN

Hooper. He invited me to a club.

BANKY

When's that faggot going to learn - you like chicks.

HOLDEN

Not that kind of a club.

BANKY

So when we leaving?

HOLDEN

'We'? You can't go. He's setting me up with Alyssa.

BANKY

And?

HOLDEN

And I don't want you fucking it up.

BANKY

Like I care about your shit. Maybe I'll hook up myself.

HOLDEN

(pulling on coat)

I just told you - it's not that kind of club.

BANKY

How does one man get to be so funny?

HOLDEN

(throws him his coat)

How are you going to get home if I hook up?

BANKY

Like that'll happen.

HOLDEN

Let me explain something to you, my witless chum - the other night in that bar, we two - Alyssa and I - shared a moment, alright?

BANKY

Oh, you had a moment?

HOLDEN

We *shared* a moment. And in that moment, one thing was made abundantly clear: this girl loves me, my friend. Loves - me.

INT HER-STORY - NIGHT

It's a club - people are mingling, a band is playing, it's loud. But something's fishy.

Hooper's tending bar. He hands a GUY a drink. The Guy sips it.

GUY

This is so watered down. It's terrible. Why is it you can never get a decent drink in these places?

Hooper looks around in a very exaggerated fashion.

GUY

What are you doing?

HOOPER

Trying to find you a tissue.

The Guy shoots Hooper an angry glare. Banky enters.

BANKY

Alright - bring on the free hootch.

HOOPER

As long as you don't bitch about how little alcohol is in the drink.

(hands Banky a drink; to Guy)

You owe me five sixty.

GUY

(off Banky)

And I suppose you're going to make your friend here pay for his drink, right?

BANKY

Hey, I befriended a guy in a position of authority so I could abuse that authority and get free shit. You want to do the same? There's a lonely Hindu who works at the '7-11' across the street. Get in tight with him.

The Guy angrily pulls out his money and slams it on the bar.

GUY

I work at that '7-11'!
(storms away)

BANKY

(calling after him)
Wanna be friends?

HOOPER

Where's your better half?

BANKY

Taking a piss. Guy's got a bladder like an infant.

HOOPER

That's funny - he says you're *hung* like an infant.

BANKY

Must his mother tell him everything?

Holden enters.

BANKY

What'd you do - fall in love?

HOLDEN

Where is she?

HOOPER

Over there...

ON THE DANCE FLOOR - in the middle of a thrall of people - dances Alyssa. She moves like a cat and she's looking very sexy.

OC HOOPER

Been dancin' for an hour. Hasn't stopped yet.

Hooper, Holden, and Banky stare OC.

BANKY

She ain't no Denny Terrio, I'll say that.

Holden smacks Banky and moves to exit.

HOOPER

Wait, wait, wait - there's something you should know.

HOLDEN

She's got a boyfriend.

HOOPER

Well... no.

HOLDEN

Then what's to know?

Holden exits. They watch him go. Banky looks around.

BANKY

There're alot of chicks in this place.

HOOPER

'Chicks'. You're such a man.

BANKY

(beat)

He didn't really say that about my dick, did he?

ON THE DANCE FLOOR - Holden slips into the crowd and dances up to Alyssa. He intentionally bumps into her.

HOLDEN

(fake rage; dancing)

Hey, hey, hey - you fucked up my cabbage-patch!

ALYSSA

Well, well, well - Bluntman himself. Or should I call you Chronic?

HOLDEN

Call me flattered. I heard you sent me the invite to this little soiree'.

ALYSSA

From a former home-town girl, to Mister Home-Town himself.

HOLDEN

You're saying you're from the 'burbs?

ALYSSA

Middletown, N.J.

HOLDEN

Get out of here! I'm from Highlands!

ALYSSA

I know. Hooper told me.

HOLDEN

How is it that we never ran into one another?

ALYSSA

You graduate from Hudson?

HOLDEN

Yeah. Eighty eight.

ALYSSA

I went to North. Also eighty eight.

HOLDEN

What a small fucking world. So you know the tri-town area?

ALYSSA

Quiz me.

HOLDEN

Miller Hill?

ALYSSA

I wrote my name on the wall.

HOLDEN

Sandy Hook?

ALYSSA

Lost my virginity there.

HOLDEN

This is so cool. The mall?

ALYSSA

Eden Prairie of Menlo Park?

HOLDEN

Wait - here's the big test: Quick Stop?

ALYSSA

My best friend fucked a dead guy in the back room.

HOLDEN

You know that girl?!

ALYSSA

I did. Before she was committed.

HOLDEN

You know what this is? This is fate.

ALYSSA

(regarding her move)

No, this is the 'Rog'.

HOLDEN

I was talking about us meeting - what are the chances?

ALYSSA

Pretty slim. I haven't been back to the 'burbs since my friend's funeral.

HOLDEN

The Quick Stop girl died?

ALYSSA

Another friend - Julie Dwyer. She died in the...

HOLDEN

Y.M.C.A. pool! Damn! You knew her too?

ALYSSA

So well.

HOLDEN

One friend in an asylum, the other friend in the grave.
You're a dangerous person to know.

ALYSSA

But I can tap.

(does an impromptu tap dance)

That was the Buffalo Two-Step.

HOLDEN

Very solid.

ALYSSA

That's what six years of tap lessons yields.

HOLDEN

Two towns away from each other for years and we
had to meet in New York.

The band stops playing. People clap.

ALYSSA

Coulda been worse - we could have not met at all.

Holden looks at her.

OC SINGER

Thank you. Thanks.

The SINGER on stage speaks into the microphone.

SINGER

A long time ago, we used to have a bass player who could lay down a mean line - just fucking powerful, okay. And she took off one day to draw funny books or something. Maybe you've seen her stuff - it's called 'Idiosyncratic Routine'?

The crowd applauds. Alyssa shakes her head, smiling. Holden pokes her.

SINGER

But what alot of people don't know is that she used to harbor these delusions that she could sing. And she used to subject us to these throaty renditions of Debbie Gibson tunes and shit, insisting that we let her front on a few numbers. Well, we didn't and she quit... and then she got famous, the bitch.

(crowd laughs)

But she's here tonight, and I think if we all begged, or maybe offered her some X, she'd get up here and treat us to some of her vocal stylings.

(crowd applauds)

What do you say, Alyssa?

Alyssa shakes her head no. The crowd urges her. Holden pushes her forward.

SINGER

She's shy.

(yelling)

GET UP HERE AND SING, BITCH!!

The crowd thunders. Alyssa offers the Singer an embarrassed half-smile. She looks at Holden, who claps along with the others and nods toward the stage. Alyssa shakes her head and relents, heading through the crowd.

Banky and Hooper stand at the bar.

BANKY

This is really queer.
(he exits)

HOOPER

(beat)

You don't know the half of it.

Alyssa jumps on stage, hugging the Singer. She takes the mic, shaking her head. The crowd is applauding.

ALYSSA

She is such a cunt.

The crowd cheers. Alyssa laughs. She turns to the band and says something, to which they nod. She turns back to the crowd.

ALYSSA

Alright. I should dedicate this, right?
(thinks)

This is for that special someone out there.

Holden smiles. Banky joins him. Holden glances at him. Banky offers a mocking mimic of his smile.

The band starts playing. Cross cutting begins.

Alyssa launches into the spicy Buster Pointdexter rendition of 'Castle in Spain'. The song is extremely seductive - as is Alyssa, who slithers and salsas across the stage, making direct eye contact with...

Holden. Or does she? Holden is smiling, being seduced. Banky rolls his eyes. Beside Holden, stands a pretty GIRL with a short haircut, who's also riveted by Alyssa's performance.

Alyssa makes big-time eye contact with somebody out there. The song seems to be aimed at whoever she's looking at. It's more than obvious there's a seduction going on, but of whom? At a break in the song, Alyssa reaches a fever pitch and throws her hand out at someone in the crowd, urging whoever it is to join her.

Holden shakes his head sheepishly and looks downward, aw-shucks style. At that moment, the Girl beside him moves forward and jumps on the stage. Banky's eyes widen. Holden looks up and is suddenly taken aback.

Alyssa and the Girl dance with one another to the music, passionately, almost well-choreographed. Their hands are all over each other.

Holden and Banky watch, a bit mystified.

Alyssa goes into the final verse of the song, arms around the Girl, spinning her, the works, all in time with the lyrics. At the abrupt ending, the Girl and Alyssa fall into a way-too-passionate-to-mean-anything-else kiss.

Holden's eyes bug. Banky allows a smile to creep across his face. The crowd applauds. Banky looks around, and for the first time, we get the distinct impression that this is a lesbian bar...

There are a lot of chicks in this place. Gay chicks.

Banky looks back to Holden and slaps him on the back.

BANKY

Now that, my friend, is a shared moment.

Holden continues to stare - mouth agape - OC.

Alyssa and the Girl continue to make out.

TB

INT HER-STORY - LATER

Banky, Holden, Alyssa and the Girl from the dance floor sit around a table. Alyssa and the Girl continue to make out. Holden and Banky casually watch, wide-eyed. Banky stares a little harder. Holden hits him.

BANKY

What?!

HOLDEN

(under his breath)

That's rude.

BANKY

Man, when are we ever going to get a chance to see this kind of shit live without paying for it?

Alyssa and the Girl break their kiss.

ALYSSA

Uh-oh - better knock it off: we're getting a man excited.

HOLDEN

Sorry. It's just... new to him.

BANKY

Oh, and you're an old hand at this.

ALYSSA

No, I should apologize. I don't usually get all mushy in public. But it's been awhile since I've seen Kim here.

KIM

(formerly the Girl)

Tell me you didn't set that gross display up with the band just so you could nail me.

ALYSSA

Like I'd have to go through that much effort.

KIM

You know what? I want to dance.

ALYSSA

Go ahead. I'll watch from here.

KIM

(tugging at her arm)

No, I want to dance with you.

ALYSSA

Don't be such a rag. I have to sit here and work up the desire to fuck you later.

KIM

Please.

Kim exits. Banky is smiling ear-to-ear. Alyssa looks at him.

ALYSSA

Yes?

BANKY

You said 'fuck'. To that girl. You said you'd 'fuck' her.

ALYSSA

And?

BANKY

How can a girl 'fuck' another girl? Were you talking about strap-ons or something?

HOLDEN

(hits him)

Would you shut up?!

BANKY

What?!? It's a valid question. You know the dyke stuff in the Penthouse Letters section is written by guys - this is our chance to get the inside scoop.

HOLDEN

(to Alyssa)

I don't know how many times I can apologize for him.

ALYSSA

It's okay. Secretly, all I really want is to be the center of attention.

(to Banky)

I've never used a strap-on.

BANKY

Then what's with saying 'fuck'? Shouldn't you say 'eat her out' or at least modify the term 'fuck' with something like 'fist'?

ALYSSA

Let me ask you a question - can men 'fuck' each other?

BANKY

Ask Hooper.

ALYSSA

In your estimation.

BANKY

Sure.

ALYSSA

So for you, to 'fuck' means to penetrate. You're used to the more traditional definition - you inside some girl you've duped, jack-hammering away, not noticing

that bored look in her eyes.

BANKY

You're so fucking wrong. I always notice the bored look in their eyes.

ALYSSA

(laughs)

'Fucking' is not limited to penetration, Banky. For me it describes any sex when it's not totally about love. I don't love Kim, but I'll fuck her. I'm sure you don't love every girl you sleep with.

BANKY

Some of them I downright loathe.

ALYSSA

But I'll bet it's different with the ones you love. I'll bet you go the full nine when it's not just a quick fix - like you go down on them longer or something.

HOLDEN

Here we go.

BANKY

I don't do that.

ALYSSA

What?!?!

BANKY

I stopped dropping. It got to be too frustrating.

HOLDEN

As stupid as you usually come off during this diatribe of your's, you're going to come off ten times as stupid on this occasion.

BANKY

What?! I lost my tolerance for the bullshit baggage that comes with eating girls out. What's the big deal?!

ALYSSA

If you say the smell, so help me, I'll slug you.

BANKY

Not the smell - the smell is good. I'm talking about not being able to do it properly. And my mother brought me up to believe that if I can't do something right, I shouldn't do it at all. Of course, my father told me she gave lousy head, but that's beside the point.

ALYSSA

At least you blame yourself for your sexual inadequacies.

BANKY

No, I blame them. Chicks never help you out. They never tell you what to do. And most of them are all self-conscious about that smell factor, and so most of the time they just lay there, frozen like a deer in the headlights, right? Not for nothing, but when a chick goes down on me, I let her know where to go, and what the status is. You gotta handle it like CNN and the Weather Channel - constant updates.

HOLDEN

You're such an idiot.

ALYSSA

No, he's got a point. That's how I was in high school - I was nervous, and inhibited about being eaten out. But by the time I got to college, that all changed. I loosened up. Not only did I learn to communicate - I learned to be bossy. I was like one of those guys at the airport with those big flash lights - waving them this way, directing them that way, telling them when to stop.

BANKY

And that's all I'm saying. It'd be different if chicks helped out - pointed a guy in the right direction. Then there'd be no bullshit, no wasted time, and no chance for permanent injuries.

ALYSSA

Permanent injuries?

BANKY

Sure. You wanna see something permanent?

(pulls out front tooth)

I got this from Nina Rollins, sophomore year. I'm going down on her, and out of nowhere, her cat jumps on her stomach. She does this big ol' pelvic thrust - cracks my tooth in half, sends it down my throat. I had to get a crown for the stub.

ALYSSA

(to Holden)

I got that beat.

(to Banky)

I got that beat.

(half-turns and lifts shirt)

Sophomore year. I'm going down on Cynthia Slater in her dorm room after we went club-hopping. I'm totally drunk, and in the middle of it, I fall asleep - right there in her lap. She got so mad, she digs her heel into my back, right there.

(points to scar)

That's permanent.

BANKY

You see this?

(moves neck slightly right)

That's the farthest I can move my neck to the right
Sophmore year, I'm going out with Maria Bennett,
and for six months, I'm going down on her, and not
a damn thing's happening. Then one night, I change
a position, or vary my lapping-speed, and suddenly
it's a whole new world. She's moving around, con-
vulsing, breathing heavy. And her legs are pressing
against my ears so tightly that I don't hear her father
come into the room. He grabs my hair...

(grabs his own hair and pulls back)
...and he pulls me way back, hard.

ALYSSA

(throws up her leg and rolls up pants)
Senior year. Spring Formal. I'm eating out Missy
Kurt in her brother's car. She's laying across the
back seat, and I'm half-hanging out of the car, my
knees on the ground. She's flailing around, and she
knocks the parking brake off. The car starts rolling
down the hill, and my right knee is cut up all to shit
like a kiddy's scissor class cut it up for paper dolls.

Banky and Alyssa laugh. Holden looks at a small scar on his arm and thinks
better about mentioning it. Alyssa points to Banky's forearm.

ALYSSA

What's that one?

BANKY

This? I got that delivering pies for Quickie's
Pizzas. During the Shaw Delivery.

HOLDEN

You were on the Shaw Delivery?! You never told me!

ALYSSA

What's the Shaw Delivery?

BANKY

(very seriously)

One Saturday, we get this call for a pizza delivery to a
local politician's estate - a Councilman Shaw. I go and
when I get there I see about eight other cars in the drive-
way - all delivery guys from other Quickie's. The Council-
man's wife greets us and sits us all down in her living
room, and proceeds to tell us that we're all going to have
sex with her, while her husband listens from outside the
door. And no matter how hard he begs, we're not to let
him in. She says refusal will mean non-stop harassment
from the local cops. So against most of our wills, we're led
into her bedroom and one by one, the guys climb on top of
her and go while her husband scratches like a bitch in heat
at the door, trying to get in. So he's pounding on the door
and we're scared as hell, and sometimes he goes away...
sometimes he wouldn't go away. Sometimes you could
hear him crying outside the door.

ALYSSA

Oh my God.

BANKY

About six thirty I bump into an old friend of mine, Herbie Robertson, from Civics class - a baseball player. I tap him on the shoulder to turn him around. But he just rolls over onto the bed - bobs on the mattress like a kind of top. He'd passed out from the fear. And the line gets shorter, and it's almost my turn. You know - that's the time I was most frightened - I'll never wait in a line again. So eight delivery boys go in, and seven have sex with the Councilman's wife, June the twenty third, 1989.
(beat)

Anyway... we delivered the pizza.

A moment of silence. Then Kim re-enters and plants a big kiss on Alyssa's neck.

HOLDEN

(off Banky's watch)

Holy shit, is that the time. We've gotta beat traffic.

BANKY

What traffic - it's one thirty in the morning!

HOLDEN

(getting up)

And rush hour starts in six hours. Let's go.

(to Alyssa)

Thanks for inviting us out. It was... educational.

Alyssa waves at him as he exits. Banky slides out of the booth.

BANKY

(to Kim)

Since you like chicks, right... do you just look at yourself in the mirror all the time?

Holden reaches in and pulls Banky out. Alyssa watches them go, then kisses Kim.

INT M-TV EXEC'S OFFICE WAITING ROOM - DAY

Holden looks preoccupied. Banky flips through magazines, biting off mini pieces of the gum he's chewing. He sticks them between pages, presses the mag closed, picks up another one and then repeats the whole process. A Receptionist types.

BANKY

(off Holden's look)

You're still dwelling on the dyke, aren't you?

HOLDEN

Lower your voice.

BANKY

What'd I tell you - she just needs the right guy. All every woman really wants - be it mother, senator, nun - is some serious deep-dicking.

The Receptionist stops typing and looks at Banky, shocked.

BANKY

(off her look)

Don't give me that look - I heard Adam Curry say worse.

The Secretary goes back to typing. Banky shrugs at Holden.

BANKY

That's why I can't buy lesbians. Everyone needs dick. See, I can buy fags. Bunch of guys that need dick - just plain need it? That I get. But dykes? Bullshit posturing. Ah - live and let live, I guess.

HOLDEN

I'm sure the gay community appreciates your support.

JOHN SLOSS, the boys' lawyer, joins them.

SLOSS

You haven't blown this deal - or each other, for that matter - while sitting here waiting for me, have you?

BANKY

Sloss like a mother fucker.
(slaps his hand)

SLOSS

Hey, every mother but *your's* - a sheister's gotta have his standards. Shall we?

INT M-TV EXEC'S OFFICE - DAY

The EXECS are a casual couple of guys, sitting on couches across from our trio.

EXEC 1

We just want to start off by saying that it's a pleasure to finally meet you. While it's been - shall we say - an experience dealing with Sloss here, one of the main reasons we started this whole thing was to meet the guys that do 'Bluntman and Chronic'.

EXEC 2

(points at them)
'Snootchie Bootchies'.

The Execs and Sloss laugh. Holden and Banky politely join in. Banky shoots Holden a 'these guys are idiots' look.

EXEC 1

Which brings us to our proposal: we are extremely interested in doing twelve, half-hour 'Bluntman and

Chronic' cartoons. The age of Beavis is coming to a close, and we're looking for something... something...

BANKY

Even more retarded and juvenile to sate the voracious, intellectually-challenged miscreants that make up your key demographic.

The Execs laugh hard. Sloss secretly shrugs to Banky and gives the thumbs up.

EXEC 1

(composes himself)

So what do you say? Are we in business?

Banky leans back into the couch, wearing a thoughtful face. He looks to Holden, then to Sloss. Sloss nods in understanding.

SLOSS

Jim, Sean - could we have a few minutes?

EXEC 2

(looks to Exec 1)

Uh... absolutely. We'll just...

EXEC 1

Uh...wait outside.

The Exec's smile and head out, closing the door behind them. Sloss turns to Banky.

SLOSS

So? Did I do good?

BANKY

You did better - you sold us out!

They clasp hands and quietly explode in ebullience.

SLOSS

Do you know how much you'll make on merchandising alone?

BANKY

(as Simon Bar Sinister)

Money and Power, and Money and Power...

SLOSS

(joins in)

...and Money and Power, and Money and...

HOLDEN

(interrupting)

I don't think it's a good idea.

Banky and Sloss freeze. They stare at Holden.

BANKY

What's not a good idea? Please don't say the cartoon,
please don't say the cartoon...

HOLDEN

The cartoon.

SLOSS

What?!? Are you out of your fucking mind?

BANKY

(getting up)

John, let me handle this.

(to Holden)

You are out of your fucking mind, aren't you?

HOLDEN

Is this how you want to be remembered? As the
guy who created Bluntman and Chronic?

Banky sits at the Exec's desk and starts rifling through the guy's stuff.

BANKY

No, I'd like to be remembered as the filthy *rich* guy
who created Bluntman and Chronic.

HOLDEN

But it'll be all glossy and main-stream. We'll lose
any artistic credibility we ever had.

SLOSS

(to Banky)

Is it me? I don't see the problem.

BANKY

(to Sloss)

He just has to get over this crush of his.

SLOSS

Oh God - not on Carrie Fisher again?

(to Holden)

Holden - she's not really a Princess.

BANKY

(opening drawer with a letter opener)

Not on her; on Alyssa Jones - the chick that does that
comic book 'Idiosyncratic Routine'. You ever seen it?

SLOSS

Please. Like I even read *your* comic, let alone
anyone else's.

(to Holden)

I'm not limited to offering you legal counsel only, my
friend. I'm also learned in the ways of the heart, and
can offer you this advice - fuck her, get it out of your
system, and move on. Like we say at Sloss Law - good
fences make good neighbors.

BANKY

She'd never let him in her yard. The chick's gay.

SLOSS

(laughing)

She's gay?!? You fell for a gay, comic-book writing chick? Holden, you poor, poor man!

(beat)

Wait a sec - does she have representation?

BANKY

Always working, you.

(holds up a Polaroid of a naked woman)

Look at this - Mrs. M-TV Exec has a string of pearls hanging out of her ass.

SLOSS

Would you leave his stuff alone!

(to Holden)

You can break her resolve, killer. All it takes is one good man. But if it takes two good men, don't hesitate to call me. That being said, in regards to more pressing issue, I suggest you leave the art to the museums and grab on with both hands to the big, fat check.

HOLDEN

I'll give it some thought.

BANKY

(holding up Polaroid)

I'm taking this as a precaution - just in case they give us any shit about pussy's decision delay.

(glaring at Holden)

You'll 'give it some thought'. You're so retarded.

HOLDEN

Says the guy who only forty five minutes ago paid fifty bucks for what's supposed to be a boot-leg of 'March of the Wooden Soldiers' with a deleted scene of Stan Laurel wearing a French Tickler.

SLOSS

How'd you fall for that?

BANKY

The guy who sold it to me had an honest face.

INT STUDIO - DAY

There is a door. There's a knock at the door. Holden opens it and Alyssa is standing there.

ALYSSA

Somebody told me that they make comic books here, and I've got an idea for this story about a guy who comes to a club and high-tails it when he finds out this girl is gay. Any interest in a story like that?

HOLDEN

Well that depends. How does the story end?

ALYSSA

The girl - who traveled really far from the big city to a place she swore she'd never visit again - takes the guy out to lunch in the park.

HOLDEN

Takes him out?

ALYSSA

Well, asks him out. He still has to say...
(beat)

Look, this is getting cheesy. I didn't come all this way just to have this movie-moment with you in the doorway. Get your coat and come on.

EXT RIVERFRONT PARK - DAY

Alyssa and Holden walk through the park, eating hot dogs.

ALYSSA

M-TV?

HOLDEN

Twelve episodes.

ALYSSA

That's great, isn't it?

HOLDEN

Banky seems to think so.

ALYSSA

But you don't.

They come to a swing set and sit down on the swings.

HOLDEN

I don't know if that's the perception I want people to have of our stuff. I know this sounds pretentious as hell, but I like to think of us as artists. And I'd like to get back to doing something more personal - like our first book.

ALYSSA

Well when are you going to do that?

HOLDEN

(beat)

As soon as we have something personal to say.

ALYSSA

Do you know how pretty you are?

HOLDEN

What?

ALYSSA

You're a pretty man.

HOLDEN

Uh... thanks.

ALYSSA

Oh, I get it. I'm into girls, so I have to find all men repulsive or something.

HOLDEN

I didn't say anything.

ALYSSA

Aren't there some men that you find attractive? Granted, not enough to sleep with, but still - just handsome or something?

HOLDEN

Sure. Harrison Ford. And our mail-man.

ALYSSA

Well it's the same thing. I look at you and just find you really handsome. And you know, it has very little to do with your look, per-say. Your look is fine, don't get me wrong. But it's more your out-look. The things you say, the way you see things. It's... I don't know... attractive.

Holden looks away, embarrassed.

ALYSSA

I weirded you out the other night.

HOLDEN

Huh? No, not really.

ALYSSA

Come on.

HOLDEN

(beat)

It's just that we've... I mean, I've never seen that kind of thing up close and personal. It just took awhile to process, longer than usual.

ALYSSA

Do you want to talk about it?

HOLDEN

Um. If you want to.

ALYSSA

I like you. I haven't liked a man in a long time. And I'm not a man-hater or something. It's just been some time since I've been exposed to a man that didn't immediately live-in to a stereotype of some sort. And I want you to feel comfortable with me, because I want us to be friends. So if there are things you'd like to know, it's okay to ask me.

HOLDEN

(beat)

Why girls?

ALYSSA

(beat)

Why men?

HOLDEN

Because that's the standard.

ALYSSA

If that's the only reason you sleep with women - because it's the standard...

HOLDEN

It's more than that.

ALYSSA

Have you ever slept with a man?

HOLDEN

I used to sleep on my father's stomach when I was a kid.

ALYSSA

You know what I mean.

HOLDEN

No.

ALYSSA

Why not?

HOLDEN

No interest.

ALYSSA

Because...?

HOLDEN

It just feels right enough to be with a woman.

ALYSSA

And that's how I feel. I've never really been attracted to men. I didn't sleep with a man 'till I was seventeen. I've always liked girls. Girls feel right. I'm more comfortable with the idea of girls.

HOLDEN

Wait, wait, wait - you were a virgin until you were seventeen?

ALYSSA

No.

HOLDEN

But you'd never been with a guy 'till then.

ALYSSA

True.

HOLDEN

So you were a virgin?

ALYSSA

You're saying a person's a virgin until they've had intercourse with a member of the opposite sex?

HOLDEN

Isn't that the standard definition?

ALYSSA

Again with the standards. I think virginity is lost when you make love for the first time.

HOLDEN

With a member of the opposite sex.

ALYSSA

Why? Why only then?

HOLDEN

Because that's the standard.

ALYSSA

So if a virgin is raped, then she's still a virgin?

HOLDEN

Of course not.

ALYSSA

But rape is not the standard. So she's had sex, but not the standard idea of sex. Hence, according to your definition, she'd still be a virgin.

HOLDEN

Okay, I'll revise. Virginity is lost when the hymen is broken.

ALYSSA

Then I lost my virginity at ten, because I fell on a fence post when I was ten, and it broke my hymen. Now I have to tell people that I lost it to a wooden post I'd known my whole young life?

HOLDEN

Second revision - virginity is lost through penetration.

ALYSSA

Physical penetration or emotional?

HOLDEN

Emotional?

ALYSSA

Well, I fell in love hard with Caitlin Bree when we were in high school.

HOLDEN

Physical penetration.

ALYSSA

We had sex.

HOLDEN

Yeah, but not real sex.

ALYSSA

I move to have that remark stricken from the record, on account of it makes you come off as completely naive and infantile.

HOLDEN

Well where's the penetration in lesbian sex.

Alyssa holds up her hand.

HOLDEN

A finger? Come on. I've had my finger in my ass, but I wouldn't say I've had anal sex.

ALYSSA

Did I hold up a finger? No. I held up a hand.

HOLDEN

(beat; then he gets it)

You're kidding?!?

(she nods)

How...?!?

ALYSSA

Our bodies are built to pass a child, for Christ's sake.

HOLDEN

But doesn't it hurt?!

ALYSSA

Sure. But in a good way.

HOLDEN

There's no such thing.

ALYSSA

Haven't you ever had sex with a woman that needed you to keep going even after you'd came?

HOLDEN

Yes.

ALYSSA

Didn't it hurt?

HOLDEN

Started to.

ALYSSA

But you kept going?

HOLDEN

Sure.

ALYSSA

Because it felt good.

HOLDEN

No, to produce a result.

ALYSSA

So you did it out of desire to achieve?

HOLDEN

Or out of affection. If it was achievement I was after, I'd have been severely let down.

ALYSSA

Why?

HOLDEN

I don't believe in the coital orgasm.

ALYSSA

You don't believe women can come?

HOLDEN

No. I believe women can come through oral sex. But that's where it begins and ends. I've been with my share of women, and none of them have ever had a movie orgasm.

ALYSSA

A movie orgasm?

HOLDEN

Like the women come in the movies. Three or four thrusts and a release of male proportions. Their bodies shivering and all that. I've asked every girl I've been with and some I haven't, and they all concur. They've never had an orgasm during sex.

ALYSSA

I've had an orgasm while being tongue-fucked.

HOLDEN

Get out of here!

ALYSSA

I have.

HOLDEN

Impossible. If all the women I've talked to can't have an orgasm from regular penetration, how can it happen for you with a tongue? I mean, let's be real - how big can a tongue even get?

Alyssa swallows what she's chewing and releases her tongue, which is just huge. Holden is transfixed. Alyssa wraps it back up and smiles, standing.

ALYSSA

Let's go.

She exits. Holden remains on the swing. Alyssa comes back in.

ALYSSA

Come on.

HOLDEN

Just...um... just give me a moment.

INT AIRPORT - DAY

Holden enters. Banky tries to balance way-too-much luggage.

HOLDEN

Look at you. It's a two day trip.

BANKY

I got the Sega in one bag, my clothes in the other, and two months worth of unread comics in this one.

HOLDEN

We're going to a convention, for the love of God. We'll be busy from ten 'till eight each day. When are you possibly going to have time for any of that shit? In fact, fuck it - you're leaving some of this shit here in a locker. Come on - give me the two that aren't clothes.

BANKY

Hold on.

(starts rifling through one bag)

HOLDEN

What are you doing?

BANKY

I just have to get something.

(pulls out a huge stack of porno books)

HOLDEN

Who are you, Larry fucking Flynt? What are you going to do with all of those?

BANKY

Read the articles. What do you think I'm going to do with them? They're stroke books.

HOLDEN

You've got like thirty books there! We're only there for two days!

BANKY

(leafing through mags)

Variety's the spice of life. I like a wide selection. Sometimes I'm in the mood for shaved slits, sometimes I like them arty and air-brushed. Sometimes it's a spread brown-eye kind of night, sometimes it's girl-on-girl time. Sometimes a steamy letter will do it, sometimes - not often, but sometimes - I like the idea of a chick with a horse.

A beeping sound is heard. Holden checks his beeper.

HOLDEN

Go check us in. I've gotta call Alyssa.

BANKY

His master's voice.

HOLDEN

Put that stuff away.

Holden exits. Banky starts packing his mags up. A little KID enters, staring at him.

KID

What are those?

BANKY

(looks at kid then books)

Do you like horsies?

Holden finishes dialing the phone. Cross cut between him and Alyssa at home.

ALYSSA

I hope for the sake of the women you've dated that you're only this quick in returning calls.

HOLDEN

What's up? I'm about to get on a plane.

ALYSSA

Ohhh. Why?

HOLDEN

Last minute invite to the Dragon Con'.

ALYSSA

Shit.

HOLDEN

What?

ALYSSA

My sister's at my parents'. I was gonna go see her.

HOLDEN

The one that wrote the book?

ALYSSA

Yeah. But I was staying all weekend, and I wanted to hang out with you. This sucks.

HOLDEN

You didn't get invited to the Con'?

ALYSSA

I don't do southern con's - all the chicks have that annoying drawl. You know how hard it is not to laugh when someone moans "Fuhhk me"?

HOLDEN

Well this sucks.

(thinks)

You know - *both* of us don't have to go.

ALYSSA

Really?

HOLDEN

Yeah. Banky can go by himself. It's not like we're on a panel. It was just a signing appearance.

ALYSSA

If you come pick me up, I'll be your best friend.

HOLDEN

(beat)

Where's your apartment.

ALYSSA

I'm not there. I'm at a friend's - in the Village. Corner of Houston and Mercer. Number eighty six, apartment 6-D.

HOLDEN

I'll be there in half an hour.

ALYSSA

You're so easy.

They hang up. Holden reacts to something OC and exits quickly.

Banky points to pictures in the book. The kid looks on.

BANKY

...And then Black Beauty couldn't take it any longer, and *he* finally did some of his *own* mounting.

KID

(off book)

Wow.

Holden grabs Banky's arm and drags him away.

HOLDEN

What are you doing?

BANKY

(waving to kid)

I think I want kids one day. They're fun.

HOLDEN

Listen to me - I'm not going. You're going to have to do this one by yourself.

BANKY

What? Why?

HOLDEN

Alyssa's coming down for the weekend, so I want to hang out with her. You don't need me for this.

(taking his excess baggage)

Meantime, I'll take this stuff home. You can keep the filth. I'll pick you up at nine Sunday night, alright?

Don't forget to plug the Annual and don't mention the t.v. show, okay? Call me if you get bored.

And he's gone. Banky stands there, open-mouthed. A check-in FLIGHT ATTENDANT comes up to him. His name-tag reads 'Frank'.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Checking in, sir?

BANKY

(still watching Holden go)

Hunhh?

(looks at F.A.)

Yeah. But this is carry-on.

F.A.

Federal aviation security law requires me to ask if you've been given any strange gifts or parcels to carry-on since arriving at the airport today.

BANKY

(thinks)

Not this trip. But one time, when I was using curbside check-in, this sky-cap gave me a cock ring and a set of anal ben-wa balls. I always thought that was pretty strange. He said his name was Frank.

(looks closely at him)

Hey! You're name's Frank!

Banky storms away. The Flight Attendant watches him go.

F.A.

Fucking kids.

EXT APARTMENT 6-D - DAY

Holden knocks at the door. It opens. A WOMAN is standing in the doorway in her bra. She looks Holden up and down and smirks.

WOMAN

Let me guess - 'the right man'?

HOLDEN

Excuse me?

WOMAN

You've got it in your head that Alyssa's not really into chicks - that she just hasn't met the right man. And you believe you're it. You're going to treat her right, fuck her like a stud, and 'straight-jacket' her back from the land of the lost. And the sad truth is that you'll accomplish none of that and wind up as either an even more bitter misogynist or a reverse fag-hag.

Holden's at a loss. Alyssa slips past the Woman, carrying an overnight bag.

ALYSSA

Don't mind her. That's just her way a saying hello.

WOMAN

Actually, it's just my way of saying "Give it up."

ALYSSA

(to Woman)

You're such an asshole.

WOMAN

When you file the date-rape charges, don't say I didn't warn you.

HOLDEN

(holding out hand)
I'm Holden, by the way.

WOMAN

I'm the voice of reason that Miss Bitch is having such a hard time listening to.

HOLDEN

Look, we're just friends.

WOMAN

That's what every guy says before he tries putting your hand on his dick.

HOLDEN

And how do you know men so well?

WOMAN

Because I lap-dance for a living, dick-head.

She slams the door. Holden looks to Alyssa.

ALYSSA

Ohhh - you look so cute!

She heads down the stairs.

HOLDEN

Who was that?

ALYSSA

Just an occasional friend.

HOLDEN

Why would you want to hang out with someone as bitter as that?

ALYSSA

(stops)
Remember this?
(sticks out huge tongue)
Her's is even bigger than that.

She smiles and continues on. Holden looks back up at the door. He sticks his own tongue out and sizes it with his fingers.

EXT TURNPIKE - DAY

The car sits in traffic.

INT CAR - DAY

Holden sighs. Alyssa plays with the radio.

ALYSSA
You were raised Catholic, right?

HOLDEN
Yeah. You?

ALYSSA
Baptist.

HOLDEN
Really? Did you have a strict upbringing?

ALYSSA
Please. There was no time to be bad - we were too busy saying 'Jesus'. Yourself?

HOLDEN
I wouldn't say strict as much as moral.

ALYSSA
Really.

HOLDEN
Yeah. But at the same time, my parents were heinous-ly morally lax as well. One year they took me and my brother and sister to Disney World. And while we were in the park, I'd hit gift shops and hold up stuff and ask if I could have it. My parents'd look around and then say "Go ahead - take it outside while we pay for it."

ALYSSA
Let me guess - they were letting you shoplift?

HOLDEN
And I didn't even know! There I am - in the Magic Kingdom - picking Mickey clean.

ALYSSA
Somehow, I doubt you caused any lasting fiscal damage to the company.

HOLDEN
I never caught on. I mean, sure - I thought it was weird that I couldn't have my name stitched into my Mouseketeer ears, but they were my parents.

ALYSSA
One family raises their kid a bible thumper and she turns gay. The other lets their kid plunder the shit out of the epitome of American tourism and he walks the straight and narrow.

HOLDEN
You think your upbringing had something to do

with your lifestyle choice?

ALYSSA

Somewhere along the line. It's a gradual transition to make - from doing what the majority does to taking a leap of faith and doing what feels more natural. Everything helps - from the way you were handled as a kid, to the way the boys acted in third grade, to the shoes you wore at your freshmen prom.

HOLDEN

Shoes?

ALYSSA

Well they were *really* tight.

HANGING OUT MONTAGE BEGINS

With the requisite music, over which we hear a conversation between Holden and Alyssa.

- 1) Holden and Alyssa sit in the DINER, eating. Holden's talking. The Waitress walks past and drops her pad. She bends over, to pick it up, hiking her mini-skirt up in the process. Alyssa stares at her ass. Holden stops talking and stares at her. Alyssa looks over at him and offers a caught smile.
- 2) Holden pushes a shopping cart at the FOOD STORE, throwing various things into the basket. Alyssa comes up with a box of Tampons and throws them in. Holden glances at them, a bit flushed. Alyssa catches him, picks up the box, and pulls one out. She proceeds to demonstrate their usage, throwing one leg on the cart and miming insertion. Holden puts up his hands in the "I know, I know," fashion.
- 3) At the DINER again - Holden hands the Waitress the check and some cash to pay for it. Alyssa takes the Waitress' hand, writes her phone number on it, and smiles. The Waitress coyly returns the smile and walks away. Holden stares at Alyssa, open-mouthed. Alyssa offers him the "What?" look.
- 4) Holden and Alyssa at the COMIC BOOK STORE. Steve-Dave and the Fan-Boy eye them suspiciously. Alyssa pays for a comic. Steve-Dave glowers at Holden. He gives Alyssa her change and they exit. Steve-Dave goes back to his card game with the Fan-Boy. Suddenly, a garbage can comes crashing through their window. Steve-Dave rips a check off the garbage can and punches the counter. The Fan-Boy rubs his back soothingly.
- 5) Holden and Alyssa walk through a PARKING LOT, talking. She takes his hand and pulls his arm around her shoulders. Holden smiles to himself.

HOLDEN V.O.

Let me ask you something - we get along, right?

ALYSSA V.O.

Famously.

HOLDEN V.O.

We have a definite chemistry?

ALYSSA V.O.

So it would seem.

HOLDEN V.O.

But we're both into girls.

ALYSSA V.O.

I'm into women.

HOLDEN V.O.

But you weren't always gay?

ALYSSA V.O.

I've seen my share of 'willies'.

HOLDEN V.O.

So if we'd met a long time ago... before you went all gay...?

ALYSSA V.O.

...I'd still be muff-diving, yes.

HOLDEN V.O.

Thought so.

INT STUDIO - DAY

Holden and Banky play EA Sports Hockey on Sega. There's a knock at the door.

HOLDEN

Come in.

Alyssa enters.

ALYSSA

So this is how you research the deep insights that appear in that book of your's? Someone once told me that guys who play hockey are merely making up for penile deficiencies by carrying big sticks.

BANKY

I thought you lived in the city? This is like the umpteenth time I've seen you here. Isn't that grounds enough for the little pink mafia to throw you out of their club.

HOLDEN

(hits Banky; to Alyssa)

I'll be ready in a second. I just have to school this mouthy second-stringer.

BANKY

Bitch, you're schooling no one.

They play. Cut back and forth between the game and Banky, Holden, and Alyssa.

HOLDEN

(off game)
What? Do something!

BANKY

(off game)
You fucking cock-teaser. I'll knock your fucking teeth out and pass all over your ass.

HOLDEN

Look at how slow you are. Christ, you move like a geriatric.

BANKY

(screaming at screen)
Fuck! You fucking cock-sucker, man! These faggots won't do what I tell them to!

HOLDEN

Oh, it's the controller, right? It's always the controller.

BANKY

No, it's these... fucking queers on blades that can't accept a fucking pass to save their lives! What period is this?

HOLDEN

Final sixty of the third.

BANKY

Fuck! Look at your fucking guys, they... FUCK!!!
(whips controller)
FUCKING COCK SUCKER, MAN! I SWEAR TO GOD!

Banky storms away. Alyssa looks at Holden.

HOLDEN

Imagine if I'd only beaten him by one instead of thirty?

INT SKEE-BALL ARCADE - DAY

Holden feeds a couple dollars into the change machine. Alyssa looks on.

ALYSSA

Explain this again.

HOLDEN

How could you have grown up down the shore and never played skee-ball? What did you do with your youth?

They head toward the skee-ball runs.

ALYSSA

Smoked pot, gave head, stayed out late.

HOLDEN

Not your grade school years; your high school years.

ALYSSA

(off skee-ball run)

This looks complicated.

HOLDEN

(inserts coin and pulls lever)

The premise is very basic - you roll the ball up the ramp at varying speeds, in an effort to pop it into the score circles. The higher the score, the more prize tickets you get.

ALYSSA

What do you do with the prize tickets?

HOLDEN

Trade them in for prizes that aren't worth nearly as much as you paid to play the game.

ALYSSA

Then what's the point?

HOLDEN

It's fun.

ALYSSA

And you question my lifestyle.

HOLDEN

Observe.

Holden rolls the ball. It pops into a twenty point circle.

HOLDEN

See? It's just that simple.

ALYSSA

Why not just walk up there and put it in the fifty every time?

HOLDEN

Where's the skill in that?

ALYSSA

Oh, this is a skill? I'm sorry, I had no idea.

HOLDEN

Just toss one.

Alyssa picks up a ball, squints to aim, and whips it overhand. It pops off one of the circles and shoots back at them, missing them as they duck. An OC knock and an "OW!" is heard. Holden reacts as Alyssa laughs.

HOLDEN

(to OC guy)

I'm sorry, man. She's new at this...

Holden ducks as the ball comes sailing back at his head. He gets up.

HOLDEN

(to OC)

Thank you.

(hands Alyssa another ball)

Underhand. Throw it underhand.

ALYSSA

That lowers the chances of my making it in.

HOLDEN

Now you're getting it.

ALYSSA

This is where you take straight chicks on dates?

HOLDEN

It's like Spanish Fly. This'll probably be the first time I don't get laid afterwards.

ALYSSA

I don't know. I'm starting to get a tingle in my bottom.

(tosses a ball)

Ten.

HOLDEN

(grabs a ball)

So what'd you do last night?

(prepares to throw)

ALYSSA

Got fucked.

Holden whips the ball in surprise. It ricochets off the ceiling and through the glass of an old pinball machine. Alyssa laughs. Holden looks around, nervously.

ALYSSA

Some more of that skill you were telling me about.

HOLDEN

Maybe this was a bad idea. Maybe we should just leave before somebody gets hurt.

ALYSSA

No way. I want a cheap prize.

(throws a ball)

So your friend's quite the homophobe.

HOLDEN

He just feels left out, I think.

ALYSSA

I'm not talking about his infantile hang-up with me.
I'm talking about when you two were playing that game.
Everytime he swore - when his players messed up, he
called them cocksuckers, he referred to the players as
queers, he called you a prick-teaser...

HOLDEN

I thought he was talking to you.

ALYSSA

I know you think it means nothing, and it may in fact
be unintentional, but it's ugly all the same.

HOLDEN

He was just pissed he was losing.

ALYSSA

So he invokes the gay community pejoratively to
stress that?

HOLDEN

Don't get all p.c. on me.

ALYSSA

I'm not. But what is that saying?

HOLDEN

It says he gets too easily frustrated.

ALYSSA

It's passive/agressive gay-bashing.

HOLDEN

How do you figure?

ALYSSA

How casually did it roll off his tongue? And that's how
he expresses his anger? By calling people faggots?

HOLDEN

I think you're reading too much into it.

ALYSSA

I think you're just so used to it that it rolls off your
back. I've heard the two of you play your little rank-
out game where one insists the other is gay.

(as the boys)

"You're a faggot. No, you're a faggot." It's cute and
all to watch you go at it like grade-schoolers, but it's
also offensive - labeling and ducking the label of be-
ing gay as if it were the scarlet fucking letter.

HOLDEN

You're blowing this way out of proportion. We live in a
more tolerant age now. You refer to yourself as a dyke.
That chick in the club called you a cunt. Hooper calls

himself a faggot all the time. Christ, you live in the city - name me one young black male that doesn't refer to himself or his contemporaries as niggers.

ALYSSA

Within a minority, yes - that's acceptable. But it's practiced as disempowerment/empowerment. I call myself a dyke so it's not too devastating when some throwback screams it at me when I'm leaving a bar at night. Hooper calls himself a faggot to steal some hate-monger's thunder. And while I can't speak for them, I believe young black males have been called niggers for so long, that it's negativity became completely lost on them, and is now used more as a greeting of solidarity than anything else. But the difference between us saying it and you saying it is miles wide. We say it to mask the pain - you say it for lack of a better expression at any given moment. No Holden, we do *not* live in a more tolerant age. And if you think that's the case, then you've been in the suburbs way too long to be resuscitated.

Holden kind of sulks. Alyssa notices.

ALYSSA

But you know what?
(picks up his face)
I have more faith in you than that.
(rips her tickets off)
Come on - I want my cheap prize.

INT STUDIO - NIGHT

Holden enters. Banky's still playing Sega. Holden sits next to him.

HOLDEN

(off screen)
How bad do you suck?

BANKY

How was your pseudo-date?

HOLDEN

Leave it alone.

BANKY

That chick bugs me.

HOLDEN

(rubs his head; in baby-talk)
Aww. Everyone bugs you.

BANKY

Get off.
(off game)
Fucking faggot! Did you see that?! Your dyke-

courting ass just got me scored on!

HOLDEN

(beat)

You know, you should watch that. If you're going to get all bent out of shape while playing the game, so much so that you need to curse the t.v., try not to gay-bash it, alright. You're not that kind of guy.

(gets up)

And she's not a dyke. She's a lesbian.

Holden goes to his drawing table and takes off his coat. Banky sits there, shocked. He puts the controller down and crosses to the drawing table.

BANKY

What the fuck is going on here?

HOLDEN

(pulling out pencil)

I'm starting a new page.

BANKY

(smacking pencil away)

Not with this shit! With you. What the fuck is going on with you and that girl?

HOLDEN

We're friends.

BANKY

She's programming you.

HOLDEN

I beg your pardon? Programming?

BANKY

Yeah. And apparently, you don't even realize it. What does it matter if I refer to her as a dyke, or if I call the Whales a bunch of faggots in the privacy of my own office, far from the sensitive ears of the rest of the world?

HOLDEN

It's passive/aggressive gay-bashing; and I know you're not really prejudiced at heart. You should just find some other way to express your anger, is all I'm saying.

Holden starts drawing. Banky stares at him. Then he grabs the pencil out of Holden's hand and shoves him to the side. He starts drawing something.

HOLDEN

What the fuck are you doing?

BANKY

Bear with me here. I just want to put you through

this little exercise.

(drawing feverishly)

Okay, now see this? This is a four way road, okay?

Banky draws a four-way stop. He illustrates according to his voice-over.

BANKY V.O.

And dead in the center, is a crisp, new, hundred dollar bill. Now at the end of each of the streets, are four people, okay? You following? Up here, we got a male-affectionate, easy-to-get-along-with, no political agenda lesbian. Okay? Now down here, we have a man-hating, angry-as-fuck, agenda-of-rage, bitter dyke. To this side, we got Santa Claus, right? And over to this side - the Easter Bunny.

Banky finishes drawing. Holden's shaking his head.

BANKY

Which one's going to get to the hundred dollar bill first?

HOLDEN

What is this supposed to prove?

BANKY

I'm serious. This is a serious exercise. It's like an S.A.T. question. Which one's going to get to the hundred dollar bill first - the male-friendly lesbian, the man-hating dyke, Santa Claus, or the Easter Bunny?

HOLDEN

(beat; then pissed)

The man-hating dyke.

BANKY

Good. Why?

HOLDEN

I don't know.

BANKY

(wildly crossing out the other three)

BECAUSE THESE OTHER THREE ARE FIGMENTS OF YOUR FUCKING IMAGINATION, YOU ASSHOLE!

Holden storms away. Banky follows.

HOLDEN

I don't need this. I'm going home.

BANKY

She's fucking with your mind, man! She knows you've got this schoolboy crush and she's using it to sway your way of thinking!

HOLDEN

And why the fuck would she need to do that? What is she - Mata fucking Hari?! What does she gain?

BANKY

Maybe she thinks you'll get her comic picked up by Contender. Or maybe she thinks you'll change the content of our book to something more political and message oriented. Or, gee - I don't know - maybe because that's just what dykes like to do: fuck around with straight guys' heads, just so she can go back to her little rug-muncher club and have a good laugh with all her man-hating, harpy cronies about how fucking stupid and easily duped men are!

HOLDEN

You're so out of line right now...

BANKY

You don't even know this girl! Big deal, she's from Middletown and she went to North! All the girls at North were bitches and sluts anyway! And this one's got them beat by a mile because she's a bitch/slut/dyke!

HOLDEN

Watch your fucking mouth, is all I'm going to tell you...

BANKY

Oh why? Do you get my back when she bashes me? Because I know she does. And do you know why she does? Because I won't play her fucking game! I'm smarter than that, and just because she's a cute dyke, doesn't mean she's harmless - cute dykes are worse because they can bend easily duped fucks like yourself to their whim!

HOLDEN

Sometimes your paranoia and suspicious bullshit is amusing. Sometimes it's just fucking annoying as piss!

BANKY

What is it about this girl? You know you have no shot at getting her into bed! Why do you bother wasting time with her? Because you're Holden fucking McNeil - most persistent traveller on the road that's *not* the path of least resistance! Everything's gotta be a fucking challenge for you, and this little relationship with that bitch is the most illogical example of your fucking condition. Well I don't need a fucking magic eight ball to look into your future; you want a forecast? Here - will Holden ever fuck Alyssa.

(shakes and looks at imaginary ball)

What a shock - "Not fucking likely"! Your fucking relationship with her is affecting you, our work, and our friendship, and the time's going to come when I throw down the gauntlet and say it's me or her! And then

what're you going to say?!

HOLDEN

(beat)

I think you should let this one go.

BANKY

No, what would you say? Would you trash twenty fucking years of friendship because you've got some idiotic idea that this chick would even let you smell her dirty laundry, let alone fuck her?!

HOLDEN

Let it go...

BANKY

What the fuck... WHAT THE FUCK MAKES THIS BITCH ALL THAT IMPORTANT?!?!

Holden looks at Banky for a long beat.

HOLDEN

I'm in love with her, man.

Banky stares at him. Holden stares back. Banky looks into Holden's eyes. Suddenly, he softens a bit. He drops his head.

BANKY

Fuck.

Banky walks away. Holden watches him go and exits.

INT DINER - NIGHT

Holden and Alyssa sit at a booth. Alyssa picks through her food. Holden looks at the check and pulls money from his wallet.

HOLDEN

I wish you were the one being pursued by M-TV.

ALYSSA

Oh really?

HOLDEN

Sure. Then you could sell out and maybe pick up the check once in awhile.

ALYSSA

(drops her fork and wipes her hands)

We're leaving?

HOLDEN

Well it's not like this is a bed and breakfast.

ALYSSA

Watch this magic.

She grabs her bag and slides out of the booth. Holden watches her, then follows.

Alyssa slides up to the cashier's desk, as does Holden, who offers a puzzled shrug. Alyssa offers the 'just wait' finger. The CASHIER turns to her.

ALYSSA

Are you an authorized deal-maker in this establishment? Do you have the power to negotiate.

CASHIER

You wanna haggle over the price of your French Dip?

ALYSSA

I want to haggle over the price of fine art.

CASHIER

What do you mean?

ALYSSA

(pointing OC)

There. By the kitchen. That painting.

CASHIER

What about it?

ALYSSA

The price tag says seventy five.

CASHIER

So?

HOLDEN

(to Alyssa)

Tell me you're kidding?

ALYSSA

I want to haggle for it.

CASHIER

(to OC)

Manuel! Bring me the Dyksiezski off the wall.

(to Alyssa)

All my years in the diner business, I've waited for this day - the day when someone wanted to buy one of the pictures.

ALYSSA

(holds out hand)

Alyssa Jones. Pleased to meet you.

CASHIER

Well then you don't know rule one about haggling, which you just broke: you never give your name.

The name is power, and to give the opponent that piece of you is to give away victory.

ALYSSA

I'm only trying to conduct a transaction. We're not opponents.

CASHIER

(accepting painting from BUSBOY)

Oh, but we are - if you think I'm letting this beautiful piece go for fifty.

ALYSSA

Ah-ha!

(to Holden)

Now we're haggling.

INT CAR - NIGHT

It's drizzling outside. Holden drives. Alyssa hugs her painting and pushes her bare feet against the windshield, making footprints.

HOLDEN

I've always wondered what kind of people buy those things. I can't believe you talked him down to twenty five!

ALYSSA

It was looking shakey when he told me the artist was a blind cripple with a hump-back, but I held my ground. There's no room for sympathy in the buyer's market.

HOLDEN

Where are you going to hang it?

ALYSSA

I'm not. You are.

HOLDEN

You want me to hang it for you? You better hope it doesn't get out to the girl-nation that you needed a man to help you hang a picture.

ALYSSA

You're going to hang it in *your* house. I bought it for you.

HOLDEN

(laughs)

Yeah, right.

ALYSSA

(looks at him)

I'm serious.

Holden stares at her.

HOLDEN

Why?

ALYSSA

Because it's captured the moment. Whenever you look at it, it'll be a constant reminder - not just of tonight, but of our introduction, the building of our friendship, everything. Make no mistake about it, my friend - it's a gift to you, from me, so you'll always remember us.

Holden stares ahead. Then he swerves the wheel to the right.

EXT ROADSIDE - NIGHT

The car pulls to the side of the road. The rain is a bit heavier now.

INT CAR - NIGHT

Holden throws the car into park.

ALYSSA

Why are we stopping?

HOLDEN

Because I can't take it.

ALYSSA

Can't take what?

HOLDEN

I love you.

ALYSSA

(beat)

You love me.

HOLDEN

I love you. And not in a friendly way, although I think we're great friends. And not in a misplaced affection, puppy-dog way, although I'm sure that's what you'll call it. And it's not because you're unattainable. I love you. Very simple, very truly. You're the epitome of every attribute and quality I've ever looked for in another person. I know you think of me as just a friend, and crossing that line is the furthest thing from an option you'd ever consider. But I can't do this any longer. I can't stand beside you and not embrace you. I can't look into your eyes and not feel that longing you only read about in classic literature. I can't talk to you without wanting to express my love for you and everything you are. I know this will probably queer our friendship - no pun intended - but I had to say it, because I've never felt this before, and I like who I am because of it. And if bringing it to light means we can't hang out anymore, then that hurts me, but

I couldn't allow another day to go by without getting it out there, regardless of the outcome, which by the look on your face is to be the inevitable shoot-down. And I'll accept that, but I know some part of you is hesitating for a moment, and if there is a moment of hesitation, that means you feel something too. All I ask is that you not suppress that - at least for ten minutes - and try to dwell in it before you dismiss it. There isn't another soul on this fucking planet who's ever made me the person I am when I'm with you, and I would risk this friendship for the chance to take it to the next plateau. Because it's there between you and I. You can't deny that. And even if we never speak again after tonight, please know that I'm forever changed because of who you are and what you've meant to me, which - while I do appreciate it - I'd never need a painting of birds bought at a diner to remind me of.

Holden stares at Alyssa. She stares back. Then she gets out of the car.

HOLDEN

Was it something I said?

EXT ROADSIDE - NIGHT

Holden gets out of the car. It's raining pretty hard now. Alyssa's hitching up the road. Holden reaches her.

HOLDEN

What are you doing?

ALYSSA

Get back in the car and get out of here.

HOLDEN

You're going to hitch to New York?

ALYSSA

Yep.

HOLDEN

Aren't you at least going to comment?

ALYSSA

Here's my comment: fuck you.

HOLDEN

Why?

ALYSSA

That was so unfair. You know how unfair that was.

HOLDEN

It's unfair that I'm in love with you?

ALYSSA

No, it's unfortunate that you're in love with me. It's unfair that you felt the fucking need to unburden your soul about it. Do you remember for a fucking second who I am?

HOLDEN

So? People change.

ALYSSA

Oh, it's that simple? You fall in love with me and want a romantic relationship, nothing changes for you with the exception of feeling hunky-dorey all the time. But what about me? It's not that simple, is it? I can't just get into a relationship with you without throwing my whole fucking world into upheaval!

HOLDEN

But that's every relationship! There's always going to be a period of adjustment.

ALYSSA

Period of adjustment?!?

(hitting him)

THERE'S NO 'PERIOD OF ADJUSTMENT' HOLDEN! I'M FUCKING GAY! THAT'S WHO I AM! AND YOU ASSUME I CAN TURN ALL THAT AROUND JUST BECAUSE YOU'VE GOT A CRUSH?!?

HOLDEN

If this is a crush... then I don't know if I could take the real thing if it ever happens.

She looks at him, rain drenching the pair. She shakes her head ruefully.

ALYSSA

Go home, Holden.

She walks away. Holden stands there, at a loss. Then he turns and heads back to his car. As he reaches the door and turns to look back at her, Alyssa pounces on him, grabs his face and locks lips with him, big time. He drops his keys and embraces her.

And there they stand, by the side of the road, drenched. Kissing.

EXT STUDIO - DAY

Banky carries a bag in one arm and pulls out his keys with the other. He jams them into the lock, opening the door. He picks up the mail on the floor.

INT STUDIO - DAY

He closes the door behind him and shuffles to the kitchenette, passing by the blanket-covered, slumbering forms of Holden and Alyssa, who are out cold in each other's arms. The place looks a mess - like a couple of people were engaged in some tremendous fucking. Banky is oblivious. He sets the bag down on the

counter and pulls out a chocolate milk. He opens it, sticks a straw into the top, and begins sipping and sifting through the mail. He comes to mail that's Holden's and tosses it onto the couch, near Holden's head. He looks down at the sleeping couple, then back at the mail for a couple of beats. Then he freezes. He looks down again, and drops his jaw and his carton of choco. It hits the floor with a pop. Holden and Alyssa shoot straight up, eyes struggling to focus. They look at one another, then at the flabbergasted Banky. Banky blinks. Then he shuffles toward the door again and lets himself out.

ALYSSA

(off Holden's reaction)

I take it that's not good.

HOLDEN

(getting up)

Stay here.

(he kisses her and exits)

EXT STREET - DAY

Banky sits on a curb, staring into the distance. Holden saunters up and sits beside him. He follows Banky's gaze.

BANKY

Catholic school girls.

Across the street, the Catholic High School is letting out. Teenage girls clad in uniforms and tight sweaters smoke, frolic, wait for their bus.

BANKY

The uniform is what does it for me. I wish I'd have went with more Catholic school girls when I was a kid. As it stands, I have no "...and then she unzipped her jumper..." stories.

HOLDEN

You looked weirded out back there.

BANKY

That's my couch you were fucking on.

HOLDEN

Sorry.

BANKY

I wanted to watch some t.v. Hard to do when your best friend's wrapped around a naked rug-muncher on your couch.

HOLDEN

She had boxers on.

Banky shoots him a glare. He goes back to staring at the OC girls.

BANKY

This is all going to end badly.

HOLDEN

You don't know that.

BANKY

I know you. You're way too conservative for that girl. She's been around and seen things we've only read about in books.

HOLDEN

But we have read about them. So we're prepared.

BANKY

There's no 'we' here. You're going to have to go through this alone. And it's one thing to read about shit, and something different when you're forced to deal with it on a regular basis. When you guys are walking in the mall and both your heads turn at a really nice looking chick, it's going to eat you up inside. You'll spend most of your time wondering when the other shoe's going to drop. Because for you, this isn't about cool, weird sex stuff. It's about love.

HOLDEN

Maybe it is for her as well.

BANKY

Somehow I doubt it.

HOLDEN

Everyone's not out to get someone in life, Bank.

BANKY

Everybody has an agenda. Everyone.

HOLDEN

Yourself?

BANKY

My agenda is to watch your back.

HOLDEN

To what end?

BANKY

To insure that all this time we've spent together, building something, wasn't wasted.

HOLDEN

She's not going to ruin the comic.

BANKY

I wasn't talking about the comic.

(gets up)

I'm going to get a bagel. Clean off my fucking couch so I can watch t.v.

Banky exits. Holden shakes his head.

INT HOLDEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Holden and Alyssa lie in each other's arms, moonlight bathing them. She smokes.

HOLDEN

Why me? You know? Why now?

ALYSSA

Because you were giving me that look, and I got wet...

HOLDEN

You know what I'm talking about.

ALYSSA

Why not you?

HOLDEN

I'm a guy. You're attracted to girls.

ALYSSA

I see you've been taking notes. Historically, yes - that's true.

HOLDEN

Then why this?

ALYSSA

I've given that alot of thought, you know? I mean, now that I'm being ostracized by my friends, I've had alot of time to think about all of this. And what I've come up with is really simple: I came to this on my terms. I didn't just heed what I was taught, you know? Men and women should be together, it's the natural way - that kind of thing. I'm not with you because of what family, society, life tried to instill in me from day one. The way the world is - how seldom you meet that one person who gets you... it's so rare. My parents didn't really have it. There was no example set for me in the world of male/female relationships. And to cut oneself off from finding that person - the ideal - to immediately half your options by eliminating the possibility of finding that one person within your own gender... that just seemed stupid. So I didn't. And by leaving my options open, I was branded 'gay', which to me was no big deal - labels are labels, you know? They define what you do, not who you are, I guess. But then you come along. You - the one least likely; I mean, you were a guy.

HOLDEN

Still am.

ALYSSA

And while I was falling for you, I put a ceiling on that, because you were a guy. Until I remembered why I opened the door to women in the first place - to not limit the likelihood of finding that one person who'd compliment me so completely. And so here we are. I was thorough when I looked for you, and I feel justified lying in your arms - because I got here on my terms, and have no question that there was someplace I didn't look. And that makes all the difference.

HOLDEN

(beat)

Shit.

ALYSSA

What?

HOLDEN

Well, you took the luster out of it.

ALYSSA

What luster?

HOLDEN

(joking - in case you didn't get it)

Of how I brought you back from the other side. How all you needed was the right man to fuck you, and that was me.

ALYSSA

You're not the right man.

(kisses him)

You're just the one.

She snuggles into him and closes her eyes. Holden stares at the ceiling.

HOLDEN

Can I at least tell people that all you needed was some serious deep-dicking?

She hits him with her pillow.

THE BIG OL' FALLING-IN-LOVE MONTAGE BEGINS

- 1) In Holden's Apartment - Alyssa waves in various directions, shaking her head accordingly. Then she puts up her hands to stop. Cut to Holden, hanging the picture Alyssa gave him. It hangs at a severely crooked angle. He looks back to her and shakes his head 'no'.
- 2) Holden and Alyssa try to play a video game. Banky plays as well. Holden instructs her in the ways of NHL '96 (turning her paddle right-side-up, pointing

at things on the screen). She presses the reset button, over and over. Banky gives Holden a 'What the fuck?' look. Alyssa sticks her tongue at him.

- 3) At the Video Store - Holden picks up a Disney cartoon off the shelf. He goes to show it to Alyssa, who's reading the back of 'Anything But Dick', an all-chick porno. An old WOMAN stares at her. Holden nods to the old Woman and takes the tape out of Alyssa's hands, putting it back on the shelf. He ushers her away. The old Woman waits until they're gone and then picks up the tape herself.
- 4) Holden carries Alyssa on his shoulders through the park, her crotch against the back of his neck. He's talking. She taps him and he stops and looks up. She begins to maneuver around so her crotch is in his face. He pulls her off and puts her down. She's laughing. He's flushed with embarrassment. The same Old Woman from the Video store passes by with her husband. Holden shrugs.
- 5) In Holden's Apartment again - Alyssa again with the waving, then putting up her hands to stop. Cut to Holden again, this time with the painting hung completely upside down. He looks at it, then offers her a bewildered gaze.
- 6) In the Office - Banky comes to his drawing table. There are penciled pages on it with a note that says "Hanging out with Alyssa today. Holden". Banky crumples it up and throws it across the room.
- 7) In Holden's bathroom - Holden shaves. Alyssa shuffles in, wearing a tank-top, all sleepy-eyed. She kisses his shoulder and then stretches - her arms above her head - revealing some hairy fucking arm pits. Holden freezes. Alyssa yawns. He slowly offers her his razor.
- 8) In Holden's Apartment - Alyssa waves this way, then that way, then puts up her hands frantically to stop. She settles back against the wall, a satisfied smile crawling across her face, and closes her eyes. We pull back to reveal Holden on his knees in front of her, eating her out (no, we don't see anything!).

INT OFFICE - DAY

Holden draws. A book is thrown in front of him. He looks up.

Banky stands there.

BANKY

Check out page forty eight.

Holden looks down at the book. It's the Nineteen Eighty Eight yearbook from Middletown North. He shakes his head at Banky and flips it open.

On the page is Alyssa's Senior year photo. Under her name is another name in quotes that says 'Pitch and Putt'.

HOLDEN

(looking up)

So?

BANKY

Did you see the nickname?

HOLDEN

'Pitch and Putt'.

BANKY

And...?

HOLDEN

And... she had a weird nick-name. What's your point?

BANKY

Do you know why it's 'Pitch and Putt'?

HOLDEN

I suppose you do.

BANKY

I do.

(takes a seat)

It's a reference to something completely salacious. You remember Cohee Lundin? Left Hudson and went to North our senior year?

HOLDEN

Yeah.

BANKY

Well, I ran into him at Food City the other day, and we got to talking, and I mentioned that you were dating Alyssa, and he said...

CUT TO COHEE LUNDIN, in the PARKING LOT of FOOD CITY, addressing the camera.

COHEE

Alyssa Jones? Shit, I know Alyssa Jones. I mean, I know Alyssa Jones, you know what I'm saying? Me, Shannen Hamilton and Rick Derris used to hang out with her for awhile, right? Fucking just hanging around her house after school, 'cuz her parents were like never home, and shit. And one day, Rick just whips it out, and starts rubbing it on her leg and shit; chasing her around the living room - we were all dying. But you know what the crazy bitch did? She fucking drops to her knees, and just starts sucking him off right in front of us! Like we weren't even there, man! We almost died! But that's not the fucked up part - the fucked up part was Rick, man - right in the middle of it, he turns to me and Hamilton and says "Two more holes." Just like that - "Two more holes." So Hamilton pulls her pants down and she's all wet and shit, and he just starts fucking her, man! And she don't even care! So I'm like "Fuck this - I ain't missing out on this shit!" And I spit in my hand, get my dick all wet, and just pop it in her ass, yo! All three of us are fucking

this crazy bitch, and she's just loving it, all moaning and shit! The bitch had every hole going! It was fucked up! So Rick started calling her 'Pitch and Putt' - cuz that day, she had more holes going than a fucking golf course!

BACK IN THE OFFICE - Holden stares at Banky.

HOLDEN

He's full of shit.

BANKY

Cohee's alot of things, but an exagerator he's not. The dude's Catholic

HOLDEN

What is your fucking problem, anyway? Even if it's true, what do you give a shit if she was a little free in high school?

BANKY

'A little free'? A handjob in the backseat of a car is 'a little free'; a chick on her hands and knees getting filled out like an application ain't 'a little free'!

HOLDEN

Fucking semantics! I'm dating her, not you!

BANKY

I'm getting your back, you asshole! People don't forget shit like 'Pitch and Putt', and if it got out that she's fucking queer as well, how the fuck do you think it's going to make you look?

HOLDEN

I give a shit what people think.

BANKY

Alright, forget about that; what if she's carrying a disease? And not because she's gay - don't jump all over my dick about that. But that shit was just one story, alright? What if there's more?

HOLDEN

(grabs his coat)

You're such a fucking asshole.

BANKY

What? Oh, it's not possible that she's all crudded up? Cohee I can vouch for as clean - the dude never got laid in high school. But Hamilton and Derris are arch fucking bush-men! Name me one chick in our senior class that Rick Derris *didn't* nail, for Christ's sake!

HOLDEN

Would you let this go?!

BANKY

I'm telling you, the bitch is a fucking germ farm! That monkey in 'Outbreak' probably shakes his head at her!

Holden grabs Banky and throws him against the wall.

HOLDEN

Give it a rest! Do you hear me?! In the future, if you even so much as mention that Alyssa looks a little peaked, I'll put your fucking teeth down your throat.

He releases Banky. Banky brushes himself off.

BANKY

Maybe I'll put *your* fucking teeth down *your* throat.

HOLDEN

(walking out)
Not bloody likely.

Banky runs to the open door.

BANKY

(calling after him)
I've been working out, you know!
(no response)
You better be ready to make that M-TV deal!

The downstairs door slams. Banky makes a muscle, then feels it.

INT TOWER RECORDS - DAY

Holden and Hooper peruse laser discs.

HOOPER

Where's that bitch partner of your's been?

HOLDEN

Sulking. He's having a real problem with this Alyssa thing.

HOOPER

I think it's more like Banky's having a problem with all things not hetero right about now. And I'm just another paradigm of said aberration.

HOLDEN

Banky does not hate gays, you know that.

HOOPER

But I do think he is a bit homophobic. And this latest episode between you and Ms. Thing has tapped into that. In his warped perception, he lost you to the dark side - which is she.

HOLDEN

You make it sound like me and him were dating.

HOOPER

Don't kid yourself - that boy loves you in a way that he's not ready to deal with.

HOLDEN

(beat)

He's been digging up dirt on Alyssa.

HOOPER

And just what has Mister Angela Lansbury uncovered about your lady fair?

HOLDEN

Alyssa's oh-so hetero past.

HOOPER

Really? Well then he's barking up the wrong tree if he wants to split you up, isn't he? He's not going to make you see the error of your ways by pointing out how truly gay she's not.

(holds up a disc)

This one?

HOLDEN

Have it.

(beat)

Actually, it's kind of gotten to me.

HOOPER

How so?

HOLDEN

It is a pretty wretched past.

HOOPER

Do tell.

HOLDEN

Sex with multiple partners.

Hooper lets out a faux-shock shriek.

HOLDEN

At the same time.

Again, even louder, hands slapped against his cheeks.

HOLDEN

Thanks for being so comforting.

HOOPER

So what do you care?

HOLDEN

Well that's the thing, isn't it? I shouldn't... but it gets to me.

HOOPER

You know that shit you hear about dykes being all monogamous?

(Holden nods)

Don't believe it. They move from affair to affair like society's elite. And it's not like they're all conservative either. I've heard tell of foursomes, fivesomes, daisy-chains. Kind of gal Alyssa is, you don't think she's been in the middle of an all-girl group-grope?

HOLDEN

That doesn't bother me. But the thought of her and a bunch of guys... all holes going... Uh!

HOOPER

Oh Holden, I beg you - please don't drop fifty stories in my opinion of you by falling prey to that latest of trendy beasts.

HOLDEN

Which is?

HOOPER

Lesbian chic. It's oh-so acceptable to be a gay girl nowadays. People think it's cute, because they've got this fool picture in their heads about lipstick lesbians - like they all resemble Alyssa - while most of them look more like you.

HOLDEN

Do I detect a little inter-subculture cattiness?

HOOPER

Gay or straight - ugly's still ugly. And most of those boys are scarey.

HOLDEN

I thought you fags were all supposed to be super-supportive of one another.

HOOPER

Screw that 'all for one' shit. I gotta deal with being the minority in the minority of the minority, and nobody's supporting my ass? While the whole of society is fawning over girls-on-girls, here I sit - a reviled gay man. And to top that off, I'm a gay black man - notoriously the most swishy of the bunch.

HOLDEN

Three strikes.

HOOPER

Hey, hey! There's a line.

A young BLACK KID approaches Hooper, holding a comic book.

KID

Are you Hooper X?

HOOPER

(in militant mode)

A-salaam Alaikum, little brother.

KID

Could you sign my comic?

HOOPER

(signing comic; nods to Holden)

See that guy there? He's the devil, you understand?
Never take your eye off the Man. Our people took
their eyes off him one time, and he had us in chains
in two shakes of his snake's tail.

The Kid offers Holden an angry look. Hooper gives him back his comic.

HOOPER

Fight the power, little 'G'.

KID

Word is bond.

The Kid leaves. Hooper slips back into his real voice.

HOOPER

Look at what I have to resort to for professional respect. What is it about gay men that terrifies the rest of the world?

(shakes his head)

As for this Alyssa's past hang-up, perhaps you should stop dwelling on it and just enjoy the relationship. Or what is it you straight boys call it - your 'conquest'?

HOLDEN

It's not like that.

HOOPER

Maybe it is. Maybe you've thought about everything up to winning her hand, but not what to do with it once it was won.

(spotting something OC)

Oooh! 'Myra Breckinridge'!

Hooper trots off. Holden glances at the disc in his hands.

Pictured on it are two gorgeous chicks, barely clad, making out. The title is 'Men Suck... and so do Girls - All XXX Action.'

INT HOCKEY RINK - NIGHT

On the ice, two teams clash, chasing the puck up and back, checking galore.

In the bleachers, amidst a slew of fans, Alyssa watches the game with a large degree of enjoyment. Sitting beside her, Holden doesn't seem to share her enthusiasm.

ALYSSA

Since most of these people are rooting for the home team, I'm going to cheer for the visitors. I've always loved visitors - especially the ones that make coffee for you in the morning before they go.

(smiles at Holden; no response)

That was a joke. A little wacky wordplay?

HOLDEN

What do you mean, 'visitors'?

ALYSSA

Was I being too obscure? The kind that - until recently - had no dicks and would spend the night.

HOLDEN

So that was until recently?

ALYSSA

Uh, yeah.

(shouting; to ice)

Foul! Foul! He was traveling or something!

HOLDEN

So nobody but me has stayed the night at your place since we got together?

ALYSSA

(beat)

Something on your mind, Holden?

HOLDEN

No, I was just wondering.

ALYSSA

If I've been 'faithful' or something?

HOLDEN

Look, I was just asking.

ALYSSA

(touches his face)

Oh, sweetie. I only have eyes for you.

(to ice)

CALL THAT FUCKING SHIT, REF!! THE GUY ON THE SKATES TOTALLY SHOVED ONE OF MY GUYS!!

(to Holden)

I told you I was great at sporting events. Your girlfriend could be such a hardcore fan if she took a serious

interest. You hear me harassing the ref? Imagine what a bitch I could be if I knew what was going on?

ON THE ICE - Things heat up between two opposing PLAYERS. One snatches the puck away from the other and skates off. The other Player gives chase.

Alyssa's very into the game. Holden shakes his head.

HOLDEN

That'd make Banky half right.

ALYSSA

About what?

HOLDEN

He said all the girls from North were bitches and sluts.

ALYSSA

Really. I'm sorry - you two left high school behind how many years ago?

(grabs his face and kisses his cheek)

Can I put some of my books in your locker?

(goes back to watching game)

HOLDEN

(under his breath)

How about your yearbook.

ON THE ICE - The Player giving chase slashes the Player with the puck.

Alyssa jumps to her feet.

ALYSSA

(to ice)

IF YOU DON'T START USING THAT WHISTLE I'M GONNA JAM IT STRAIGHT UP YOUR ASS!!

(to guy next to her)

Right?

HOLDEN

What's with 'Pitch-and-Putt'?

ALYSSA

(sitting back down)

'Pitch-and-Putt'?

HOLDEN

Yeah. In your senior yearbook, your nickname was 'Pitch-and-Putt'. What is that?

ALYSSA

It was? Shit, damned if I can remember. I'd look it up, but I threw all that shit out years ago.

(beat)

Where'd you see a North yearbook?

HOLDEN

Do you know Rick Derris?

ON THE ICE - The Players skid into the corner where Player One checks Player Two into the boards, hard. Player Two scrambles to his feet and throws down his gloves.

The crowd around Alyssa and Holden go wild.

ALYSSA

Rick? Sure. We used to hang out in highschool.
(to ice)

PUNCH HIM IN THE FUCKING NECK, NUMBER TWELVE!!

HOLDEN

Did you go out with him or something?

ALYSSA

(eyes on the ice)
Date Rick Derris? No. We just hung out alot.

HOLDEN

Just... you and him?

ALYSSA

No, there were a few of us. Me, Rick... um... what was that guy's name...

HOLDEN

Cohee?

ALYSSA

Yeah! Cohee Lundin. God, I haven't thought about that name in years. Those two, and Shannen Hamilton.

ON THE ICE - The Players square off. Player Two pulls Player One's helmet off and punches him in the face.

Holden looks as if he'd like to do the same to his companion. She's riveted to the ice.

ALYSSA

I remember those guys used to come over almost every day after school. They'd bug my sisters or look through my father's closet, trying to find some porno tapes or something. And our fridge. Jesus, those guys really took advantage of my parents never being home.

ON THE ICE - Player Two yanks at Player One's jersey and gut punches him.

Alyssa seems oblivious to Holden's anger, so enthralled with the action is she.

ALYSSA

(starts laughing)

I remember this one day... Rick pulled out his dick and chased me around the house with it! Right in front of Shannen and Cohee! I couldn't believe it! Guys are weird - I thought the whole size hang-up made you all terrified to

show your dicks to each other?

ON THE ICE - Player One staggers a bit, then quickly rights his jersey and lunges at Player Two, landing a barage of his own punches. Blood sprays across the ice.

Holden's face is reeeeeaaaaally sour looking. Alyssa's still in the game.

HOLDEN

He pulled his dick out? Really? What'd you do?

ALYSSA

(looks him dead in the eye)

I blew him while his two friends fucked me.

ON THE ICE - Player One delivers the kill shot, slamming his fist into Player Two's nose. The blood shoots out like a geyser, and Two goes down hard.

Holden stares at Alyssa, flabbergasted. The crowd around them stares not at the fight on the ice, but the fight in their midst, shocked. Alyssa fumes.

HOLDEN

Excuse me?!?!

ALYSSA

That's what you wanted to hear, isn't it? Isn't that what this little cross-examination of your's is about? Well try not to be so obvious about it next time; there are subtler means of badgering a witness!

(to bystander)

Am I right?

BYSTANDER

(to Holden)

Jeez, even I knew what you was getting at.

HOLDEN

(to Alyssa)

You didn't... really...?

ALYSSA

Yes, Holden - I did! I took on three guys! In fact, everything you've heard or dug up on me from around the tri-town area's probably way-tame compared to the stuff I did when I moved away.

(grabbing her stuff)

But if you wanted some background information on me, all you had to do was ask - I'd have gladly volunteered it. You didn't have to play Hercules fucking Poirot.

She gets up and storms away. Holden chases after her. The Bystander watches.

BYSTANDER

(to companion)

I knew these seats were gonna be good.

INT RINK LOBBY - NIGHT

Alyssa marches quickly, pulling on her coat. Holden catches up to her. We track with them through the crowd and out into the parking lot.

HOLDEN

How could you do such a thing?!

ALYSSA

Happily! And I'm not making apologies for it now - not to you or anyone! You fucking people make me laugh! Rick Derris was the biggest slut I ever met, and nobody ever gave him shit about it! Well I caught on to the double standard, way-early in life, found it unfair, and saw no reason why I should conduct myself in a manner that betrayed my curiosities and desires just so that I wouldn't be called a slut or something equally juvenile! Because I knew I wasn't sticking around the tri-town area my whole life, and wherever I wound up, people wouldn't point at me and say crap like "Holy shit - it's Pitch-and-Putt! She's the one that got stuffed like a turkey!"

HOLDEN

But all those guys...

ALYSSA

What about them?

HOLDEN

How am I supposed to feel about that?

ALYSSA

How are you supposed to feel about it? Feel whatever the fuck you want about it. The only thing that matters is how you feel now.

HOLDEN

I don't know how I feel now.

ALYSSA

Why? Because I had some sex with a few different guys?

HOLDEN

Some sex?

ALYSSA

Yes, Holden - that's all it was: some sex. Just like you've had some sex - alot of sex, probably - from high school, on. And am I right in assuming that you hit the double digits?

HOLDEN

Yeah, but...

ALYSSA

Fine, so have I. So what's the big deal?

HOLDEN

There's a world of fucking difference between typical high school sex and three guys at once! They fucking used you!

ALYSSA

I *used* them! You don't think I would've let it happen if I hadn't wanted it to, do you?! I wanted to experiment, I wanted to taste it all, which was an instinct that accompanied me all through life - through dozens of guys and girls - until we - that's you and I - had sex that night. Can't you take some fucking comfort in that? We fucked, and I decided - then and there - that I was done experimenting; that I'd found it - that thing that wasn't in Rick Derris' pants, or in Kim's crotch, or anywhere else on the fucking planet! I found you, you asshole! And my advice to you is to let this shit go; it was all a long time ago! Maybe you knew your track was from point 'a' to 'b', but I didn't know how to get to 'b' from 'a', because I wasn't given a fucking map at birth and shown the way! I found it myself. And how dare you try to lay a guilt trip on me about it - in a fucking public place, no less! Who the fuck do you think you are, you morality-slinging prick? You mean to tell me that - while you have zero problem with me sleeping with half the women in New York City - you have some sort of half-assed, mealy-mouthed objection to pubescent antics, that took place almost ten years ago? What the fuck is your problem?!?

Holden's eyes are downcast. Alyssa waits for a response.

HOLDEN

I want us to be something that we can't.

ALYSSA

And what's that?

HOLDEN

(beat)

A normal couple.

Holden skulks off. Alyssa stares after him, and then starts kicking and punching a car beside her, finally slumping to the ground. She cries.

INT STUDIO - DUSK

Holden sits on the couch, alone in the dark. The door opens and Banky enters. He stands there, sizing up Holden's mood.

BANKY

The girl?

Holden nods. Banky nods back. He stands there for a beat. Then he sits beside

Holden. He opens his arms. Holden shifts into his friend's embrace and begins crying on his shoulder. Banky pats his back. Pull back on a man in pain and the comfort of a friend.

INT DINER - NIGHT

Holden sits alone at a booth. He stirs his iced tea.

OC VOICE

Yo, look at this morose mother fucker here...

Holden looks up. JAY and SILENT BOB stand above him.

JAY

Smells like somebody shit in his cereal.

Holden offers a half-smile. The pair slide into the booth.

HOLDEN

What took you so long?

JAY

We were at the mall. You bring the salad?

Holden pulls an envelope out of his jacket and tosses it to Jay. Jay opens it and pulls out a thick wad of bills.

JAY

Man, this likeness rights shit is more profitable than selling smoke.

HOLDEN

How'd a dirt merchant like you ever learn about likeness rights?

JAY

(hands envelope to Silent Bob)

We deal to alot of lawyers. Those mother fuckers get high constantly. Speaking of which...

(pulls out a dime bag)

Little signing bonus and shit?

HOLDEN

I'll pass. Did you see the latest issue?

JAY

Yeah. When you gonna get some pussy in that book, man? Throw some super-villain in with big fucking tits that shoot milk or something, and I just drink her dry, bust some moves on her...

(demonstrates)

...and then she has to fuck me.

(Silent Bob hits him)

Fuck us.

HOLDEN

I'll see what I can do.

A WAITRESS joins them.

WAITRESS

What can I get you.

HOLDEN

Nothing, thanks.

JAY

Yo Flo. - tell Mel to whip me up a toasted bagel and cream cheese.

(to Silent Bob)

You want one too?

(Silent Bob nods)

Make that two. And kiss my grits. Noonch.

(the Waitress leaves; to Holden)

D'jever watch 'Alice'? That show's good as hell.

(starts rolling)

So why the long face, Horse? Banky on the rag?

HOLDEN

When is he not? No - I'm just having some girl trouble.

JAY

Bitch pressing charges? I get that alot.

HOLDEN

No. I'm just at a point where I don't know what to do.

JAY

Kick her to the curb. Girls get to be too much trouble, there's always the 'band of the hand'.

HOLDEN

Can't do it, g. I'm in love.

JAY

Ah, there ain't no such thing. You gotta boil it all down to the essentials. It's like Cube says - life ain't nothing but bitches and money.

HOLDEN

Oh I forgot - you two are from the 'hood.

JAY

Who is this girl?

HOLDEN

I don't think you know her.

JAY

Come on man - I'm people who know people.

HOLDEN

You sound like Barbra Streisand.

JAY

That's 'cause I got this tubby bitch playing her greatest hits tape in my ear all the time. You should see him: she starts singing 'You Don't Bring Me Flowers', this faggot starts crying like a little girl with a skinned knee and shit. It's embarrassing. I got the only muscle in the world with a weakness for ballads.

(to Silent Bob)

You big fucking softie.

(to Holden)

So what's this skirt's name?

HOLDEN

I'm telling you, you don't know her.

JAY

I ain't playing. Tell me her name, Mysterio.

HOLDEN

Alyssa Jones.

JAY

Pitch-and-Putt?

Holden rubs his eyes.

JAY

You're dating Pitch-and-Putt? I thought she was all gay and shit?

HOLDEN

She is. Or was. I don't know.

The Waitress returns with the order.

JAY

And you go out with her? Shit, man - you're a lucky dog. She bring other chicks to bed with you, get a little of that filet o'fish sammich going on?

The Waitress stares wide-eyed and offended at Jay.

JAY

(off Waitress' look)

What? Do something!

(Waitress leaves; to Holden)

So - four tits, or what?

HOLDEN

It's not like that.

JAY

Well what's it like then?

HOLDEN

Right now?
(beat)
I don't know. I love her. But she has a past.

JAY

I'll say. Stuffin' three guys, eating chicks out. Yo -
I heard one time, she had this dog...

HOLDEN

Eat your fucking bagel already!

JAY

(to Silent Bob)
Look at this touchy mother fucker right here.
(to Holden)
So, if you're all in love with her, what's the problem?

HOLDEN

The problem is shit like that. All that experience...
What am I supposed to think?

JAY

You think good; because now she'll be all true blue
and shit. The girl's tasted life, yo. Now she's settlin'
for your boring, funny-book-makin' ass.

HOLDEN

Settling. That's comforting, Jay. Thanks.

JAY

That's what I'm here for.

HOLDEN

I'm just having a problem with all of it. I can't get
it out of my head, these visuals of her doing all this
shit. And I don't know why I can't let it go. Because
I'm crazy about her, you know? I look at this girl,
I see the future. I see kids. I see grand-kids.

JAY

You're scaring me.

HOLDEN

I'm scaring myself. Because I think so much of her,
and then I can't get away from shit like 'Pitch-and-
Putt'.

(shakes his head)

I don't know what I'm doing.

Holden looks out the window. Jay continues to roll his joint. There's silence. Then...

BOB

You're chasing Amy.

Holden's head snaps forward. He stares, wide-eyed at Silent Bob.

HOLDEN

What...what did you say?

BOB

You're chasing Amy.

Holden stares, shocked. He looks to Jay, who's still rolling his joint.

JAY

What do you look so shocked for? He does this all the time. Fat bastard thinks just because he never says anything, that it'll have some huge impact when he does open his fucking mouth.

BOB

Why don't you shut up? Jesus! Always yap, yap, yapping all the time. Give me a fucking headache.
(to Holden)

I went through something like what you're going through. Years ago. Same kind of thing with a girl named Amy.

JAY

When?

BOB

A couple of years ago.

JAY

What'd she 'live in Canada' or something? Why don't I remember this?

BOB

What you don't know about me I can just about squeeze into the Grand fucking Canyon. Did you know I always wanted to be a dancer in Vegas?

Jay and Holden look at him. Silent Bob busts a move with his hands.

BOB

Hunhh? Bet you didn't know that?

JAY

Just tell your fucking story so we can get out of here and smoke this.

BOB

(to Holden)

So I was dating Amy, and one day I find out she used to date this guy, right? Lived with him and shit for awhile. And this guy - who she loved - he used to bring other people to bed with them all the time, which blew my mind. I'm not used to that sort of thing, right? I was raised Catholic.

JAY

Saint Shithead.

Silent Bob backhands him. Jay raises his fist as if to strike.

BOB

Do something.

(to Holden)

So I'm weirded out about the whole thing, and the only way I can deal with it is to condemn it, right? Just blast her, and him, and the whole lifestyle - I mean, I'm out for blood. I want to hurt her - because I don't know how to deal with what I'm feeling. I tell her that it's all demoralizing, and she tells me it's not - that it was that time, in that place, and that was right - then. And I tell her to renounce it. I tell her to condemn it, to apologize for it. And she won't. So I tell her it's over, and I walk.

JAY

Fucking a.

BOB

No, idiot. It was a mistake. I hurt her, I walked away from her, because I didn't know how to deal with it. And what I figured out was that I wasn't disappointed in her, but more in myself. At that moment, I felt small - like I'd lacked experience. Like I'd never be on her level or something. And what I didn't get was that she didn't care. She wasn't looking for that guy anymore. She was looking for me. And regardless of how circuitous a route it was for her or how direct a route it was for me, we were both at the same point at that time, so it really didn't matter. But by the time I realized this, it was too late. She'd moved on, and all I had to show for it was some foolish pride, which then gave way to abject self-loathing and regret. She was the girl, I know that now. But I pushed her away...

Everyone's silent. Silent Bob lights a cigarette.

BOB

So I've spent every day since then chasing Amy...

(takes a drag from his smoke)

So to speak.

They sit there for a beat. Jay pockets the rest of his dime-bag.

JAY

Enough of this fucking melodrama. My advice - forget her, dude. There's one woman in the world. One woman, with many faces.

(to Silent Bob)

Get up, bitch.

(to Holden)

We gotta book. We're catching a bus to Chi-town.

HOLDEN

What's there?

JAY

Business, yo. How many more of those phat envelopes do we got coming to us?

HOLDEN

I don't know. I don't know if the book's going to be around much longer.

JAY

Yeah? Good. I'll be glad as shit when it's gone.

HOLDEN

Are you kidding me? There's millions of people out there that'd love to see themselves in a comic book.

JAY

I know. I spend every fucking waking hour with one of them. As for me - don't get me wrong, I dig the way you draw us and shit. But it ain't like us at all - all slap-sticky and shit - running around like dicks, saying... What's that shit you got me saying?

HOLDEN

Snootchie-bootchies.

JAY

'Snootchie-bootchies'. Who talks like that? That's baby-talk.

(slaps his hand)

It's a big world, g - but we're bound to run into you again. Until then - keep your unit on you.

HOLDEN

I'll try.

BOB

Do, or do not - there is no try.

JAY

(slaps him)

Knock it off! Get your fat ass moving - we got a bus to catch.

(under his breath)

Jedi-bitch.

Exit Jay and Silent Bob. Holden remains in the booth, thinking.

MONTAGE - AN UNCOMFORTABLE SILENCE

- 1) Holden sits at his drawing table, tapping his pencil up and down.
- 2) Alyssa sits in a club, getting talked at by some women. She's not present in the conversation.
- 3) Banky meets with Sloss at a restaurant. Sloss shakes the contracts at him, and Banky makes the "I know, I know," face.
- 4) Holden stares at the picture Alyssa gave him.
- 5) Alyssa with her ear to the phone. She hangs up, angrily.
- 6) Holden sits in the park that he and Alyssa walked through. He's staring at Alyssa's yearbook picture. He closes the book and sighs. Then, an idea hits him. He jumps up and dashes out of the park.

INT STUDIO - NIGHT

Banky and Alyssa sit on the couch. Holden paces in front of them.

HOLDEN

I know you're wondering why I asked you both here tonight, at the same time, knowing that we have shit to settle between us, separately.

BANKY

I just figured you wanted to kill two birds with one stone by telling her to fuck off with me here so you didn't have to go through the story again later on.

ALYSSA

Fuck you.

BANKY

Not even if you let me videotape it.

HOLDEN

Enough!

(they both look at him)

I've been going through things, over and over. And I dissected it all, and looked at it a thousand different ways. Banky - there's friction between us for the first time in our lives. You hate me dating Alyssa, and you want me to sign off on this M-TV thing.

BANKY

How perceptive.

HOLDEN

Alyssa - you and I hit a wall, because I don't know how to deal with... your past, I guess.

BANKY

That's a nice way of putting it. I'd have said the whole triple-fuck thing...

HOLDEN

Shut up.

(right in his face)

I'm only going to say it once.

(back to pacing)

Now - I know I'm to blame one way or the other on both accounts. For you, Alyssa - it's my fault because I feel inadequate. Because you've had so much experience, had such a big life; and my life's been pretty small in comparison.

ALYSSA

That doesn't matter to me...

HOLDEN

Please. I have to get through this.

(beat)

And with you, Banky - I know why you're having such a hard time with Alyssa, and it's something that's been obvious forever, but I guess I just didn't acknowledge it.

(takes a deep breath)

You're in love with me.

BANKY

(makes a face; beat)

What?

HOLDEN

You're attracted to me. Just as in a way, I'm attracted to you. I mean, it makes sense - we've been together so long, we have so much in common...

BANKY

(getting up)

Well, I've got to get home and catch the last few minutes of 'Babylon 5', so I'll be...

Holden grabs him, kisses him full on the lips, and pushes him back onto the couch. Alyssa reacts. Banky - wide-eyed and speechless - looks away.

HOLDEN

It's something you're going to have to deal with, Bank. You may very well be gay, which explains your homophobia and why you're so jealous of Alyssa, and your sense of humor as well.

BANKY

Just 'cause a guy's got a prediliction toward dick jokes...

HOLDEN

Bank. Stop. Face it. You'll feel much better.

He grabs a chair from the side of the room.

HOLDEN

Now - at this point, you may be asking yourself the question that I've been going over and over in my head for the last few days: what does one have to do with the other.

Alyssa's face drops. She subtly shakes her head.

ALYSSA

(under her breath)

Don't

HOLDEN

And when I did some serious soul-searching, it came at me from out of nowhere, and suddenly it all made sense - a calm came over me. I know what we have to do. And then you - Bank, you - Alyssa, and I - all of us... can finally be... alright.

ALYSSA

(again, under her breath)

Please don't say it.

HOLDEN

(sits in the chair; takes a long beat)

We've all got to have sex together.

The room is silent. Holden lights a cigarette. Banky's eyes nearly bug. Alyssa's head drops.

HOLDEN

Don't you see? That would take care of everything. Alyssa - I wouldn't feel inadequate or too conservative anymore. I'll have done something on par with all the experience you've had. And it'll be with you, which'll make it that much more powerful. And Banky - you can take that leap which everyone in the world but you can see has to be taken. And it'll be okay, because it'll be with me - your best friend for years. We've been everything to each other but intimates. And now, we'll have been through that together too. And it won't have to be a total leap for you, because a woman will be involved. And when it's over, all that aggression you feel toward Alyssa will be gone. Because you'll have shared in something beautiful with the woman I love. It'll be cathartic. A true communion. We have to do this. For me, for both of you... for all of our sakes. This will keep us together.

(beat)

What do you say?

Banky stares forward, wide-eyed. He leans back into the couch and lets out a huge sigh. Then shrugs.

BANKY

Sure.

Holden smiles at his friend. Then he looks at Alyssa.

HOLDEN

Alyssa. You know I need this. You know it will help.

Alyssa looks at him, sadly.

ALYSSA

No.

Holden reacts, shocked. Banky lets out a sigh of relief.

HOLDEN

No? I... I thought you'd be into this.

ALYSSA

You did? What does that say about me?

HOLDEN

But you've... you've done... stuff... like this. This should be no big deal for you.

ALYSSA

You don't want this.

(lights her cigarette)

You really don't want this. Trust me.

HOLDEN

I need this. This has to happen. Why can't you see that? And how can you not? What does that say about me? You can take it from three guys whose names you can barely remember, but I ask you to share an experience like it - where it's not about you being defiled, where it's about intimacy - and you say no?

ALYSSA

(inhales from her cigarette; takes a beat)

I can't.

Holden moves to her side of the couch.

HOLDEN

You can. I'll be there. And when it's over, we'll be the strongest we've ever been because we got through some nasty shit together. And then there'll be nothing we can't accomplish.

A tear rolls down her cheek. She looks at him, sadly, and touches his face.

ALYSSA

Oh Holden.

(trying to compose herself)

That time is over for me. I've been there. I've done it. And I didn't find what I was looking for in any of it. I found that in you - in us. Doing this won't help you forget about the things you're hung up on. It'll create more.

HOLDEN

No it won't. I thought about all of that.

ALYSSA

No, it will. Maybe you'll see me differently from then on - maybe you'll despise me for going along with it, once you're in the moment. Maybe I'll make a noise or a breath with Banky, and then you'll resent him, and become suspicious of us. Or you'll alienate him because of it, and then grow to blame and hate me for the deterioration of your friendship. Or maybe - I sincerely doubt it, but maybe - I'll see something in Banky that I never saw before, and fall in love with him and leave you. I've been down roads like this before; many times. I know you feel doing this will broaden your horizons and give you experience. But I've had those experiences on my own. I can't accompany you on your's. I'm past that now.

(touches his face; starts to cry)

Or maybe I just love you too much. And I feel hurt and let down that you'd want to share me with anyone. Because I never wanted to share you.

(holds it in; gets up)

Regardless. I can't be a part of this.

(beat)

Or you. Not anymore.

(hugs him)

I love you. I always will. Know that.

She releases him, then slaps him.

ALYSSA

But I'm not your fucking whore.

Alyssa storms away, stopping briefly to look Banky up and down.

ALYSSA

He's your's again.

She walks out of the studio. The door closes behind her.

Banky and Holden stand there, silently. Cut to black.

INT COMIC BOOK SHOW - DAY

It's ONE YEAR later. We're at another show, not unlike the one from the opening.

A copy of 'Bluntman and Chronic' enters the frame. The cover reads 'The Death of Chronic', complete with a corresponding drawing.

BANKY V.O.

Blast from the past.

Banky sits at his own signing table. Behind him hangs a banner that reads 'BANKY EDWARDS - CREATOR OF FORESKINS, DISEASE, AND DECAY'. A small line is formed in front of him. He talks with a FAN.

FAN

Do you know how much it's going for these days? One ten. You signing it will push that up even higher.

BANKY

If you sell it, I want a kick-back.
(starts signing)

FAN

I don't know if this is true, but I heard once that there was supposed to be an animated series of Bluntman and Chronic.

BANKY

There was going to be.

FAN

What happened?

BANKY

(off comic)
You're looking at it. No Chronic - no cartoon.

FAN

That sucks man. That would've been awesome.

BANKY

Tell me about it.

FAN

Is that what happened to you and Holden McNeil?
You got into a fight over the rights or something?

BANKY

It was a little more involved than that.

FAN

Whatever happened to him?

BANKY

He quit the biz, I guess.

FAN

You guys don't talk anymore?

BANKY

(looks OC)
No. Not really.

Banky locks eyes with someone OC. His expression softens.

Holden leans against a wall on the far side of the room. He smiles at Banky.

Banky smiles back, and sort of nods.

Holden holds up a copy of Banky's new solo comic. He points to it and gives a thumbs up.

OC FAN
Probably shouldn't have killed off Chronic.

Banky smiles to OC.

BANKY
Guess not. Some doors just shouldn't be opened.

Holden waves to Banky slightly, then exits the room.

OC FAN
Well, keep up the good work, man. Love them dick jokes. Love 'em. See ya.

The Fan leaves, but Banky is looking after the OC Holden instead.

BANKY
Yeah. Bye.
(shakes it off)
Okay. Who's next?

ALYSSA sits at a separate signing table, with a line in front of her. Beside her sits a WOMAN. She dashes off signatures in the copies of her comic.

ALYSSA
(to OC departing fan)
Thanks for reading it. Bye.

The Woman stands and rubs her shoulders.

WOMAN
I'm going to get a soda. You want anything?

ALYSSA
No thanks, babe. I'm fine.

They kiss, and the Woman heads off. Alyss starts rummaging through her bag.

ALYSSA
(not looking up; jotting)
Okay. Next.

A comic book drops on the table in front of her. She glances at it quickly, then does a double-take.

It's a comic book call 'Chasing Amy'.

She leafs through it, not looking up.

ALYSSA

Um... You might have made a mistake. This isn't one of mine.

OC HOLDEN

It's mine.

Alyssa looks up sharply.

Holden stands before her, smiling.

HOLDEN

I saved you one.

ALYSSA

Hi.

HOLDEN

Hi.

ALYSSA

(beat)

How've you been?

HOLDEN

Good. Really good. Yourself?

ALYSSA

Good.

(beat)

Book's selling like crazy, for some reason.

HOLDEN

That's because it's good. I just read the new one. I really liked it.

ALYSSA

Thank you.

(off comic)

I haven't even seen this yet? Did it just come out?

HOLDEN

A month ago. I did a really small run. Self-financed. Only about five hundred issues.

ALYSSA

Will I enjoy it?

HOLDEN

You might. It's familiar subject matter.

Alyssa leafs through it. Her eyes get somewhat misty.

ALYSSA

Looks like a very personal story.

HOLDEN

I finally had something personal to say.

They look at each other for a beat.

HOLDEN

I'm going to go. I don't want to hold up the line.

ALYSSA

It can get ugly.

(beat)

I mean, have you ever seen a nun call a small child a cunt-rag? It's not pretty.

HOLDEN

(smiles)

Read that, when you have a minute.

ALYSSA

I will.

HOLDEN

I'd like to hear your thoughts. If you get a chance, give me a call about it.

ALYSSA

I just might.

They look at each other for a beat.

HOLDEN

Nice seeing you again.

ALYSSA

Really nice to see you too.

He walks away. A few steps away, he turns and waves again. She waves back. And he's gone in the thrall of fan-boys.

The NEXT person in line approaches Alyssa. The person follows her gaze.

NEXT

Who was that?

ALYSSA

Hmm? Oh. Just some guy I knew.

(taking book from person)

Who should I sign it to?

Alyssa begins scribbling her signature. The show goes on.

END
K.S.