

Freak Out

It was December of 1970 and I was a low-level pot dealer, who also sold LSD, aspiring to be a mid-level pot and acid dealer. I was married to Sue and was hiding my business as well as my personal consumption from her. I had customers in my hometown of Cedar Rapids as well as Iowa City. So, when one of my regular CR customers moved to Cedar Falls, I was ready to add that to my burgeoning territory. I already had a buddy Bruce, who lived there, attended UNI, and was selling some of my acid and small bags of weed to fellow college students. When I told him that I would be coming to town on a consistent basis, he agreed to buy my product. Two birds, one car trip.

The guy who was relocating was Ken and his wife's name was Sharon. They both loved the ganga and could be counted on to buy a couple of ounces per month. Ken had just started a Master's program at UNI and had secured a position as a Teaching Assistant in order to help pay the bills. Sharon, the Alpha in the marital relationship, was a secretary in the private sector.

A few months into servicing my Cedar Falls accounts the weather had turned wicked. My late model VW bug battled

freezing winds and sub-zero temperatures all the way. I made it to Bruce's shortly after dark on a Saturday. We did our business, burned a joint, and had some laughs. Then I excused myself and headed to Ken and Sharon's. When I arrived, they were in merry spirits. They were getting dressed up for the faculty Christmas party. Sharon was super excited at the prospect of hobnobbing with professors and their spouses. Ken was excited by the prospect of an open bar. Having their marijuana dealer/friend show up right at that moment only added to the fun. Sharon insisted that I roll one up immediately which I was glad to do. One of the best things about slinging weed was conducting the product sampling sessions.

Sharon instructed me to go ahead and fire up the doobie and said that they would partake as they continued to get ready for the party. So, I was sitting on the living room couch and they were going back and forth between the bedroom, bathroom, and me. It was such a happy holiday scene and I felt very fortunate to be part of it. Finally, the joint was finished and their ensembles were complete. A couple of ounces and some cash changed hands and we all put on heavy coats and headed out into the cold night with warm farewells. I got into my bug and fired up the engine. Just as I was backing out, Sharon ran across the parking lot and waved for me to stop. I stopped and rolled down the window. She was

laughing uproariously. Between gales of laughter, she said “Pull your car back in and come back to the apartment. We are too stoned to go to the party right now.” More laughter. I wondered why *I* needed to delay my trip home because *they* were too stoned to go out, but I did as I was told and returned to the apartment. No sooner had we all gotten our coats off when Sharon, in mid laugh, dropped to her knees, her face instantly changing to a terrified expression as she looked up at her husband, and said “It’s too much Ken, I can’t take it”.

I had smoked a lot of marijuana, gotten extremely high, and seen hundreds of other folks do the same, but I had never seen anyone “freak out” on pot, until that moment. And it quickly got worse. “We need to call the police so that they can test this pot and see what it is cut with” demanded Sharon. Now *my* adrenaline levels were spiking as well. Ken normally went along with whatever Sharon decreed, but not this time. “No, let’s sit down and try to relax.” Sharon grudgingly accepted this idea but then came up with another. “Give me the phone. I won’t call the cops”. That was good news.

She ended up making three phone calls to three different men. She told them that she had smoked some “tainted pot”, was having a “bad trip”, and needed them to come over and help her get through it. She apparently had not considered

that Ken and I had smoked the very same pot and were just fine. The first one was Ken's supervising professor who was just about to walk out the door to leave for the same party that Ken and Sharon were scheduled to attend. He agreed to come over. The next call was to a local friend who Sharon considered the biggest pothead she knew. He also agreed to come. I never found out who the third person was because he basically told her to buzz off.

The professor was a god-send. Sharon obviously looked up to him and trusted him. He sat down on the couch next to her, enveloped her in a one-armed hug, and started telling her about his experience freaking out on acid in public. He used just the right blend of humor, self-deprecation, and empathy. Several times she tried steering the conversation back around to having the police test the weed but he strongly poo pooped it and she quickly backed off. He was helping Sharon and I both get down "off of the ledge". Then the pot-head showed up. He had no interest in helping Sharon get her shit together at all. Instead, he starts asking me if he can score some of the "freak out weed" right in front of everyone. I shut him down immediately.

After about forty-five minutes, Sharon was no longer in a state of high anxiety. The professor used superb timing when he said "Are you ready to go to that party now?" A huge smile

returned to Sharon's face. Everyone put their coats on and headed out the door. The pot head discreetly stopped by my car in the parking lot and scored a bag, but I never went back to Ken and Sharon's. Ever. Sharon later told the mother of a mutual friend, Greg, to warn her son to never buy pot from me because it was laced with heroin.