

Class

by Rusty Barnes

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When your neighbor James Frehley cusses you out for hanging a block and tackle from the silver maple in your front lawn, begin to pull the engine from your Galaxie anyway, smile and nod to him in his chaise longue. Offer him a Bud. Reach the hand of human kindness across the wide expanse of manicured shrub separating the two of you, and as he sputters his refusal, nod at him again and continue what you were doing, pretending he is not there across his finely-turfed lawn and sprinkler system with his two lovely children, twins even, and his tanned and large-breasted wife who mows the lawn in her bikini and sweats profusely as you watch her through the kitchen window.

When Mrs. Frehley—God, don't call me that, she says, smiling through her tears—sniffs at you as she picks up her mail, you in your sweaty cutoffs and green ankles, using your weedwhacker to clear out the broadleaf dock growing around your mailbox, smile kindly at her and remember: God rewards the meek. As she and her step-daughter Belinda come by and knock on the screen door while you're watching Carmen Del Toro and Bunny Bleu in *Hometown Kink*, pull the couch pillow over your prominently swollen member and yell to her that you do not want any fucking cookies, thank you very much, and please get the fuck out of my house, even though they are technically not in it.

Listen carefully as Timmy and Belinda, those noxious twin terrors of eight-year-old, sneak through the hole in the shrubbery and throw pine cones at your Mastiff/pit bull mix, Spud. Pay careful attention as Spud lunges to the end of the logging chain you've bolted to the side of your garage and connected as well to a railroad tie driven 3 feet into the soft loam of your backyard. Imagine Spud slavering at them, running to the end of the brown dirt circle of lawn his

incessant pacing has claimed for his own, rimmed with grand piles of week-old shit and the remnants of chewed plastic bowls and battered iron ones.

When you've finally finished the Galaxie, start it up and listen to the engine, watch it belch black smoke into the air, and determine that your timing is off. Say fuck it and go back inside to watch the videotape of your wedding over and over again. Wonder where that fellow went. You know where the wife went, after all. Cry tears of joy that you are shut of the neighbor-fucking bitch, and tears of abject sorrow and self-pity that she left with everything that mattered, and tears of mirth that even your best friend-neighbor-buddy Jimmy Frehley, for all his goatee and manners and six-pack abs, will not be able to keep her either. Fall asleep on the sofa with snot on your pillow and in your mustache.

As the morning finds you vomiting into the sofa cushion, determine a plan of action, any action. Wait until James Frehley leaves for work. Walk over to his lovely home and stride into his foyer with Spud on your weakest leash. Tie Spud to the banister with a slipknot. Feed him raw meat and stool softener. Cover his nose in turpentine. Get him really pissed off, and as Amy Frehley, you former wife, comes out of the bathroom naked, shaking out her blonde hair, don't even notice her obvious beauty. Simply throw her an old t-shirt and a pair of period panties, the only thing she left behind besides you. Make her mow your lawn with your pushmower. You won't need to hold your 12-gauge on her; she'll do it because she knows how you people are; she's seen *Deliverance*, *Natural-Born Killers*, *Kalifornia*. Never mind that you haven't owned a gun in years. She just knows. And cries and does what she is told.

Imagine for once that these people know you, that the meek do inherit the earth. Imagine that God cares.

