



*Paul Bacon's book *Bad Cop* (Bloomsbury USA) is out this month. Buy, borrow or steal it.

FRESH *INK*

PAUL BACON WAXES POETIC.

The day before I graduated from the police academy, my parents arrived in New York City — on different flights. My mother and father hadn't seen each other since I'd graduated from college 12 years earlier.

Their reunion took place in my apartment and started off reasonably well. They hugged and shared a few laughs, until my mother noticed my new gun belt. "Ooo! Can I wear it?" she asked greedily after she'd already lifted it up off of my dresser. She put on the belt and pulled out my handcuffs, then waved them in my father's face and said, "All right bub, on your feet. You're under arrest." Warily, my father allowed himself to be restrained with his hands behind his back, and I took a photo of the moment that I'll cherish forever.

My mother is nine inches shorter than my father and about 50 pounds lighter. Still, she leapt at the chance to shackle him. This was the woman who raised me, my first female role model. When I was a teenager, she owned a shotgun, drove a vintage American muscle car and lived with two pit bulls in a bad part of Oakland, California. Hardly surprising then that I've always had a rather skewed idea of a dream girl. My biggest celebrity infatuations have been for gun-wielding starlets: Linda Hamilton in *The Terminator*, Jodie Foster in *The Silence of the Lambs* and Gillian Anderson of *The X Files*.

For most of my life, I've had crushes on women who could crush me. Unfortunately, women don't generally lust after men who want to be dominated. I learned this during puberty, a depressingly uneventful time in my development. While I tried to woo my female classmates with emotional accessibility, they were more attracted to the indomitable boys — the troublemakers and the athletes. I changed tactics to emulate my rivals in the seventh grade. Starting off as a hooligan, I skipped class, flipped off my teachers and vandalized cars. The girls still didn't notice me. A few years later, I became a jock, joining my high school rugby team, partly in hopes of impressing a certain ladies' lacrosse player I had my eye on; I was knocked unconscious by a boy almost twice my size during my first match. The dangerously high tackle I threw at him won the game, which did get me a date to the prom but didn't get me laid afterward. Eventually my cherry was broken by a girl who took pity on me, then drifted out of my life.

In 2002, I joined the police force. I didn't do this to impress women (if that had been my goal, I would have joined the fire department), though I admit being a little disappointed that the manly job didn't come with sexual perks. Women supposedly go crazy for men in uniform, but that wasn't my experience. And when I look back at the bruises I have born in the quest for sex and love, I can't help but wonder, is it a virtue to reach for the unreachable? Or is it just self-delusional torture? In the journey towards male fulfillment, does rejection change us for the better? Perhaps only if we give up while we're ahead.

The good news in this tragic tale of woe is that I'm now happily married to a woman I'd never dreamed of, or slobbered over, or endured blunt-force trauma to the head in order to impress. She's powerful without being dominating, and she's never tried to handcuff me, at least not yet. I guess in the end, sex can make us try to change ourselves, but when all is said and done we're still just who we are. **PAUL BACON**