

# Owner's Lament

*by* Chris Okum



How many times were they going to have to listen to Stanley talk about his short love affair with Beth was the question they asked themselves while listening to Stanley talk about his short love affair with Beth for what had to be the third or fourth time. And it wasn't that they didn't care about how sad Stanley was, it was that every time Stanley discussed the details the details kept getting more and more depraved, perverse, vulgar, and just all-around ugly. Stanley spent an hour talking about Beth's feet and how they smelled and tasted like bubblegum. Stanley spent two hours talking about how many different positions you could engage in while in the backseat of a 1973 AMC Gremlin, which made it seem to them like Stanley

could write a New Age Kama Sutra slash Owner's Manual. Stanley spent so much time talking about the minutiae of his lost object of desire that they were all starting to feel like the description of the affair was lasting longer than the affair itself. And it's not as if they could say anything or even express their boredom through their body language. Oh no. They had to sit there and listen. Because Stanley was the BMOC. He set the style. He got the girls. He was the TA to a Nobel Prize-winning geneticist. If Stanley didn't like you then no one did. So they had to come when he called. They had to listen to him. They had to laugh at his jokes. And, most importantly, when he was done talking, they had to applaud. And applaud. They had to applaud until it felt appropriate to stop applauding, which could take anywhere from five to fifteen minutes. The whole experience felt like some kind of experiment they had not signed up for but found themselves taking part in anyway. When would it end was the question they asked themselves while listening to Stanley talk about Beth's mouth, specifically her teeth. Stanley could extemporize for hours on Beth's teeth. Apparently, her teeth rattled right before it rained. To intimate with any part of your person that this information held about as much interest as the speed at which grass grew was to risk it all. And for what. That was the question. Or just another question among many. They sat perfectly still while their faces looked back at their faces.

