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## **PORNSTAR**

When I began Photographing porn stars in 1991, my intent however suspect was to glamorize and legitimize their lives and work in the same way the media portray their mainstream Hollywood counterparts. I envisioned a book with gorgeous, enticing pictures that would provoke a re-evaluation of fame in our culture.

But as I journeyed into the surprisingly accessible "underground" world of porn initially through cold calls to video companies and letters to fan clubs, then by word of mouth from one star to the next - my glossy, conceptual approach gave way to one of grim resolve. I couldn't ignore the rapidly accumulating evidence of abuse and emotional disconnect.

But rather than pursuing this book rather than facing the fact that a happy, tidy book about this sad terrain would be impossible - I retreated back into my life in New York, once for a whole year, only occasionally making visits to Show World to say hi to porn stars I knew - or more likely, to get a small dose of titillation, a fix.

The world of XXX had blown the lid off any remaining hopes I had of using it to validate my own ideas in support of a lifestyle with sexual adventurism as its core.

By the time Savannah - a decent if naive twenty-three-year-old California girl who was also the most famous XXX film star of her generation - committed suicide in 1994, I was compelled to address the heartbreak and fragile humanity I was learning firsthand are the foundation of this subculture.

I was deflated but in a way relieved. There was a feeling of liberation in relinquishing, in no longer having the burden of trying to manipulate or temper the evidence to fit my narrow thesis.

No porn star ever asked me to manipulate anything.

I'd used the few porn sets I'd already visited as places to meet and then shoot more stars. The action - what they were actually doing there - was peripheral, something I'd shied away from, successfully avoided. But finally, if there was truth or meaning in any of this, it would be found in the sex.

In the course of more than five years, I forged relationships with my subjects that changed me, and discovered that the world of porn is not only a product of mainstream society but a parallel universe where all the challenges of emotional intimacy facing humans exist.

During the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas in January 1996, Jon Dough, a veteran porn actor, dialed my number at the Sahara. "No one ever tells the truth," he said. "I don't know why, but it just doesn't happen. Tell the truth. That's all you have to do."

### **October 1991, San Francisco**

Jeanna Fine is in the hotel bar. I introduce myself. We shake and Jeanna holds on to my hand with both of hers and stares into my eyes. There's a smudge of red lipstick on one of her front teeth. She catches me looking at her mouth, grins, licks it. I blush, fluster. Her boyfriend, Sikki Nixx, is waiting upstairs. Jeanna senses my hesitation, and her vibe changes. Her available-sex-goddess veneer disappears like the flick of a switch.

Jeanna has modified her image - from flat-chested, spiky platinum blonde to jet-black hair and an explosive tit job. She says she was retired from porn, that she worked for Todd Rundgren for two years.

"I didn't wanna come back and be the same ditsy kid all over again," Jeanna says in the elevator. "This is me now."

Their hotel room is a mess. Garters, feather boas, whips, stripper clothing and accessories, wet towels and fan-club flyers are strewn around, a roomservice cart with a half-eaten breakfast. Jeanna introduces her skinny, pierced, tattooed boyfriend. Sikki is twenty-one and cute, not scary like in *Bad News Brat*. He has stringy, long hair, and he's handsome, in a junkie-rocker way. He talks like a burnout, but a really friendly one.

Compared with her boyfriend, Jeanna is bouncing off the walls, speedy. Sometimes she smiles at Sikki and holds his hand, but she addresses him with impatient snaps. Her in-store appearance is in two hours, and Jeanna made Sikki in charge of getting her ready. Bad decision. He's lying back against the headboard, breaking apart another bud to stuff in his pipe while she does her face.

Someone knocks. Jeanna goes to the door. A maid enters, a black woman in her fifties.

"Whew, girl, you have something else!" the maid says, staring at Jeanna's chest.

"I'll tell my doctor you like his work," Jeanna deadpans.

"Those aren't real?" the maid says. "Can I see? I've never seen that before."

Jeanna brightens. "Sure you can, honey." She smiles, pulling her top down. "You can touch them. Don't be shy."

The maid raises her hands to Jeanna's tits. She squeezes two times gently, then more aggressively on the third and fourth. "Wow," is all she says, smiling, looking at Sikki and then at me.

Jeanna comes over to me. "Feel," she says, all serious. It's an order.

I do what she says. Jeanna keeps staring at my eyes. I squeeze. They're heavy, dense, big. Up close, the scars around Jeanna's nipples are severe. They look chewed up. She's had more than one operation already. I cop a clinical, removed feel. The whole thing probably lasts an excruciatingly long three seconds. Then Jeanna turns away, back to the maid.

The maid sees a dildo sticking out of the panty pocket of an open suitcase. The porn star is on a roll. Jeanna bends down, grabs it, licks the end, then pushes the head of the fat, eight-inch rubber dick past her lips and down her throat. The entire thing disappears. Jeanna offers the maid a tight, close-lipped smile and a wink before opening her mouth and letting the dildo pop out, her eyes watering.

"No one can deep-throat like I can," Jeanna says. "Ask anyone."

The video store is empty.

It's dark now, and pouring. Jeanna acts positive. She and the owner know each other from an appearance here a few months ago. Jeanna will get something for just showing up.

Sikki sets up her stuff on a folding card table, and they stand around waiting. A balding middle-aged man in a tan raincoat emerges from the back of the store. He's been in a twenty-five-cent-token video booth. He approaches the star.

"Are you Jeanna Fine?"

"Yes, I am. How do you do?" Jeanna replies.

"Uh, fine," he says. "I mean, good. Uh, are you doing Polaroids?"

"Sure. One shot for ten, two for fifteen or three for twenty." "I'd like two, please."

"How do you want me?" Jeanna asks.

"Topless? Would you take your shirt off?"

"Sure." Jeanna removes her leather jacket, pulls down her top. She stands in front of the man with her back to him.

"Here," she says, taking his hands and pulling them around her. "You hold my tits, OK?"

"OK," he says, gingerly cupping Jeanna's tits under her nipples. He looks totally uncomfortable but manages a weak smile when Sikki says, "Say cheese."

For the second Polaroid, the man sits on a chair and Jeanna straddles his lap. She stands just high enough to press her chest into his face. He turns red. Sikki snaps the shot.

Jeanna gets off the man, and they both stand. He straightens his coat.

"Can you sign those to Rob, please? R-O-B."

Jeanna writes, "For Rob, Good fuxx!" and then signs her autograph. Rob thanks her, mumbles something about loving her movies, then leaves.

That's it for the in-store appearance. The store is now officially empty. The owner comes over to check on Jeanna. She asks him to shoot one of her with Sikki and me.

The room is still a mess.

Sikki forgot to take the Do Not Disturb sign off the doorknob. He's not too worried about it.

After the release of *Edward Penishands*, in which he had the lead role, Sikki claims the film's producer received calls from Tim Burton, John Waters and Johnny Depp. "They wanted me to autograph their tapes," Sikki says.

Sikki wants to start working behind the camera more.

Jeanna says Sikki had to take off his condom in order to finish a scene with a young actress named Dominique Simone. Jeanna says she wasn't happy about it but that she understood.

"The truth is," he says, "I was really into doing Dominique. I didn't want to spoil it with a rubber, y'know? I knew Jeanna would be pissed, 'cause she's working so hard to get everyone in the business to, y'know, send out the safe-sex message."

Next Night. Jeanna bares her tits and panties for a snapshot in front of fellow porn superstar Porsche Lynn's hotel, ignoring a passing group of elderly theatergoers in black tie and evening gowns. They ignore her, too.

The arena is a mob scene. The air reeks of pot and cheap beer. When Nina Hartley first mentioned the ball to me, it sounded like an intimate, sad little attempt at keeping the torch of the swinging Seventies burning. Then the Ticketmaster agent said it was \$38.50 a head. The event is a cross between an AC/DC concert and a New York Rangers hockey game -except

that everyone is semi- or completely nude.

One guy is in a diaper and bow tie and is carrying a baby bottle filled with beer. Jeanna spots a six-foot walking penis. The parade is endless.

It turns out Jeanna is here with a purpose. Two \$10,000 prizes will be awarded: one for the best costume and one for "sexiest lady." Jeanna intends to win the latter. The judges - a couple of local DJs - will gauge audience reaction to decide the winners. Jeanna, like a mom, all stern and focused, tells Sikki to meet her at the mezzanine bar after she wins her prize. Then she disappears.

Sikki has a drink in each hand, alternating between sips from both plastic cups. He looks happy. He's buzzing.

Porsche appears. She's hooked up with two broad-shouldered young guys dressed in black, head to toe, with black-and-white paint covering their faces. They're leading Porsche around on two thin silver chain leashes attached to her leather collar. Her Elvira dress is pulled open to show off her pierced nipples.

Porsche and her teenagers drift off into the crowd. Sikki positions himself at the railing of the mezzanine to watch the stage. A nine-foot-tall space creature wins for best costume, then it's on to the girls. In a matter of minutes, the competition boils down to three women sticking their asses out for applause. Then it's two: Jeanna and a tall, blond Texan. They're called back to the center of the stage to compete for the noisiest ovation.

The Texan is in white. She's radiant. She never even shows the crowd her tits, but the applause is decisive. Jeanna is the loser.

She finds Sikki. Jeanna is bitter. "That bitch isn't hot," she says, spitting. "Fuck. If she wasn't a blonde, she wouldn't even be up there."

She and Sikki continue drinking hard. Jeanna begins flashing her chest to random passers-by. In a minute, a crowd of sweaty, half-naked men has formed around her. They snap pictures and lewdly assess her body. Jeanna tucks her G-string off to the side, showing them her shaved pussy. She eggs them on. Jeanna turns to Sikki, who's standing back five feet or so, and says, "This is out of hand."

Suddenly the crowd bursts apart. A young guy in a toga reels back, holding his face as blood runs out of both nostrils. Jeanna punched him right in the nose. She takes a step toward him, and he takes three quick ones backward, then disappears into the crowd.

"That fucking asshole grabbed my tit," Jeanna says, looking pumped. The group has dispersed. Sikki holds her hand. He's so out of it. His makeup is smeared around a frozen smile.

Jeanna takes a couple of steps forward. She begins luring men in with her body, again, just like

before. Jeanna Fine can get a crowd. Fast.

"Wild, man. This is a strange trip," Sikki says.

I agree, but he corrects me. "No, man. I dropped acid."

This zoo is a bad trip sober. Sikki's peculiar, frozen smile is intact.

Jeanna has surrounded herself with leering, drooling guys all over again. In the same instant someone's hand makes contact with Jeanna's ass, her elbow is already slicing into the perpetrator's neck. She grabs his hair as he goes down, punching the side of his head twice and stomping on his stomach with a spiked heel as two of his buddies, both wearing penis masks, drag their friend away.

There are fights breaking out. The crowd surges dramatically when someone shouts, "He's got a knife!" The house lights are turned on. There's no air, just the sour smell of cheap beer, piss and vomit. Security guards in riot gear charge into the crowd.

Jeanna and Sikki make their way toward the exit. It's freezing outside. Sikki is visibly shaking, but Jeanna still looks rushed-out on adrenalin or speed, or both.

"Those fucking guys were completely out of hand. Totally," she says, exhilarated. Her words squeeze through a clenched jaw.

She directs the taxi driver - not happy about the freaks he's just picked up back to Porsche's hotel. Two friends of Sikki's who drove in from Boulder are already there. They were at the ball, too. They're tripping. Everyone is in the kitchen of Porsche's suite, eating Halloween candy. Jeanna goes on about the contest.

"Blondes," she says. "It's just the same shit. To tell you the truth, I think my applause may have been louder."

The door to the suite swings open and Porsche calls out, "Hey, everyone, I'm home."

She appears in the kitchen doorway flanked by the two boys she picked up at the ball. Porsche surveys the scene in the kitchen, smiles, then leads them to her bedroom and shuts the door.

Porsche's screaming - total howling - cuts through the walls. For half an hour. Nonstop. No one in the kitchen ever acknowledges the noise.

### **October 1991, Hollywood**

I have a really nice pickup truck. I just don't have money for gas," April Rayne says. Then she laughs. "Could you come get me?"

April lives in a rundown section of Hollywood, east of Highland and north of Franklin. A small, punky girl with shoulder-length hair, dyed black, stands behind a screen door. She smiles, her

face hard but friendly. April is wearing a flannel shirt tied in a knot at her belly, jeans shorts, torn fishnet stockings, black motorcycle boots. Her bellybutton is pierced.

"Jeanna told you I'm not doing fuck films anymore, right?" she says. "I got a part in an independent feature. They're gonna show it at Cannes. I'm gonna try and act more, and you can't get parts if you're doing X. It's like a union thing."

April smokes a Camel Filter. Now we're at a red light on La Brea. "Anyway," she continues, "after doing fifty videos, the thrill was gone. Three months in this business is long enough." I look at April when she says this, but she turns her head the other way, down Santa Monica Boulevard.

April is impressed with the photography studio, as if she's never been in a place like this. She checks it out, snoops around, then puts her bag on the makeup table. She takes her shirt off. April's chest is a shock. Her tits jut out from the top of her torso, scream out. She's only five feet three or four and really skinny, which makes her chest more freaky. There's no give to the flesh, and their shape is boxy. The scars under her nipples are red, fresh.

My first reaction is panic: There's no way to hide those scars and no budget for retouching every picture of a porn star with a tit job. The scars are the first place she applies makeup, though, and I kind of slow down, go with it.

She poses on the roof. April has style - and charisma. She connects. She's a natural, the first one of the girls I've shot so far. The clothes look cool, and April knows what to do to hide her tits, or to flatter them.

On the way here she seemed depressed. Now April exudes confidence, like she's centered. I go with what I see in front of the camera, over anything else, because that's the kind of image I want to believe and show the world. The Southern California sun begins its descent. Towering palm trees sway in the distance. April is a star.

When the roll is finished, she gives me a long hug.

While packing, April talks about her boyfriend's band, Dumpster. She says they opened for Guns n' Roses at the Whiskey. "He's a skinhead type," she says. "I guess you could say I've been supporting him. Or I was, until recently. Y'know, since I stopped porn."

New York. there's an article about April Rayne in Interview. It's called "An Actress Who Likes Taking Chances." The article refers to April by her real name, Andrea, and Interview's film critic raves about her performance in Hold Me, Thrill Me, Kiss Me, an independent feature, the film Andrea mentioned the day she posed for me in Hollywood. The film's director says he discovered her while watching Personalities, a hardcore video.

Andrea's success outside porn and her mainstream recognition are a vindication of my original

vision for this book: "See, these are real stars, and their lives aren't all hopelessly negative." I telephone Andrea to congratulate her, but her number has been disconnected.

Tom Byron's hasn't. "I hear she's turning tricks," he says. Tom doesn't have a new number for Andrea. He says the last he heard, she didn't have a place to live.

### **July 1992, Malibu**

Nina Hartley likes the idea of doing a photo shoot at John Stagliano's house in Malibu. She's famous for her rear end, and he's famous for worshipping rear ends. I call Stagliano. He hesitates. He's in the middle of editing his latest Buttman video. It's my last chance to photograph either one of them before returning to New York. Stagliano finally says yes.

"No guy turns down a chance to spend the day with Nina." John says this for me, or for the mythology of it. It's been a while since he has used Nina in one of his films. He concentrates on new girls, not legends.

Stagliano sniffles pre-emptively and says, "I have the same cold everyone else picked up in Las Vegas." If he can pull himself away from the editing console, he says, he might pose, too.

John gives a tour before Nina arrives. Most of the living room has been converted into a ballet studio - John once had dreams of dancing professionally. One wall is mirrored and has a balance bar; the other wall is all windows with a view of a swimming pool, sun deck and, beyond that, a couple of houses, then the Pacific.

Stagliano's bedroom is sparse: a bed, a large TV and a collection of his movies on a mantel. He lends me a copy of Buttman's Ultimate Workout, an early feature he's proud of, on condition that it be returned. Recently, the real age of one of the video's stars was exposed. The actress was underage at the time of Stagliano's shoot, so her scenes had to be edited out of all subsequent copies of the video.

"That's a collector's item." Stagliano says.

The doorbell rings and Nina breezes in. She hugs John and kisses him on the mouth. He tells her he's fighting something, but Nina doesn't act like she's afraid of catching a cold.

Stagliano returns to his editing. Nina sits cross-legged in front of the ballet mirror, nude except for a G-string, "putting on her face." She looks like she's in her late thirties, maybe older than her years, too.

Nina is a certified superstar of porn, frequently described as a legend. She has a commanding presence. Nina calls herself a radical feminist. When she says she's thirty. I avoid her eyes.

She poses for pictures behind the house, then on the upstairs deck outside John's bedroom. Nina is kind of an earth mother, beautiful despite her not seeming to really care. She fiddles absent-mindedly with the string of her tampon while I reload the camera.



Stagliano joins her by the pool. He undresses, Nina goes inside while he's being photographed. A few minutes later she joins John in front of the camera and starts kissing and fondling him. He protests weakly, is reluctant, sounds stuffed up. He mumbles something about having a fever. Nina persists.

She begins sucking his cock. She's on her knees. He has half a hard-on and looks weary. He goes along, managing a smile here and there, John plays with Nina's tits. He's still not fully hard, but Nina squishes down, gets him inside her and rides him a little.

Nina is like a mom briskly toweling off her little boy: vigorous, upbeat. John is the resigned little boy. It's not passionate sex. This impromptu performance may be Nina's way of trying to remind John that she's still viable, still a good casting decision, her way of proving a point. He goes along, sick, rather than reject her in the presence of an outsider.

I go in the house as Nina climbs off John and begins sucking him again. Inside, a few minutes later, Nina has a mischievous - but still sweet - smile. John looks the way he did before the sex - just half an hour later. I hand Nina a model release form and begin explaining it to her.

"Do you have any idea how many thousands of those things Nina has signed?" John snaps.

He may not be into doing her, but he wants to make sure I don't forget Nina is a star. A legend.

#### **July 11th, 1994, New York**

The telephone rings, late - or early. It's still dark. I'm asleep. "It's Jamie."

Contact with Jamie Summers has been sporadic. She retired from porn and moved to Fort Lauderdale with her boyfriend, a talent scout for strip clubs.

"Tommy just called me," she says. "Savannah killed herself."

"When?" I say.

"Like a couple of hours ago."

I want to feel angry and sad, but I just feel detached, and confused about how to process the information. It's been two years since I photographed her slept with her, and a year almost to the day since I last interviewed Savannah, since the night she drank sake bombers at Sushi on Sunset, then purple penises at Bar One with Corey Feldman, the ex-child star, at a birthday party for someone from the cast of Beverly Hills 90210. Savannah's face was puffy and blemished, beaten up from hard living. She'd gotten a second tit job, gone real big, and it made her look more like every other porn actress. She mentioned she'd recently been dating about doing a gangbang video. Hearing that was saddening, in a more simple way than news of her death: It meant her career was seriously in decline. Her career was all she had.

She had been out partying with a kid who worked for the band House of Pain. Late that night

she crashed her Corvette into a fence near her house. She wasn't seriously injured, but her face was bloodied. She called her manager in a frenzied state. While the House of Pain kid was downstairs, assessing the damage to her car, Savannah shot herself in the head.

Most of the star I'd been photographing were fucked up or fucking up. Most had hinted at their revulsion at selling their bodies for a living. I'd shrugged it off, but it was finally getting through. The heroin or booze or whatever they were using -- even the sex itself -- was a symptom; they were numbing themselves.

I'd avoided asking about their childhoods, except for a few instances in which I'd questioned them, reluctantly, in a way that must have come off like I didn't really want to know. I didn't -- I knew it would complicate things. Keeping it on a surface level worked. The girls protected me, or my image of them, by saying, "No, I wasn't of them, by saying, "No, I wasn't abused." I had needed to hear that. But didn't believe them anymore. It had taken me far longer than most. Half the women I knew outside porn had been sexually abused as little girls, so it only stood to reason that the statistics might apply in porn as well. One study of the general population claims that it is two out of three. The puzzling refrain I'd begun hearing from porn outsiders: "There are plenty of people with histories of sexual abuse who didn't grow up to be porn stars." That's missing the point: The ones who did become sex workers were abused. All of them, that's my guess.

#### **August 1994, Compton**

A silver, really-eighties Mercedes coupe swings into the lot and screeches to a stop. Not out of control, but maybe borderline, very fast.

Debi Diamond fumbles with the lock of the trunk. She pulls out a garment bag and heads toward the entrance of the soundstage, across the lot in our direction. She's tall and really really skinny. Her energy is intense, and I can't help it -- I begin snapping pictures before I even introduce myself. Debi gives me -- the camera -- the finger.

"Who the fuck are you?" she says.

If Edward G. Robinson had been a girl from Southern California, he would have sounded like Debi Diamond.

Then she smiles.

Debi is six feet tall in black Converse high-tops. Her jeans are tight and faded, torn up and down the front. Her tiny striped T-shirt barely covers her flat chest. Debi's bleached-blond hair is piled on top of her head, falling in front of her sunglasses.

"Who the fuck are you?"

This time the drawn-out, sandy growl is more of a purr. She's still smiling.

"Sure, you can take my fuckin' picture. But you should be a little fuckin' cooler, y'know? You could be some lunatic stalker trying to fuckin' kill me. ... God, I'm fuckin' horny."

Debi struts, bounds into the building, straight through the lounge, past everyone and into the dressing room. She tosses her knapsack on a love seat and pulls her shirt down so it hangs around her waist. Debi raises a bottle of Evian high in the air for a long, desperate suck of water. She unbuttons her jeans with her other hand.

By the time the bottle swings down and the actress gasps for air, she's surrounded. The production coordinator hands her a model release form. Teri the stylist is holding a hot curling iron. Bionca, another actress, says, "Hey, baby," as she slaps Debi's butt with a black-rubber-gloved hand. Debi is three hours late.

Debi talks nonstop, strikes poses, flexes, checks herself out in the mirror. She looks like a junkie, emaciated, and acts like she's on speed. She's beautiful, though, beyond harsh, and I know - instantly -that she's someone special, different from all these other people. I keep shooting, because Debi is the first porn star I've ever met - the first star of any kind I've ever met - with a charisma that generates moments, images, every second. Her energy sweeps me along.

"Everyone thinks I'm doing drugs," she says. "I'll take a fuckin' drug test right now." Debi brags about her thrice-weekly mountain-bike rides from Sunset up to Mulholland and back. "My trainer can't fuckin' believe what I'm capable of," she says. Then, softly, "I run on the beach with my dogs every morning. But one of them is getting old ... so I have to work with him, y'know, slow down, 'cause that's how much I love my animals."

Debi is back in the parking lot. She's transformed. She towers atop platform sandals with six-inch heels. She's in a transparent white dress with ruffled cuffs, white panties, white stockings. Her hair has been puffed up into a big, curly do. She's smoking a Marlboro, eating a cookie and talking on her cellular.

A production assistant sticks out his head and tells Debi it's time.

Someone has lined the dungeon with votive candles. The gray platform where Marc Wallice, Nick East and Bionca will go at Debi is also surrounded. Each candle already has an inch or two of hot wax at the surface.

Debi is fired up from the word go. She hisses, writhes like someone possessed. She twists her body like a contortionist. Her acrobatics are extreme - at one point she's standing on one hand, completely upside down, sucking Marc's dick and stroking it with her free hand while Nick, standing, eats her out. The guys need Bionca, if only to steady Debi's frame while they tip the candles. Bionca pets Debi, tries to soothe her. Debi thrashes her head from side to side. The white dress is already torn away.

"In my mouth," Debi urges.

She's on her back. Kelly, the director, stops shooting.

"Are you OK, Debi?" she asks.

Debi nods yes and grunts affirmatively, motioning with her hand for the director to keep going. Nick glances up at Kelly, sees she's shooting again, and continues. He pours wax into Debi's mouth.

Debi flips her legs up and spreads herself with her hands. Nick turns to the director again, doesn't get a sign, keeps going. Debi takes the hot wax everywhere.

A minute later, Debi makes a scissors motion with her fingers to signal "cut." She says she has wax in her eye, that she needs to take out one of her marine-blue contact lenses. Her string of fake pearls is broken. One end dangles from her shoulders. Most of the beads are scattered around the actors' feet.

This was intended to be "light bondage," the central episode of a "couples oriented" Vivid Video release, but the scene has taken a turn for the super hard-core. Debi's oily, sweaty body is covered with strands of dried wax. It's been poured into her vagina, asshole and open mouth. Both Marc, who's acted in porn for more than ten years, and Nick, a relative newcomer with four years' experience, are having problems maintaining their erections. They weren't expecting the scene to turn vicious.

Debi's snarling demands for abusive treatment are intimidating, throaty and real. If Marc and Nick had any control over the dynamic when the filming began, that control is gone. The five-minute break will help them. Maybe that's why Debi called it. It doesn't matter whether she gets off or not: This scene is not over until these guys come.

Kelly steps back. Scott St. James moves in to shoot stills. I shoot, too. With her legs high up above her head, Debi looks into my lens with the same expression she might have worn for her third-grade school portrait. "Help me" is what I hear. It's too much - not her need itself, but her willingness to make a connection with me, to really let me in. I flinch, then look away.

Debi storms off toward the bathroom. She pulls Nicole London's boyfriend, the P.A., in with her and slams the door. Nick paces around the set, stroking his semi-hard-on. Marc sits, pants at his ankles, casually picking lint off his dick.

Violent sex noises emanate from the bathroom. Bumping, shouting, It lasts five or six minutes. The P.A. is left standing in the doorway, a frazzled, guilty smile pasted across his face like he's just been hit by a sexual tornado. Debi returns to finish the scene.

Don't worry about banging my head against the wall... really."

Debi is reassuring Marc as he enters her mouth. Nick East is at Debi's other end.

"It's OK," Marc says, "I can do it this w-"

"No, don't worry. You can bang my head against the wall if you have to."

"But if I just -"

"Bang my head against the wall, you fucker."

"We're still rolling," Kelly reminds everyone.

Debi, quickly demanding - hissing one more time, says, "DO it."

Marc does what Debi says. Now the soundstage is silent except for a steady thumping - Debi's head banging against the wall of the set - and the hum of stage lighting and video equipment.

When it's over, Debi gathers as many of the beads from her necklace as she can find on the floor. Of all the scenes I've witnessed - some hot, others not this is the first one that breaks my heart.

### **January 1996**

Andrea, A.K.A. April Rayne, says she had an abusive affair. The guy would beat her, "severely," and eventually she said, "No fucking more." After they split up, he moved back to his native Italy. Right about that time, Andrea realized she was pregnant. She never told him. Instead, she went home to Sacramento, moved back in with her mom, gave birth to her son and became a mom herself.

As excited as she is about being a mother, it's nothing compared with how she sounds when she reminisces about the "old days."

"It was so fucking wild," she gushes.

Andrea says she shot up \$50,000 worth of heroin - basically everything she'd saved while doing porn. At one point her habit was \$1,500 a day. She says she quickly resorted to streetwalking.

"So in the middle of all this is Hold Me, Kiss Me, Thrill Me, which was so wild," she says. "Did you know I went to Cannes? I was a junkie with nowhere to live, but I would get these messages, y'know, like, sometimes from my mom, if someone could find her: 'Tell Andrea Interview magazine wants to shoot her.' It was really great."

Two weeks later, Andrea calls again. "Guess what?! I called up Tommy Byron and he said he wants me to star in a video he's directing. ... Isn't that wild?! It's gonna be my comeback."

She says it like she's expecting me to congratulate her. It does sound wild, out of control. Andrea is so into doing this.

"My boyfriend is cool about it," she says. "He definitely wants to watch and maybe even do a scene with me. He's not jealous at all. He wants to watch me get fucked."

I tell her I want to interview her after she does it, maybe right after. Then I say she should really give it some thought before she goes through with it, especially now that there's a kid involved.

"Don't worry, I will. It's gonna be fucking great."

Two weeks later. Jon Dough.

"Hey, man! How are you?" I've called to find out about his family, about his childhood, his mom. Jon sighs and doesn't say anything for a few seconds. Finally, it's, "Oh, man, my mother? She's still searching for happiness. Never found it, just like all of us. She's a dreamer."

There's rustling, like maybe Jon lifts himself out of bed and resigns himself to dredging it all up. "My father, he was gone with a new wife, kids, house, by the time I was seven or eight. I remember thinking, 'Wow, a real house, a real family - that would be nice.' So, anyway, my mom has this black guy named Bobcat Jones move in with us. He was bad. Over time, there were rapes in my house. My brother and I he was seven, and I was eight - we wanted to kill him.

"So my mom - I don't know - Bobcat moves out. Pretty soon after that, a friend of hers, a woman named Ann, moves in with us. By this time I've al- ready been dumped in whoever's lap would take me. Back and forth, back and forth. My mom and Ann drove me up to Bakersfield [California] they were gonna leave me with my mom's stepfather.

"I'm lying awake in the dark. I'm twelve at this point. So I'm listening to my mother and Ann talking. My mom was saying she was like the man in their relationship and so forth. That was when I first understood, or learned, that my mom was a lesbian.

"It didn't bother me," he says.

Jon describes the point in his childhood he remembers most fondly: He'd persuaded his mom to let him come back and live with her in L.A. He was thirteen. "My mom was still so young and so were her friends, all her lesbian friends. A lot of them were beautiful. They were affectionate with me. They would stroke my hair and stuff like that. I was so turned on by those ladies."

I ask Jon if he ever had sex with any of them.

"No. But what happened was enough. But, God, I was so turned on. Those days I was jerking off in my classroom at school - literally through my pocket, and actually coming. Is that common? I always wondered if other guys did that.

"A little later, my mom sent me to Pennsylvania to live with my real father. I was fifteen. He was a cop in a small town. It was really tough. We would have fist-fights. I got a job at Kroger's, the grocery store. I bought a Nova and souped it up. That's when I started stealing cars, for joy

rides and parts."

He continues, describing getting back to L.A., getting deeper into the car stealing, into being bad, bad, bad: all the macho stuff.

"Since I don't do drugs anymore, I find that high somewhere else," Jon says. "Every second of the day, I have to fight some part of myself that's self-destructive. Ian - every second."

Jon's call-waiting beeps. He comes back and says he has to go. "I've waited till the last minute. Now they need me. I have to go do a scene. It'll probably be boring on the set, so maybe I'll call you back. What's your number?"

Before hanging up, I ask Jon whom he's having sex with today, more for a vicarious thrill than anything else.

He pauses.

"I don't ... I couldn't tell you," he says. Jon lets out a chuckle, like he sees the irony, then tries some more to remember.

"Honestly, Ian, I couldn't tell you."

One year later

Andrea calls. April Rayne. I assumed, long ago, that I'd heard the last of her. After telling her I wanted to interview her again, I hadn't tried very hard to make it happen. She says she's been seeing a therapist twice a week and that sometimes she brings her son along, too. She never made that comeback video.

I tell Andrea I still want to do an interview. She says she's ready. She doesn't back off at all, so I proceed, stiffly, having cornered myself. Date of birth: August 21st, 1967. Place: Culver City, California. Education: Beethoven Elementary, Mark Twain Junior High, Ventura High School.

"How old were you when you lost your virginity?" I ask.

She says that at twelve she had her first boyfriend, a twenty-eight-year-old guy named Hector. "He had the coolest Vespa," Andrea giggles.

I ask again.

"I was raped when I was nine," she says. "You have to understand: My dad always called me his favorite son, y'know. He said he wanted to teach me to be tough. So he would drop me off in places like Sawtell, y'know, bad neighborhoods, and let me find my own way home."

Andrea tells the story like she's fine about it, like it is what it is.

"I wandered into some courtyard, a building with gates, y'know, and three - I think three - black guys basically passed me around. I know there were two more, Mexicans, standing watch by the gates. Then I think I blacked out. Anyway, I was more afraid of what my father would do to me when I got home. I had a broken nose and a bloody lip - I fought - so I knew he'd know something."

Andrea says she's not sure whether anything happened before that or whether her father ever sexually abused her. Side describes a second rape, at fourteen: A guy pinned her against a Dumpster behind the cheesecake factory where Andrea worked. This time she spiked the guy in his eye with one of her high-heeled shoes, then ran.

"That was an easy one for the cops, 'cause they knew who they were looking for - someone holding his eye," Andrea says, laughing.

"What did your father do?"

"Oh, he died when I was twelve," she says. "Thank God. You pretty much know what happened from there. At twenty-two I became April Rayne."

Andrea says she has two brothers. One is a U.S. Navy Seal. The other, the younger one, writes and makes his living as a snowboarding instructor.

"He's like my son, really," Andrea says, "you know, besides my real son. I love him so much."

"Uh... I just wanted to let you know," I offer as a closer, "um, since I'm basically done with the book, you know, we won't be speaking again, probably. You know, I mean I'll probably be changing my number and everything."

It takes a second before she gets it; the shittiness of it, of my timing, of my having to say it at all.

"Oh...", Andrea says. "OK."

She picks up the conversation again. I'm useless. She makes small talk and stewards our clumsy goodbye. Then right before she goes, Andrea reverts to her "great news" tone of voice - the one she uses for dropping bombs - and says she's just been certified to operate an escort service in Sacramento.

"Certified?" I say, thinking, "Jesus, escort service?"

"Yeah, you need a license," Andrea says. "An escort service. I'm doing it under a different name. I don't need to know about anything illegal they do" she chuckles - "just as long as I get my percentage. I have three girls so far. It's hard to find good ones around here. I'm thinking about moving back to L.A., 'cause I'd make a lot more money down there."



Andrea says there are certain clients - "my favorites" - that she'll always keep for herself. Then she says she looks great, that she's more voluptuous than she used to be. Andrea says she has a boyfriend, a fireman, and that another friend told her she looks like a Police Woman-era Angie Dickinson.

"I thought that was a really high compliment," Andrea says.

There was a full-page ad in the '96 Adult Video News' Super CES Issue for two compilation tapes: Debi You're a Fucking Slut, Part One and Two. Someone I ask says he heard she retired. Another person says she heard Debi got married.

The Nastiest Side of Debi Diamond!  
The Queen of the Guttersluts  
She Fucks, She Sucks and Swallows  
With the Best of Them.  
DEBI, YOU ARE A FUCKING  
SLUT!

The last time I spoke to her, before discovering that her pager and voice mail were disconnected, I read Debi my description of the first scene I watched her perform - I guess to be upfront with her about the way I saw things, my take on it. She listened closely. It was the scene with the wax, the broken string of fake pearls dangling from her neck, the guys and their erection problems, Debi's demanding Marc to bang her head against the wall.

Debi was silent for a long few seconds after I stopped.

"Those were my grandmother's pearls," she finally said, "and they weren't fake."

Excerpted from "Pornstar," IAN GITTLER'S new book, to be published by Simon & Schuster in October.

PHOTO (BLACK & WHITE): Sikki and superstar Jeanna Fine

PHOTO (BLACK & WHITE): Jeanna Fine

PHOTO (BLACK & WHITE): Jon Dough

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By Ian Gittler

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