

# Bonfire of the Insanity

by Erin Zulkoski

Thirteen years ago, my hometown was hit by a very vicious snow/ice storm. Trees suffered the hardest blow and branches were down all over town. The city maintenance crew worked tirelessly to gather all the branches and they placed them in an area just off the side of the city park where they were later to be burned. The fire was impressive, lasting for several hours and it smoldered for a few days afterwards.

It was a Friday night, just after our high school basketball team had won it's first game. Spirits were high all over town and it seemed everyone was out celebrating. I was hanging out with my two buds, Mandi and Corey, and we were bored with the scene. We wanted to do something, but had no clue what. We were in Mandi's old Ford Thunderbird, driving around town, when we drove through the park. Our eyes lit up as we drove past the still smoking pile of wood.

"Dudes, we should roast marshmallows!" said Mandi, enthusiastically.

"Awesome! Out of sight!" said I.

"It's on like Donkey Kong!" quipped Corey.

We drove to Mandi's house and raided her cupboard. And we looked for food, too. Success! Hidden in the back shelf was a bag of giant marshmallows. We grabbed them excitedly and drove back to the park. When we got there, we searched for long sticks to use to roast our treats. Mandi and I were looking on the outside of the pile, because as I said before, it was a pretty big pile and was still pretty hot.

Corey, however, was standing closer to the middle of the pile. I warned Corey to be careful. He did not listen so well.

Mandi and I had our sticks and were holding our marshmallows over a hot spot, when we heard Corey yelp loudly and he was jumping up and down, cursing.

“Holy shit! My fucking foot! It's on fire!”

We threw down our sticks and ran over to Corey, who was still dancing around like a retard.

“Jesus Christ, my foot's on fire! Help me!”

You know when you're in church and your older brother does something funny and you're laughing and your dad grabs your elbow to make you shut up, but that's even funnier still and you keep laughing and you know you shouldn't be laughing because you're in church and God will smite you forever? Yeah....that's kind of what it was like then, too.

Corey looked like such an ass, hopping around, screeching so that you couldn't help but laugh. I was also concerned for him because his foot was pretty much engulfed in flames at this point. But seriously, how could you NOT find this humorous at all? Mandi has very little empathy for anyone, so she was on the ground, laughing hysterically and pointing at Corey's foot, trying to grab her marshmallow stick so she could roast hers over Corey's foot.

I was laughing, too, but was trying to get Corey to stop, drop, and roll, because that is how you get a fire out.

“Corey, stop moving! ” I yelled at him.

“I can't, my foot's ablaze!” he screamed back at me.

Well, the idiot wasn't going to stop, so I did what I thought was best. I ran over to him and started stomping on his foot, trying to snuff the flames. Now, instead of screaming that his foot was on fire, he was screaming at me to stop jumping on his foot. Well, what was I supposed to do? I got the fire out.

Mandi was still laying on the ground, tears streaming down her sooty face. Corey limped over to her and kicked her in the side and called her a twat for not helping him. He hobbled over to Mandi's car and opened the passenger door and sat down in the seat. He pulled his shoe off and groaned.

“My new shoes! Ruined! You're buying me a new pair, bitch!” he spat at Mandi.

She didn't care, she was still on the ground, unconscious. A small patch of her hair had caught fire and a stray dog had wondered over and was licking her charred face.

I made my way over to Corey and picked up his shoe. The sole was melted on one side and the entire inner side of it was burnt leather. I could put three fingers into the hole. I looked down at Corey's foot. His sock was ruined, charred and black.

“Are you ok, Corey? Are you hurt?”

“What the fuck do you think, Erin? My fucking foot was on fire and all you did was laugh and stomp on my feet!”

“At least I tried to help, asshole. ” He pissed me off. “I could have just let your foot burn! ”

“But did you have to fucking stomp on it?! That was like, the worst experience of my entire life! I think you broke my foot!”

“Oh, shut up, you big queen. Quit your bitching and help me pick Mandi up. The dog is starting to hump her.”

So the two of us, I, furious at Corey for being a whiny little bitch and shunning my heroic efforts to put out his fire foot, and Corey, shoeless and sock-less in the middle of January, walked over to Mandi and pulled her to the car and laid her down in the back seat. I got into the driver's seat and started the car.

We drove in silence back to Corey's house. Mandi was still unconscious and was starting to mumble in her comatose state. Not wanting to deal with her, we left her in her car. Corey and I walked into his house and his parents were sitting in the living room, watching porn.

“Corey, darling, where's your shoe? ” asked his mom.

“It fucking caught on fire, no thanks to Erin here.”

“Erin? Is that true? Was his foot on fire?”

“Yes, ma'am. But it wasn't my fault. He got too close. It's his own stupid ass fault.”

“She's right, son,” Corey's dad Mike said. “You should have been more careful. You know how flammable you are. Remember your

fourth birthday? Lit up like a Christmas tree, he was. Spent months in the hospital. Skin grafts, plastic surgery....honestly, son, what were you thinking?" His dad went back to watching porn.

"Fuck you, dad!" Corey roared. Next thing I knew, he grabbed the lamp next to him and smashed it over his dad's porn loving head. The lamp shattered into a million pieces and his dad slumped over, knocked out cold. Corey's mom screamed and struggled to get up from the couch.

"Oh no you don't, wench!" He grabbed the same lamp he rearranged his dad's face with and used to cord to tie his mom's feet and hands together. He whipped around to me and said, "Help me get them out to Mandi's car!" Not being one to argue with a madman, I obliged. We piled his parents on top of Mandi in the backseat.

"Get in your car and follow me. And no funny business." he sneered at me.

Scared witless, I did as I was told. Corey got into Mandi's car and peeled out into the street. I was close behind him, terrified of my friend. What was he going to do? What's happening? Was Friends a rerun tonight?

We drove back to the park. Oh no, I thought. Not again....

Corey barged out of the car and ran over to me. His eyes were wild and flashing, his mouth foaming. He never looked so frightening. And I was never more aroused....

"Pull them out of the car and leave. Go home. This doesn't involve you."

I did what I was told. I got the three limp bodies out of the backseat. Mandi was coming to and she looked around, frightened. I leaned down to her and whispered, "Forgive me, friend..." I felt Corey's eyes burning holes into the back of my head. I had to think quick. I gave Mandi a hay-maker and she was out cold again. I slowly turned around and walked back to my car, opened the door, got in, and started it. Afraid he would change his mind, I drove away as fast as I could.

I drove home in silence, reeling from the nights activities. This had to be a nightmare. It had to be....

I never saw any of them again after that night. In his rage, Corey was going to throw his family and Mandi into the very fire that had consumed his soul, but was stopped in the nick of time. Someone had heard a great commotion and called the police. Corey was apprehended and arrested. He's now serving 3 life sentences in a prison for the mentally insane. Mandi and Corey's parents were spared. They spent a few days in the hospital for their injuries, but are doing fine. Mandi writes to Corey every day....

Me? I've tried for thirteen years to get the images out of my head. Luckily, I banked a ton of money after selling our story to Dreamworks, who made an "inspired by true events" movie about us. It starred Matt Damon as Corey, Winona Ryder as Mandi, Sam Elliot as Corey's dad, Susan Sarandon as Corey's mom, Chris O'Donnell as the arresting officer, and Glenn Close as me. It's called "Three Banjos" and is up for several Oscars. With the box office returns, I am rolling in the Benjamins, so I could care less about what happened. I've got mad stacks of coin!

Who says money can't buy happiness? They're obviously stupid. And poor.

