

## I'M TOO SEXY

Charles swaggered down Sierra Highway reflecting on his conquest earlier that night. He tried to come up with the words for how he felt about himself. *Man I'm cool. I'm all... so hot, I'm scorchin'. The chick wanted it, I could tell. I mean, you know, she gave me her cell phone number afterward.*

At 18 years old, he figured he knew the ways of the world. A little gang banging here, a little stealing there, with some drugs and sex mixed in. Girls couldn't resist him -- life was fine.

And, he planned on "scoring" a little better tonight, after he got back with Brittany, the girl he "met" earlier in the evening.

Well, "met" wasn't the exactly the right word. More like, "took by storm," with his three friends to help him.

He smugly reflected on the moment. *Yeah, me and my pals found the chick sleeping in her truck in a parking lot. With four of us and one of her, how could we miss?*

But it didn't seem to Charles like the girl needed too much convincing. She didn't scream or struggle. Just protested the whole time. He figured she was playing hard-to-get. Meanwhile, he and his buds took turns sexually assaulting her.

Too bad about their pal David driving up when he did -- spoiled the moment. They'd all barely started when a car pulled into the parking lot. They all stopped momentarily before they recognized that David, their homeboy, was the driver. Meanwhile, Brittany had pulled her clothes back on, gotten into her truck, and driven off - but not before Charles told that little dish to give him her cell phone number, which she did.

So now, an hour later, Charles figured he and his homeboys were all set for a hot date. He dialed Brittany's number to set up a meet and got... Jasmine, Brittany's friend! Jasmine was also ready for a date!

"Sorry, Brittany's in the bathroom. I'm her friend Jasmine. Are you one of the guys Brit met up with at Sierra and Avenue N?"

"Yup."

"Was that *your* white car with the shiny rims she told me about?"

"Yeah, that's my Probe!"

"So, are Brit and I gonna kick it with you and your homies tonight?"

"Yeah, me and Shupe and maybe "Little Mo" and "Slow-Boy," at the Motel 6 on Palmdale Blvd."

"I heard you and Brittany already got together out on the highway."

"Yeah, and we're gonna get more busy at the motel, right?"

"For sure. Call us back when you've got a room number."

Charles picked up Shupe and headed to the Motel 6. But Shupe wanted to meet the girls at his house. "Cool," said Charles. "Call 'em and tell 'em."

Shupe called and got Jasmine again.

"Hey Jasmine, I'm Shupe, Charles' friend. Where can we pick you up?"

"We'll be at the billiard place at Palmdale Blvd. and 20<sup>th</sup> East."

"Ok, don't go away. We're comin'!"

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Meanwhile, at Antelope Valley Hospital...Palmdale 263H PMs, Deputy Jennifer Pederson felt bad for the girl. It appeared that she was a one-hundred percent righteous victim of rape. Jennifer could tell she was a little naïve, but not stupid.

Luckily, the girl only needed a rape exam, and not the reconstructive surgery, bandages, casts, or code-blue treatment that many rape victims need. That's because she hadn't panicked during the ordeal and had figured out how to get away before things got worse. She'd driven straight to Palmdale Station, and Jennifer was assigned the case.

Jennifer asked the hospital staff where she could interview the girl privately, and they found her a quiet office. Then Jennifer asked her to go over it from the beginning.

"Ok, a few hours ago, I was driving home from a day at the beach in Ventura. I was sleepy, so I did like my parents told me. I stopped at the parking lot at Sierra and N, where everyone goes to watch the planes take off from Lockheed.

"I got in the back seat of the truck to take a nap. About ten minutes later, this car has driven into the parking lot with four guys in it. One of them is yelling through my window, "Hey, can we borrow a jack to fix our flat?"

"So I get out and give 'em my jack from the back of my pickup, and I wait 'til this one guy is done fixing his tire. Meanwhile, the other three guys start coming on to me.

"I was sitting in my driver's seat, and one of them starts touching me. I pulled his hand away, but I couldn't shut my door 'cause he was standing in the doorway. That's when I figured out I was in trouble.

"Then suddenly they're all four at my truck. One gets into the back seat, lies down and tells me what he wants to do to me. I hear two of them talking about sex while another is standing in my passenger door looking through stuff on my front seat.

"I was really scared, but no one else was around, so I tried not to resist violently or blow my cool 'til I had a chance to escape."

Deputy Pederson listened carefully as the victim, Brittany Nieman, F/17, went on to describe how two of the four suspects completed the crime of rape. It was an embarrassing, scary story for the victim to tell, about how they took turns sexually assaulting her, all while she was avoiding fighting back viciously for fear of getting hurt or killed.

The victim described in detail the vile things they said every time she tried to stop one of them from grabbing or touching her, saying "No, please, I have to go." Or "Come on you guys, don't do that." One of the suspects kept asking for her cell phone number.

"My phone was on the front seat. I was afraid if I gave him the wrong number, he'd check it and get mad and really hurt me. I was trying not to get them mad, so I gave him my real number."

She told Jennifer how a car drove up, but instead of helping her, the guy in it was a friend of the suspects and just stood there. Still, it gave her enough time to pull on her clothes and get into the driver's seat.

"I was trying to act nonchalant as I got my keys off the front seat and started the truck. Then I drove straight to the Sheriff's Station."

As Jennifer continued the victim interview, she told the victim, "If your cell phone rings, I'll answer it."

Lo and behold it did, and that's when Deputy Jennifer Pederson "became" Jasmine. Sure enough, it was one of the punks. By means of nervy role-playing, Jennifer bluffed them into a perfect trap.

By the third call, extracting key info to set up the "date," "Jasmine" was able to radio Field Sergeant Tommy Carter to look for a "white Ford Probe with shiny rims that's heading for Vaughn's Billiards, 20<sup>th</sup> East and Palmdale Boulevard."

Sergeant Carter arrived at the billiard place just as the suspect vehicle was leaving the parking lot. (After all, the girls were no shows!) He followed them, and with the assistance of Deputies Jeff Hutchinson and David Hernandez they stopped and arrested the occupants.

Jennifer drove the victim to the location for a field show-up, and she quickly identified Suspect #1 Charles. At first the victim didn't recognize "Shupe," so his personal information was recorded and he was released.

Because Brittany was 17, the case assignment was sent to Special Victims Bureau Deputy Fred McNutt. With names for the other suspects like "Little Mo" and "Slow-Boy," he went to his friends in the gang unit and got them to research the CAL-GANGS computer data base for some actual identities. He was able to identify "Little Mo," get his photo, and create a photo line-up to show Brittany. She picked the right guy out and Fred immediately got an arrest warrant. Within a day, Lancaster Deputies Danny Robinson and Paul Zarris tracked down Little Mo and arrested him for Fred. In the interview, Fred got the suspect to give up the identity of "Slow-Boy."

The rest of the story is about the thorny business of the incredibly high standard in our system of justice called "beyond a reasonable doubt." The outcome was pretty darned good considering that the suspects were "kids" and that the victim hadn't been injured or killed trying to get away. Charles and Little Mo, both 18 years old, got 3 years each in state prison. Fred's attempt to get the other two 17-year-olds prosecuted as adults was valiant but didn't fly. They ended up in a juvenile detention "camp."

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Maybe these guys would have been caught eventually anyway. But there is a lot to be said for Jennifer's approach, i.e. start the main suspect on his way to the Big House within 3 hours of the crime, by means of quick thinking and showmanship.

Try looking at this from the victim's point of view. Imagine how she must have felt about our Department to see her assailant caught and safely off the street *before* she has even finished describing the crime. That feeling is a big part of what our business is all about!

