

# **KING OF STICKS**

**by David Skeele**  
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*(Lights up on what appears to be the basement of some kind of factory. MARLON, a man in his late twenties, sits next to an enormous turbine. The turbine is making an incredibly loud throbbing noise. Marlon is wearing jeans, a garish heavy-metal*

*T-shirt and a leather vest. A leather pouch hangs from his belt. The noise of the turbine seems to have put him into a trance. He sits, staring through the audience, occasionally taking a hit off a joint he is holding. There is something very disturbing about the expression on his face--it is at once vacant and intense. Suddenly the turbine makes an even louder screeching or rattling noise. Just when it sounds as if it is going to explode, it abruptly stops. Silence. Marlon shows no reaction. Long silence. From upstage, LES enters. He is roughly the same age as Marlon. He is well-groomed. He has "pretty-boy" features. He wears a dress shirt with its sleeves rolled up and a tie. He looks around a bit uncertainly, not seeing Marlon until he practically bumps into him.)*

**LES:** Uh, excuse me.

*(In a flash, Marlon vaults over the back of the chair. With one hand he slams Les up against the turbine and with the other he scoops up a wrench from the floor and brandishes it above Les' head)*

**LES:** Wha...what are...

**MARLON:** *(slowly, fiercely)* WHO..the FUCK...are YOU?

**LES:** I'm..I..*(Marlon raises the wrench)* LES! LES! DELMONICO! Les Delmonico! I'm the new--

**MARLON:** WHAT!

**LES:** Floor supervisor. *(Marlon steps back, confused)*

**MARLON:** Scotty. *(Pause)* Scotty's the floor supervisor.

**LES** *(Still crumpled against the turbine, trembling and out of breath)* No, he was. I guess he was, uh, let go or something.

*(Pause. Marlon stares at him)* I don't know why. They asked me to--

**MARLON:** I've never seen you before in my life. You don't work here.

**LES:** I just got here. The training school sent--

**MARLON:** Bullshit! Training school, training wheels, little... training tie, somebody looks like you comes in and kicks Scotty out on the fucking street?

**LES:** I didn't kick anybody--

**MARLON:** Let me tell you something, dickhead. Scotty's been here for 15 years. No, shit--19 years

or something. Started out on the saws just like we all do, worked his way up to sawroom foreman, then No. 4 wood grader, then No. 3 wood grader--no, skipped No. 3 wood grader--went right to--

**LES:** Hey, okay--

**MARLON:** HEY, OKAY! HEY, OKAY! I'll tell you what's hey okay! Scotty knew this fucking place like the back of his wife's head and now I'm supposed to start taking orders from some...*(finally starting to realize that Les is actually his superior)* Hey, where are you going?

**LES:** *(Shaking)* To my office. I'm going to check the log book, find out your name--and in three hours I'm going to call Mr. Dearborn and--

**MARLON:** Wait! No, lis-

**LES:** Get away from me!

**MARLON:** Sure, sure. No problem. Just wait, please! Puh-lease don't go out that door. I'm sorry I freaked out a little. You startled me, okay? It's nothing against you. I'm just on edge, we're all on edge, you know? I see a stranger, and with that guy on the loose and whatnot...

**LES:** What guy?

**MARLON:** What, you haven't heard? Maniac's been jumping chick's in town. Catch him they ought to string him up by his balls. Everybody's suspicious--hey, I mean, I'm just doing my job, right? Protecting the mill like a good employee. I mean, you **say** you're the new floor supervisor, but--

**LES:** I don't even know what the hell you're talking about. *(starts for the door)*

**MARLON:** No, please! C'mon, man, you don't have to go find out my name, I'll tell you my name. Just sit down a second, we can get to know each other, okay? C'mon, man, it's Thanksgiving night-- a night to give thanks.

**LES:** I don't know.

**MARLON:** *(gently)* On my honor, I am truly sorry. I'll make it up to you, okay? Look, just sit down and I am going to make you happy you came in here tonight.

**LES:** Oh, shit.

**MARLON:** What?

**LES:** I just remembered why I did come in here tonight. I heard the turbine shut down.

**MARLON:** *(realizing for the first time that the turbine isn't on)*  
Oh, yeah. I was just..uh, trying to figure out how to fix it when you came in.

**LES:** What'd you come up with?

**MARLON:** Huh?

**LES:** How do we fix it?

**MARLON:** What--you mean you don't know?

**LES:** Well, it's not really my area.

**MARLON:** Well, just what the fuck is your area? You're the fucking floor supervisor!

**LES:** They really trained me in, uh, personnel management but then this job came up and when you go in they guarantee you a job and there weren't any in--

**MARLON:**  
Personnel management. Personnel management? *(pause)* I guess we're both up shit's creek then, huh?

**LES:** Yeah, well. I'll see ya.

**MARLON:** Hey! No, look, I don't have anything against whatever the fuck you are. I mean, it's not my department either. "Just watch the power supply," they said. Supposed to be a tit job. Babysitting a fucking piece of metal. All I'm saying is I don't know how to fix this thing and you don't know how to fix this thing, so all we can do is sit and wait for the mechanics to get here on the 6:00 shift, alright?

**LES:** I think I should probably call Mr. Dearborn.

**MARLON:** You want to wake him up, go ahead. But I'll tell you what, Ace. If you pull up a seat and wait with me, I'll grab my mechanic buddy Danny when he walks in and Queerborn doesn't have to know his floor supervisor doesn't know how to fix anything, okay? *(pause. Holding out his hand)* Marlon. Marlon Spier. What's your name again?

**LES:** Les...Delmonico. *(shakes hands)*

**MARLON:** You like Les or Lester?

**LES:** It's Leslie, actually.

**MARLON:** Leslie?

**LES:** It's a guy's name, too!

**MARLON:** Sure, sure. *(pause)* Where are you from, anyway?

**LES:** North Dakota. Near Fargo.

**MARLON:** North Dakota. *(pause)* Fuck. Indians, right? Lots of Indians there?

**LES:** There are reservations, yes.

**MARLON:** Yes. Reservations, yes. I knew it. *(pause)*

**LES:** You...interested in Indians?

**MARLON:** Shit, yeah! I mean, they're into some wild shit. And I'm into some wild shit. *(slight pause)* I should have been a fucking Indian.

**LES:** Uh, is there another chair?

**MARLON:** Hey, I can do better than that. *(reaches under turbine and pulls out a folding metal chair and a card table and sets them up with a flourish)* Ta-da! The lounge. Kick your shoes off, Jasper!

*(Les sits down)* Now, I told you I'd make you happy you came in here. I've got a little present--wait, are you cool?

**LES:** Huh?

**MARLON:** Are you cool? You get high?

**LES:** Oh, I've been known to.

**MARLON:** Oh, you've been known to. *(taking out two joints and tossing one to Les)* A couple hits of this and you won't know shit. Happy Thanksgiving, Kemo Sabe.

**LES:** Now?

**MARLON:** Hell, yes. You got something better to do?

**LES:** Aw, no man, I just got hired. Not on my first night, okay?

**MARLON:** Hey, Les-lie, the turbine is bro-ken. I'm the only one on the floor tonight, so the bottom line is you ain't got no one to supervise. You ain't got no...personnel to manage. Nobody here but us Indians. Ha! We're the only two crazy enough to work on Thanksgiving. Besides, man, you want to be friends, right? I fucked with you before, so now you got to let me make it up.

**LES:** Aw, shit, Marlon...

**MARLON:** C'mon, it's a peace offering. From North Dakota, Kemo Sabe. Now you can teach me how to plant corn, or some such happy horseshit.

**LES:** What about the guy upstairs?

**MARLON:** You mean Haji? Don't worry--the only thing'll make him mad is we're smoking without him. He's cool. We call him Haji because his eyes get all slanty when he gets high. You know, like Haji on Johnny Quest. He's cool, he's my buddy. Runs a chipper. Fucking dangerous. Shit flying all over the place. But tonight he's not doing shit. Hah! Last time it was this slow he had a chick in here, can you believe it?

**LES:** What do you mean?

**MARLON:** What do you think I mean? He was boning her guts out. Right behind the No. 3 headsaw. Y'know that little broom closet?

**LES:** I don't think I've seen that yet.

**MARLON:** Hey, you're not going to tell anybody, right? You'll be cool about it, right?

**LES:** Sure. *(laughing)* As long as it's a slow night.

**MARLON:** *(Slight pause)* Yeah, right. Of course. *(tosses matches to Les)* Fire her up, chief.

**LES:** Well, maybe just a hit or two.

**MARLON:** Now you're talking. Tell you what, smoke half, then I don't care what you do. Save the rest for leftovers. *(They both light up)* Ah, da Thai weed, mon. This is none of that creeper bullshit, either. Shit goes straight to your brain. *(Les has begun to choke on the hit he has been holding. Marlon laughs)* Expand-a-bud!

**LES:** *(coming out of his cough with a laugh)* You really think I was a rapist?

**MARLON:** *(quietly)* Who said anything about a rapist?

**LES:** You said some guy was raping girls.

**MARLON:** I said jumped. I didn't say anything about raped. How the hell did you know they were raped is what I want to know!

**LES:** *(startled)* Jesus, I don't know! I just assumed--

**MARLON:** *(bursting out laughing)* Relax, pal, I'm only kidding. They do that shit on the detective shows all the time. Man, I always wanted to do that. But seriously, buddy, why couldn't you be him? Sure, you dress nice and all, but so what? We're all alike underneath, man. You felt the same things as this guy, I bet.

**LES:** I don't get you.

**MARLON:** Oh, come on. Now you're going to pretend you're a fucking choirboy. You do the deed, right? You're no little virgin, right?

**LES:** *(laughing)* No, I don't think so.

**MARLON:** Alright, then. What's the longest you ever gone without it?

**LES:** Shit, I don't know. Nine, ten months, maybe. My girlfriend and I were both living at home and it was hard to get together anywhere, you know? And she was real paranoid about getting caught.

**MARLON:** Perfect. And all that time, didn't you ever get so fucking horny you just wanted to grab her somewhere, the car, her parents' kitchen and say "**fuck** this paranoid bullshit, I need some gash!" Or maybe you're walking down the street and you see some nice round ass in front of you and you just want to have it! You don't want to know her or talk to her or play any of those stupid games, you maybe don't even want to see her face, **YOU JUST WANT THAT ASS!** Les, buddy, you're getting that look, I think I'm freaking you out again.

**LES:** No, no it's okay.

**MARLON:** I'm just saying, anybody could do it, so...it could be anybody, right? I hope I'm not too rude, crude and totally lewd for you. It's just what happens when the boys get stoned.

**LES:** No, I...it's just nice to talk to someone; I mean, this doesn't seem like the easiest place in the world to make friends.

**MARLON:** Bullshit. I got lots of friends. All kinds of buddies all through here. I'll introduce you. You'll make friends.

**LES:** Thanks, that'd be great. And I'm sorry about Scotty. I hate to see anybody--

**MARLON:** Scotty was a dickhead. He was a fucking liar and a lousy floor supervisor, so don't worry about Scotty. *(slight pause)* But he did know how to fix a turbine.

**LES:** *(suddenly bursting out laughing)* The back of his wife's head?!

**MARLON:** What's this?

**LES:** You said he knew this place like the back of his wife's head.

**MARLON:** Yeah, I guess I did say that. *(They both laugh, then Marlon stops)* I don't think Scotty has a wife. *(Slight pause)* He did have a wife once.

**LES:** But she didn't have a head! *(Both collapse laughing. They are now quite stoned)*

**MARLON:** Oh, shit! Scotty and his headless wife! Maybe that's why he left her--she couldn't give him head!

**LES:** She didn't have a head for business! *(Both continue laughing)*  
She should have quit while she was a head! *(Les keeps laughing; Marlon stops and regards Les. Les sees this and stops too)* No...I guess that doesn't make sense.

**MARLON:** You're a pisser, alright, Les.

**LES:** Oh, wow, I must be stoned. Sorry.

**MARLON:** Don't worry about it. I told you this was good dope. *(pause)* Jesus, Dearborn, what an asshole! I can't believe he makes you start tonight. He's fucking warped.

**LES:** Well, technically I'm not really starting till tomorrow night. I just sort of...I don't know.

**MARLON:** Just sort of what? You mean you're not supposed to be here? You're giving them a freebie?

**LES:** Well, I didn't know what else to do, y'know? My stuff hasn't gotten here yet from North Dakota and my apartment's all empty. I was just sitting there and it felt...weird. So I..you know..came down to check the place out.

**MARLON:** Shit. *(pause)* Suit yourself, I guess. Tell you what, you watch this turbine and I'll go sit in your fucking apartment.

**LES:** Um, if we're supposed to be watching the turbine, shouldn't we really try to do something...or

something?

**MARLON:** Will you stop worrying about it? (*points to joint in Les' hand*) She played?

**LES:** Yeah.

**MARLON:** Give her here. (*he puts the roach in his vest pocket*) For the collection. (*Suddenly an eerie sound comes out of the darkness--a kind of reverberating creaking sound like that of a submarine's hull expanding*)

**LES:** (*jumps*) What the hell was that?!

**MARLON:** You get used to it. It's just the water pressure.

**LES:** Water pressure? What are you talking about?

**MARLON:** What do you think? We're underwater. On the other side of those walls is nothing but river--how do you think the goddamn turbines run?

**LES:** Jesus. Has it ever sprung a leak?

**MARLON:** Nothing major. But you never know. It's still fucked-up down here. I told you this isn't my regular job--I'll take the saws any day, any way. I work the edger. You seen that?

**LES:** No. What is it?

**MARLON:** (*shrugs*) Cuts the ends off boards. (*pause*) Boy, you really don't know shit yet, do you? What kind of mill was this place in North Dakota, anyway?

**LES:** It's not a mill at all. It's just an office. By the time the wood gets there, it's already paper.

**MARLON:** Ha! A paper-pusher, huh? Welcome to the real world. (*The sound happens again. Les flinches. Marlon laughs*) So, Les, tell me about yourself.

**LES:** (*laughs*) Jesus, not much to tell. I'm 26, I uh, went to UND...

**MARLON:** You're smart, right? Smarter than the normal Joe Schmoe, right?

**LES:** Oh, God, I don't know. Sure, I guess I'm--

**MARLON:** 'Cause I'm smart, too. I mean, I may just be a worker on the saws, but I got shit computing in here like none of these assholes would believe. You believe that?

**LES:** Yeah, sure I do.

**MARLON:** (*Agreeing*) Sure you do. **You** know, Les, **you've** been around--you've been to North Dakota, you've rapped with fucking Indians, right?

**LES:** Well, sure, I guess.

**MARLON:** That's right. Guys like us, we think things--think about wild shit. Shit that would freak out Joe Blow on the street.

**LES:** Like..what?

**MARLON:** Like thinking of Scotty's wife with her head cut off and stuff like that. You can say something like that and I'll understand.

**LES:** I was just being stoned.

**MARLON:** So? Stoned, straight, drunk. It all comes out of the same place. It's all part of the same wavelength you give off. Being stoned just...makes it flow. You...project off what's really inside you, you can't help it. (*getting intense*) Even right now, you're sitting there giving off waves you don't even know about and you couldn't even stop if you did. (*Les is getting uncomfortable, but he doesn't know what to do. Marlon pulls a deck of cards out from the leather pouch on his belt*) I got a feeling about you, Les, yesiree. (*With some sort of dramatic motion he spreads the cards out on the table in front of Les*) Ever seen these before?

**LES:** Are they tarot cards?

**MARLON:** There, you see that? None of the dickheads around here had a clue. (*hands deck to Les*) Here, shuffle. (*Les reluctantly starts to shuffle*)

**LES:** It's pretty wild that you're into this stuff, Marlon.

**MARLON:** How's that?

**LES:** Well, you just don't seem like the tarot card type.

**MARLON:** Too stupid?

**LES:** No! Of course not. I just mean...like where did you get these?

**MARLON:** I found 'em. I had to teach myself how to use them--I'm not stupid, Leslie. I was fucking born with this talent. Just wait, I'll tell you things about yourself you don't even know. I'm unbelievable. Around here the guys call me Marlon the Magician.

**LES:** After Merlin the Magician.

**MARLON:** Who the fuck's that?

**LES:** Never mind.

**MARLON:** It's Marlon the Magician. You are stoned.

**LES:** Well, there. They're shuffled.

**MARLON:** No, man, what are you doing? You've got to keep shuffling till it feels right! I thought you knew about this stuff! Keep going.

**LES:** No, really, it feels fine.

**MARLON:** Alright, then. Now. Put your hand on the deck, that's right. Now. Look into my eyes. C'mon! I need you on my wavelength. Just watch--I'm going to read you like a fucking T.V. *(Les looks into Marlon's eyes--Marlon has that same scary look on his face that he did in the opening scene. After a long moment they break)* Okay. Now. I'm going to deal you five cards and then I'm going to read them one at a time. *(Marlon deals out a stack of five cards)*

**LES:** Are you sure this is how to do it? I mean..haven't I..I think I've seen people laying them out in patterns or something.

**MARLON:** Are you telling me you know how to read these things, Les?

**LES:** No, not at all.

**MARLON:** Then please shut the fuck up and let me do my thing, alright? *(Les shrugs, hurt)* Hey, no hard feelings. This just takes alot of concentration, okay? Shake. *(He holds out his hand and Les shakes it)* Okay! *(Marlon does a strange incantatory movement, perhaps moving the card around in a small circle in front of his forehead, then dramatically flips the card onto the table)* First card! Two of sticks.

**LES:** Sticks?

**MARLON:** STICKS! Now, quiet, I'm thinking. *(pause)* Garbage, Les.

**LES:** What do you mean?

**MARLON:** It's a garbage card, Les, it doesn't mean anything.

**LES:** It's got to mean something.

**MARLON:** Alright, smart guy, it does mean something! Two sticks, two dicks! Dueling dicks! It means you're a fucking homo, that's what it means! (*Les stands up*)

**LES:** Alright! That does it, I'm sick of this shit, Marlon! See you around.

**MARLON:** (*jumping up*) GODDAMNIT, **LES:**! That's what I'm saying! I know you're not a homo, that's why the card is fucking garbage! (*Runs in front of Les and crumples card*) There! It's gone, okay! You just didn't shuffle enough. I told you. Now, c'mon. Sit back down, we're just getting started.

**LES:** I don't know, Marlon. It's late, we're both tired.

**MARLON:** (*fiercely*) SECOND CARD. (*deals*) Ah. Queen of circles. Now there's a card. There is a fucking card!

**LES:** (*in spite of himself*) Why? What does that mean?

**MARLON:** Sit down and I'll tell you. (*Les slowly sits. Marlon chuckles*) Looks like you got a real ballbuster somewhere in your life, pal. I don't know who she is, but you got my sympathy. Queen of Circles is one scheming bitch.

**LES:** (*Laughing*) I don't know who that could be.

**MARLON:** (*Singsong*) Think, Les-lie.

**LES:** (*Thinks*) No, I really don't think that fits anyone in my life right now.

**MARLON:** I'll bet you dollars to fucking donuts it does. What about that chick? The paranoid.

**LES:** You mean Karen?

**MARLON:** Whatever.

**LES:** No. It couldn't be her. (*pause. Marlon grins at him*) She's nice. A nice person. She wouldn't...

**MARLON:** You don't sound so sure, there.

**LES:** Sure I'm fucking sure! It's not her!

**MARLON:** Hey, don't argue with me, Kemo Sabe, I'm just flipping the cards. Argue with them. (*flips card*) Three of Sticks. Shit, you know what that means.

**LES:** Three dicks?

**MARLON:** Alright, you're learning. Whoever this chick is, could be she's fucking three different guys behind your back.

**LES:** Oh, Jesus, that's ridiculous! Karen hasn't slept with three guys her whole life!

**MARLON:** Whatever you say, pal, whatever you say. Fourth card. YES! Les, this is my favorite card in the whole fucking deck. The Lovers.

**LES:** What does this one mean?

**MARLON:** What do you think? Look at them. This--this is the Fuck Card, Les. It means poontang and boatloads of it. You get this for your fourth card and it means you are the hosemaster of all time. And look at the smile on this bitch's face. If that's Karen, you must have a dick like a California fireplug.

**LES:** Well, close. No, really, I don't get many complaints. In fact, I'm not trying to brag, but that's why we can't do it at her parents' house. You see--I can't believe I'm telling anybody this--she's kind of a screamer. I can keep her quiet for a while, you know, put my hand over her mouth or something, but not all night long...

**MARLON:** Wait, Les--

**LES:** That's how I know Karen isn't the Queen of Circles. I mean, I think I do a pretty good job of keeping her faithful.

**MARLON:** Les.

**LES:** Not that I'm Superman or anything, but it just wouldn't be the same with someone she didn't know as--

**MARLON:** LES! (*Les stops*) I fucked up. I'm sorry, man.

**LES:** What do you mean?

**MARLON:** Look at the card. (*pause*) It's upside down.

**LES:** (*a little panicked*) So what does that mean?

**MARLON:** I guess...just the opposite of what I said. It's nothing to be ashamed of. Lots of guys got..you know..sexual difficulties.

**LES:** What?

**MARLON:** That's what the card says.

**LES:** And you believe that shit? That's bullshit, man! These cards are bullshit!

**MARLON:** You believed them a minute ago when you were Long Dong Silver! Now I'm not trying to rag on you, Leslie, but these cards do not lie. *(With the same scary intensity again)* It all makes sense now--the Queen of Circles, the Fuck Card, all those stupid sticks--it all makes sense! This bitch is messing with your mind by the shortest way to your head which is through her snatch! She's making herself feel superior, making you feel like a little pussy, and there's not a goddamn thing you can do about it! Well, that's the special power these bitches have--they act like they think you're a little faggot and if you complain, they act like they know you're a little faggot! I'm telling you, that's the way these cunts think--*(suddenly Les lashes out and belts Marlon in the mouth. Marlon tumbles to the floor. Silence. For a moment, they are both too amazed to speak)*

**LES:** I...oh my God...I didn't...*(Marlon starts to rise from the floor. He moves slowly, almost languidly. There is a small, almost placid smile on his lips. The effect should be terrifying. In concert with Marlon rising, Les sinks to his knees)* Oh, my God...I'm sorry, Marlon, please, please...*(As Marlon reaches full height, Les' words spill out in a torrent)*It's just...you were right before about what you said. About Karen. She does fuck with me. She's...she's the only person I've ever done it with and she fucking scares me sometimes, she makes me feel so bad. You know how sometimes the first time it's...you know...not so good and I'll try to do it again but she'll pretend to be asleep and go all stiff except there's this little smirk on her face. I don't know. Like she'd rather have it bad, just so she could use it against me or something. Sometimes I just fucking hate her. I don't know. *(Pause. Marlon reaches down to Les. Les takes his hand. Marlon gently pulls Les up to standing)*

**MARLON:** *(soothing)* Go on. Grab a seat, pal.

**LES:** *(sits, weakly)* Jesus, I'm sorry, Marlon.

**MARLON:** *(sits opposite, softly)* Listen to me, Les. Do you remember when you surprised me earlier? When I had you up against that turbine? *(Les nods)* You were scared, right? *(Les nods, mesmerized)* Well, I was scared, too. I saw something in your eyes, Les. Power. I don't know if it's Indian power or what, but it's there. You've got power, Les, you just don't know what to do with it. You hit me and I don't care, 'cause it's not me you're trying to kill. It's that Queen. A bitch has got you turned around but I'm not worried about you, pal. I used to be just like you, but I found a cure. Used to be I'd sit in a bar, watching some cute blonde thing, chatting, giggling with her friends. I'd make a joke or something, and you know, I'd be dressed like this, and she'd ignore me or throw some kind of fuck-you look. So finally enough is enough. I pick one out. Blonde. Preppie bimbo with little braids. I watch and wait, watch and wait, sucking down beers and Les, I luck out. She

leaves alone. Big deal with her fat friends like she'd never see them again but finally she leaves alone. She goes out. I go out. I guess she dropped her keys in the dark, 'cause I come around her car and I'm face to face with this tight little preppie ass sticking up in the air. Well, I've got this piece of leather wrapped around my hand, and when she stands up, WHAM! Right in the side of her head. She goes right down and doesn't move. Zip, zip, pants down and she's mine, Les. No smirk, no fuck-you look and no complaints. No muss, no fuss. I felt like a fucking king. And that was just the first one.

**LES:** *(in shock)* You? You're the guy?

**MARLON:** Yes, Leslie, I'm The Guy.

**LES:** I don't believe it.

**MARLON:** *(grinning)* Well, get your believer fixed, Chief. *(pause)* So what do you think?

**LES:** Well, how have you...why haven't they...

**MARLON:** Caught me? Don't worry about that shit, Les. It's always pretty dark. And I always hit them real quick. I don't think any of them have even seen me yet. Luck, Les. Luck and a nice fucking right hook. Hell, I'm 3 and 0, all knockouts. Just one punch. BOOM! *(slams fist down on table)* So. What do you think?

**LES:** I don't know...I just can't believe it..

**MARLON:** Yeah, we been through that already. I guess what you're telling me is I'm a fucking liar, some little kid telling stories about humping the babysitter! Is that what you're telling me!

**LES:** No! No. I believe you. It's just...wild.

**MARLON:** No shit it's wild. I told you. I'm into wild shit. What I'm asking is, did I make a mistake? Did I make a mistake telling you about this?

**LES:** What do you mean?

**MARLON:** Don't play stupid with me, Les. Are you going to tell anybody what I just said to you?

**LES:** No. Hell, no...I wouldn't do that. *(Pause. Marlon stares at Les. After a moment he smiles)*

**MARLON:** No. I know that. I don't know what I'm getting all bent out of shape for. I know we understand each other. You know how I know?

**LES:** How?

**MARLON:** Your last card. I peeked. *(He flips the card)*

**LES:** *(slowly)* King of Sticks.

**MARLON:** That's you, man. You are the King of fucking Sticks. This card means you'll never be afraid, or pussywhipped again. You're the King. With your big old North Dakota warclub.

**LES:** Thanks.

**MARLON:** Shit, don't thank me. It's the cards, I'm telling you, they never lie. *(Reaches over and puts the card in Les' pocket)* Here. Keep this with you at all times. Right side up.

**LES:** Won't you need this?

**MARLON:** What for? You're it. I'm not giving this card to anyone else.

**LES:** It's like having my number retired?

**MARLON:** Yeah. Ha! That's exactly what it's like. *(Tosses Les a joint)* Now fire this baby up and let's celebrate. C'mon, now. Don't give me any argument, just do it. *(As Les does so, Marlon suddenly produces a penknife and opens it dramatically. Les' eyes widen)* Will you fucking relax? *(Reaching into bag on floor)* It's Thanksgiving, remember? I'm carving the turkey.

**LES:** Turkey?

**MARLON:** *(Throwing a vacuum-sealed packet of sliced turkey down on the table)* Turkey.

**LES:** Wow.

**MARLON:** I know. Leave it to Marlon the Magician. I fucking think of everything. *(Slices open the packet)* I figure you must have the munchies wicked by now. I know I do. Dig in, Tonto.

**LES:** Wow, thanks. *(They both rip slices out of the packet and eat greedily)*

**MARLON:** Just like the Indians. We don't need any fucking mashed potatoes or any...

**LES:** Cranberry sauce?

**MARLON:** Or cranberry sauce or stuffing. Just turkey. *(They eat for a moment)*

**LES:** Um, Marlon. *(Marlon grunts)* You...tell anybody else about this?

**MARLON:** Hell, no. You're it, Bud. That's another reason I never got caught. The dickheads around here don't have a clue because I play it very cool around them. Almost every day I throw in a "did they catch that fucker yet?" or some such shit. Man, nobody wants to catch that guy like I do. They must think he raped my mother or something.

**LES:** Um, Marlon..those girls. Are they alright? I mean, none of them died or anything, right? Just out of curiosity...

**MARLON:** Fuck, no. They might wake up with a little headache, that's all. And they know they been fucked, but that's okay. Shit, if you ask me, they probably wake up better than they went to sleep. *(Pause)* Why? You getting interested in this stuff, Leslie.

**LES:** No. I mean, yeah, it's interesting. I never met a rap--I mean someone who's actually done this before. *(Marlon stares at Les for a second, then makes a decision)*

**MARLON:** Les, I'm going to give you one more present, then you're going to have to start remembering me in your will. *(Marlon reaches into his bag and pulls out a wide strip of leather. He tosses it to Les)*

**LES:** *(Awed)* Is this the one you--

**MARLON:** That's the one.

**LES:** But-

**MARLON:** Don't worry about it. I can get more. *(Les wraps the leather around his hand)* How's it feel. Is it a fit? *(Les "tests" the leather, moving his hand around or lightly punching his other hand)* Now don't hit me again, buddy, but I have to run this by you. If you ever tried out my little, uh...

**LES:** Technique?

**MARLON:** Yeah, technique on Karen, y'know, next time you go back to North Dakota or whatnot, you'd be pretty fucking home free.

**LES:** What do you mean?

**MARLON:** Think about it, man. You'd be the last person anybody'd expect. I mean, you're supposed to be getting it for free, right? *(Les looks at him)* Oh, I don't know, Les, I'm just trying to think of you. I mean, if you really want to feel like a king--*(suddenly Les starts laughing)* What? What's funny?

**LES:** Every time you say that, I keep thinking of that stupid butter commercial.

**MARLON:** Butter?

**LES:** You know, the one where the guy says "I feel like a king!" and all of the sudden he's got this big, doofy crown on?

**MARLON:** *(Uncertainly)* Yeah, well, it is kind of like that.

**LES:** *(Still laughing)* I can see Karen's parents coming home and I'm on top of Karen in the driveway and I've got this thing on my hand and some stupid purple crown on my head! *(As Les laughs, Marlon beams at him. Suddenly Marlon reaches out and grabs Les by the hand. Quickly, he wraps the leather around both of their hands)*

**MARLON:** Old Indian handshake. *(Almost maudlin)* I'm so fucking glad you came in here tonight, pal.

**LES:** *(After a pause)* Thanks, man. Me too.

*(Suddenly a flashlight shines on their faces and a deep masculine voice booms out of the darkness)*

**VOICE:** What the fuck is going on down here?

*(Marlon and Les jump as Haji moves into the room. He wears no shoes or shirt. He is tall and very imposing physically--both his face and his body are finely muscled, and his eyes are intense. Without another word, he charges toward Les and Marlon. Both flinch, but he quickly moves past them and nimbly positions himself on his back underneath the turbine.)*

**MARLON:** Oh, Jesus, Haji, you startled the shit out of me!

**HAJI:** *(Playing the flashlight around under the turbine)* FUCK! FUCK!

**MARLON:** Oh, yeah, Haj, the turbine went down...

**HAJI:** *(Popping back out from underneath)* No shit it went down, Marlon! Jesus Christ, I can't believe you. The easiest job in the whole fucking mill--one step below the little faggot who puts the cups in the water cooler, and you can't get it right...

**MARLON:** But, Haj, there was nothing I could do, it just went down...

**HAJI:** *(Overlapping)* How about fixing it, ya dipshit? Are you stupid, Marlon? Some cop drives by and sees half the mill is dark, what do you think happens? Dearborn comes marching in here and finds you smoking dope and holding hands with your boyfriend, which I don't really give a shit about, but what happens if he decides to check upstairs?

**MARLON:** Oh.

**HAJI:** Fuckin' A right, Oh. I'm not alone up there, Marlon, get it? (*Marlon smirks and nudges Les. Haji puts his finger in Marlon's face*) Don't sit there grinning at me, you little monkey! I'm not fucking around here!

**MARLON:** Jesus, Haj, calm down. (*Indicating Les*) It's cool, we got the new...

**HAJI:** (*Running over to bang on the side of the turbine, poke around under it, etc.*) COOL? Don't tell me what's cool, you little peckerhead! FUCK!! (*Turning to look at Marlon*) Five minutes. I've got five minutes, so you've got five minutes. Five minutes to do your fucking job and get this thing RUNNING!!

**MARLON:** Fuck, Haji, you know I can't fix this--it's not really my job. It's not..my area.

**HAJI:** Yeah, well in five minutes your area's gonna be the fucking..river with your head ripped off, so you better get rid of your little friend and...

**MARLON:** Haji, I been trying to tell you, this is Les..uh..Del something...

**HAJI:** So?

**MARLON:** He's the new floor supervisor.

**HAJI:** (*Pause*) What?

**LES:** I'm the, uh, new floor supervisor.

**HAJI:** (*Staring at Les*) You're fucking kidding me.

**LES:** No.

**HAJI:** You guys are fucking with me, right?

**LES:** No. I just started. I'm...

**HAJI:** (*Starting to laugh*) Jesus Christ. No offense..Les?..Is that right? (*Les nods*) No offense, but...how can I say this? You don't look much like Scotty.

**MARLON:** Shit, Haji, that's alright. Scotty had a fucking gut out to here...

**HAJI:** (*Warningly*) Don't even talk to me about, Scotty, Marlon. (*To Les*) So, Mr. Floor Supervisor, what's the deal--am I busted? Is the poontang patrol gonna haul me in for questioning?

**LES:** No. I mean, it's a slow night, and it's Thanksgiving and all, and we could all use a little morale-boost, you know? Just so long as it's not a regular, you know...

**HAJI:** Morale-boost? Oh, I think I'm gonna like this guy. You ever worked in a mill before, Lester?

**LES:** Not exactly. I worked in the head office.

**HAJI:** Doing what--exactly? Are you an electrician? Come to save the turbine?

**LES:** *(Laughs)* Hardly.

**HAJI:** Well, that's just too fucking bad for all of us. You must be a saw man, then. You run a chipper? *(Les shakes his head)* No? What about a sash gang? Jet sprayer? Trimmer? Headsaw? No? So, in other words, you can't do anything. Not even run Marlon's little edging saw.

**MARLON:** It's not that easy, Haj.

**HAJI:** No skills. All you need is to be rich and you'd be a perfect owner.

**MARLON:** Haj, this is our boss, remember?

**HAJI:** And what a boss. First night on the job and you're down here smoking dope with Marlon. No offense, boss, but you've got a lot of shit to learn. *(Looks at his watch)* Shit. Like how to fix a turbine in three minutes. *(Tosses the flashlight to Les)* C'mon, Lester, you're gonna take a look at the inside of your first turbine.

**LES:** Okay. I mean, I really should learn.

**HAJI:** That's the spirit. Get on your back. *(Elbows Les as they climb under the turbine.)* If I had a nickel for everytime I've said that, huh? *(Les laughs weakly)*

**MARLON:** I don't know about this, Haji, he's never done this before.

**HAJI:** He couldn't do any worse than you. Now, Lester, shine the light up in there. In technical terms, the key here is to find something that looks fucked-up, and then fuck around with it till it doesn't look fucked-up anymore. Okay, like that spindle there with the copper wire on it--what's wrong with it?

**LES:** Well, it looks a little bent.

**HAJI:** See that, Marlon, the kid's a fucking engineering genius! So, whaddya say, boss, let's see what we can do about it. Marlon! *(Haji sticks his hand out, snaps his fingers and makes a little*

*grasping motion. Marlon grabs the wrench and puts it in Haji's hand. Haji feels what it is, then drops it on the floor) Not the wrench, you dipshit, the joint! (Marlon puts the joint in his hand. Haji takes a big hit, then hands it to Les, who does likewise) There now, you see, it looks better already. (He laughs and this time Les joins him more confidently) Now the wrench. (Grumbling, Marlon puts the wrench in his hand, and as the other two ad-lib under the turbine, banging on the spindle and so on, Marlon begins to pace restlessly. He picks up the leather strap, and makes several punching motions in the air, letting out a martial-arts type sound. Haji and Les catch sight of this from under the turbine. Haji pokes his head out) What the fuck are you up to, Marlon? (to Les) Jesus, what a head case.*

**LES:** *(Starting to crawl out from under the turbine) Just a minute, Haji. Maybe I'd better...*

**HAJI:** *(Pulling him back) We ain't got a minute. C'mon! Don't pay any attention to him--we're on a strict timetable here. (Les reluctantly goes back. Marlon gets louder and more vicious with his movements. Nearing the door, he pulls back for a particularly violent punch, and just then Abby enters. She has long flowing hair and wears two large hoop earrings. Seeing Marlon with his fist pulled back, she starts and shrinks backward. Marlon does virtually the same thing. Both a little breathless, they stand there for a second staring at each other)*

**MARLON** Whoa. Sorry, I...

**ABBY:** *(Collecting herself) I'm just looking for my date.*

**MARLON:** You looking for Haji?

**ABBY:** Yeah, that's the cartoon character.

**HAJI:** *(Hearing her voice, and quickly emerging from the turbine) Abby, what the fuck? I thought you were going to wait up there for me.*

**ABBY:** Oh, yeah, Haji, there's a world of adventure in that broom closet. Almost more excitement than a girl could handle. In fact, it was so much fun that just for a break I thought I'd come down and get punched out by your mill-buddy.

**HAJI:** What's this?

**MARLON:** I didn't see her, Haj, honest! I didn't do anything!

**HAJI:** *(Shaking his head in disgust, he walks over and slaps Marlon on the top of the head, hard, with the tips of his fingers) C'mon, babe. Just five more minutes, I swear I'll get this thing up and running, and then we can get this other thing up and running.*

**ABBY:** No fucking way, Haji--I'm not spending one more minute up there talking to the barn

spiders and the urinal cakes.

**HAJI:** Goddammit, Abby, c'mon! This was supposed to be our night, remember? We can still--

**ABBY:** Yeah, some night. Getting kicked out of a trailer--whee-haw!

**HAJI:** For the hundredth fucking time, Abby, I'm sorry about that. I didn't know she was going to come home like that. She always spends Thanksgiving night at Grandma's.

**MARLON:** You living at home again, Haji?

**HAJI:** *(Whipping around with his fist cocked)* What the fuck is it to you!! *(Marlon starts and stumbles backward. To Abby)* Now will you just..get upstairs and wait for this! I'm talking one fucking second, here!

**ABBY:** Hey, whatever. If you don't want me around, maybe I ought to just go home.

**HAJI:** No! No. Alright, alright. Shit--stay down here if you have to. Marlon here'll keep you company. In a few minutes you'll be missing the spiders. *(He starts to climb back under the turbine. To Les, who is still banging on the spindle)* Out the way, Lester, it doesn't have anything to do with the fucking spindle!

**ABBY:** Hi. I'm Abby. *(She holds her hand out, but as Marlon reaches for it, she goes into a boxer's stance, her hands up guarding her face. Smiling, she drops her hands and extends her hand again)*

**MARLON:** *(Laughing nervously as he shakes it)* Yeah. I'm Marlon. Marlon Spier.

**LES:** *(From under the turbine)* That wire looks kind of fucked-up.

**HAJI:** That's just the ground wire, it doesn't do anything. I'll tell you what, Lester, you're kind of dead weight in the electrical department, so why don't you give me some room and go talk to Abby for a while? I'll yell if I need something.

**LES:** Sure, sure. *(He climbs back out)*

**MARLON:** Abby, this is Les. He's the new floor supervisor.

**ABBY:** What's a floor supervisor?

**LES:** Well, uh...

**MARLON:** He's not sure yet. *(Pause. Abby looks back and forth from Marlon to Les)* Hey, I got an idea! While you're waiting, how would you like to have your fortune read?

**ABBY:** Fortune?

**MARLON:** I shit you not. *(Reaches behind him and presents the cards with a flourish)* Ta-Da! You ever seen these before?

**ABBY:** Well, if I had to hazard a guess, I'd say those were tarot cards.

**MARLON:** *(To Les, shaking his head in amazement)* Holy shit, two in one day! You hear that? Tell her what they call me around here, Chief.

**LES:** What?

**MARLON:** He's stoned. They call me Marlon the Magician.

**ABBY:** After Merlin the Magician.

**MARLON:** Who the fuck is this guy?!

**HAJI:** *(Emerging from under the turbine)* FUCK!! This wrench is too small. Lester, you know where the--no, you don't know shit yet, I'll get it myself. *(Starting out, he sees the cards)* Oh, now don't start pulling this stupid shit with her, Marlon. Guy's been trying to tell me my fortune for over a year now. He's full of shit, just like with everything else.

**ABBY:** Oh, go find your wrench, Haji. I want one of Marlon's readings. *(Grumbling, Haji exits. She takes a seat)* How do we start?

**MARLON:** Les--how do we start?

**LES:** What do you mean?

**MARLON:** What the fuck?! You forgotten already?

**LES:** Oh, well, you have to get on her wavelength.

**MARLON:** That's right. It's nothing..without the wavelength. *(He begins his strange movement again, staring into her eyes as he moves the cards in a circle around his forehead. She stares back into his eyes equally intently)* Okay. Now. First card! Three of Sticks--oh shit, I forgot you were supposed to shuffle first. Here, start again--

**ABBY:** Wait, what did you say this card was? Three of Sticks?

**MARLON:** Yeah, but that was Les' card. You gotta...

**ABBY:** Now hold on, I'm just curious, here. I've never heard of this card before. What does it mean? What did it mean for Les?

**MARLON:** It's kind of personal...

**LES:** It was a message about my girlfriend. He said it meant that she might be sleeping with three different guys behind my back.

**MARLON:** But that was his reading...

**ABBY:** (*Overlapping*) Oh, poor dear. How did he get that out of it? Oh, wait, Sticks. You mean the sticks are like...

**LES:** Yeah, dicks.

**ABBY:** Dicks. Interesting. So what does this mean for me, Marlon? Have you magically divined that I'm sleeping with three different guys behind Haji's back? Or maybe that my girlfriend is sleeping with three guys--

**MARLON:** I've been trying to tell you, this is his reading--you never would have gotten that card on your own! You have to shuffle them yourself.

**ABBY:** (*Regarding him for a second*) How long have you been doing this, Marlon?

**MARLON:** (*Getting a little uncomfortable*) I don't know...it's hard to say. You know, in this business time is...(he trails off helplessly)

**ABBY:** Time is...relative? Fleeting? Money? (*She picks up deck and begins to shuffle expertly*)

**MARLON:** No, it's like not important. I mean, when you're *born* with this talent...

**ABBY:** (*Deadpan gravity*) Ah, I see. You mean that in a sense you have *always* read the tarot.

**MARLON:** (*Warily, as he watches her shuffle*) Yeah. That's kind of what I mean--I've always read the tarot.

**ABBY:** Marlon, I think I'm ready to begin my reading now. (*She hands him the deck*)

**MARLON:** I don't know, maybe the vibrations aren't right tonight. They feel a little funny...

**ABBY:** Hey, now, I wouldn't think Marlon the Magician would let a little thing like funny vibrations get in the way, would he, Les?

*(Les looks at Marlon expectantly. Slight pause, then reluctantly)*

**MARLON:** All right. First card! It's uh...Seven of...uh, Sticks.

**ABBY:** Seven? Well. I seem to be getting sluttier by the second. Or am I a lesbian? We never figured that out the first time, did we?

**MARLON:** No! It doesn't mean you're a slut or a lesbian, it just...

**HAJI:** What's this?! *(Haji has appeared in the doorway holding a gigantic plumber's wrench. Marlon backs up)*

**MARLON:** Nothing, Haj, I was just saying...

**HAJI:** *(Slowly walking toward Marlon)* Am I hearing right? Did I just hear you calling my girlfriend a SLUT and a LESBIAN?! Did I just hear that or am I losing my fucking MIND?

**MARLON:** I was just saying she wasn't a slut or a lesbian--I'm just trying to...Godamnit, Haji, they're just cards! I DIDN'T MEAN ANYTHING!

**ABBY:** Yeah, take a valium, Haji. He's right. It doesn't mean anything. None of it means anything. To him they're just cards! *(She throws the deck down on the table and they scatter on to the floor.)* Right? Marlon, I'll tell you what. I am going to bring you a book. You study this book for at least a year, and then if you want to go around telling people that you know how to read tarots, knock yourself out.

**MARLON:** *(Surlly)* I don't need a book.

**ABBY:** Oh, is that so? You don't need a book. He thinks "dicks" is a suit and he doesn't need a book. The suit is called "wands," Marlon, not "sticks." The other three suits are "disks," "swords" and "cups."

**LES:** Wow. Have you done this before?

**ABBY:** I've been studying it for the past six years off and on, reading and practicing, learning new decks, reading some more. You hear that Marlon? Six years. And even I wouldn't go around calling myself Abby..the Sorceress. That truly offends me. You shouldn't be messing with this shit if you don't know what you're doing. This is dangerous shit!

**HAJI:** *(Laughing)* Alright, baby...

**ABBY:** Yeah, yeah. I'm off my soapbox. What's going on with the turbine?

**HAJI:** I'm getting close, babe. With this wrench I should be able to take off the lower casing--it's gotta be something in there.

**ABBY:** Oh, man, I don't know. I'm kind of beat, Haji...

**HAJI:** *(Taking her aside)* C'mon, babe, this is still our night, and we still got..almost an hour. Look, just go up there and light a cigarette, crack that bottle of Beam if you want, and I swear to Christ I'll be up there before you're finished.

**ABBY:** One cigarette, Haj, and then it's time for this little dogey to hit the trail. *(She leaves, sighing. Haji starts to climb back under the turbine)*

**MARLON:** Wait! *(Haji stops)*

**HAJI:** Oh, fuck, Marlon, what now?

**MARLON:** *(With a meaningful look at Les)* Maybe you shouldn't let her go up there alone, not with that guy on the loose.

**HAJI:** Jesus Fucking Christ! Don't you ever talk about anything else? It's starting to give me the creeps. "Did you hear about that guy?" "Did they catch that guy yet?" You're like a fucking broken record. What the hell is it? You starting a goddamn fan club for the guy?

**MARLON:** No. I'm just...interested.

**HAJI:** Oh, you're interested, are you? Interested in some guy that knocks out women and fucks them? Why, Marlon? What's so interesting about that? *(Marlon says nothing. A long moment while Haji stares into Marlon's eyes.)* Something's not right about you, Marlon. I've never been able to put my finger on it, but...

**ABBY:** *(Re-entering)* Hey, Haji. I'm sure you guys have already tried this, but there's a huge circuit-breaker box at the top of the stairs. *(Long pause. Haji turns and looks at her)*

**HAJI:** *(Dumbly)* Circuit-breaker box?

**MARLON:** *(Scornfully)* That's not it.

**HAJI:** Shit. That just might be it.

**LES:** Wow. You know about this stuff, too?

**ABBY:** Electricity? I don't know anything about electricity. Except to check the circuit-breaker.

**HAJI:** Well, shit, let's check it out! *(They head out. Pause)*

**MARLON:** Now there's a candidate. There is a fucking candidate.

**LES:** *(Starting to pick up the cards)* What do you mean, Marlon?

**MARLON:** Don't give me that innocent face, you know exactly what I mean.

**LES:** Just..cut the shit, Marlon. Let's not do this, okay?

**MARLON:** Cut the shit, Marlon? What's gotten into you all of the sudden? Don't tell me you fell for that bitch's act. *(Imitating Abby)* "I'm offended" BOOM! "I don't know anything about electricity" BOOM! And here'd be us, Tonto, bending her over this table and taking turns showing her who's king.

**LES:** C'mon, Marlon, stop it.

**HAJI:** *(Appearing suddenly in the doorway)* No, let him go, Lester. I want to hear all about it. *(Marlon blanches)* We didn't get to finish our conversation before. Why don't you tell me the story, Marlon. And just to save time and most of the bones in your face and body, why don't you just tell me now.

**MARLON:** *(His voice shaking)* Nothing to tell, Haji. I was just fucking around.

**HAJI:** No, looking at you standing there shaking like a fucking gerbil, I somehow don't think you were just fucking around. *(He laughs a little)* You know, I've thought about this a lot, and whoever this guy is, you know he's gotta be someone who can't get chicks the normal way, right? Someone who's too fat, maybe, or too ugly. Or maybe, now that I think about it, someone who's just too weird--someone who walks around doing geeky shit like pretending he can tell fortunes. Sound like anybody you know?

**MARLON:** What the fuck are you trying to say, Haji, you think I'm the guy? That's crazy.

**HAJI:** Oh, I don't know, Marlon. I'm having a hard time believing that, 'cause frankly I don't think you have the balls. But I know there's something fucked up about the way you keep talking about this guy. And walking around hitting your hand with that piece of leather all the time. It's weird, Marlon. Even for you it's weird. So I figure even if you are too much of a pussy to be doing this yourself, maybe it's somebody like you--maybe it's some little weasel buddy of yours. All I know is that you know something. So, one last time--and I mean that sincerely--tell me the story.

**MARLON:** Alright. Maybe I do know something. *(Abby enters)*

**HAJI:** Okay. So who is he? Who is this guy? Is it you?

**ABBY:** *(To Les)* What are they talking about?

**LES:** I guess that rapist guy in town. The one that's been raping all those women.

**MARLON:** Maybe it's none of your business. *(Pause. Smirking)* Maybe it's for me to fucking know, Haji. *(Suddenly Haji grabs Marlon by the throat and lifts him up onto his toes)*

**HAJI:** Oh, so you think it's funny now, do you? Well, I got a little sister, motherfucker, so I don't get the fucking joke!

**ABBY:** Jesus, Haji, chill out! It's not Marlon!

**HAJI** Abby, I've known this little dickbag for three years now and I've never once seen him with a girl. Oh, he tells stories--he fucked Pat Benatar backstage, he did the babysitter when he was nine--but it's all talk. Now he's gotta be getting his rocks off somewhere, but the question is where? Where?

**ABBY:** C'mon, Haji, let him go!

**HAJI:** Stay out of this, Abby! The fucker just told me he knows something. Now. You're going to tell me what that something is. You're going to give me his fucking name. Whether it's Marlon Spier or some other pathetic little weasel's name I don't care but you're going to give it to me or I snap your fucking windpipe. What's his name?!

**ABBY:** George Dingle.

**HAJI:** What?

**ABBY:** That's his name. The rapist. George Dingle, or Bingle, or something. I only remember it because it's so stupid.

**HAJI:** What are you talking about?

**ABBY:** The guy. They caught him. I've been trying to tell you. The bouncer at The Love Nest caught him right in the act. Nearly killed the guy.

**MARLON:** This is bullshit! Don't listen, she's just fucking with us again, Les!

**ABBY:** Hey, don't take my word for it, go listen yourself!

**HAJI:** Shit. *(Slight pause)* Are you sure about this, babe?

**ABBY:** Yeah, I'm sure. They said he confessed to all of them. Even carried the first girl's ring around in his pocket as a good-luck charm. Shit, I heard this on your radio, Haji, where the hell were you?

**HAJI:** I don't know. How was I supposed to hear with your hot little thighs wrapped around my head?

**ABBY:** HAJI! *(Laughing)* You're such a scumbag!

**HAJI:** *(Kissing her)* And you love it.

**MARLON:** HEY!

*(Haji looks up. Marlon is standing there, staring wildly at them. But he doesn't know what to do or say. Pause)*

**HAJI:** What do you want me to say to you, Marlon? I'm sorry, alright? I made a mistake. I got...over-emotional, okay? I was wrong and I'm sorry, alright? Now, c'mon, shake. *(Haji extends his hand. Marlon ignores it, staring at him)* What, are you going to stay mad? Here, I'll tell you what. Hit me. That's right, hit me. Right in the mouth. As hard as you can. *(Haji sticks his chin out toward Marlon. Marlon stares at him for a second, then makes a strangled sound and lashes out with all his might. At the last second, Haji dodges the blow and shoves Marlon back into a chair)* I changed my mind. You're just too fucking scary. C'mon, babe. *(Haji grabs her hand and they start out)* Oh, yeah. Lester, you got your big floor supervisor key-ring yet?

**LES:** Yeah, it's right here.

**HAJI:** Well, come on then, Stillborn locked the fucking breaker box.

**LES:** Yeah, just a minute.

**HAJI:** We ain't got a minute. C'mon.

**LES:** Yeah, just wait there. I'll be right out, I promise.

**ABBY:** Later, gentlemen. *(They leave. Les and Marlon sit in silence for a moment)*

**LES:** Well. *(Pause)* I guess we better clean up. Y'know, like the joints, before Mr. Dearborn gets here and stuff. *(He starts to gather up garbage, then stops when Marlon does not respond)* Look, you want me to bring you some coffee or something?

**MARLON:** *(Quietly)* Fuck you.

**LES:** Alright, then. I'll see you. *(Les starts out. He stops at the door and opens his mouth as if to say something, then closes it)* Have this place cleaned up in fifteen minutes. *(Les exits. Marlon sits still for a moment, then picks up the piece of leather from the table. He slowly stretches it taut a couple of times, then wraps it around his face so that it flattens his nose, leaving his mouth and eyes visible. He tightens it, making his face look grotesque and mask-like. As it gets to its tightest point, the turbine suddenly kicks in, making its original loud, throbbing noise. Marlon begins to hyperventilate to its rhythm as the lights fade...)*