

At 16, she was the Queen of Porn.

At 18, she was on the lam.

Now, at 21, she smiles and says
she can't remember any of it and
wants to be an actress

RACI LORDS WITH HER CLOTHES ON

She drives the L.A. freeways, a car phone to her ear, in a vivid-red sports car whose color perfectly matches the lipstick on her Baby Doll mouth. A pretty girl, at 21, with straight-cut blonde hair; a round, Slavic face; narrow eyes masked by thin black wraparound shades; and skin the white of a sun-bleached bone. She is dressed entirely in black. She has the body of a Fifties pinup, lolling, perhaps, on satin sheets while popping bonbons into her lascivious mouth.

She would look like every other 21-year-old starlet in Hollywood, if not for those lips. Fat, moist, red, alive. They can be as seductive as the sexual flowers painted by Georgia O'Keeffe, and as repulsive as an open wound.

"What do you want with me?" she says with narrowed eyes. "My story is an old one." It is ten o'clock in the morning in the hushed restaurant of the Four Seasons Hotel in Beverly Hills. Around her, men and women in dark business suits are scanning *The Wall Street Journal* while absentmindedly eating their spare breakfasts of bran flakes and freshly squeezed orange juice. She picks a strawberry from her fruit plate and sucks it between her lips. People try not to stare. People recognize her everywhere. In supermarkets, men gawk at her while their women hiss "Slut!" In hip restaurants in Venice Beach, waiters approach her to say they were in her acting class. "You hated me then," they say. "It wasn't you," she tells them. "I hated all men then."

She glances around the swank hotel restaurant and says, "These people are too fucking cool to notice me. I oughta stand up on the table and shout 'Here I am, fuckers! If you can't deal with it, too fucking bad!'" She giggles. "My agent's always telling me I can't say 'fuck' in interviews. What's the big deal? I can say 'fuck' if I want. Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!" She giggles again, like a bad little girl.

Of course, that has always been her appeal to men. "I met her on the set of *Sex 5th Avenue* in 1985," says actor Paul Thomas, who was 35 to her 16. "She was as cute as can be. A nasty little girl who enjoyed being bad. I just wanted to fuck her."

Even now, she seems both younger and older than her years. At times, she can be as innocent as a child entering the mysteries of her teens. Her conversation is dotted with giggles and teenisms. At other times, she can be as perceptive as an adult decades older. Of an actress who plays the same character in movie after movie she will say, "She's afraid of failure. She'll get over it." Then in the next breath she will say, "I feel sorry for Cher and Madonna. They don't know who they are. I like who I am. It took a lot of hard work. Still, I don't expect people to take me seriously."

And then, in a flash, she will become as cold and calculating as any 40-year-old divorcée selling real estate in Beverly Hills. "I don't take shit from anybody," she says. "In my adult life I will not accept no. I manage my own money because it pissed me off when my finances were in someone else's hands. The only thing that scares me is being out of control. I know everyone uses you in this business, but it's up to you to decide who and how. . . . I'm

BY PAT JORDAN



not bitter. I just don't pretend the world is full of goodness. I'm not bad, I'm just strong. Strong women intimidate men. Unless you come on to them. I don't give off those vibes. Just because I'm young and pretty doesn't mean I'm bait. I'm not for sale. I don't believe in fucking fat, stupid Jewish producers to get a role. There are plenty of little starlets ready to pull their pants down for that. The only difference between me and them is I did mine on film. I've done it all. That scene bores the shit out of me now."

She's right. She doesn't give off sexual vibes. Despite her youth and beauty and voluptuous body, there is something almost antisexual about her. She is like the pornographic actress in the George C. Scott movie *Hardcore*. In one scene, Scott, who plays a deeply religious man, tells the actress they have different attitudes about sex. *No, we don't*, she says. *You think it's so unimportant that you don't do it. I think it's so unimportant that I don't care who I do it with.* It is an odd observation to make about a woman who is recognized throughout the world for her sexuality, who created herself as a sex object at 15, beginning with her name: Traci Lords.

"I got the name from Jack Lord of *Hawaii Five-O*," she says. (Perhaps she is unaware of the Katharine Hepburn character in *The Philadelphia Story*, Tracy Lord.) "When I was a little girl, he was the first man to make me realize I was sexual. I love older men." She giggles. Then her eyes narrow. "When I tried to get into straight movies, I tried to use my real name. But everybody knew me. So I said 'Screw it!' It takes too much energy to hide. I'm not into regretting my past. I'm who I am because of it. That experience made me grow up faster. Since I've been 15, I've been pretending I was 22. I was very good at it. I've been acting all my life. I know it wasn't acting in any real sense. . . . So what? So I was just a 15-year-old porn star. Big fucking deal."

Not just any porn star, but the biggest in the business. At 15, she was a baby-fat brunette child-woman whose eyes glanced sideways at the camera and whose hands shook as she performed her sex acts. By 16, she was a tough, savvy professional known for "giving the best orgasm in the business," according to a video distributor. In *Beverly Hills Copulator*, she writhed and screamed and moaned on a sofa as an actor had sex with her. She glared up at him and said through snarling lips, "Come on, baby! Is that all you've got?"

At one point, she made \$300,000 in nine months. Her videos outsold those of other porn actresses 10-to-1. She became famous throughout the world.

Then in the summer of 1986, investigators raided her

Redondo Beach, California, apartment and found the fake IDs she had been using to fool adult-video makers into believing she was of legal age (18). Traci was never prosecuted. The authorities were more interested in going after the men who were behind her pornography career when she was a minor.

Within months, the Traci Lords scandal threatened to seriously injure the adult-video business. Tens of thousands of copies of her films had to be pulled from video-store shelves and destroyed, at a loss of millions of dollars to the industry. It is a business whose proprietors do not take setbacks lightly. It was rumored that the Mob put out a contract on her life.

At 18, Traci Lords dropped from sight. "Look for her under a cement block," said one video distributor at the time. She has recently resurfaced as an aspiring actress, trying to make it in legitimate films, something none of her porn predecessors have ever really managed. Her biggest part to date, in high-camp director John (Pink *Flamingos*) Waters's new film, *Cry-Baby*, can be seen this month.

The "new" Traci Lords has told recent interviewers that she can't remember her porn past. "I never saw any of my movies," she told me. "I don't even remember making them. I was drinking and addicted to drugs. I was always shitfaced and stoned out of my mind."

This assertion is laughed at by those who knew her then. "Is that what she's claiming now?" says Jim South, the man who introduced Traci to the adult-video world. "That's an absolute lie. I never saw the girl take drugs. I woulda got complaints. She was always a responsible businesswoman."

In a not-very-believable interview on TV's *A Current Affair* in 1988, Traci claimed she had left the porn industry of her own accord because "I didn't like what I was becoming. Sex was unimportant and dirty to me. I went home after my last movie and tried to take a shower to wash the dirt off, but I couldn't." She claimed she quit right then and there and never looked back. She says this defiantly, as if challenging people to disbelieve her. And then, in an unguarded moment, she will grin and say to me, "I can't talk about my past. NBC is making a movie of my life and I don't want to spill all my cookies."

She had a sense of who Nora was at birth," her mother says. She is sitting in a booth at Denny's in Redondo Beach, desultorily picking at a salad. "She wasn't even crying at birth. It was like, 'Here I am!' The doctor said, 'Look! She sits up like a queen.'"

She smiles, a slight, pale, ethereal woman of 42 with the big, timid eyes of a small bird. She is a practicing Buddhist in search of her Karma. She describes herself as a "mañana" sort of person who would have made a good librarian. On the table she spreads out several photographs of her daughter as a child. A pretty girl at 8, with a pained smile. "This is the Nora I remember," she says.

Nora Louise Kuzma, the second of four daughters, was born on May 7, 1968, in Steubenville, Ohio, a poor Appalachian town on the banks of the Ohio River. "It was a dirty little town," Nora remembers. "Freezing. I hated everything about it." Her father was a Ukrainian-American Jew, a steelworker and an alcoholic. Her mother, Patricia Briceland Kuzma, was a deferential woman who had grown up in poverty with four brothers and sisters in a house without indoor plumbing. She married at 20 and immediately, and uncomplainingly, fell into the pattern of poverty, hard work, pregnancy after pregnancy and abuse from an alcoholic husband that is common to women of impoverished regions. "I supported his addiction," says Pat Briceland, who, even now, is unable to utter her ex-husband's name. "I was a good wife. I kept my mouth shut."

Nora was a precocious child who loved to pose for pictures and dreamed of becoming a model. "She came into the world with her own personality," her mother says. "She was a girl of extremes. With tremendous drive. She had a strong constitution, like her father."

Nora's father loved his little girls—as long as they remained little girls. As they approached the sexuality of their teens, he had difficulty relating to them. It was a fragile period in Nora's life, as it is for most girls. They either get the sense of their emerging sexuality from their father, often the only man in their life, or they look for it elsewhere. "I think my father hated women," Nora says. "He dealt with us until we were 11, then he started to lay this guilt on us about sex. It only made me more curious. Hmmm, I wondered, what's this all about?"

"When Nora grew up, her father was lost," says her mother. "The girls began to fear him." Nora's father would come home drunk and accuse her mother of having had boyfriends in the house. There were scenes, rages, abuse. Nora turned to her mother for help, but she found none.

"My mother had no time to deal with our insecurities," Nora says. "She was always working, so everything our father said about sex went unquestioned."

Soon Nora began dealing with her turbulent household in two ways: For one, she would take her father's beer from the refrigerator, hide the bottles under her coat and walk down the hill to her grandmother's house. "I felt like Little Red Riding-Hood running from the wolf," she says. "My grandmother and I would get drunk as hell. Then she would teach me how to cook good Russian food. I was very close to her."



Michelle Lynn, a street wise cop (played by the beautiful TRACI LORDS) is forced to go undercover, and I mean all the way undercover, as a high society hooker in Beverly Hills to find her younger sister who has become a prostitute in a seamy-entertainment district.

Melting jabs forces with her long time friend Grace River, to infiltrate the prostitution ring, ending up finding out more than they expected and conceiving a plan to bail me rag single-handedly.

TRACI LORDS

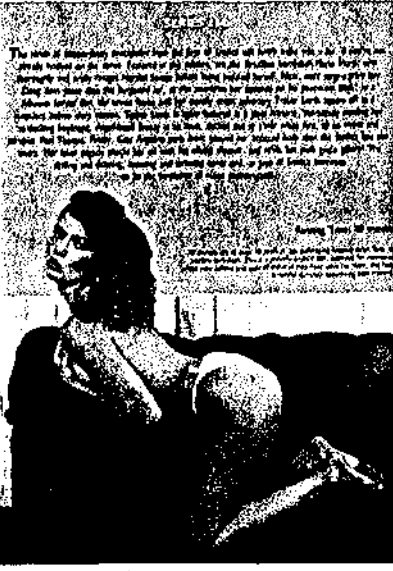
Produced by STEVEN CARTER and TRACI LORDS
Directed by STEVEN CARTER

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EROTICA



The most of interesting... (The text is mostly illegible due to the high contrast and graininess of the image.)

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RATED XXX

After the scandal broke that she had been underage, Traci dropped from sight. "Look for her under a cement block," said one video distributor at the time.

Tens of thousands of Lords's videos had to be destroyed, at a loss of millions to the men who control the porn industry. The "18 or older" disclaimer on each video was obviously not strictly adhered to.

Nora also became a compulsive cleaner, the way children sometimes do when they grow up in chaotic homes, as if the tidiness of washing dishes would somehow impart order to her disordered life. When her mother and father were finally divorced, it was a relief to Nora and her sisters. Shortly afterward, her mother lost her job and decided to follow a new boyfriend to the land of golden dreams—California. But first she discussed the trip with 12-year-old Nora. "My mother was having second thoughts," Nora says. "I told her, 'Mom, it can't get any worse. Let's get the hell outta here.' We got on a Greyhound bus and rode for three days. We had two cookies each and all our belongings in shopping bags." Nora laughs in the elegant restaurant of the Four Seasons Hotel. Then she says, "Get the picture?"

Nora saw her first palm tree through the window of the bus. She saw tanned boys and girls in bathing suits. She saw the sun shining over the Pacific Ocean. "When we hit Redondo Beach, she went crazy," her mother says. "She thought it was beautiful. She saw all the boys she would ever need here. I thought, How am I gonna keep track of my girls? It was a good question."

Nora laughs. "What'd I think?" she says. "I'm home! This is me, and Daddy's a million miles away. I was 12 when I last saw my father. I have no desire to see him. He's dead to me. I don't have a father. I never idolized my parents like some kids. It's sad when people have big dreams that get crushed. Maybe my mother had dreams, I don't know. She's very, very fragile. She's sweet and loving, but not very ambitious. She's not into material things. I just throw up my hands and say, 'Okay, Mom, if that's how you want to live.' I never wanted to be like my

mother. I was determined to break that Appalachian cycle. You know, kids at 16, a husband who drinks and beats you. When I hit L.A., I said, 'There's gonna be some changes here.'" Nora throws back her head and laughs until her eyes fill with tears.

By the time Nora started her freshman year at Redondo Union High School she was living the life of a typical California girl. She roller-skated on the beach in her bikini, caught the "big waves" and started smoking "the herb." She saw herself, however, as fundamentally different from the other kids. They were affluent, laid-back, without drive. "They were clueless," she says. "They relied on Mommy and Daddy for everything."

Nora, however, had ambitions. She took stock of her assets: Brains. Beauty. A voluptuous body even then, at 14. And an incredible willpower, fueled, increasingly, by anger. She saw instantly how those assets could get her the things she wanted—love, money, control over her life. She began, first, by controlling boys. She took to wearing halter tops, hot pants and high heels to school. When her mother questioned her behavior, Nora lashed out at her.

"I hated the world," says Nora. "I was hateful to my mother. If I came home from a date at 11:30 and my mother questioned me, I'd say, 'I was out fucking somebody!' I wasn't. I was afraid of sex then, but I pretended I knew everything. I just wanted to piss my mother off."

Nora had her first sexual experience at 15. She immediately got pregnant. "Welcome to the real world," she says, laughing. "My boyfriend was scared shitless, which only compounded my anger. Men suck. Men are the lowest form of creatures. I heard my father's voice saying, 'If you play, you'll pay.' Great, motherfucker! You made this happen. I got the abortion myself. Then I got worse. I tortured my boyfriend. Now that it was too late, he said he wanted to marry me. I tossed my hair in his face and said 'Sure' and went after the hottest guy in school to drive my boyfriend insane."

Nora quit high school after the tenth grade. She got a fake ID and began using it in bars to get served drinks. She started dating older men. Finally, when she fell under the influence of one such man, she ran away from home.

"He was a father figure," she says. "Why not? You feel you're shit because even your father doesn't love you. Older men prey on young girls desperate for love. I told you my story wasn't unique."

Nora's mother notified the police of her daughter's disappearance. They told her they could do nothing: There were too many runaways on the streets of Southern California. "I always kept the door open," says her mother. "Nora was tough and I knew she'd do what she wanted. She got the opportunity to live her fantasy of the highlife."

Shortly after she ran away from home in 1983, Nora Louise Kuzma, 15, visited the studios of World Modeling Agency, in Sherman Oaks, California. She was accompanied by a man in his forties who told people he was her stepfather. The owner of World Modeling, Jim South, told them his girls primarily did nude modeling, often involving simulated sex acts as seen in such magazines as *Cheri* and *Velvet*. Nora was unfazed. South also told them his models had to be at least 18 years old. Nora produced a California driver's license and a birth certificate stating that she was Kristie Nussman, born November 17, 1962. South told her to get undressed for some Polaroids. While she nonchalantly stripped, her "stepfather" regaled South with stories of all the porn stars he knew. Then he said to South, "This girl will do anything you want in porn movies."

The first modeling shoot South arranged for Nora/Kristie involved simulated sex acts. "The photographer had to stop the shoot," South remembers, "because she went beyond simulation. Whenever she came into my office, she always grabbed my face in her hands and stuck nine inches of tongue down my throat. She came on to anyone. Still, you could tell right off she was using sex as a vehicle to get what she wanted. When she began making X-rated videos, she'd come into my office after a shoot and laugh at the male actors who thought they'd made her climax four times. 'I fooled them, Jim,' she'd say. She was all business. The smartest girl I've ever seen. That girl was an adult at 10. I mean, she was slicker than owl shit in an okra dish."

South, at 51, has a droopy bandito mustache and a thick southern drawl. He likes to refer to himself as a staunch Reagan conservative. Much of his business entailed channeling young women from nude modeling into X-rated movies, and he got Nora into her first porn film. By then, she had dropped "Kristie" and had acquired another name—Traci Lords.

At first, Traci received as little as \$200 a day for bit parts in such movies as *Joys of Erotica*. In that film, she sat on a sofa with an actress named Raven and talked about men.

"I'm sick of men in my life," Raven said.

"They all have an ego problem," said 15-year-old Traci. "Every one of them thinks they have the golden jewel. The best cock around. You have to sit there and play with them like little toys. Make sure they feel they're the best." Then the two women engaged in sex. ("At one time, I thought I was gay," says Traci now. "But I never had sex with a woman outside of movies.")

Soon enough, she had transformed herself into the slimmer, tough-as-nails platinum blonde who acted as if she was in combat with the men she was having sex with. Bill Margold, an adult-video screenwriter responsible for such Lords classics as *Portrait of Lust* and *New Wave Hookers*, remembers the time Traci was having sex with

porn star Jamie Gillis. "When the camera went off," says Margold, "Traci was still fucking Jamie, while screaming 'Come on, Mama wants it hotter!' She had the sexual perniciousness of a 40-year-old. Still, she was exceptionally mechanical. Like a cash register. She never gave too much onscreen."

Paul Thomas, the porn actor known as P.T., the Postman (because "he always delivers"), says of Traci. "She was one of the few actresses who wouldn't stop having sex after the camera was off. She wanted to show she could fuck just as good as porn stars like me, which was okay with me." ("I was out to prove something," says Traci.)

In her movies, there was much of the naughty child-woman about Traci, not unlike Carroll Baker in her movie *Baby Doll*. It was this element of the seduced innocent that helps explain much of her appeal to men. In *Country Girl*, Traci wore a pink T-shirt, pink shorts and spoke with a drawl. She played a naive southern teenager initiated into the delights of sex by older men and women. She peeked into bedrooms and her eyes opened wide with both curiosity and desire. Often in her movies, Traci did more acting and speaking than most porn actresses. She was one of the very few who did act in between bouts of sex.

By 17, Traci was the highest-paid actress in her field. Working almost constantly, she made up to \$1,000 per day. ("I only did it for the money," she says.) She was mobbed in Paris and Tokyo when she made appearances. In the States, at adult-video conventions, moonstruck men would line up for hours just to get her autograph. She was a one-person porn industry, which she controlled herself. She raised her own money, produced her own films, wrote her own scripts, starred in her own projects and marketed the resulting products herself. She formed Traci Lords Productions with her "manager" and reputed boyfriend, a man in his late thirties described by South as "a fucking snake." They got video companies to pay Traci \$10,000 a month and furnish her with an apartment and a Mercedes. Shortly after she turned 18, Traci raised between \$25,000 and \$50,000 from a video distributor to make an adult film in Paris. Though she went to Paris, she told the distributor she never made the movie.

When she returned to California in the summer of 1986, investigators were waiting. Carrying a false passport is a federal felony, but the U.S. Attorney's Office had no intention of prosecuting Traci. It was more interested in using her to go after bigger fish. Several men in the business were arrested, both men like South, who got Traci into adult videos, and men like Rubin Gottesman, owner of X-Citement Video, Inc., who distributed them. They were charged with violating federal child-pornography laws, which carried maximum sentences of

ten years in prison and \$100,000 in fines. All of them claimed they had been unaware that Traci was underage. Los Angeles County District Attorney Ira Reiner was not impressed. "We're all familiar with their high standards," he said. Besides, in order to prosecute the men, federal law only required proof that Traci had been a minor when acting in X-rated movies. State law, however, took into consideration that she had produced apparently valid IDs.

It cost South \$25,000 in legal fees to avoid going to jail. Gottesman was not so lucky. He was convicted in 1989 on three counts of distributing child pornography and sentenced to one year in prison and three years probation.

As to why Traci was never prosecuted, Reiner said, "She may very well be a hard professional now, but she was 15...when the pornographic-film industry got ahold of her. The thrust of our investigation is directed toward the industry that exploited her."

"I got out of every subpoena," says Traci now. "It cost me a lot of money. My mother testified for me [at Gottesman's trial] and the judge bought it."

During the scandal, stories abounded as to how the FBI had discovered Traci's true age. It was rumored that she had been arrested in Tokyo using a false passport and had made a deal with the FBI to avoid prosecution. It was rumored that her mother owned all the rights to her videos and was using the scandal to inflate their price. It was rumored that Traci had been paying off her mother to keep her silent about her daughter's career, and when Traci stopped the payments, her mother called the FBI. It was rumored that Traci had revealed her real age to the FBI so that after her underage videos were pulled off the shelves she would own the rights to the only legal Traci Lords video extant. It seems that she had made her Paris video, *Traci, I Love You*, and was now offering it for sale. She eventually sold it to a distributor for \$100,000—a move she regrets today. ("I get the rights back in two years," she says, "and I'm gonna burn every copy.") And finally, it was rumored that the Mob was looking to get even. South claims that someone approached him with an offer of \$1,000 to disclose Traci's whereabouts. He refused because, as he says, "sometimes ethics matter in this business."

Screenwriter Bill Margold says, "One day Traci Lords will wind up as the cornerstone of a bank building."

Traci and her mother deny all the rumors. "I don't know who squealed," says Traci. Adds her mother: "I never knew she had that kind of money at her disposal. Would you want that money from your daughter?" By then, Traci and her mother had reconciled. Three years after leaving, Traci had appeared at her mother's door and said "Ma, I fucked up." They laughed and cried and hugged. "I used to call her from a phone booth just to hear her voice," Traci says. "I'd hang up."

"I was never angry at Traci," says her mother. "Her sisters were angry for a while. They'd walk to school and kids would call out 'Your sister's' (continued on page 303)

TRACI LORDS

(continued from page 255) a slut! I'm just thrilled she's got her life back."

Over the next year or so, Traci disappeared from public view as she tried to distance herself from her former career. She took the energy of her anger and channeled it into making a career in "straight" movies, as if by a mere act of her considerable will she could remake her life. She took acting lessons at the Lee Strasberg Theatre Institute in Hollywood and voice and classical-ballet lessons. She supported herself mainly by posing seminude for posters and a Traci Lords calendar, all of which she has advertised, as recently as late last year, in *Adult Video News* magazine, alongside ads for such classic porn videos as *Hung Jury* and *When Larry Ate Sally*. Her ad read: "THE LEGEND OF TRACI LORDS LIVES ON!!! Everyone's favorite porn-star-gone-Hollywood remains the crave of the nation!"

Traci then made an exercise video, the cameras spending more time focusing on her bobbing breasts than on her calisthenics. It failed miserably. Soon thereafter, she got an agent.

Don Gerler is a quick little man in his fifties who grew up in Brooklyn. Before Traci, his most famous client was Dan Haggerty, TV's Grizzly Adams. "I let Traci do most of her own stuff," Gerler says from behind the cluttered desk in his small Hollywood office. "She knows what she wants. Her picture came in the mail. I didn't know who she was. I didn't care what she did in the past. I only cared what she is now. The time is right for her. I can smell it. She's one of a few actresses her age who can play 17. She can play innocent."

Under Gerler's handling, Traci began knocking on studio doors. They opened, then closed on her. She read for the part of the mother in a TV movie about Jessica McClure, the Texas child who fell down a well. She drew raves from the casting director, says Gerler, but the producers wouldn't even consider her. "Why not?" says Traci. "They audition centerfolds."

Finally, Traci got a break when she auditioned for director Jim Wynorski, a Roger Corman "B"-movie disciple. ("I have no desire to make a big statement," says Wynorski, a tall, lanky man with stringy hair and a beard, who directed *Chopping Mall*.)

"A friend suggested I use Traci Lords as a joke," says Wynorski, who was casting for his next movie, a sci-fi thriller called *Not of This Earth*. "It took me two weeks to track her down. But she was good, so I hired her. There was nothing sleazy about her. So she did her sex onscreen. A lot of Hollywood does it offscreen. She's a good person. Thoughtful. She was the first person ever to send me flowers. I think she can be an actress, although she'll find doors shut on her in legit films. I suggested her to three

producers, but they said 'No way!' I offered her a part in my next movie, but she turned it down because it had nudity. She turned down Corman for the same reason. I applaud that. But Corman says, 'I've seen a lot of actresses come and go when they don't realize their exploitative qualities.'"

When the film was released in the summer of 1988, *The Hollywood Reporter* began its review with "Yes—she can act!" And she could. Traci was believable as a hip, sexy, sarcastic nurse who was also touchingly innocent. It was not much of a departure from her own personality. Despite her childhood, her porn past and her current efforts to appear cynical beyond her years, there is still something innocent about Traci Lords, almost as if the guilelessness of her lost teen years had been suspended in time, waiting for her to go back and claim it.

Since the Wynorski movie, Traci has had bit parts in the TV series *Marted* ... *With Children* and *Wiseguy*. But her biggest test comes this month, with the release of John Waters's *Cry-Baby*. Traci co-stars, with Johnny Depp, as Wanda Woodward, a virginal, sexual tease who drives the high-school boys wild. "She's a bad girl who's really a good girl," explains Waters of his decision to cast Traci. "Besides, Jes-

sica Rabbit wasn't available."

Waters, whose own career has moved from the fringe toward the mainstream, claims Traci's past didn't deter him from hiring her, because "everybody on the set had a past. Troy Donahue. Patty Hearst. Traci was good, and funny. She made fun of her notoriety, which is the best way to get rid of it. She's very endearing, nothing like the Traci Lords of her porn life. Sure, there was a certain hardness, but you can't expect three years' of ugliness to disappear overnight."

"I got the part and I didn't have to sleep with anyone," Traci says, grinning. She also got a fiancé, *Cry-Baby*'s prop master, 22-year-old Brook Yeaton. "I got rid of that old-man bullshit," Traci says. "Some women never learn. You wouldn't believe my therapy group. Women at 35, married three times to guys who beat them like their fathers did." She shakes her head in disgust. "Still, they don't get it. I wanna shake 'em. 'Snap out of it!' I found out all kinds of things about my father and why I did the things I did. I'm not searching for a father figure anymore. When I was younger I always wanted to be older. Now I want to go back and do the things I never did when I was 17."

Traci is driving back to her apartment,



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TRACI LORDS

near Universal Studios, in her lipstick-red sports car. She is talking on her car phone to Gerler, who has a new movie contract for her to sign. Her lips peel apart as she speaks. Those lips! Even today, she outlines them in dark red, and then, almost unbelievably, paints their moist insides, too. When she puts the phone down, she says, "I turned down some roles because I won't do nudity. I won't do anything I would be embarrassed to be seen in. Credibility is my goal now."

She drives in silence for a while on the freeway. A beautiful girl with platinum-

blonde hair and thin black wraparound shades that hide her eyes. She turns and says, "I'm not the type of person to say I am a victim. I'll tell you who's a victim. I was in an airport recently and I saw this yuppie couple with their little boy. They were such fucking yuppies, you know? And the little boy, he was still innocent. I wanted to yell at that little boy, 'Run! Run! Don't let them make you like them!'" She throws back her head and laughs. ■

Pat Jordan is GQ's writer-at-large. He profiled director Ron Shelton in December.

BARRY SADLER, WITH A BULLET

(continued from page 247) the warm, brown odor of Jack Daniel's was on every page.

The pair received a \$4,800 advance for the manual, enough for two solid months of partying.

Although he was considered a modest talent by almost everyone in the music business, it didn't take Sadler long to alienate himself from those who might have helped his career. Certainly the Lee Bellamy affair didn't help. And one night in the parking lot of a local tavern, he struck a fairly well connected record producer, knocking him senseless.

It often was said of Sadler that he possessed his very own self-destruct button and really enjoyed punching it.

Between binges, he got around to turning the screenplay he had developed back in Tucson into a book. Entitled *The Moi*, a Vietnamese word for "animal," it was published but didn't sell enough copies to fill a shoebox.

Soon thereafter, he came up with another idea: a paperback series about a fighting man's Dorian Gray; it seemed a sure thing, a way of supporting himself and his family without taking a job as a clerk at K mart, which he often threatened to do. He pitched the idea to Bob Robison, a talent agent in Nashville, and together they stormed a booksellers' convention in Atlanta, stealing in through a service door in the back.

Michael Seidman, then an editor with Grosset & Dunlap, read the first of the Casca Longinius novels and told his boss, "This is a good idea. Too bad the guy can't write."

In the series, Casca, cursed by Christ to "wander the globe a constant soldier" until the Second Coming, finds himself engaged in history's ugliest battles. Wherever Casca goes, people are decapitated, disemboweled, castrated, beaten with rocks and shot to pieces. Although Sadler refrained from writing explicit sex scenes, almost every woman who turned up in his pages could count on an erotic death.

As soon as the first of the Casca books

sold, Barry temporarily retired from writing to do what he did best: kill time at the Shame. By now his infidelities had become commonplace, and although Lavona knew that he couldn't keep his pants zipped, she felt powerless to do anything about it. He'd hypnotized her, remember, and damned if she could break his spell. Sometimes after they argued, he would disappear for days—time spent at bars or in other women's beds.

He once went to a strip joint in town and handed out autographed copies of his latest Casca novel to the dancers. As the women sashayed onstage, he waved the glossy paperbacks at them like \$100 bills.

He often drove his motor home to Music Row, parked at curbside and slept there. Some days, camped in the Shame's asphalt lot, he would engage in a contest with a friend to see which of them could bed the most women in the course of an afternoon. It was not uncommon for Sadler to have sex with three women in as many hours.

By now, Lavona was sick of the abuse. One day in late 1982, she and Barry got into a shouting march that shook the walls and rattled the lamps. The more they yelled, the more their daughter, Brooke, only 6 years old, screamed and hollered.

The argument ended when Barry threw a fist into Lavona's face. He had never hit her before, and he seemed as surprised by the violence as she did. But at that moment, something happened to her: No longer was she hypnotized by his might and magic. Later she told him, "I'll kill you."

"If ever you cook with mushrooms," he replied, trying to make light of things, "I'll know they aren't good to eat."

She proposed they cut a deal: He would purge his awful lust for women and adventure from his system and return in five years to resume his life as a husband and family man.

"Okay," he said.

"You must first be aware that a lot of things happened that night," Tex Henry is saying on the telephone. He's the Canadian fel-