

Abby hailed in Juneau, Alaska. The daughter of an Alaskan Inuit mother revered for her artwork and an American father who had been both a respected trail guide and arctic researcher, Abby was a child predisposed to exploration and independence, assaulting the surrounding harsh wilderness with her natural curiosity and will to see just what was beyond the next hill, or mountain, or forest.

Though this behavior occasionally put **Abby** in serious danger, she grew to accept the hazardous as a necessary litmus test for a life intensely lived, and before long even the wilds of Alaska couldn't contain the curiosity of different cultures and places. After a fulfilling childhood of tomboyish bravado and scholarly achievement, she decided to explore beyond the bounds of her state.

Her first destination was New York City. Ever since seeing the tradesmen who occasionally flew in and out of the local airplane strips and the international hunters and businessmen brought with them, **Abby** had become curious of not only what else was out there, but whom.

She had always been a girl accustomed to harsh physical tests and activity, so she decided to try her hand at stunt work for film and entertainment. **Abby** enrolled in stunt training school in Brooklyn.

To make ends meet, **Abby** took a part-time job at Hooters restaurant on the advice of a girl she had met in the program, who had nothing but good things to say about tips. Initially, she was shocked to deal with so many subtle invitations and come-ons at once, when she had previously known a life of little romantic involvement and flirtatious behavior.

Her social nature kept friction with customers to a minimum. **Abby** decided to quit suddenly after some inappropriate conduct from a table of businessmen who had taken her rebuffs a bit too personally. When the police arrived, she decided it was the best decision for everyone involved if she were to just resign to avoid any pending lawsuits and litigation.

Abby finished her schooling, specializing in freefalls and aerial maneuvers.

She left the concrete canyons and cacophony of New York and soon found herself near Los Angeles. She needed few material things, other than a place to sleep, and enough food, clothes and books for entertainment. As a result, it was fairly easy for her to move locations and save money from work she found as a stuntwoman on a few film productions.

After she had saved enough, she decided to take off again, visiting major cities and stretches of wilderness alternately for a number of years. During this time, she read the works of other wanderers: Thoreau, Emerson, Tolstoy. **Abby** drew upon the comfort of a human's insignificance relative to nature found in the pages of London and Abbey. She became an avid hiker and outdoorsman.

Soon, she began to document her travel through photography, and with her mother's artistic genes, excelled. **Abby's** childhood playground only seemed to grow with age, even as the world steadily became a little smaller for her, and began traveling the world beyond the continental United States.

When money was low and stuntwork unavailable, **Abby** worked odd jobs, everything from Librarian to Custodian to Babysitter to Waitress, and so on, as she kept meeting people and forging supernova friendships, flaring up bright and intense and joyous and romantic, and fading just as quick to obscurity when it was time to move on.

Abby often questioned whether it was time for her to leave her nomadic ways and rear a permanent family and home and life, but could never bring herself to settle down, constantly finding herself at the door, unable to stay inside, unable to stop her motion to another time-zone, another place.

Bill liked to go fast. Ever since he was a little kid racing his big wheel down the long alley where the garbage cans were stacked, he was seduced by speed. The faster he went the more the world around the sides of his vision would blur into a colorful streak of the recent past.

His mother would yell down from the fourth floor window of their two-bedroom Sunnyside apartment. It was time to come in, but **Bill** was way past the need for food.

Bill already knew he could live off a steady diet of Milk Duds and Fanta soda. His mom, although well-meaning, was just trying to slow him down.

School as no different. **Bill** would race to class, read all his assignments in class so he could tear through his tests. It wasn't the best way to get through the fourth grade. He could truthfully say he had read the texts, but could recall only bizarre combinations of facts and details.

When **Bill** was asked to regurgitate the content in class discussions, American History and earth sciences became part of a fantastic version of the daily lessons. The brontosaurus was extinct because of a difference of opinion on tariffs imposed on the trade routes of Lake Champlain.

Not only were these Frankenstein-creations the source of amusement for **Bill's** fellow classmates, but also the indirect cause for concern among parents confused by the differing versions of lessons their kids were discussing at their respective dinner tables.

During his senior year of high school, **Bill's** father bought a Kawasaki motorcycle for himself. The father was a short man with a tall disposition. He ran an auto body shop with a solid following. One problem, though, was his inexperience riding. He had broken a hip in his thirties while swinging wildly at a birthday pinata made for his housekeeper's daughter. The pain of riding the Kawasaki forced him to come to terms with his middle age. The bike quickly became garage sculpture.

Every time **Bill's** parents would leave town, he would rocket-test-run the bike late at night when traffic was minimal. The neighbors eventually turned him in, growing annoyed with the sound of screaming rubber and

the sight of deep circular tire skids along the street. But by then the die had been cast. Bill was hooked.

At university, **Bill** managed to calm his speed-addicted personality with a curative in use long before Ritalin: marijuana. A joint before class would allow him to see the colors more distinctly, hear the music more deeply, and follow lectures with rapt attention.

Bill slowed down his experience of the world to absorb the details with intent. The fact of his study technique was known by his professors. Red eyes would peer back at them from across a sea of desks. He would just nod and smile.

Sara was searching for a long time. A former heavy drug user and one-time groupie for the Grateful Dead, she had her ride in the front seat of the rollercoaster for years before the overdose of a friend woke her up from her hallucinogenic haze.

Sara quit the party life and roamed the country, making tie died T-shirts for children to sell at weekend farmer's markets.

Sara began her Zen practice in the fall of 2000, just before the famous flights that ended so much delusion for so many. The monastery where she sat and meditated for three years after eventually told her she must leave. Her teacher thought she was using the secluded grounds as escape from her life.

Sara needed to go out and experience the world using her new perspective, then learn to integrate that perspective. She resisted, but eventually left for the city. She got a job in a small vegan restaurant in the village, where many of the former students from the monastery found a good vegan meal.

After months there, **Sara** found she was very much missing the seclusion of the monastery, violating the first rule of happiness. She had become attached to the past.

Abby, Bill, and Bill's Need for Weed

Abby and **Bill** were a good match, but a complicated one, as circumstances so often seem to enforce. She was a nomadic stuntwoman, he a speed-addicted motocross rider. Their casual attitude toward high-risk enterprises allowed a fundamental, deep current of understanding between them, and their impulsive drive to experience life on their unique individual terms only added to the sense of camaraderie.

Bill first met **Abby** while watching a studio production of an action movie filmed in his town. He became fascinated watching a group of people shout orders and give the OK to light another gasoline-soaked person on fire.

Car crashes, collapsing buildings and the occasional freefall were all enacted before his eyes, and rapt though **Bill** was by the cinematic display, still his eyes constantly sought out the woman he had been watching throughout multiple scenes of the manufactured carnage.

Abby was smaller than most, and well-spoken; articulate with choreographers and prop techs. After watching her climb out of a crash contest between a dump truck and six small cars, **Bill** decided he needed to talk to this woman.

As they spent more time together, **Abby** noticed shifts in **Bill's** behavior; sometimes he would be hyper and difficult to talk to, not the calm, easy-going person she had known in the beginning of their friendship. Within a few days, she figured out that he was a heavy **marijuana** smoker. She had some experience being around those who did, and had also smoked some herself, though infrequently and only in social situations.

After talking to **Bill** about the shifts in behavior, she realized that not only did he use **dope** to calm his speed-addicted personality and his ADD, but it helped when he was dealing with the negative aspects of his relationship with women.

Abby noticed he didn't speak of her often, and normally had to be prompted to respond in conversation. Increasingly, Bill became more difficult to talk with, and finally she asked him if he wanted to go back to his place and **smoke** a bowl with her before she went home.

The indecision was plain on his face; the lines in his forehead like dry canals, with small beads of sweat forming near his widow's peak. **Abby** understood then what **Bill** couldn't, that he was again being forced off his chosen **medicine** for another purpose, usually related to girlfriend or career.

With fast-paced frustration, **Bill** began to confide in **Abby** the reasons why he smoked **pot**. He always felt different from others around him. Though she never had to deal with ADD, Abby understood about doing what was necessary to communicate and live a better quality life.

It wasn't just that **Bill** was cranky when he wasn't **high**, he felt unstable and prone to outbursts and sometimes physical violence. **Sara** knew that his anger had been steered toward professional competition. Soon signs of frustration and deep depression began to appear in his fatalistic statements and reckless behavior.

Abby herself was frustrated that his girlfriend **Sara**, who seemed to genuinely care for him, would be so upset about his use to force him to make the choice between her or the drug.

Bill loved **Sarah**, and would do whatever necessary to save the relationship. But doubts clouded his thoughts about the long-term negative effects of cessation. The cognitive dissonance caused by forcing a loved one to give up **weed**, something important, necessary, and fundamentally enjoyable felt subversively sinister and dangerous. It weighed heavily on his mind.

A minor issue in a good relationship was becoming a major issue in a stressed one. Bill's temperament steadily grew worse, until one night **Abby** was so pissed-off, she baked **Bill** a batch of **pot-laced brownies**.

Three hours later, **Bill** was comfortable, less agitated. He felt normal. Abby was worried that he would be angry at her for meddling in a complicated relationship and precarious situation, but hoped that he would realize the difference in his quality of life to do what she felt was right.

Bill told **Abby** that his relationship with **Sara** came down to a fundamental disagreement: Sara thought his psychological addiction to **marijuana** was a sign of his resistance to doing the right thing to make their relationship work.

Bill viewed his dope **smoking** as a necessary tool to live life the manageable way he felt he deserved.

A long silence ensued, broken only by the occasional giggle from **Abby**, whose tolerance for **pot** was much lower than **Bill's**.

Bill and **Abby** knew their lives were connected. The epiphany came. Neither had any illusions on the inevitable brevity of their time together, but hoped theirs was a friendship that would last, even with the advent of an unexpected tray of **special brownies**.