

TRUSTED

written by

Darrell A Pennington

EXT - ASTBURY MERE PARK, ENGLAND - DAY :

Darrell and Penny cross a busy street towards Astbury Mere Park with Fen and Ray, black and white border collies straining at their leads, anxious to run. The sun is shining in all its glory for the first time in ages.

PENNY

Ray, hold on, boy. We're almost there. I'll let you off your leash when it is safe.

DARRELL

(squinting at the sun) You know the park is going to be butts to nuts. The Brits haven't seen sun like this since October!

PENNY

(laughing) Well, I don't imagine it will be that full.

DARRELL

Just wait.

They cross a lot, every parking space filled and cars circling in vain for an opening. Owners get out of their cars with dogs, toys, treats etc.... Pausing to take in the scene, the four continue their walk across the parking lot towards the entrance. As they enter the park, it buzzes with families, couples, singles and animals enjoying the rare warm and sunny March afternoon.

PENNY

Oh, my.

DARRELL

Maybe we should find another park that is a little less lively.

PENNY

No, let's stay here. We'll be fine. They'll love it. They will have so many buddies to play with.

DARRELL

Are you sure? I'm not a pet sitting expert yet, but maybe hyper active 4 year old male border collies and a full-to-the-gills park full of other dogs is a combo we're not really looking to navigate on the fly.

PENNY

Oh, they'll be fine. They're good boys, aren't you? They're always super friendly. (takes Ray's face and rubs him hardily) Isn't that right boy? You want to go see your buddies and catch

up, don't you? It's been a long winter. Time to renew some friendships.

DARRELL

Yeah, and maybe you can get some whiff of new ass too. Is that what you're hoping for Fenn??

PENNY

Oh stop. They're just good boys looking for some exercise. You're good boys aren't you?

As they fully enter the park, a 40 acre expanse of hilly green land with dense clusters of mature trees, wild grasses and bushes starting to bloom catches their eye, along with a large pond filled with fowl and a paved walking path around it, full of people and animals.

DARRELL

Damn, I bet our bench is taken.

PENNY

Maybe not. (bends over to take the leash off of Ray) We can let them off and walk over there and see.

Darrell takes the leash off of Fenn, who bolts ahead with Ray, and holds Penny's hand as they walk towards the bench area.

PENNY

Be good boys! Be nice!

DARRELL

That's telling them!

PENNY

(slapping Darrell on the arm playfully) You hush. (pauses momentarily) You do have the weed, right?

DARRELL

Of course.

PENNY

Of course? We don't have to recount your track record the last few days, do we?

DARRELL

No, unless you just want to have a good laugh.

PENNY

I don't remember laughing then.

DARRELL

But now we can. If this new batch is any good, maybe we'll just laugh our asses right off about it.

PENNY

And the lighter, too?

DARRELL

(stops in his tracks) Fuck!

PENNY

Darrell, are you serious?

DARRELL

(hoping for sympathy) Dammit! I put it on the table by the door....

PENNY

Darrell?!

DARRELL

(pulling his hand from his jacket pocket) and picked it up as we walked out! (holds the lighter in triumph)

PENNY

(harder slap this time) Damn you, Darrell!

DARRELL

See, I told you we could laugh about it.

PENNY

Yeah, it's all grins and giggles. Until it's not.

DARRELL

Oh look, they're leaving!

Two adults and a child are getting up to leave. Darrell hurries over to claim it. Penny looks to the dogs.

PENNY

Ray, Fenn - come here boys. Let's play ball.

The dogs look to Penny. They are frolicking with each other mainly, not paying attention to the others in the park. They jog over to Penny, all three arriving at the bench together.

PENNY

See what good boys you all are! (sitting down on the bench beside Darrell) See, I told you. They'll be fine. Just like always.

DARRELL

(pulling out the lighter and a small black packet) They just haven't found the right bitch, yet.

PENNY

Darrell.

DARRELL

What?! (looks around as he passes the lighter and packet to Penny) We good to light up here? In front of everyone?

PENNY

(pulling out an empty tobacco pouch from her cross over) When you are as prepared as I am. Everyone rolls their own, we just set this pouch out and it looks like we're smoking cigarettes. We just need to smoke our own, no passing back and forth.

DARRELL

The smell?

PENNY

Nah. It's windy. (opens the packet and pulls out 2 joints) Here you go.

Penny picks up one of the ball throwers and prepares to throw the ball. Both dogs come to immediate attention and are ready to go chase.

PENNY

Fenn, we're gonna let Ray go first, OK. Sit boy. (Fenn obediently sits) Good boy. Now, stay Fenn, stay. (looks over at Ray) You ready, Ray?? (cocks the ball thrower, pauses and throws the ball) Go get it Ray!

The ball flies 20 yards in the air. Ray tracks it, arriving at the spot it lands and catching it on the bounce before galloping back and returning the ball directly to Penny.

PENNY

(taking a puff, holding it as she talks) Good boy, Ray! (exhales a plume of smoke) Yes, you are such a good boy. You ready Fenn? Your turn now. Ready boy?

Fenn excitedly prepares to launch as Penny places the ball back in the thrower and cocks her arm to throw it.

PENNY

(as she throws the ball) Go get it Fenn! (like a rocket Fenn is off, nearly galloping to grab the ball after it's bounce 25 yards or so away.)

A beautiful brown and white cocker spaniel and owner slowly walk the paved path near the pond. Millie, pink bows on her ears, her coat glistening in the sun, looking very dog-sexy. She walks leash-free beside her quite large female owner, who wears a black puffy winter coat, sock cap, and mittens. Millie is clearly the belle of the ball. Ray, sitting beside Penny, stands up as Fenn arrives with the ball. Ray is sniffing the air excitedly, clearly enticed. Fenn drops the ball, turns to look in the direction of the cocker and sniffs the air. Darrell and Penny are oblivious to the situation quickly materializing in front of them, unprepared to take action. As they take a puff, the scene unfolds before them slow-action style as the cocker runs from its owner towards the bench area. Ray and Fenn are off like a shot, running stride for stride with each other towards the cocker. Each dog's long flowing hair floats in the wind as they run towards each other. Love is in the air styled music plays. Penny is startled by the commotion, looks up, and exhales a cloud of smoke as the three dogs meet approximately 50 yards from their owner and start sniffing one another intimately. Action returns to normal speed as the music scratches to a sudden end.

PENNY

(yelling helplessly) Ray! Fenn! STAY! Come here, boys!

COCKER OWNER

(shrilly) Millie! Come back here!

Each plea ignored, Ray and Fenn take turns sniffing the cocker and circling her, all three getting to know each other, Millie quite content to be sniffed repeatedly. Ray comes in for one more sniff and immediately mounts Millie. He is in fine form this first Saturday of Spring.

COCKER OWNER

(attempting to run but managing a slow walk) Millie! (pauses to catch breath) Millie! (pauses again) Millicent Laine Hooperson!! Get away from there, girl!

PENNY

(bolting up and yelling scathingly) Ray, NO!

Penny starts slow jogging towards the dog when her foot gets caught in the neck hole of the leash and she steps with her other foot on the length, causing herself to stumble for a few steps, her arms flailing for balance, barely able to stay upright before gathering herself as she hurries. Fenn is licking the face of Millie as she tries to get underneath him to smell his penis.

COCKER OWNER

Millie! Girl! Get back here. (she has to stop, bent over, hands on knees, helplessly looking in Penny's direction and huffing as she yells) She's in season!

PENNY

(insistently as she continues to run towards the dogs) Fenn, stop that! Sit! Stay! Come here, Fenn. Ray, stop humping! (pulls treats from her jacket pocket) Look boy, treats! Come get your treat, Ray! Please!

The entire park has stopped to watch as Penny arrives at the scene. Millie has burrowed under Fenn so that it looks like he is humping her face while Ray gives it all he's got from behind, performing the first dog threesome many of the park's visitors have likely seen. There is a cacophony of yelling from Penny and the owner of the Cocker as the obese lady finally arrives at the scene, out of breath, but still managing to get out intermittent yells of Stop, Stop, and Oh my poor Millie. Darrell relaxes on the bench, taking another puff and surveying the scene, clearly happy with the action before him. As he exhales an extra large cloud of smoke Penny begs forgiveness.

PENNY

I am so sorry! They are usually such well-behaved boys!

COCKER OWNER

(still trying to catch her breath) Well....(huffs and wheezes) I'm not sure....(more wheezing as she sort of clutches at her chest) what you consider....(has to stop talking, bends over, hands on knees, and tries to take in deep breaths) I'm not sure what you consider well-behaved, but this is not it! Millie was a virgin!

PENNY

A virgin? What?

COCKER OWNER

Yes! She is only 2 years old!

PENNY

(exasperated and aggravated yell to Darrell) I could use some help!

DARRELL

(exhales a large cloud of smoke and waves dismissively) Oh, they're fine! They're being good boys!

PENNY

(to the cocker owner) Well, she sure looks like she knows what she's doing to me. (looking over at the action) She doesn't seem to mind getting double-teamed. Honestly, she looks like she is enjoying it...I think Millie is a good time girl. Maybe Millie isn't quite as pure as you'd like to think.

COCKER OWNER

Don't you dare!

PENNY

Don't I dare? Don't I dare? You're the one bringing Millie out here while the bitch is in heat, looking like she wants to have a grand ol' time with her beautiful hair blowing in the wind and wearing pink bows on her ears. Pink? You wouldn't bring your 14-year-old daughter to the park, showing her pink panties to all the boys hanging around with hard-ons on command, would you? Would you?

COCKER OWNER

Excuse me?

PENNY

(looking back over at Darrell) Well, would you? You know pink is like instant boners to boys. Why do you think we call men dogs? Because dogs like pink panties too, and if they get a shot at a threesome, they're gonna take it. They're dogs!

COCKER OWNER

Well, I don't know how you Americans address this situation in your country, but in England, we teach our dogs AND our men to respect bitches, I mean, women in general.

PENNY

Really? Is that so? You ever hear of King Charles or Hugh Grant? You know, the one that had Diana killed and the one that decided to get a cheap whore while poor Ms. Hurley sat at home alone?

COCKER OWNER

Don't even dare talk about Diana! You have no right to utter her name.

PENNY

(in a recalcitrant tone) OK. (pauses) OK, maybe I went over the edge with that one. I'm sorry.

COCKER OWNER

(a self-righteous huff) You most certainly did!

PENNY

(looking at the dogs still going at it) Look lady. I really am sorry. I'm just a new pet sitter looking after these dogs while the owners are on holiday in Africa. I'm not meaning to be a bitch. Millie is precious. And gotta give it to the girl (looks over at the action still taking place) - Ray's been gettin' after that for some time now, and she's just taking it like a champ. You're a good time, girl, aren't you Mille!

Ray is still humping vigorously while Fenn gets a doggie bj. The people in the park are laughing, pointing, taking pictures, and shooting video or talking on their phones excitedly as Penny stands there, unsure what to do. Finally, she looks over at Darrell one last time

PENNY

(waiving her hand as it turns into flipping him off) Thanks for all the help, asshole.

Darrell exhales a cloud of smoke and acknowledges the gesture graciously with a wave back.

A close-up on the three dogs still enjoying this spring Saturday before the camera pulls out from above, Penny (arms folded) and the Cocker Owner (hands over her eyes, gingerly peeking to see the situation) visible, then the onlookers and other dogs as the scene ascends before a final fade to black.

Super: 1 Year Earlier

INT - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Nine people sit around a table in a rundown, dingy conference room with another 10 crowded into the small space. Coffee cups litter the table, a partially eaten Danish sits on a paper towel in front of someone. A stack of tri-folded papers sits next to Stumpy, mid-60s and grizzled, at the head of the table. His long-sleeve dress shirt is wrinkled, yellowed and unbuttoned one button too many. His sleeves are rolled up to his elbows with a pair of glasses sat atop his head. He has a sad look as he speaks.

STUMPY

I know this is short notice. But it isn't a shock to any of us. I'm sorry. I really am, but we all knew this was going to happen. I expected it a long time before today. Now, we just have to figure out how we move forward. I love you guys, you're all family to me. We're family to each other. So, (pauses) chin up. This isn't the end. It is the beginning of the next thing. That's the way I'm looking at it.

DARRELL

So, what is the next thing?

MISC PERSON 1

Yeah, Stumpy. What is the next thing?

STUMPY

I don't know. (taps the stack of papers sitting on the table) I have these to give to you. It has your severance information. As I understand it, they're not retaining any of us. Honestly, I think they are going to use the AP wire and AI to generate 90% of the content. Not sure what the plan is for local coverage.

BOBBY

What bullshit. No one wants stories from the fuckin' AP or artificial lack of intelligence or any of that crap. They want the stories this paper has been pumping out for the last 125 years from local writers who live here.

MISC PERSON 3

You're pissing in the wind, Bobby. That time passed long ago. Stumpy is exactly right - I can't believe we lasted this long. Hopefully, we've all saved some money and can take time to figure out next steps.

BOBBY

Shit. I've been lucky to pay rent and child support the last 3 years. I think I have \$5.67 in my savings account at this exact moment.

STUMPY

(tapping the stacks of paper beside him) Well, this part will help for sure. And we did get a 30 day notice so there's that too. I'll write glowing letters of recommendation for each of you.

DARRELL

Well, that and a pack of Bubblicious will get you to second base.

STUMPY

(pauses, not sure how to interpret the statement) Look, I'm not trying to sugarcoat this or blow smoke up your ass, but it really is the beginning of something else. I'm not trying to say it will be better but part of that is up to us and how we choose to move forward. And, we still have a job to do for the next 30 days so we need to stay as focused on that as possible even as we are preparing for whatever is next.

INT - STUMPY'S OFFICE - DAY

Stumpy sits in a Captain's chair behind a cluttered desk in front of a wall of disorganized chaos spilling from bookcases. Two chairs sit in front of the desk, one with Darrell. The open glass door reads Editor In Chief. A nameplate on the desk reads: Stumpy Rowe / Asshole in Chief. Both men hold a rocks glass with whiskey.

STUMPY

(sips from the glass) What are you gonna tell Penny?

DARRELL

I already did. I called after the meeting. Told her that it finally happened and we knew it was coming so now we gotta make some decisions.

STUMPY

And?

DARRELL

Oh, she tried to act like she was upset for me. She's beyond ecstatic. (raises his glass for a gulp) If I know her, she probably helped engineer the buy out of the paper. She's been wanting me to retire for years.

STUMPY

You should! You've earned it.

DARRELL

And do what? Fuck me, I've written a daily column 5 days a week for 27, almost 28 years, and I'm just gonna stop in 31 days? Fuck that.

STUMPY

Get a hobby retard. Go travel. You're still young. Do it while you have the energy. My God, work will be out there whenever you want. They say timing is everything, you know.

DARRELL

Jesus fuckin Christ - did she call you and give the speech?

STUMPY

(laughing) No sir.

DARRELL

Well, you sound just like her.

STUMPY

We talk about you at our Wednesday hook ups alot. She really likes you for some reason.

DARRELL

I knew she was into amputees! She always tried to act like she wasn't but I could feel it. Team stumpy all the way.

STUMPY

You ain't been humped until you ride a stump.

DARRELL

(finishes off his whiskey) Well, that's depressing. Any special recommendations for Peyroni's?

STUMPY

(laughing) You got ol' carrot dick, huh? To much self abuse I'm guessing.

DARRELL

Probably. Closer to a sideways horseshoe. Only, for a miniature horse. Of course.

STUMPY

(taking a final swig) Of course!

EXT - OUTDOOR PATION - NIGHT

Darrell and Penny sit at a round table, occupying two of the four chairs. An empty bottle of red wine sits on the table as they each take a sip from their glass. A gas-powered fire pit warms the space. Penny has a joint in her hand.

PENNY

Stumpy was right. Something new awaits.

DARRELL

I guess. Starting something brand new doesn't particularly appeal to me.

PENNY

What, so you were going to work until the day you died? That's depressing.

DARRELL

I don't know. I suppose it depends on when I die.

PENNY

I'm beating a dead horse here, I know that. But there is a bright side to be looked at.

DARRELL

In 31 days you are going to be seeing much more of this smiling face?

PENNY

(takes a long toke and exhales) Well, there is that little nugget of reality that I can't wait to experience. But I was thinking more along the lines of us getting out to finally see the world.

DARRELL

The world?

PENNY

Don't even start. You promised when you retired that we would travel to places we've never been.

DARRELL

I didn't retire, I got fired. We're not even 60 yet. I know I look like mangled roadkill most days but I'm still a youngster. At heart anyway.

PENNY

Exactly! A youngster at heart. Life is short, work is meant to go away at some point - which is the issue if you ask me. Who knows how long you've got? Yours wouldn't be the first funeral we've been to. We'll be 60 in a few months. And I appreciate your roadkill-esque aura. I prefer to see it as seasoned but I can follow you down the roadkill path. But work is not a path, it is a dead end.

DARRELL

Not for us, not now at least. We don't have the money. Unfortunately, hometown newspapers never stepped up to the plate with those 6-figure paydays.

PENNY

Don't be a dick. (takes a toke and exhales demonstratively) And quit feeling sorry for yourself because something didn't go the way you wanted it to go. Things change, people adapt. Lives evolve. We have plenty of money. For now. When we run out, we'll figure out what's next. We can travel inexpensively, too, you know. Places all over the world.

DARRELL

Hey, if you can find us a sugar daddy who needs his prunes and a diaper change every now and then. Whatever else he needs that you can certainly keep to yourself, I'm willing to listen.

PENNY

Don't tempt me, roadkill.

DARRELL

OK, OK. Tell me about this grand plan and how we can travel the world on a shoestring budget. (finishes his wine) I'm all ears.

PENNY

Oh good! (pulls out a magazine from under her leg) It's all in here. (sets it down in front of Darrell)

Darrell picks up the glossy magazine. The front cover has a couple about the age of Penny and Darrell walking a dog in a park. Above their picture is a round logo with the word TRUSTED in a puffy letter font.

DARRELL

Trusted, huh? (flips open the magazine and flips thru it). Give me the Cliff Notes version.

PENNY

(takes another puff) OK, its an online service that matches home and pet owners with people looking to travel to their location. So people like us that want to travel and be house and pet sitters, they have a profile on this website that explains why they would be a good sitter. Sort of like a dating app. And a lot of the locations that are listed on the site are just wonderful.

DARRELL

Yeah? (flips thru the magazine, an article looking for freelance writers catches his eye) Like where?

PENNY

(Pulls out her phone, jumps on the app, types in some words and scrolls) Like this one! (reads aloud) Mykonos, Greece - South Coast: 2 bedroom home less than half a mile from the beach. My precious Alister is a 14 year old senior feline that lays around most of the day. Travelling to visit family in the U.S. for 5 weeks May 10 to June 18.

DARRELL

(reading the article, paying half attention) Hmmm. Interesting.

PENNY

Interesting? We've talked about going to Greece for years! 39 days we would get to stay looking after 1 lazy old cat and a few house plants. And it costs us NOTHING to stay there. Nothing! (Darrell is still looking at the magazine, having

flipped to the masthead page to read the particulars of the magazine's publication) I've been reading about this a lot the last few weeks. There aren't enough sitters to meet the demand - this company is advertising all over the internet and I've even heard a few commercials on some of the podcasts I listen to.

DARRELL

(looks up from the magazine) Do you have any other issues?

PENNY

No, just that one. Why?

DARRELL

I'm pretty sure this is put out by the same holding company that just bought the paper.

PENNY

Really?

DARRELL

(holds up the mast head page) Looks like it. Z.P. Ferguson Media Enterprises.

PENNY

Strange.

DARRELL

Not really. These media companies are buying up every bit of print content that they can. There's so few buyers and so many failing papers, magazines, and periodicals all over the world. They're getting shit dirt cheap in hopes they can make something hit. Maybe Stumpy has some inside contact info I can finagle.

PENNY

For what purpose?

DARRELL

Who knows? Seems like pissing money away in my opinion but I'm not a Wall Street wheeler dealer.

PENNY

No, why would you want Stumpy to find some contact?

DARRELL

(flips to the article about freelance writers) They're looking for writers. Maybe there's something here. Who knows?

PENNY

(excitedly) Really? Like you would write for them AND we would become pet sitters too?

DARRELL

(giving in) Sure, why not? Worth a shot. What the fuck do I have to lose? I'm unemployed in 31 days and you're convinced I'm gonna be pushing up daisies in a few, so maybe you're right, maybe it's time to figure out what's next.

PENNY

Burials are expensive. You're getting cremated. But I'd rather be holding your hand, walking the beach in Greece, than carrying your ashes to scatter in the ocean. (walks over and kisses Darrell on the top of his head) It's time. It's going to be an incredible adventure - wait and see! And it's just taking care of pets - what a breeze!

Super: Six Months Later

INT - ITALIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Darrell, Penny, and Stumpy are having dinner; there is a celebratory vibe. 3 empty wine bottles sit on the table with an empty bread basket and wine, water, tea glasses filled to various levels, along with half-eaten desserts in front of each.

STUMPY

(holds up his glass) To new challenges and new beginnings!

PENNY

Hear, hear (all three clink glasses)

STUMPY

(looking at Darrell) Not gonna lie, when you told me about this, I thought there was no way in hell you'd go thru with it. Not a shot, I thought to myself. And shit, 6 months later, and you leave out tomorrow. (looks at Penny) I still can't believe it.

PENNY

(looks knowingly at Darrell) That makes three of us.

DARRELL

Yeah. Guess this ol' dog can learn a trick or two.

STUMPY

That makes one of us (holds up his glass).

DARRELL

Fuck that. Your time's coming Stump. Hang in there. (Pauses)
God. That's horrible. I'd strike that from a column if I saw it, and
here I just said it out loud. To my best friend. (looks
apologetically to Stumpy)

STUMPY

Don't fret, young lad. (lifts his glass towards Darrell) I hear you. I
hear you.

PENNY

(breaking the uncomfortable silence) Hey mutherfuckers....none
of the frowny face shit tonite. That's bullshit. We are not starting
this adventure with some sad sack old men feeling sorry for
each other trying to verbally jerk each others half hard cocks to
no avail because both of them busted a nut yesterday. No - this
is a fun night out you suns of bitches. Drink up! Drink up, I say!

STUMPY

Congrats - not even the weekend.

DARRELL

I could say the same.

STUMPY

Eh, handy's don't count.

DARRELL

Retirement! She's being kind. It wasn't a nut bust so much as a
nut poof.

STUMPY

She's told me. 60-year-old prostates are a bitch.

DARRELL AND STUMPY AND PENNY
(holding their glasses aloft) Drink up mutherfuckers!

Time-lapse scene showing the threesome fellowshiping, laughing, talking seriously, a tear maybe wiped from an eye as empty wine bottles now number eight, a pot of coffee also on the table, as the scene returns to present time and Darrell takes a piece of bread from a new breadbasket, takes a bite, puts it down and stands up.

DARRELL

If you will pardon me. But I got to go see a man about a horse.

STUMPY

Hey, while you're at it, shake it a few extra times and pretend it's me doing it for your little feller. Just like the old days.

PENNY

The old days? (shoo's Darrell) Go on old man, wait too long and you'll start dribblin' again.

DARRELL

(walks behind Penny, squeezes her shoulders lovingly and kisses her on the head) You can't have her pal, she's all mine.

PENNY

(looking over her shoulder) My God, I thought he'd never leave. I'm so glad you both are so comfortable with your man love for one another. It's cute (shaking her head negatively).

STUMPY

OK, if his prostrate cooperates we probably got three minutes but if he took his flonase then just a minute and a half.

PENNY

You crack me up Stumpy. I know you're fucking with me. I know that but damn you sure can act stupid like a genius.

STUMPY

Been workin' on it my whole life, my dear.

PENNY

OK, so you got to help me out here.

STUMPY

I'm all ears, 2 arms and one and a half legs. Go.

PENNY

You gotta help me get Darrell to start smoking weed.

STUMPY

On your nerves already, huh??

PENNY

I love the man. Lord knows I love him. And he ain't always the easiest man to love. But I do it.

STUMPY

But it's just been 5 months, and you're gonna kill him?

PENNY

Or myself. Or both of us. I don't know, but I have got to get that man to chill the fuck out. And not 2 bottles of red wine can't pronounce diphthongs anymore chilled out. Just smoke a joint and chill. the. fuck. out. Dark Side of the Moon style.

STUMPY

I hear ya. I've been known to get down with the ganja every now and then.

PENNY

Is that right? With the (air quotes) 'ganja', huh? Seems unlikely.

STUMPY

Well, it's been a few years, I suppose.

PENNY

Has it now?

STUMPY

OK, OK. My point is I understand. Why is he so resistant?

PENNY

I don't know. He always just says he's not a pot guy and never has been. He likes the alcohol buzz better. I think there's some Daddy issues there, if I am being honest, but I ain't scratching that itch. I've scratched a lot of gross places for that man but his Daddy issues is a no go area for me.

STUMPY

Understood. So, what do you want me to do?

PENNY

I don't know. I was hoping that maybe you could just casually bring up how you've been smoking it lately and it's really helped with your depression on not being able to find anything yet.

STUMPY

Ouch! Damn woman!

PENNY

Quit being a pussy, you know what I mean. Just tell him that you've been smoking it for a few weeks and that it has really helped you chill out and if you want to really rub it on thick you could say that you and Janie are on the best terms you've been on since the divorce.

STUMPY

Damn! A couple more of those and I'm gonna bleed out.

PENNY

(noticing that Darrell is on his way back, pats Stumpy's arm) Oh, you'll be fine. Just roll with it!

DARRELL

OK, what did I miss? Did he try to get you to touch his stump again? Did she ask if she could pump the stump?

PENNY

Oh Darrell, quit being 12 every day.

DARRELL

(takes his seat) I'd say closer to 14. I was sort of a late bloomer.

PENNY

(looks at Stumpy and shakes her head negatively) But you've really made up for it since then, my stud. But, (pauses again) I do have to ask.

STUMPY

Ask away my love.

PENNY

I can't believe in the 25 years or how ever the fuck long it is that I've known you I have never heard how you got the nickname Stumpy.

STUMPY

(looks bewildered as he fidgets under the table, pulling up and shaking his prosthetic leg in the air) And here I thought it had been so obvious all those years.

PENNY

Not why, prune sack. How?

DARRELL

(as Stumpy puts his leg back on) Yeah Stump, why don't you tell her?

STUMPY

Seriously, you never told her?

PENNY

He just said it happened in the Gulf War.

DARRELL

I told her the rest of it was your story to tell.

PENNY

Yeah, but really weird. (looking at Stumpy) Like you all were boyfriends or something.

STUMPY

I'll never tell.

DARRELL

Tell her the story. She'll wonder why you haven't been nominated for a Medal of Honor. Real War Hero here. Second coming of John McCain practically.

STUMPY

I mean...that might be a stretch of the tiniest proportions, but a stretch nonetheless.

DARRELL

Go on. Stop stonewalling and tell her. She what she thinks.

STUMPY

(earnestly) If I tell you, you promise you won't think less of me?

PENNY

Stumpy, I couldn't possibly think any less of you. Now get to the fucking story, please.

WAITRESS

(walking up to the table, she is Asian and interrupts gingerly)
Pardon my interruption folks, I did want to let you know that we close in 20 minutes or so. Did you need anything else before I bring you the ticket? Are we splitting this you two and you?

STUMPY

No, it's all on me.

DARRELL

Stump? No way. I can't let you do that.

STUMPY

Can't let me? Please. Plus, you're on a budget now.

DARRELL

You're unemployed!

STUMPY

It's fine. I got it. (winks). I'm good for it. Can you bring us another bottle of wine and the ticket?

WAITRESS

(looking at the 8 bottles on the table) Sir, we close in 20 minutes. Plus you've had 8 bottles already. I don't think we can serve you another bottle?

PENNY

(touches the Waitress re-assuringly) Oh, we're taking Uber.

WAITRESS

(pulling her arm back, turning snarky) Oh. Uber? When did they start preventing alcohol poisoning?

PENNY

Well, Lordy me. I didn't know we had Margaret Cho waiting on us tonight. (looks her up and down) You've held up so well, dear. Perhaps waitressing suits you better than stand-up. I never thought you were that funny anyway. I'm more of an Ali Wong Girl.

DARRELL

Excuse me. Dear, I understand you can't bring us another bottle of wine. How about three Irish Coffees. (looks at Stumpy) And put those on a separate ticket for me , please.

WAITRESS

OK, I'm gonna cut you all some slack because she reminds me of my grandmother and I will bring you the three coffees with 2 tickets. (smiles snarkily at Penny) I hope you took your liver pills today.

PENNY

So funny Margaret!

DARRELL

Stump? Come on man. Let me pay for ours.

STUMPY

I got it. I'm good. I want to do this. It's been my plan all along. (looks around the restaurant) Sort of assumed we were looking at Waffle House when we said we were going to have a good bye dinner. That's what I get for letting you pick (picks up Penny's hand and kisses it).

DARRELL

Ok, so before we were accosted by Margaret Cho you were getting around to telling Penny your war injury and subsequent nickname.

STUMPY

Yes, let's do get to that thrilling story that an award-winning movie will surely document one day, preserving for posterity this unique war story and one soldier's journey to being known as Stumpy for the rest of his life.

PENNY

You're drunk.

STUMPY

(leans in to whisper) And, if I might add, just a little high.

DARRELL

What? Really?

STUMPY

I mean, I'm on the come down now, but yeah, I smoked a joint before I came in tonight. Just to cut the edge of the day off. Try to get my chill vibe on (furtively glances at Penny)

DARRELL

Shit. Seriously?

STUMPY

(looks away) Yeah. Actually been smoking for a few weeks now. Why so surprised?

DARRELL

I don't know. I mean, you text me a picture every time you buy a bottle of Bourbon and you just start smoking weed out of the blue a few weeks ago and don't say a word to me. (Looks at Penny, she looks away) Just seems strange to me.

STUMPY

Hey Geraldo, there's no story here. I just started smoking it to try it out. My therapist actually suggested I try it out.

DARRELL

Your therapist? The one that you've been going to for the last decade?

STUMPY

Yeah, Linda.

DARRELL

Linda suggested you start smoking weed. In a state that doesn't allow medical marijuana?

STUMPY

(looks at Penny) Turns out she's a drug dealer too. Guess just being a therapist can't make ends meet these days. Thanks Trump. So anyway, one day I was telling her I was starting to get anxiety attacks about not having a job lined up with my severance almost thru and she asked if I was on any medications. I told her just for my cholesterol and if I want to get hard before I jerk off a Viagra every now and then.

DARRELL

And Linda just whips out a bag of weed and sells it to you while you're lying there on the couch.

STUMPY

I told you, we don't use the couch anymore. I kept falling asleep.

DARRELL

Whatever the fuck it is. Your chair, she just tosses you a bag of weed and says 'here go smoke two of these and call me tomorrow'?

STUMPY

(really getting into the lie) No, not at all. Actually, she has this menu.

DARRELL

A menu?

STUMPY

Yeah. Real heavy and nice. Like at Ruth's Chris or something.

DARRELL

And what, pray tell, did this menu have?

STUMPY

Oh man, it was laid out in all the different strains of bud she has to offer. Sativa's in one section and Indica's in another. Flower, hash, moonrocks, even some edibles. She has it all man. (Penny looks perplexed as this level of specificity). You should check it out, actually. Well, I guess you can't since you're leaving tomorrow.

DARRELL

And why didn't you tell me any of this?

STUMPY

I don't know man. (looks at Penny) I mean, you can be a bit of a moralist.

DARRELL

(looking at Penny) A moralist? (Penny shrugs)

STUMPY

That's not a bad thing. It can be a bit monotonous at times.

DARRELL

Well shit, that sounds like a bad thing to me. Hey honey, meet my monotonous friend - you'll love him.

STUMPY

Come on man, you're drunk. We're all drunk.

DARRELL

Yeah, but I'm not that drunk.

PENNY

Darrell, calm down.

DARRELL

I am calm, I just didn't expect to get double teamed at our going away dinner.

PENNY

Oh come on.

DARRELL

(looks at Stumpy) Really? Stumpy is a pothead now and gets his shit from his therapist and her Steakhouse styled menu? I mean I know the old age is taking it's toll on me but I really didn't think I'd become an imbecile already. (gets up from the table, drops a couple of 20's). I'm gonna go order the Uber (walks off).

STUMPY

Guess I really did lay it on thick, huh?

PENNY

(shaking her head affirmatively) No, not at all.

STUMPY

I'm sorry. I really am.

PENNY

Oh, I'm fucking with you. That's my fault. I shouldn't have asked you to do that. He saw right thru it in a second. But damn dude, where did you come up with all the knowledge?

STUMPY

(laughs assuredly) I told you I was down with the ganja didn't I?

PENNY

Stumpy Lowe, you are one big ball of contradictions aren't you?

STUMPY

I think the term is complex.

PENNY

Touche Sorry it ended this way. He'll be fine but I better get out there before he leaves me..

INT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Darrell and Penny LAY in bed at the end of a long and emotional evening. They are propped up on overstuffed pillows and a TV hangs on the wall opposite of them. Sportscenter is on.

PENNY

(holding an unlit joint in one hand and a lighter in the other) I don't want you to think we were double-teaming you. That's not what that was. Stumpy was just helping me out.

DARRELL

I don't understand why I'm a project you need help on.

PENNY

You're not a project. You're stubborn. That's been great for you up to now. And for me most of the time. But I don't want to travel the world with a stubborn old man. Being stubborn at work and with the kids when they needed it is one thing, but this is a different now. Stubbornness isn't gonna work in this part of our life. We gotta be a team on the same page, able to adapt.

DARRELL

We leave for England tomorrow for 5 months and 9 pet sits. Seems like I'm pretty adaptable.

PENNY

Yeah. So far. When it has been all theoretical. But come on. You know that once we get into it we're gonna get some curveballs. It's just you and me now babe. For 5 whole months. I love you to death - but five whole months of you 24/7 is not a trip I want to take sober. Life's to fun high to be sober all the time.

DARRELL

I'll stay as drunk as you want me.

PENNY

Come on. Your pancreas can only take so much more before I'm scattering your ashes in Greece. I feel like I am a high school bully - come on man, smoke this. Do it. You know you want to.

DARRELL

I'd let you bully me. Is there a spanking at the end of that joint?

PENNY

There could be!

DARRELL

OK, so light that up and send it this way.

PENNY

Really?

DARRELL

Sure. Why not? Fuck me, how many times are you going to get me to say that?

PENNY

(lights the joint) OK, so instead of saying 'excuse me, could you send that marijuana cigarette this way over her miss' say 'hey, puff puff pass'.

INT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Darrell and Penny wear matching robes as Darrell fixes a new dish he calls Hot Dog Grilled Cheese. Penny sits at the bar watching him, sipping a glass of wine. He is wearing boxers under his open robe, his hair is all messed up and Penny's hair pulled up in a bun.

PENNY

I tried to tell you...

DARRELL

You sure did

PENNY

Can you imagine that every night??

DARRELL

(flipping the sandwich) My waistline can't support a Hot Dog Grilled Cheese every night!

PENNY

Very funny, Fucker.

DARRELL

I sent Stumpy a text. I told him I was sorry for being a dick. He's cool. Said you promised to blow him if he went along with it and wants to know if that will be before we leave or when we get back.

PENNY

I couldn't possibly manage another one tonight so give him a raincheck.

DARRELL

Fair enough. (plates the sandwich, goes to the fridge to grab the mayo, sriracha, jalapenos, dill pickles)

PENNY

Holy shit, Dagwood!

DARRELL

I guess the munchies are a real thing.

PENNY

If you start smoking every day like me.....

DARRELL

(interrupting) Every day or every hour?

PENNY

Don't reach for the moon just yet junior. You gotta crawl before you can even think of running with me.

DARRELL

I'm sure.

PENNY

But those will go away after a few weeks and you'll just fall into a normal routine. I really think it will be good for you and for us. I know you think I'm joking when I say it's my medicine but it

really is. Everything is much more enjoyable. Not a hallucination, not some trip. Just a smoothing of the edges and a little more insight to the ways of the world. Plus, you are much funnier when I am high.

DARRELL

We need some celebrity weed company to sponsor the trip. I never woulda guessed we'd be smoking buddies in England.

PENNY

Well, hold on hoss. You have to graduate to smoking buddy. Right now you are my pot protege. I have to mould you and get you into smoking buddy shape. The NFL doesn't just jump into the regular season does it? No, they have a preseason. You are a rookie looking to make the roster.

DARRELL

Got it coach.

PENNY

OK, so go hit the showers before we go to bed rookie. You smell like cheese.

INT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Darrell and Penny relax in bed. He is propped up on one of the overstuffed pillows and she is laying across his chest, his right arm is draped across her back

PENNY

So since you brought our night to a screeching halt at the restaurant you get to tell me the Stumpy story.

DARRELL

I do, do I?

PENNY

That's right.

DARRELL

Fair enough. OK, so picture - this is, let's see, Summer of '91. Desert Storm started in January and Stumpy gets shipped over there in March. It would have been March 24th when he landed cuz he told me that he was shipping in on his 24th birthday.

PENNY

Wait, so Stumpy is younger than you?

DARRELL

Damn, Penelope. Even high you are a math whiz.

PENNY

It's a gift.

DARRELL

So he is there a few months and is getting a lay of the land. It's hot as fuck in the summer there so anytime they got free they would head into town to this air conditioned bar the Army had set up for the non-religious locals and our boys. Cheap beer. He actually says it is his favorite bar ever.

PENNY

(propping up) No shit?

DARRELL

Who knew the one thing the government could get right is a bar? (Penny lays back across Darrell) So anyway, Stumpy is a regular there and one of the local girls takes a liking to him. She flirts with him all the time.

PENNY

(propping herself up again) Wait, so Muslim girls can flirt?

DARRELL

Who knew?

PENNY

Well, not me (lays back down across Darrell) I can't keep up with what the Presbyterians are allowing on any given Sunday, much less the Muslims.

DARRELL

Yeah, so this girl is flirty and actually buys him a beer.

PENNY

Well shit, she's gotta a set on her I guess.

DARRELL

Right. So they get to talking and....now this is all according to Stumpy so take it with a grain of salt...

PENNY

Noted

DARRELL

So he says that she gets all meta on him and recognizes that the reason he is not pursuing her is because he thinks that she thinks she can ride his army jacket coattails all the way back to the good ol' US of A. Turns out she just wanted to experience an American johnson to compare to the homegrown talent.

PENNY

How'd he figure that out.

DARRELL

That's where the story gets really good. So one day she comes in dressed very provocatively. Again, this is Iran so nothing like Miami Beach but she comes in showing some skin. And Stumpy thinks to himself, shit she really is hot. So the girl comes over to him and said she was ready to make some money.

PENNY

Like a prostitute?

DARRELL

Yeah.

PENNY

Damn! Good for her!

DARRELL

See! I knew you'd say that. I wanted Stumpy to hear you say it.

PENNY

Yeah, I am all about this Muslim Mary. Wants to get some red white and blue balls and ends up convincing Stumpy to pay for what she wanted to do for free? Damn right. Capitalism at it's finest. Guess we done won that war.

DARRELL

(laughing) So then she adds in that it is her 20th birthday so he should buy her a birthday present of a nice dinner and drinks.

PENNY

This girl needs to be selling how to tapes online.

DARRELL

I don't think they produce VHS tapes anymore, honey.

PENNY

Well, FaceTube or YouBook - I don't know. sounds like to this girl knows how to run a business.

DARRELL

So anyway, Stumpy takes her out to the nicest restaurant in the town, treats her like a princess. Dessert, champagne, all of it.

PENNY

Damn, we got champagne drinking, chocolate eating, pole riding Muslim girls in Iraq acting like prostitutes. I'm not sure that's the liberation we were aiming for but OK.

DARRELL

So girl says that she works out of this apartment near the restaurant and was he ready to go back there. Of course Stumpy is all about it. Can't wait. They walk a few blocks and get to the apartment. Stumpy says as soon as they got inside she was ripping his and her clothes off and they were just at it in an instant, no foreplay or anything.

PENNY

Had to be Stumpy's dream come true.

DARRELL

So she's been going down on him for awhile and she looks up and says 'Will you taste mine'?

PENNY

Will you taste mine? I'm learning so much about the world's other major religion tonight.

DARRELL

So they change positions and he said his knees were killing him but he didn't want to stop. SO out of the corner of his eye, he notices this little fluffy blanket with tassels on it. Without missing a lick he reaches over and gets it, leaves it rolled, and has it under his knees. Giving him tremendous relief.

PENNY

Well yeah. Been there, Stumpy.

DARRELL

So, to hear Stumpy tell it he is just giving a gold medal performance and breaking world records with his chow session. She's loving it and neither one hear that someone has come in the room with them.

PENNY

Oh no....

DARRELL

Oh yes...So it's her older brother that she lives with and is tasked with keeping her virginal and suitable for marriage.

PENNY

Oh shit.

DARRELL

Yeah, oh shit. Wait. So to top it off, turns out the knee pad wasn't a blanket but it was the brother's prayer rug.

PENNY

Oh my fucking Allah.

DARRELL

So brother has just got home from work. At the butcher shop. Still carrying his trusty butcher's cleaver.

PENNY

Oh no.....

DARRELL

Oh yes...brother notices his sister getting eaten out by an American soldier on the bed they share in this little one room apartment which probably sends most jihadists over the edge but

when he notices that Stumpy is kneeling on his prayer rug with his sisters legs over each of Stumpy's shoulders he lets out this blood curdling scream and slices that calf right in half!

PENNY

(yelling out vociferously) Oh my God! (acts as if she might throw up). So the brother just sliced it straight off in one whack?

DARRELL

Yeah, but it was halfway down his calf. Girl runs out screaming, barely covering her body and tracks down one of his army buddies on the street, and they eventually get him to the local hospital because they are afraid he'll bleed out before they get back to the base, but they can't do anything to save the leg. Actually, the real kick in the nuts is because he cut it halfway down the calf, they had to amputate the rest up to his knee so he would be able to get a prosthetic. And apparently, since they were under wartime law and Stumpy was an American, they could not administer any painkillers, so they had to amputate him, strapped to a table screaming in agony. Said he passed out three times at least.

PENNY

Holy shit, Darrell. Are you being serious?

DARRELL

Yes, I'm being serious.

PENNY

So his war injury that took his leg was just because he wanted to get some middle eastern pussy.

DARRELL

Yeah, I guess you could put it that way.

PENNY

COULD? Sounds like it is exactly that way.

DARRELL

Yeah, that's right.

PENNY

(her look transforms from shock and horror to one of humor, eventually starting to laugh her ass off) Only fucking Stumpy. I

swear to God that man really is something. Well, I hope that middle eastern pussy was worth his lower leg. He literally gave that left leg for pussy. Was it any different than American pussy?

DARRELL

He said it tasted like burnt roast beef.

Fortunate Son by CCR plays

FADE TO BLACK