

Can't Take No More

When a child dies it always comes as some tragic accident. An article was recently written in the local newspaper. A little boy had drowned, and resurfaced on a bank of the town river, not far from his home. This little boy's name was Clint Langstrom, but his death was no accident.

Little Clint's birth, now that was the accident. He was not meant for this world, quite literally in fact. His two excuses of parents never wanted him, barely even knew he was coming.

Hank Langstrom was of course too liquored up: "Oh c'mon honey, don't make me wear a rubber."

But Darlene Langstrom wouldn't have it, "Hank you get that little fucker away from me."

"Aww dammit to hell! Fine. But I get some titty fucking then."

It wouldn't really matter, Hank never kept any of his promises, so why start now. Somewhere in the middle of it all he slipped his pecker out, and slipped the condom off. Darlene was too drunk to notice, they were both too drunk to care.

What happened next was just another careless page of history. This page shouldn't have been written, but soon little Clint was on his way, and it wouldn't matter. He'd come into a world unprepared, and unwilling to look after him. Not even Darlene knew she was pregnant.

The Langstrom's already had one son, and it was debatable to whether or not he was an accident too. A lackluster effort of imagination and creativity had the first born simply named Junior. Little Clint's older brother-to-be was the one who first noticed Darlene was pregnant, well, sort of.

"Momma you sure is fat," he would say, and "Hey Momma let me punch that bag you carrying on your gut," or "That fat ass of yours can't get no fatter Momma."

No one ever listened to the 8 year-old Junior? The Langstrom's were terrible listeners,

Can't Take No More

better at talking over one another than really hearing what someone had to say. However, Darlene was getting tired of what she called her, “little shit.” Junior's comments were beginning to grate.

This family never liked to think too hard, but one day Darlene took a long look at herself in the mirror. Junior had come up with what he thought to be a hilarious chant, roaming around the house singing out, “Hey fat momma! You as big as a llama!”

“Junior, I said shut-up, shut-up, shut-up!” Darlene yelled from her bathroom. “Hank! Daddy! Where you at?”

Without much care or interest Hank hollered on back, “Darlene, what the fuck you want! The games on baby,” muttering the last line, “Jesus Christ.”

Darlene's yelp pierced the air, “I heard that! Don't you be taking the lords name in vain.”

“Mmmmm.” Hank sloshed some tobacco spit into his empty beer can. “Hey Junior, go get me another beer.”

“Fuck off pop.”

“What did you say to me you little fuck-tard? I oughta--”

“HANK!!!”

“God dammit woman, what! You better have a big god damn problem if I gotta get up off this couch.”

“Hank! The lord!”

“Yeah, yeah.”

“Just come in here you lazy ass!”

“Fuck, alright.”

The years had not been kind to Hank, but then again, Hank hadn't been particularly kind to those years either. Once your typical white trash slob, he had now evolved into a balding, fat, whelp. From the unclean and mishaven look of his ugly mug, down to his stinky and unclipped

Can't Take No More

toe nails, Hank cared little for hygiene. His wife-beater had various stains and colors that rivaled the sheen of an oil slick, and his Levi's were covered in splotches of missed tobacco spit, spilt beer, and fingerprints of whatever he had wiped off. "Ain't that what jeans are for?" Hank would say, "Just like a damn napkin."

Having a hard time getting off his molded depression on the couch Hank had to rock his gut a bit in order to stumble up. Eyes still glued to the screen, he was unable to move, and shouted back to Darlene, "I'm comin', but if I miss any part of this game it'll be your ass. I got twenty bucks riding on the Texans, and I wanna see 'em win. Ernie will be payin' me in the mornin'." There was a break in Hank's viewing pleasure as a caveman selling car insurance popped onto the screen. "Shit a commercial. Ah but I love this dumb-ass caveman."

"Hank if you aren't in here in 5 seconds I'm going to--"

"Ok baby I'm comin', I'm comin'. Ha stupid caveman. Alright, what is it?"

Darlene was standing buck naked. The clutter of the bathroom surrounded her dirty, off white skin and big brown frazzled hair. Years of smoking had wrinkled and destroyed her once hick, princess face. Hands on her waist, one hip cocked out to the side, feet spread for balance, Darlene's little belly protruded over her grizzled bush.

"Now what the fuck is this baby, the game's on. C'mon stop fucking around."

"What does it look like Hank?"

The modern day caveman just stared at her, going back and forth from tits to bush, trying to remember the last time they had a good fuck.

"Hank, I think I'm pregnant..."

"Shit...Hey Junior bring me a beer. Better get one for your mother too."

"Fuck off pop!"

* * * *

Can't Take No More

A few years would pass, and so would the care for Little Clint. Unable to name the new Langstrom addition “Junior”, Clint somehow randomly popped up. Junior thought it to be like naming a new pet, and picked out a random name. Hank found it to be hilarious because it sounded like “clit”, and Darlene didn't care too much. No one cared.

Maybe it was best that way. He was only 5, but the years of neglect left Clint on his own. Attention was the last thing on him, so he was free to roam around and explore the property for himself. Not too far away, through the gap in their backyard fence Clint had found the town river. It was here under the safety and shade of the tree's, the comforting sound of the rushing river, and the taste of the nearby berries and honey suckles, Clint could find solace.

On the days Darlene wasn't late picking him up at kindergarten, he'd come home and race off to his little hideaway. However, more often than not, Hank would forget to take Clint to school, while on his way to work. Clint loved these full days of fun at the river, but hated going home to Darlene who yelled and smacked him around when she had come to find no boy to pick up at school.

It shouldn't come as a surprise Clint was never taught how to swim. He steered clear from the rapid river, but could usually be found in his favorite tree overlooking his hideout. With the amount of junk that piled up at the river's bend Clint had made himself a makeshift fort to escape to. Out of tires, plastic sheeting, and other miscellaneous items, here he closed his eyes and imagined new world's. With help from constant television watching in the Langstrom household, his imagination grew wild. Some days he was a pirate barking orders up in his fort to the salty sea dogs at his command. Other days he would play in the nice cool mud that bordered the river, pretending he was an explorer caught in quick sand, or trying to escape the evil clutches of some slimy monster.

Clint's home life had rendered him almost mute. A shy and quiet boy, he didn't say much,

Can't Take No More

for fear of saying the wrong thing. Because of his mistreatment at home Clint was unsocial, left on the school playground alone and friendless. He didn't seem to mind, Clint was great at coming up with games and stories to play by himself.

One thing Clint had to be mindful of were the screams and yells from back home. He had become keenly adept at discerning what a certain scream meant. Darlene pretty much only had one scream, “CLINNNNTTT!!!” That meant for him to hustle his ass inside before she locked him out. However, that didn't always mean she'd rattle off a cautionary scream, for Clint had spent a few nights out in his fort when Darlene had forgotten he was still outside somewhere. He had learned to bring a few blankets out to the fort when this happened.

Hank on the other hand had a whole repertoire of screams. Some screams were pointless and empty, “Hey. Hey Clint. Dammit Clint!” This being linked to a stubbed toe or lost shoe, cursing Clint's name for Hank's own clumsiness. Other screams were demanding and desperate, “CLINTY! WHERE ARE YOU? Get over here!” A cry for more beer or cigarettes to be picked up. Clint knew which ones were important to listen to and which ones to ignore. It was the loud grumbling slurs that filled the air Clint had to watch out for. “You stupid son-of-a-bitch. Clint you little, fuck, fuck, fucker!” a drunk Hank would yell back home, beer in one hand, showing a clenched fist with the other. These were the nights Clint knew to stay in his fort, regardless of whether or not Darlene called him back.

“Clint! CLINT!” Hank called out from his usual spot on the couch. “Where the fuck is Clint?”

Next to him, blankly watching the flashes of TV, Junior droned, “How the fuck should I know?”

“Is your mother picking him up from school?”

“It's a Saturday you idiot.”

“Well then, where's your mother?”

Can't Take No More

“I don't know. Getting her hair done with friends?”

“Fuck, where's Clint then!”

“He's your damn kid, it's not my job to know where he is.”

No one usually knew where Clint was, nor did they care. If their calls weren't answered they figured he had just left, or was out, not realizing he was just beyond the backyard by the river.

“Shit. Can you run down to the store then and pick up a 6-pack?” Junior was last on the totem pole, because he was least likely to do what was asked of him. “Hey and don't you be saying that neither. My kid. Ha! Your mother musta fucked someone else cause that kid don't look nothing like me.”

For the most part Hank was right. If anything, Junior was the spitting image of Hank at a young age; brown shaggy hair, a creep of peach fuzz beginning to poke through his acne torn face, and the most pathetic excuse for a growth spurt. The only thing that came out of puberty was a deep voice, nothing else.

“That little bastard better not come back.” Hank continued. “I'm tired of driving him to school in the morning. I gotta go outta my way, wasting gas and time just for him. What has he ever done for me 'cept be a pain in my ass? He ain't no good around here, always fucking shit up and not listening.”

Hank burped and knocked over the last beer that had been resting on his belly. It spilled all over him, soaking his already damp and sweaty clothes. The idiot simply turned over, front ways down, pushing into Junior, and slid himself back and forth, rubbing the wet, beer-soaked clothes into the couch to help dry him off.

“What the fuck dad! Get off me motherfucker. Mom told you to stop spilling on the couch, it already smells like shit. Man, this whole fucking house does.”

There was a dumpster-esque feel that clashed with their unfortunate hoarding. When it

Can't Take No More

got hot outside the various smells of spoiled food, dirty laundry, backed up bathrooms, and faint stench of mildew and sweaty crotch only amplified. It was always hot.

“Aw shut-up Junior. You sound like your mother.”

As much as Junior liked to tattle and tell people off, he hated being compared to his mother.

Hank suddenly came up with what he thought was a brilliant idea. “Hey Junior, what if you take Clint to school with you? Then I don't have to get up earlier and drive him across town. He can walk the few blocks with you, or take the god damn bus.”

“Naw, I ain't taking him. I don't want that little faggot following me around.”

The argument was moot by two counts. One, Junior went to school less than Clint did, and two, by some miracle Junior had become a freshman while Clint was just entering the first grade.

Hank grumbled in annoyance, “Hmmp. Fine. Damn dipshit, causing me all these problems – We ain't got no beer left. WHERE THE FUCK IS CLINT!!!”

Clint heard Hank yelling, and he knew this to be a demanding scream, one to be ignored.

* * * * *

One day the school called. It turned out Junior, now a senior, was barely a senior at all. He was failing all of his classes, had missed far too many days, and his bullying had gotten out of hand. There was no way he could graduate, even in the underwhelming and underperforming school Darlene and Hank shoved him into.

The school had grown increasingly aware of the Junior Langstrom problem, but failed to ever reach or contact either Hank or Darlene. He should have been kicked out long ago, but the school embarrassingly admitted to not knowing what Junior looked like. He was well known among the students as a dope smoking, piece of shit, bully, who roamed the halls looking for a

Can't Take No More

fight or a drag, but was a mystery to the administration. Most likely a combination of their carelessness with students, and Junior's uncanny ability to get out of school, none of his teachers could give an exact description of him. It was weeks before they called the right kid into the office, plucking a half dozen possible look-a-likes from the masses.

There was no way to rely on Junior to give his folks a note, so a handful of calls were made. The problem was the Langstrom's phone and answering machine had never tried to work properly. Finally, a letter would make contact, shuffled in with the Penny Saver's and porno mags. When it was learned Junior would have to go to reform school, shit hit the fan, or most likely would have if the Langstrom's owned one.

Squeezing off another torpedo Hank yelled in exasperation, "What the hell does it say!?"

"Your little fuck of a son just got kicked out of school!" Darlene called out. "We are gonna need him in some school for dumb asses. That means you gotta ask for another shift at the toll booth."

"I knew it! I knew he was a god damn retard. Why did we have another? Shoulda just dumped him. What did I tell ya – Wait what! Are you shitting me?" Hank yelled on back, slamming open the bathroom door, Levi's and stained underwear rising much too slow to cover anything, as the after effects of last night's Taco Bell dinner wafted into the hall. "More work! You fucking kidding me? NO. Nuh-uh, make him pay for it. That no good cheese-dick!"

Moments like these, where Hank's rage mixed with his hungry belly, had him completely lose the ability to swear or curse coherently without adding a food or two in the process.

"Turkey-bitch-hole. I swear to god when I get my hands on Clint I'm gonna fuck up his pudding ass good."

Unfortunately Clint had not yet made it out to the river. He was stuck in the hallway, frozen, clutching a stick he had retrieved from under his pillow. The past few days had given way to stories and dreams of wizardry and magic. Clint had plucked this particular stick from his tree

Can't Take No More

fort. It stood out for him, a limb different from the others, reddish in color, with black speckles along the side. He imagined it could shoot sparks from its tip, and transform any man to beast.

“Come here you little shit-rind. I'm gonna teach you a lesson!” Underwear and pants still not entirely up, Hank reached down for his belt and slid it out fast through the loops, whipping the stinky and stained air.

Unable to run, Little Clint was viciously snatched up by Hank and thrown into the middle of the trash cluttered living room. A large “SMACK!” came from Little Clint's small face as Hank's open hand connected. The force of the blow knocked tears into his eyes, and shocked him to the ground. Without struggle Clint looked up at Hank, unsure of what he had done.

“I'll be damned if I have to work more because of your dumb-ass.” Clutching what he could of his pants and hoisting them towards his hairy gut, Hank clambered over Clint, pinning him to the ground, using his knees to hold down Clint's arms. Still grappling with the hitch in his pants, Hank used the other hand to wallop Clint's body and face with the belt.

There were no plea's for help, for he wouldn't receive any, nor did he cry out for the pain to stop, because it was a rage he could not control. No, Clint lay there under the immense weight and pressure of Hank, pummeled by belt and fist. The poor child screamed into the air, crying out louder and louder, tears wetting his face, and torment twisting it.

Hank didn't seem to notice. Instead, he flipped him over, pushing Clint's face into the floor as he now worked the backside. Innocent cries of shock and pain were choked by tears as they rattled the room. Clint, unable to wriggle free and escape this harm, escape this family, escape this life, still tightly gripped his magic wand. Lying there on the ground waiting for hits to come he moved his beautiful red wand up and down desperately beating against the floor, hoping for it to end. But no sparks came. Hank was stuck a beast, and Clint's magic had failed.

“Hank get off him, he's had enough.” Darlene's voice finally poked through.

“Stop squirming! What do you have there?” Hank used the couch to help himself up, but

Can't Take No More

not before prying Little Clint's hand apart until it released his magic wand. “A fucking stick? Why the hell'd you bring this into the house?”

Clint remained a ball on the floor, breathing harsh and heavily into the filthy carpet. He tried to calm down, covering his new welts and sores with whimpers and sobs.

“Huh? I said, why'd you bring a stick here?”

No movement, only tears.

“Fine. It's just fuckin' trash anyways.” Hank snapped the stick in two, carelessly tossing it to the side of Clint.

“Would you listen to me you dumb redneck!” Darlene got a hold of Hank's attention. “It ain't Clint, it's Junior. Junior's the one who needs more schoolin'. Now you gone and scared him, taken off so he won't have to deal with you.”

“What? Junior! Ahh dammit. Well let this be a lesson to them both then. He'll be back anyways. I'll get him.”

It was a rare occasion where Hank remembered Clint wasn't an invisible servant, but another son of his, even if it was for the wrong offense.

Both Hank and Darlene left the room, walking to the kitchen to find some fast food leftovers. Shaking, Clint's small hand slowly reached out to his broken wand, bringing it close to his chest, trying to stop himself from crying.

* * * * *

Even with the addition of more work, Hank would not allow the household any lasting peace. Everyone was on edge, agitated with the arrival of a late night and usually drunk Hank. More work, meant more abuse. Darlene still bubbled about with her normal schedule, working at the local mall food court and shopping/shoplifting her days away, but Clint and Junior had

Can't Take No More

become weary of their time at home.

Yes it was quieter, and perhaps easier for both of them to do as they pleased, but it was always a countdown. As the clock ticked from afternoon to evening, from evening to night, the two dreaded the arrival of Hank. Darlene began to dread it too. Whether he came home from work or the bar, he was almost always drunk. She could tell which it was when Hank sat down to eat her re-heated meal. Beer on the breath meant the bar, whiskey meant he had a flask all to himself in his booth.

While Hank inhaled the mediocre meal that lay in front of him he'd regale the whole household with angry tales of work. No one paid too much attention to him as he explained how he didn't "give two fucks about being drunk on the job." Just as Junior had managed to escape detection in high school, Hank could float through the day gradually moving from sober to sloppy on his double shift without his boss noticing. He'd usually give back the incorrect amount of change, hand back too much, or not enough, but somehow always came out with an equal, or close to equal book.

However, there was an occasional shift or two where a driver would check the change given and then holler insults at Hank. These shifts made nights more abusive.

"So I'm just sitting there, you know. All she has to do is hand...is hand...hand me the money," Hank rifled out a loud burp, giving the air more to feel sick about. "But this bitch, and she was a bitch, has to make a big deal about it. 'I want two fives, and the rest in ones, but make one of them all quarters, blah blah blah,'" Hank mocked the woman from earlier. "I mean really, who gives a twenty? A twenty, I don't know...I don't know, want to break a twenty? Ha! She held up the whole god damn line, until I got it right. And then, AND THEN! I finally get her what she wants, like I'm some fuckin' bank, and she's soooo mad that she calls later and complains. My boss came up to me at lunch and..."

No one was listening. Hank sat on the living room couch, holding the plate to his mouth,

Can't Take No More

using his hands rather than the plastic fork and knife, to pick at the microwaved tray. Darlene was taking note of her manicure, Junior had the TV blasting, and Clint lay in a corner pretending the rocks he held were a super hero and villain pair. The bad guy was an ugly brown colored rock, while the super hero was shiny white with blue specks.

Another loud burp rumbled and shook, knocking Hank's precariously set beer onto the couch and floor.

“Aww god dammit.”

“Hank what did I tell you about using the lords name! I don't – did you spill on the couch again! You stupid drunk son of a bitch! How many times do I need to tell you?”

“Oh come fucking on. Get off my back. Bitch Bitch Bitch. Fuck'n woman. Gotta be a bitch to me. Shut your ass up!”

Cussing in the house was no big deal, using the lords name in vain was another, and then cussing at Darlene was a whole 'nother issue. This was unacceptable.

The red-necked woman now sported a red-face as she exploded on Hank. The fight was a mix of words that meant very little, and threats that meant even less. Both Langstrom's let the insults fly, as grudges kept from months past were used on one another.

Junior turned the TV up and Clint ran outside, knowing when to make himself scarce. Raging on into the night, there was no end in sight. All their breakables had been broken, and their to-go boxes, paper plates, and plastic souvenir mugs tossed in anger.

In the end, a drunk, tired, fat ole Hank was no match for Darlene, who was proud of her flabby yet secretly strong arms. She needed them when stealing heavier items at the mall.

Even though the night ended in silence, the fight of course picked right back up the next day. It wouldn't matter if Hank did or said something wrong again, as soon as he came into contact with Darlene she had a few choice words for him.

He had some choice words for her too, “No, not this again. Really. Another one of your

Can't Take No More

little pussy fisted fights.” That never helped the situation. Too drunk to defend himself Hank would take another beating until Darlene felt accomplished. In turn Hank would then take out his own anger and aggravation targeting Junior and Clint.

“Im'ma make you shit dicks! This is all your fault.”

The argument never made sense, but it didn't have to for him to beat up on the two. Clint was spending most of his days and nights at the river fort, in order to escape these outbursts. Hank would forget and beat up Junior instead. Regrettably, Junior did not forget, and whenever Clint escaped one beating, he'd come home to another one. A bruised but lethal Junior was almost worse than a drunk and sloppy Hank.

* * * * *

No one would think that a child could hold in so much pain, hatred, and sadness, but Clint did. He was too young to matter, thought of as just another kid. But he wasn't just another kid, he was the one kid who had been hated and forgotten his whole short life. A lack of friends and constant abuse from family left him broken. It hadn't been a terrible day, or a horrible week, but an unfortunate life. He had come to his river to have fun, to hide, to wait, and to cry. The only place where he didn't hate everything in existence. The one place that mattered to him.

One day, it all amounted to too much. He couldn't take no more. Maybe he got the idea from television, or something Junior said to him. Maybe he came up with the idea all himself, or truly had no clue what he was doing, but the boy was looking for one thing, an end.

He hid his favorite toys, the ones he made up, and the ones he found. A small grave was dug for them to rest in, to return to the wet squishy mud he loved to play in so dearly. His fort over the river was cleaned, left in a manner that seemed suitable to Clint.

Out the makeshift window he climbed, grasping the rough bark of the tree in order to

Can't Take No More

steady himself. Barefoot, the boy carefully walked out to the middle of the branch, balancing himself, hands out. In one hand he carried his most favorite toy, his superhero rock. The rock that had defeated every evil he could throw at it, the one white rock that glistened blue when the light hit it just so. In his other hand his magic wand, taped back together, a reddish wood that had powers to protect.

Atop this branch, over the careening and fast river, Clint sat. He watched the water, imagining a better life beneath the depths of a cold rush. With a sad smile and a flick of his magic wand Clint leapt off and quietly said, "Poof."

There was no struggle. This was his escape he wanted. The river held him, embraced him, cared for him like no other had. It took all his troubles and pain. It washed Clint away.

A jogger running a trail that bordered the river would find Clint's body. He had washed ashore down stream, a stick in one hand, a rock in the other.

Hank and Darlene had forgotten. Junior had forgotten. The Langstrom parents had gone out for a classy night at Sizzler, leaving Junior in charge. They came home late to find Junior drunk and passed out, and immediately went to fucking before they passed out too. It had been a while since Hank had got some good pussy. They had put their argument behind them.

None of the Langstrom's even realized Clint was gone until the afternoon of the next day. A police car showed up asking about a boy who had been spotted playing in this neighborhood earlier in the week, and whether they knew where their son was. The family would need to go down and identify the body, and fill out some paperwork.

An obituary was written by some poppy journalist who approached the family. It said a little about Clint, mostly made up stuff the family tried to remember and fill in the blanks for, but nothing close to the truth. The article continued, asking for privacy in this emotional time, showing appreciation to all those who cared. It spoke of how pain in a town like this, is a tragedy no family should endure. The excuse became that Junior was babysitting one day and lost track

Can't Take No More

of his baby brother. They were playing hide and go seek, and Clint ran to a secret favorite spot of his. The article said how he was such a good hider, and how no one thought to look down by the river. Unfortunately, he must have slipped and fallen into the river, unable to swim, and drowned. It was all such a horrible accident.

Only, it wasn't an accident.