

# Cymbals Guy

by Paul Hargreaves

Midnight and the bus is dank and sweaty, the windows glazed with funky pubescence. I'm the cymbals guy — another way of saying hey turdshitface haul your skinnyass to the front of the bus. Only the snare-drumming elite and high-C hornblowers need apply back there. Felicia Tanguay, a lowly colour guard whose tits already fill a mighty fine sweater, scores an easy freebie.

The morning's gig is in Hearst, Ontario. Santa Claus parade. The horns will freeze, the oil congealing into thick guck in the valves and slides. The drummers fingers will frostbite. Which will leave me to here comes santa claus all alone in crashing brass.

The chaperone dozes beside me, ignorant to the humping of the frost-heaved asphalt. She sleeps, but I'm awake to the seeping yellow-metal chill and to every imagined sound from the back — the scratch of classrings under down-filled nylon, the wet smack of balmed lips, the escape of halting breath.

It sucks that Felicia's back there with Freddie Hammond, the lead chop. I picture the lucky prick's hand edging under her sweater, knuckling beneath the stiff underwire. I picture that hand, make it mine, slowly reach into my pants. The chaperone surfaces but quickly sinks back into dreams of rummage sales and apple bobbing while I stare out the window, into the frozen void.

The northern bush passes me by, unseen.

