

Hard Rock

By Gerard Brennan

The sweet scent of groupie sex hung in the air. I grabbed the tequila bottle by the neck and gulped down a mouthful. Another hotel room. They'd all merged into one. Especially since our manager had decided not to book us into five-star penthouses. He said the savings would buy us better equipment, but I was still battering out licks on the same old Les Paul I'd started out our first six-month tour with. We'd just played the last set. No more shows. No more hotel rooms. And no more groupies. Except this last one.

Buck-naked and handcuffed to the headboard, my last fuck of the tour smiled up at me. I stood at the foot of the bed, not wearing much more myself - just my silk boxer shorts and a smug smile. Her body was at my mercy. Five minutes she'd known me, but she trusted this much. I'd have passed it off as typical groupie dumb-bitch behavior, but this one didn't strike me as the usual awestruck bimbo. She wasn't after a story to tell her friends. She wanted to give *me* a story to tell. I plonked my tequila bottle back down on the dressing table. She writhed a little on the crumpled sheets, just for show.

"You ready to go again, rockstar?"

"I need another minute." I smiled to myself. "Just lie there and wait for me." Like she'd a choice.

"Oh, you're so mean, Joey D. Leaving me all chained up like this. I need some attention."

"What are you, some kind of nympho? I already fucked you twice."

"They were intro-fucks. Now that we've got to know each other, we can really go wild."

I shook my head, but my dick twitched in my boxer shorts. She was something to look at, all right. Her golden brown skin and black shock of thick curly hair spoke of Latin blood, but her stunning green eyes had an Asian slant. Hawaiian, maybe? Certainly a world apart from the flame-haired *cailíní* I'd pursued in my youth. Forget those frigid Irish chicks. I'd moved on to better things. I ran my fingers through my mane, a match for hers in length, colour and volume. Rock and Roll, baby.

"Maybe a line or two of coke will get you going?" she said.

Seemed like a good idea. I scooped the baggie and my little pewter straw from the round table in the corner of the room. I held it out to her.

"Want some?"

"No, Joey. I want *you*."

I poured some snow on the table.

"Wait, Joey! Why would you want to snort off that old thing? Lay some of that powder on me, why don't you?"

"Party on, my lady."

She giggled. "*My lady*. What are you, a knight?"

I ignored the wisecrack. She'd told me her name earlier, but I didn't care about that shit. No need for names in this business. Something you learned pretty quickly on the road.

I powdered her from her tits to her trimmed pubes and got to work like a Dyson. She giggled as I disappeared the coke, working from the top down. I didn't get it all. Got distracted by that musky scent from between her muscled thighs. I

tossed the straw over my shoulder and it pinged as it bounced off the wall. She raised her hips to meet my tongue, purring like a kitty cat.

When I'd had my fill, I crawled up her body, licking patches of the missed coke off her skin on the way. My senses hummed. As we kissed, she hooked her toes into the waistband of my shorts and slid them down to my ankles. I reached out to the bedside cabinet for a condom. I always kept them next to the Gideon bible. I'm not sure whether or not I meant it as an insult. I bagged Little Joey and guided him towards her.

"Wait," she said.

"For what?"

"Let's have a little more fun."

"What do you have in mind?"

"I was wearing a silk scarf. It's on the floor by the door. Would you get it?"

"Why?" I tapped the headboard. "You're already tied up."

"I've something else in mind."

I wanted to fuck, but I humored her. If she was into me wearing a white silk scarf it was no skin off my nose. So long as I got my hole.

It's something that'll never change for me, but I can't help feeling ridiculous when walking naked with a hard-on. What's sexy about that? Worse still when it's wrapped in a luminous green rubber. So I wasted no time. Dashing to the door and back, embarrassed by the wobble and sway of my dick, I fetched the scarf. Back on the bed, I started to put it on. She giggled.

"It's not for you, Joey. It's for me."

I shrugged, and wrapped it around her elegant neck.

"Tighter," she said.

I tugged on it a little.

"Tighter."

I pulled a little harder.

"Tighter, Joey! Tighter!"

"What? You want me to fucking strangle you?"

"Yes!"

I froze. Was this chick for real?

She stared me in the eye. "What? You never heard of erotic asphyxiation?"

"Girl, I can't even spell it."

"Oh, come on. You never dabbled in breath-control play? Baby, you haven't lived."

"Are you serious?"

"Hell, yeah. Joey, honey, you wouldn't believe it. It makes you cum so hard."

"It makes you die."

"No, no. It's *breath-control*. It reduces the oxygen flow to your brain to heighten the orgasm. But you release the pressure before going unconscious. You haven't heard about this before? I thought you were a man of the world."

"Hey, I've been around, but most of my lays are happy with the old bang-bang. None of them ever complained either."

She pouted. "I'm not most lays."

I nodded. "Okay, baby. Let's give this a go."

When you're running on adrenaline, booze and cocaine, you'll try anything. And I swear to God, as soon as I yanked on that scarf like I meant business, she became *electric*. I could almost feel static crackle between us as she bucked under

me. I had to pull out after one short minute, not wanting to end the experience but knowing my limitations.

“Oh, honey, don’t stop now.”

Her voice was hoarse. Had I damaged her throat in such a short time? If so, she didn’t seem to mind. She was hungry for more.

“You have to give me a minute. I’m ready to blow my load here.”

“Put on another rubber. It might slow you down a little.”

So I did. And she was right. I went a little longer this time, choking and releasing at steady intervals as I drilled her. But I stopped when her eyes began to stream.

“Don’t stop yet.”

This time, she barely managed a whisper.

“We’re going too far,” I said.

Again, that throat cancer whisper. “I’ll be the judge of that.”

And I wanted to go again. That feeling of power had me hooked. I hadn’t felt in control since the start of the tour, ruled by timetables, flight schedules and a fat-fuck manager. If she said she wasn’t done, who was I to argue? But first I went back to my tequila bottle. I was still too close to filling my doubled-up condoms.

After four or five big shots of Mexican rocket fuel, I grabbed a handful of snow and pelted it at my handcuffed, kinky nympho. She smiled, and through puffy and reddened lids, her eyes glinted in the dull light.

I leapt onto her, raising a fine white cloud, and we went at it even harder than before. I’d decided the third time was the charm. No more pulling out. Finish the job, roll up the scarf and unlock the cuffs. We’d pushed our luck far enough.

And as I felt my own orgasm welling, I closed my eyes and continued to tighten and release the scarf every few seconds. The end came too soon. I sighed as I finally let go, then flopped onto my back beside her. I needed a cigarette.

“Holy fuck, baby,” I said. “That blew my mind.”

She didn’t reply. I figured her throat was too sore. I rolled onto my side to look her in the face. Check out her post-coital glow.

“Hey, baby,” I said, a hand sneaking out to squeeze her tit.

She didn’t respond. I nudged her a little. Then I stoked the raw skin on her neck, tentatively checking her pulse. Her head lolled in response to my touch.

“Oh, no.”

It was all I could think to say. She looked back at me with unseeing, blood-flecked eyes.

She wasn’t glowing. She looked...

Dead.

“Oh, no.”

Slowly, calmly, I got off the bed and went for my tequila.

“Oh, no.”

I took a slug.

“Oh, no.”

And another.

“Oh...”

Another.

“No.”

I’m not sure how long I stood there, drinking tequila and staring at a dead groupie handcuffed to my bed, but eventually I snapped out of my daze. Something had to be done, but I was fucked if I knew what. There was nothing for it. I had to

tell Larry. I used the phone on the bedside cabinet to call my manager's room. As it rang, I looked at the bible lying under a smattering of condoms. I swallowed hard and averted my gaze.

"Come on, Larry. Pick up the fucking phone."

"Fuck's this?"

"Larry! Man, I need to see you. Come up to my room, will you?"

"*Fuck's this?*"

"It's Joey D. Come on, man. I'm in room one-eighty-seven."

"Fuck you want?"

"I'll tell you when you get here. It's important, okay?"

"Fuck's sake. Be there in a minute." He hung up.

I dropped the handset back in its cradle and sat on the edge of the bed. Then I remembered the dead chick. I jumped up and crossed the room, back to the tequila. I raised the bottle to my lips then lowered it without taking a drink. Enough already. I had to stop before I passed out. I lit a cigarette instead, flicking the ash onto the carpet rather than returning to the bedside cabinet for the ashtray. Just as I was trying to figure out what to do with the butt, the doorknob rattled.

Larry's voice cut through the wood. "Let me in, Joey."

I moved to the door, pausing at the bathroom to flick my cigarette butt into the sink. Larry bustled past me, bleary-eyed and wearing a white dressing gown. His thick, ginger chest hair looked even thicker against the white towelling. He scratched his fat ass as he squinted at me.

"Jesus, kid. Put something on, will you?"

Fuck! I was still naked. Mumbling an apology, I retrieved my shorts from the foot of the bed and pulled them on. With my modesty covered, I turned to Larry. He blinked rapidly as he tried to focus on the groupie.

"Is she...?" he trailed off.

"Yeah."

"What the fuck happened?"

"I strangled her."

"What for?"

"It was a sex thing, Larry."

Larry blinked at me now. "You sick fuck."

"It was her idea, man. I didn't mean to kill her."

Larry scratched his stubbly head. "Fuck."

"What are we going to do, Larry?"

"I don't know. Give me a smoke, will you?"

I fetched him the pack and lighter. His hands didn't shake as he pulled out the cancer stick and lit it up. He slid the rest of the cigarettes into the pocket of his robe. I didn't complain.

"Fucking rockstars and their messes. I should have gone into hip-hop. At least real gangsters know how to get rid of the bodies."

It sounded like it wasn't the first time he'd encountered a disaster like this. But that wasn't something I wanted to pry into.

Larry glared at me. "Were you fucking her when she died?"

"No. I mean...maybe. I'm not sure, man."

"How can you not be sure?"

"I, uh... I had my eyes closed."

Larry snorted, puffing smoke from his nostrils. "You fucking pussy."

"How's this helping, Larry?"

“It just seems like the kind of thing you should know. Psychologically speaking. I mean, years from now, will you be able to put your hand on your heart and say that you’ve never humped a corpse?” He licked his chapped lips. “Though as far as they go, this is one fine-looking cadaver.”

Sour spit flooded my mouth. I fought hard against the urge to puke.

“Kid, you look like shit. Go freshen up while I think about this.”

He didn’t need to tell me twice. I managed to keep down my tequila supper, but only just. My reflection squinted at me from the mirror over the sink, gaunt and sickly. I picked the cigarette butt out of the sink and filled the cool white porcelain with cold water. Then I took a deep breath and dunked my face in. My lungs burned in my chest before I pulled myself back out. I reached for a neatly folded towel and daubed at my face. Now I looked gaunt, sickly and wet.

I closed my eyes.

The sound of creaking springs from the bedroom froze me to the spot. *What the fuck?* Hoping to find a revived groupie sitting up on the bed, I forced myself out of paralysis and sprinted from the bathroom.

Larry kneeled between the dead girl’s thighs. His gown hung open and he fumbled with a condom. I couldn’t help but stare at his short, fat erection beneath the solid swell of his gut.

“Want a picture, faggot?”

“What are you doing, Larry?”

He laughed. The ugly, fucked-up sound of it raised gooseflesh on my arms and back.

“Larry, what the fuck?”

“Dead or not, this bitch is smoking hot. No sense in wasting an opportunity.”

“Stop it.”

“Or what?” He stroked her inner thigh. “She won’t mind.”

He rolled the condom on and I wondered why he’d picked a ribbed one. *For her pleasure.* What kind of a fucked up thought was that?

“Seriously, Larry. I mean it, man.”

“Fuck you. If you want my help, you’ll give me and my new girlfriend some privacy.”

But that wasn’t going to fly. Bad enough I’d killed the poor girl. No way was I going to let fat Larry have his way with her dead body. I leapt and shoulder-barged him off the bed. We hit the floor with an almighty thud. A tangle of limbs. Me on top. I straddled his chest and tried to take the advantage. It felt so wrong to be struggling on the floor with a pink-skinned, almost naked, fat man wearing a ribbed condom. But life throws shit like that at you sometimes.

He grappled with my arms as I tried to land a punch. I couldn’t get a clean hit. Then he was holding each of my wrists in an iron grip. We stared at each other. Stalemate. He smiled, as if he was embarrassed by the situation. Then the fat fuck caught me with a headbutt. He let go of my wrists and I fell back.

I cupped my nose with my hands. Blood ran down my face and filled my throat. I coughed and spluttered gobs of crimson into the air. It rained down on my chest. Larry was on his feet. He kicked my ribs and stomped on my head. I curled up into a ball. Helpless. But he’d figured the job was done. The mattress springs creaked again as he climbed back onto the bed.

“You fucking prick.” Larry sounded amused. “I lost my erection. Talk about a fucking mood-kill.”

I heard him roll off the bed and pad across the room. He snuffled and snorted. The bastard had his piggy snout in my coke.

“That’s the business,” he said. “I’ll be back in the saddle in no time.”

I got to my hands and knees then yakked on the carpet. Watery, bitter-tasting puke splattered my hands and forearms.

“Better out than in,” Larry said.

I groaned.

“You should have left me alone, kid. I just wanted to clear my head. Now look at you.”

My stomach lurched again. I breathed deep to wrestle back control of my innards and inhaled the pungent scent of tequila puke. Larry said something else, but I lost it in a fit of coughing.

When my coughing stopped I pushed myself onto my knees. Larry stood before me, the tequila bottle in his pudgy hands. “Here, have a drink.”

“Fuck you, Larry.”

“Ah, don’t be like that. We just had a little misunderstanding. No harm done, right?”

I spluttered a choked, sarcastic laugh. I held up my blood-coated palms.

“Yeah, Larry. Just a little misunderstanding.”

“Come on, kid.” His tone was kind. “Don’t be a little bitch about it. Take a drink.”

I took the bottle and drank deep, clearing the blood from the back of my throat. It felt good. Harsh. Cleansing. I wiped a forearm across my mouth and stood on Bambi legs. Larry smiled and nodded at me. Then he glanced at the dead chick.

“Okay, Joey. Give me ten minutes with her, while she’s still fresh, and then we’ll get to work. Okay? We can smuggle her out, and I know some people who’ll take it from there. You listening?”

Still fresh.

I smiled back at him and he opened his arms as if to invite a hug. I hefted the almost drained tequila bottle. Grunting, I brought it down hard on top of Larry’s head. His shaved scalp split neatly.

“Uhn!” he said, all surprised and wide-eyed.

“Okay, Larry.”

I smiled at him, then clunked the bottle off the side of his head. He wobbled.

“Okay, Larry.”

I hit the other side of his head. Blood sprayed this time.

“Okay, you fat fuck.”

His eyes rolled back in his skull and he toppled backwards. I looked down at the bottle in my hands. It surprised me that it was still intact. In the movies, they always shattered into a million pieces.

It looked like Larry was dead, but those same movies taught me never to wait for a fallen enemy to leap up for the final scare. I knelt by his side and pounded his face with the bottle. It was therapeutic. And when I realized that, I forced myself to stop. I didn’t want to become some sort of psycho. I picked my leather jacket up off the floor and covered the pulpy mess that used to be Larry’s face.

I stood up and looked around the room. Cocaine on the table. Dead girl cuffed to the bed. Dead fat man laid out on the floor. Blood-covered rockstar, stinking of puke and clutching the murder weapon, swaying on his feet.

It crossed my mind that jumping out my window might be my best option. But that was the coward's way. Besides, my room was on the first floor. I'd probably break a leg at worst. Better to face the music. The music. Fucking music.

Our album sales would go through the roof when this got out. When would I ever get a chance to enjoy that? Probably never. It would go to my family though, wouldn't it? See my parents right? I thought about calling my lawyer.

I picked up the phone and dialled down to the reception.

"Hi. I'm going to need you to put me through to the police."

Fuck.

*Gerard Brennan, 29, lives in Dundrum, a small Northern Irish seaside town, with his wife, Michelle, and their two children, Mya and Jack. He's working on his third novel attempt. He is also redrafting a screenplay, titled *The Point* (thanks to NI Screen), finishing off a collection of poetry for children, illustrated by Rachel Law, and plans to tackle another draft of the play co-wrote with his father, Joe Brennan, titled *The Sweetie Bottle*. And he runs a blog dedicated to crime fiction in Northern Ireland, www.crimesceneni.blogspot.com. So pass the coffee.*