

Grandpa Ganja's Emporium

(The Tasting)

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FADE IN:

BETH checks stock in display cases and rearranges things in preparation for their 10:00 a.m. opening. GG enters from the backroom carrying a mug of coffee and a fat pot cookie.

He points at the case she's working in.

GG

That muffin's upside down.

BETH

Our clients will never know the difference—or care if they did know.

GG

But it's a matter of aesthetics, of symmetry. An upside down muffin reflects on every muffin in the case. Throws the whole display out of balance.

BETH

Nobody balances muffins, Grandpa.

GG

I do.

BETH

That isn't your first cookie, is it?

GG

Implying what?

BETH

That you're stoned again.

GG

Again? Don't you mean still?  
Just breathing the air in here all  
day would turn a cigar store Indian  
into a pothead.

BETH

Now you're mocking Indians.

GG

What?

BETH

You're saying Indians are potheads.

GG

Some of 'em are. They come in here  
all the time. I read that Sitting Bull  
and all of his Indians at the Little Big  
Horn were stoned out of their gourds.

BETH

And that's why the Indians won?

GG

That and because Custer's men were all  
hung over from boozing all night.

BETH

You made that up.

GG

I did not. I saw it on Wikipedia. Sitting  
Bull himself wrote it so I know it's true.  
(bites cookie)  
Earl not in yet?

BETH

No. He said he had to get new glasses.

GG

What for?

BETH

Because he can't see with the ones he has?

GG

And new glasses will help him see?

BETH

Yep. He's even getting bifocals.

GG

Does Ben Franklin know about this?

BETH

Know what?

GG

That his bifocals can cure blindness?

BETH

(shakes head)

I need some of that coffee.

GG

(cup & cookie down)

Here, I'll get it.

He goes to the coffee table and pours a mug of coffee, adds just the right amount of cream, and takes it to her at the table.

BETH

(reflecting)

Earl never talks about his vision, does he? I mean, how it happened.

GG

(offers box)

Cookie?

BETH

Why not? If it's good enough for a cigar store Indian it's good with me.

(takes cookie,  
reflects)

It might have been an accident. He's got some scarring around both eyes. Like maybe he had surgery.

GG

(shrugs)

He's a good man with some really shitty luck.

BETH

(smiles warmly)

I like him, Grandpa. He thinks I'm  
a pretty blond with blue eyes, tall  
like a model, no makeup..

GG

Jesus, maybe Earl *isn't* blind! He  
described you exactly!

BETH

(laughing)

He's too kind—and so are you.

(more businesslike)

It's ten. Time to start healing the sick.

GG

(moving to door)

L.A.'s version of Blue Cross. Couple  
more years and the whole country will  
be stoned and they'll have to close half  
of the hospitals for lack of sick people.

BETH

Don't tell the insurance companies  
or they'll bomb this place.

GG swings the door open and the usual motley crew enters  
and takes up favorite posts. Pot is sold, smoked, eaten,  
praised, debated, and cut up in chunks and carried home in  
a sack. Guitar music fills the air and commingles with the  
smoke and peals of laughter fill the spaces between them  
and healing continues apace.

An hour later EARL enters wearing his new glasses that are  
just as opaque as his old ones. He stops in the doorway to  
sweep the room with a commanding gaze but since he doesn't  
have a gaze he settles for striking a pose and turning his  
head for all to see.

GG

Hey, Earl. Beth says you got new glasses.

EARL

Yep. Got all the extras, too. Safety  
glass, bifocals, tinted lens, designer  
frames, UV light protection...

GYPPER

(not Gipper)

Holy shit, man, the only thing you're missing is X-ray vision and a mindless fear of kryptonite.

GG

Come on, Earl, you need an infusion of THC before you come down and scare the shit out of everybody.

(to BETH)

Beth, give Earl a cookie and only charge him half price.

BETH

What if I charge him double? He isn't going to pay it, anyway.

EARL

Well, I've never been so insulted!

GG

Yes, you have. How about the time..

GYPPER

Hey, what time does the tasting start?

EARL

If it has anything to do with taste, it'll start right after you leave.

GYPPER

Talkin' taste? Look at you, man. Wearing a striped shirt with plaid pants and one shoe black and the other one brown.

EARL

What? Oh, shit!

(looks down, pats self)

That's what I get for dressing in the goddamn dark!

GG

Relax, Earl. He's putting you on. You look like a model for GQ.

(to Gypper)

Say, Gypper, what's with the name? You play for Notre Dame?

GYPPER

Naw, that's Gipper; I'm Gypper. They call me that because I used to work in the health insurance industry.

BETH

Because you gypped people?

GYPPER

Yeah, but I got fired. A barrel of holy water tipped over on me and washed away my sins. It made me an honest man.

BETH

That's awful!

GG

Tragic! How's a man supposed to live in modern-day America with a curse like that on him?

EARL

Man, what I want to know is, where'd you find a barrel of holy water?

GYPPER

At the Blessed Bleeding Stigmata parish. They just got a new shipment in and I was stealing the barrel.

BETH

What were we talking about?

GG

The tasting?

BETH

Oh. The tasting starts at three. We'll choose a panel from the audience to judge the pot. All entries are from bud grown within L.A.'s city limits so we can promote local growers and raise more tax money for the city.

1<sup>st</sup> VOICE

Oprah gives the audience free gifts!

The smoke eddies and builds.

EARL

(taking coat off)

I'll give you a free gift you...!

2<sup>nd</sup> VOICE

Yeah! Put some pot under everybody's chair!

3<sup>rd</sup> VOICE

Or pass the cookie box around!

GG

(aside to BETH)

They're turning ugly. We may have to send for *The Nuns*.

BETH

(aside)

Wait. I'll pass the regular cookies around. It's all image, anyway.

(calls out)

The man is right. If Oprah can give out gifts so can we.

(box up)

Free cookies for all! Take one and pass it on! Compliments of Grandpa Ganja!

The duped dopers eagerly empty the box and eat the cookies as our heroes move behind the counter and look on.

GG

Maybe we should just sell regular cookies. Make more money.

BETH

Spoken like a neocon asshole.

EARL

(accusingly)

You gave 'em regular cookies, didn't you?

GG

So what? They're already stoned. Any more pot would be excessive stoning and that's outlawed by the Geneva Convention.

EARL

I suppose you're going to give me a regular cookie, too.

GG

I wasn't going to give you any cookies until you pay up.

BETH

Here, Earl, have a pot cookie. Just don't blow our cover.

EARL

(takes cookie, shakes head)  
Man, I've got half a mind to take my business to another pot store.

GG

You can't. I put your ass on YouTube and warned every pot store in L.A. If you show up they'll sell you shake with twigs and seeds and zero THC. You'll come down like Icarus with his ill-fated aerobatics.

BETH

Just ignore him, Earl. You're our oldest regular and a fixture here. This is a union shop and you've got seniority rights.

EARL

Hear that, Gramps? You mess with me and I'll call a goddamn strike and picket this place 24/7.

GG

(sighs)

This power to the people business is getting out of hand. I'm going to shred some incriminating evidence before the feds raid us again.

Grandpa leaves and BETH and EARL move to the table where a machine roller and sack of pot await their attention.

BETH

We've got to roll some more joints. We'll need at least 100. Good thing we've got a machine for this or we'd have carpal tunnel syndrome all the way up our necks.

EARL

A Hundred Js. That's a lot of money.

BETH

They're slim Js. Besides, the PR will pay for it and more.

EARL

Good. Maybe I can get a raise out of that cheap old geezer.

BETH

A raise? Grandpa isn't paying you anything now.

EARL

That's why I steal cookies. I eat 300 bucks worth a week and I want to throw in some hash and maybe some Panama Red now and again.

BETH

(seriously)

Earl, uh, are you okay? I mean, do you need money or ...?

EARL

(touched, smiles)

No, Beth. No. That's really cool, though. It's just shtick, you know. Keeps my mind agile. I have enough money. I steal pot just to mess with Grandpa.

BETH

(warmly)

He thinks the world of you, Earl. And so do I.

EARL

(gruffly)

Hey, what's this? We got work to do here. People out there need their medicine. In fact, I'm feeling woozy myself. Maybe a bowl of Panama Red would restore my health.

BETH

And mine. Two bowls coming up.

BETH fills pipes as EARL listens.

EARL

The pay's not so hot but the fringe  
benefits are great.

BETH

(pipes ready)

To our health!

BETH lights EARL'S pipe and then her own and both inhale mighty drafts of life-giving smoke and add another day to their life expectancy. A second hit and the THC stirs sleeping endorphins that race through their brains rousing pleasant thoughts and warm feelings of well-being. That done, they fall to work with a will.

At 2:30 the place is filled with stoners of all races, creeds, and colors. Many are bandaged, some costumed in foreign dress, some \$2000 suits, a lady wearing nothing but a long T-shirt that isn't long enough. Three chairs for the judges are empty, three small boxes hold the feature attractions, and an expectant air drives all the regular air out of the room and leaves behind a mix of expectant air and airborne THC. Needless to say, all are nicely stoned. The smoke continues to build and eddy.

Our heroes confer behind the counter.

BETH

Picked the judges yet?

GG

Yeah. How about Biker Bill? He's a  
connoisseur. Amsterdam called him as  
an expert on how to improve Dutch pot.

EARL

He invented Mars bar pot, too. Remember?

BETH

Good choice. What about Doc? He'd  
add prestige to the panel.

GG

Uh, a thought. Shouldn't we have  
judges that aren't already stoned so  
they can start with a clean palate?

EARL

We don't know anybody who isn't stoned.

BETH

Yeah. If they aren't stoners when we meet them they are once they know us.

GG

Good point. So, Doc's in, right?

BETH

Right. One more. I see Bishop Ryan. He's one of our biggest customers.

EARL

And people trust him because he's not supposed to lie.

BETH

Of course he doesn't lie. Why would a priest lie? He represents the Catholic Church.

GG

You've answered your own question, Beth.

EARL

But choose him, anyway. I like him.

GG

Done. I'll notify the judges.

BETH

And I'll get those brownies out of the oven.

EARL

I'll, uh, I'll help Beth.

BIKER BILL is at a table across the room. GG approaches.

GG

Bill! How's it going, buddy?

BIKER BILL

Good, good. Did you get your money from Red?

GG

Yeah, sure. He brought it in himself three days later. Man's word is his bond.

BIKER BILL

It's the Code, man.

GG

Code? There's a code?

BIKER BILL

There's always a code. This one's about a man's word. You expect a man to keep his word.

GG senses that not keeping one's word with BIKER BILL would be a mistake.

GG

Yeah, well, you know me, Bill. They don't call me Honest Grandpa Ganja for nothing.

BIKER BILL

Nobody calls you that.

GG

They will. I've got a publicist working on it.

(beat)

Say, by the way, we need some judges and I thought of you right off. You guys have been up to your ears in pot for decades and know all about the stuff.

BIKER BILL

Sure. Glad to help. That's in keeping with the Hells Angels' motto: Nothing's too good for our friends—or our enemies.

GG

A man could take that two ways, Bill.

BIKER BILL

Yeah, I know.

GG

Yeah, right. Thanks, Bill. You're a pal.

BIKER BILL starts for the dais and GG spots DOC near the door. He signals to him and heads that way. DOC is in scrubs.

GG

Doc. I thought you were in surgery today?

DOC

I am. That is, I was and I will be again after the tasting. It's okay. I left my nurse in charge.

GG

Isn't that risky?

DOC

Not for me. What can happen at a pot tasting?

GG

I meant for your patient.

DOC

Aw, he's okay. He's a very rich man and rich people never die. Ask their heirs.

GG

Anyway, we want you to be a judge. We need somebody with class that people respect, somebody who knows what he's talking about.

DOC

Ah, yes. I can see why you came to me. You need an authority figure, one that can tell ditch weed from the real McCoy.

GG

Exactly. Grab a seat up front.

BISHOP RYAN starts past GG and he stops him.

GG

Bishop Ryan! Thanks for coming.

More smoke, denser eddies.

BISHOP

Oh, it's my pleasure, Grandpa!  
I can't thank you enough. Your  
views on celibacy opened my eyes.  
Here, meet my secretary, Gilda.

GILDA is a luscious blond with fake boobs and almost no  
clothing. Even GRANDPA wants to fuck her.

GG

Yes, uh, how do you do, Gilda?

GILDA

You're Grandpa Ganja! Joe talks about  
you all the time. I think we owe you  
for our coming together.

BISHOP

Grandpa made me see the light on the  
Church's stupid celibacy rule...

GG

Hey, they'll void that rule any day  
now just like they dumped Purgatory and  
Limbo and said it was okay to eat  
meat on Friday. It was all phony to begin  
with. I say get a head start, that's all.  
(scopes GILDA out)  
And it looks like you did, Padre.

BISHOP

I spread the word, Grandpa. E-mailed  
priests all over the country. They're  
dumping celibacy and taking up with  
strippers and pole dancers in droves.

GG

Why strippers and pole dancers?

BISHOP

Well, those girls are sinners so the boys  
figure they can save 'em while they  
strike a blow for sanity and free sex  
at the same time.

GG

Very thoughtful. Uh, you can grab a seat, Padre. We're ready to start.

The BISHOP heads for his chair and GG gallantly escorts GILDA to a front row seat where he'll have a clear view of all of her not covered by the bits of cloth that prevent her arrest for making men expose themselves as idiots. GG steps up and addresses the throng.

GG

Welcome to the first Annual International Ganja Tasting sponsored by Grandpa Ganja's Emporium and featuring some of the finest marijuana grown in the L.A. city limits.

A VOICE

The city limits aren't international!

EARL

Hey, what are you, a geographer?

2<sup>nd</sup> VOICE

Maybe we should alert the GPS people.

3<sup>rd</sup> VOICE

Or the politicians that draw up maps of congressional districts.

GG

We call it International in honor of our Mexican friends who grow most of our pot. Besides, L.A. is a Mexican city now and if we offend them they won't let us live here anymore.

Mexicans in crowd acquiesce with suitable comments. "¿Quien sabe?" "¿Que hora es?" "!Caramba!" and so on.

GG (cont'd)

The plan is simplicity itself. Everybody will get three joints containing three different samples. We'll all smoke the first one, take comments from the floor, and our judges will comment on each.

(beat)

You all know our judges. Biker Bill is

GG (cont'd)

here from the Hells Angels, a philanthropic group famous for their work with crippled folks made that way by members of the Hells Angels.

GG (cont'd)

(BILL waves fist)

Next, we have Doc, a renowned surgeon who has won nine malpractice lawsuits in a row.

(DOC high fives BILL  
and the BISHOP)

And finally the Bishop himself has been a pot toker ever since he found out about the celibacy rule. It was smoke pot or go nuts and now, thanks to an enlightened clergy, the good Padre can do both.

(crucifix up, he  
leers at GILDA)

Remember, one joint each. If you take more Biker Bill will meet with you after the show.

(beat)

Okay, Beth, pass out the first Js.

BETH advances to the front and starts boxes around. Each takes a single joint and smells it, checks for firmness, and admires its overall beauty even though the joints have little beauty because they were machine rolled and look like Marlboros.

On a signal from GG 30 small fires ignite 30 imperially slim joints that produce 30 hearty inhalations so powerful that much of the air is sucked out of the room. The resulting exhalation shoots enough high-powered THC into the air to stone that cigar store Indian mentioned earlier.

Comments follow.

2<sup>nd</sup> VOICE

Nice, nutty taste.

1<sup>st</sup> VOICE

Very smooth.

3<sup>rd</sup> VOICE

Slow burning, too.

EARL

But it looks like a Marlboro.

GYPPER

How can you tell?

GG

(calls out)

Guess the THC content?

2<sup>nd</sup> VOICE

Nine-percent!

4th VOICE

Seven!

1<sup>st</sup> VOICE

Twelve!

GG

Doc, do you want to take this one?

DOC

Mine's a sativa called Durban Poison. 14% THC. Great medicine. Got Alzheimer's? This stuff will make you forget you have it. The bouquet is delicate and robust at the same time. The first impression is aromatic and faint, the second is a jolt as the THC hits home.

(joint up, looks at it)

Earl's right. It does look like a Marlboro. There's no art, no soul in a hundred identical joints. It should be lumpy and too fat or too thin and crooked. In other words, it should be unique.

BIKER BILL

But it's really smooth. The smoke is like vapor. Asthmatics would like this one or maybe people with only one lung.

BISHOP

So would sinners who are trying to forget.

GG

Well, that includes just about everybody,  
Padre.

1<sup>st</sup> VOICE

Hey, there's no gift under my chair!

3<sup>rd</sup> Voice

Yeah, where's our gifts?

EARL

Say what? You're smoking free pot. What  
more do you want?

2<sup>nd</sup> VOICE

Oprah gives free cars away!

GG

Let's move on to the next sample.  
That would be you, Bill.

(calls out)

Biker Bill wants your attention.

A hush falls over the room.

BIKER BILL

My sample is a Indica Hindu Kush from East  
L.A. The THC content is 12%. The grower  
is Pedro O'Brien—not his real name—and  
he grows under lights in his basement.  
He has pictures of the plants here.  
They average three to four feet and produce  
one pound of bud each. He grows 20 plants  
with three harvests a year.

GYPPER

Where does Pedro live?

2<sup>nd</sup> VOICE

Does he need a partner?

EARL

What? You want to help him smoke his pot?

GIRL

For 60 lbs of pot I'll marry Pedro's  
ass!

GYPPER

(to GIRL)

With all that pot what would  
Pedro need you for?

GIRL

You mean you don't know?

There is so much smoke people are at windows and front door  
inhaling with might and main as smoke pours out.

GG

Hear, hear, folks! We're here in  
the interests of science and we need  
to act like scientists and not like  
average Americans.

1<sup>st</sup> VOICE

Who you calling average?

2<sup>nd</sup> VOICE

Yeah, there's no need to insult us!

GG

(to BIKER BILL)

Bill, explain it to them for me.

BIKER BILL

Sit down and shut up, pal.

He sits and everybody shuts up.

GG

That's better. There's nothing like  
an appeal to reason to solve a problem.

(beat)

Now, we're ready for the final entry.  
Beth, if you'll do the honors again.

BETH advances with boxes of Js and the onlookers help  
themselves.

GG (cont'd)

Okay, light 'em up and start your engines!

Small fires dot the room as lighters are applied to Js and  
60 lungs fill with high-octane smoke that visibly jolts the  
tokers as the THC races to their already addled brains.

Some hold on, others are stunned, still others grin like the pro stoners they are and enjoy the trip.

GG (cont'd)

Okay, our final judge is Bishop Ryan, a man of the cloth who smokes pot to cure the heebie-jeebies. He recently had an epiphany that has freed him from years of ignorance and despair.

(gestures to PADRE)

I give you Bishop Ryan—and this is his epiphany.

(points to GILDA)

Audience cranes necks to glimpse GILDA and Oohs and ahs fill the air as their respect and admiration for the BISHOP rises exponentially.

BISHOP

Some folks think it's a sin to smoke marijuana but they're mostly little old lady librarians, schoolmarms, and hypocritical Republicans who never tell the truth about anything.

(mumbling)

You should see neocons in confession. Takes 'em an hour to list their sins and they'll steal the seat cushion on the way out if you don't watch 'em.

GOP GUY

I resent that! I'm a Republican and I...!

CAMERA on prissy guy with bow tie, etc.

GG

What? Didn't you see the sign?  
No neocons allowed in the Emporium.  
Somebody throw his ass out!

GOP GUY

(defiantly)

Sir, I know my rights! I'd like to see somebody try to throw me out!

BIKER BILL stands up and the GOP GUY ducks and runs for the door like the weasel he is. All cheer and make supportive comments. "Asshole!" "Good riddance!" "Fuck you!"

BISHOP

(piously)

I'd pray for his poor soul...

(sotto voce)

...if I thought anybody would hear me.

(roach up)

My sample is an Indica Skunk and you could get a confession out of a terrorist in ten minutes flat with it. All you'd have to do is promise him some more pot if he talked. I know I would.

(beat)

Its piquant taste adds just enough spice to make it interesting and the 16% THC could jump start the wooden heart in a cigar store Indian. I'd recommend this bud to anybody who's looking for a jump start or just four hours in another dimension.

3<sup>rd</sup> VOICE

Some people say pot's the devil weed.

BISHOP

That's not true.

2<sup>nd</sup> VOICE

What? They don't say it or that pot isn't the devil weed?

5<sup>th</sup> VOICE

Hey, what are you another neocon asshole?

2<sup>nd</sup> VOICE

I'm just playing the Devil's advocate.

4<sup>TH</sup> VOICE

Put a curse on his ass, Padre!

6<sup>th</sup> VOICE

Send him to Purgatory for 10,000 years!

EARL

(shadow boxing)

Where is he? I'll kick his neocon ass!

GG

Relax, boys. It's a fair question. Some people think pot is evil but they all have very low IQs. A recent study by Hogan and Chiller found that anti-pot people are 17 points below America's national IQ. That makes them just below Lassie in intelligence. They've hardly got enough sense to get Timmy out of a goddamn well.

STONER

Timmy's fallen in a well again?

STONER'S PAL

Quick! Somebody send for Lassie!

BIKER BILL

(disgusted)

Cut those guys off before they call 911 to report Timmy's missing again.

3<sup>rd</sup> VOICE

Must be amateur tokers.

1<sup>st</sup> VOICE

Or pros.

GG

(gathers self)

So, uh, thanks for that riveting report on your sample, Padre. I'm sure your appearance here today will encourage others to, uh, you know, uh, do the right thing and all.

GG forgets where he's going; only BETH notices and steps in but can't get attention. BIKER BILL sees her plight.

BIKER BILL

(rising)

Hey! Everybody shut the hell up!

BETH

Thanks, Bill.

(to audience)

We still need a judge's decision on the winner of the three samples! Let's go back to our judges for a decision.

GG

Let me remind you that all three are available here at the Emporium as long as the supply lasts. The Durban Poison is \$10 a gram and the Skunk and Kush run eight bucks.

(beat)

And now let's hear from Doc and his favorite sample.

DOC

First, all three samples are very good pot. Lots of kick and flavor. The Kush is sweeter than the Durban Poison and the Skunk is more aromatic. My own favorite was the Kush but it's a close call.

GG

Okay, one vote for the Hindu Kush! What's Biker Bill think about that?

BIKER BILL

I think Doc's right. They're all good but the Kush has an edge. It's very subtle, though, you have to kind of lean to the right and concentrate hard and think like a pot plant to get its full effect. So I vote for the Hindu Kush, too.

GG

Well done, Bill! Very insightful and penetrating. Does the good bishop make it a clean sweep?

BISHOP

I do. It was a toss-up between the Kush and the Skunk but I went for the Tush.

EARL

You went for the tush?

BISHOP

What? No! I said Kush. I went for the Kush!

BETH

What would Freud think?

The sound of fire engine sirens close at hand arouses everyone's curiosity and heads swivel.

GG

What the...?

BISHOP

There must be a fire out there!

GG

(fanning smoke)

Or in here!

The door flies open and two FIREMEN enter with axes at the ready and wearing gas masks.

1<sup>st</sup> FIREMAN

Everybody out! She's liable to blow any second!

GIRL

Don't look at me when you say that!

GG

Hey, wait a minute. There's no fire here. This is just a lot of pot smoke.

1<sup>st</sup> VOICE

Yeah, false alarm, man.

2<sup>nd</sup> FIREMAN

What?

BETH

It's a pot tasting gone awry, is all. It's medical pot and all legal, too.

FIREMEN take their masks off and sniff the smoke.

GG

See? Ganja, that's all. Just some pot tokers holding a seminar.

Cautious FIREMEN look around and inhale deeply as they go. In no time they're stoned and hungry and attracted to the box of pot cookies on the table. Ever the proper host, BETH urges them to have some coffee and cookies.

1<sup>st</sup> FIREMAN

We can only stay a minute.

2<sup>nd</sup> FIREMAN

Yeah, they're waiting with the truck.

EARL

Tell 'em to come on in. They can make sure the fire's out.

GG

And tell them to lose their gas masks.

1<sup>st</sup> FIREMAN goes to the door and waves his buddies in and in no time a full-blown party breaks out with thoughtful tokers blowing smoke at the FIREMEN while they practice their yoga with deep breathing exercises.

Our heroes meet behind the counter and survey the scene.

BETH

I'd call our tasting a huge success.

EARL

I would too if I could see it.

GG

I say we could have monthly tastings with special celebrity guest tokers like Arnold and Woody Harrelson. We'd get good PR and maybe a reprieve from the governor or a part in a movie.

(bites cookie)

Why, maybe we could get Obama and..

BETH rolls her eyes and EARL shakes his head as they move into their partying guests and GG rambles on.

THE END









ETH