

**“Have you ever interviewed someone,” asks Dennis Rodman, “while they’re having sex?”**

It is the day of Rodman’s firing from the Los Angeles Lakers, and the basketball superstar is driving out to his house in Newport Beach in his white Mercedes 500S with the woman he calls “my ex-wife,” Carmen Electra, on the seat beside him.

Rodman and Electra are eating hamburgers and french fries they’ve picked up at a drive-thru McDonald’s along the highway. (“Rodman, Rodman!” “Keep rollin’!” “Keep *playin’*!”) scream the kids working the window, straining to touch Rodman’s arm and passing him napkins to sign.)

“Everything is sexual with him,” says Electra, dabbing at a smudge of grease at the corner of her voluptuous mouth. “Dennis,” she says in a chiding tone. Rodman is squeezing one of her pinball-perfect breasts and pushing it up and out of her white spaghetti-strap top.

“That would be a first,” Rodman says, sultry Dallas accent twanging, “interviewing someone while they were having sex.”

“Well, you’re gonna have to be having sex with someone *else* for that to happen,” says Electra, plucking his hand off.

Rodman snakes his hand down to her crotch and grabs; she swats at him.

“What are you doing?” she complains.

He does it again, now tickling his ex-wife through her tight, white pants.

“Never seen *that*?” he teases. Electra tosses her head back, dark hair swinging; she just laughs. Rodman smiles and pushes on the gas with his giant foot, toes curling up over the edge of his flip-flops.

**That morning, Dennis Rodman had been asked to leave the Lakers practice by head coach Kurt Rambis because he’d shown up late, and couldn’t, he said, find his sneakers or socks.** It was later said to be the last straw in seven weeks of Rodman’s so-called “bizarre behavior,” which included not showing up for practices at all; pulling himself out of games (always, suspiciously, on Friday nights); taking a week-long absence to sort out

“personal problems” in Las Vegas, where he apparently gambled away his sorrows (and, for that, was fined). In his last week on the team, Rodman had also put a close to his five-month marriage to Electra, which technically didn’t have anything to do with basketball, but which was labeled a “distraction.”

“The Lakers don’t have a lot of organization,” Rodman was saying in the car. “No one knows what’s going on over there. What move to make, who to talk to, which way I should turn when I take a shit, which way I should wipe.” Electra was looking at him. “When you take a shit, which way should you *turn*?” she asked. “I pretty much just look straight ahead when I take a shit. Just wipe your ass.” She laughed.

“They just don’t have any direction,” continued Rodman, whose official career with the Lakers lasted a mere 51 days. “No paperwork or anything. If you did a survey in L.A. everybody would say the same thing: Something is *wrong*. They don’t want to face the real problems. They hate to give *me* any type of credit. When I came in—*boom!*—interest started to go back up, TV ratings went back up.” And, it should be added, in his first few weeks on the team, the Lakers won eleven games straight. But then things started to turn. “It’s like anything,” Rodman sighed. “Everything comes back to reality; everything just comes back to reality.”

Electra turned up the radio; Nirvana was playing. “All apologies,” moaned Kurt Cobain, as the song built steam. Rodman’s relationship with the Lakers was over, but he didn’t know it yet. No one would tell him until that night.

**I’d met up with Rodman earlier that day in his eleventh-floor suite at the Four Seasons Hotel in Beverly Hills.** The air in the room smelled sweet and expensive, a result of the enormous vases filled with fresh-cut flowers. The windows were open, providing a view of L.A. spread out like an accordion postcard, the sky dappled yellow and blue. Wearing gray sweatpants and an unbuttoned, short-sleeved Chicago police shirt, Rodman was half-reclining at a long mahogany table, his Kangol hat pulled down over mirrored sunglasses. He held an indelible marker, and his hand was moving back and forth across the shiny Lakers jerseys being stretched out before him by men from an autograph company, all buzz cuts and woolly arms. They flew around Rodman in military fashion, fingers splayed on purple jerseys, yellow jerseys. Rodman signed and signed and signed.

“Those bring up to \$400,” Rodman’s sports agent, Jill Smoller, giddily stage-whispered. Rodman didn’t speak to anyone the entire time. “He’s very shy,” said his bodyguard (and former Chicago police officer) Kelly Davis. “Talk to him,” said Matt Labov, Rodman’s Al Pacino-lookalike publicist, giving me a nudge. “I’d talk to him *now*,” urged Rodman’s exceedingly well-groomed talent agent, Steve Chasman, “while he’s *here*.”

But no one talked to Rodman. Everyone just watched him like a sideshow curiosity. “I’ve always been a guy that’s been intelligent in my own world,” Rodman would tell me later. “I sit there and put myself in a picture. I am a guy in my own audience.”

“Did you hear about Dennis’s movie? *Simon Sez*—like, S-E-Z?” Chasman asked, spelling out the name, as the flack pack stood outside of the hotel, awaiting their cars. “It’s coming out in July. It’s a fun movie.”

“It’s not Merchant-Ivory, okay?” asided Labov. He wasn’t sure about the plot—something about gangsters in the south of France.

Smoller’s car came, and then Labov’s, and then Chasman’s. They seemed to find it awkward that theirs had arrived before Rodman’s. “Um, this is weird,” someone muttered. Rodman stared ahead as his representatives all drove away. “I have *four* publicists now,” Rodman said softly. “I ask myself, how did this happen? I do so much, and make so much money, and there are so many people around me who use and abuse me to make money for themselves.”

Electra drove up in the Mercedes and put it in park; she slid over. Rodman climbed in the driver’s seat, kissing her gently with his considerable lips. He seemed relieved to see her. “Hi,” he said. She smiled.

Somewhere along the drive to Rodman’s beach house, Electra began

talking about their break-up. "We are divorced, yeah," she said, her voice warm but scratchy. She and Rodman both looked a bit squinty-eyed behind their sunglasses, somewhat the worse for wear, as if they might have been up late the night before. "All of sudden, like, I'm on every fuckin' news channel," she said, "and they're saying I'm a golddigger, that he was drunk [when they exchanged vows]. Even though it seems like nothing, it was really like, traumatic to me. I have a career, too." (Formerly of *Baywatch*, Electra now plays a millionaire's daughter on the WB Network's *Hyperion Bay*.) "And the *last* thing I want to do is marry Dennis for his money. I didn't put up with all this shit ... for *that!* I mean, I love the guy."

"She wanted to marry me two weeks after we met," Rodman interjected languidly. "He asked *me* to marry *him* two weeks after we met," said Electra. "We almost did it then. And then once we *did* do it, it just got really difficult with the tabloids. There were certain little things that were true, and then other things that *weren't* true. We'd had a little problem in our relationship...." Rumors had been circulating of infidelity on both sides. But, said Electra, the two of them just "hadn't been getting along."

"I think that we made the right decision," that is, with the divorce, she added, "'cause now we're hanging out and having a really good time."

"Yeah, we are," said Rodman. "We go home and fuck our brains out." Electra segued. "We're getting along better, it's really true. I mean, it was like, we're together, so why are we even getting married? It was causing drama—we don't *live* together.... He likes the drama better than I do."

They had eaten their McDonald's, and now needed something to wash it down with. Rodman pulled off the highway and into the driveway of a convenience store. He watched Electra walking away from the car, her size-2 bottom jerking pertly as she trotted across the parking lot on her three-inch, cork-heeled sandals.

"Just imagine," Rodman said, "I got a white ex-wife people jack off

**"I can cope with L.A. for a minute."  
—Dennis Rodman**

to. Imagine that. I like that. Guys get horny, they sit there and jack off to my ex-wife. Guys sit there and see Carmen Electra on the screen, say all these nasty perverted things to her...." He smiled. "I'm just saying, visualize *that*."

"Isn't the magazine gonna pay for the Coke?" he asked.

I joined Electra inside the store. Some boys with skateboards were frozen in a teen tableau watching her pay for a six-pack of Coca-Cola. "You should see them at games," Electra said, back outside, chuckling. "They ask me for my autograph. Dennis doesn't like it."

"That's because you're supposed to be watching *me*," said Rodman, starting up the car.

"I can cope with L.A. for a *minute*," he added, speeding off. Electra had switched the radio over to a hip-hop station (she's 27; Rodman's 38, and prefers rock-and-roll). "California, yee-ah!" went the Tupac song.

**When Rodman came out to L.A. in February to join the Lakers, he held a press conference; the team's management did not sponsor it.** Rodman was up there alone in front of the microphone, wearing a multi-colored, embroidered mushroom hat and saying he had come to help make things better, as long as he was "taken care of" (due to a current NBA salary structure, Rodman had to sign for a meager pro-rated sum of \$468,000, more than half of which he claims went to taxes and his personal charities).

Reporters hammered Rodman with questions about his personal life: How could a guy like him, they seemed to be saying, who couldn't even keep his own life in order, do *anything* for the Lakers? In the middle of the press conference, Rodman broke into tears. "I *was* really crying," he said. "I'm such an emotional person when it comes down to certain things ... and all those things came together. People don't give me any kind of



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credit—nothing in return. They just keep bashing me and bashing me. What can I do? Fuck *it*? I'm already here! But I'm *not* here," he said, cryptically, meaning, perhaps, not where he wants to be.

"[Lakers general manager] Jerry West suspected from the beginning that Rodman didn't really want to play basketball," a story in *The Los Angeles Times* reported a couple of days after Rodman was fired. "Are you kind of bored with basketball?" I asked him that day. "Yeah," he said. "I have to entertain myself! That's when all the shit starts. 'Oh, he took a vacation,'" he said, miming the voice of one of his naysayers. He laughed at the thought of it. "Nobody does that shit. I say, 'I'ma take a vacation, I'll see y'all next week.' 'Are you all right?' 'Yeah, I'm all right, I'll be back.' I get bored, I just take off."

"I need to get my mind right," Rodman continued. "In sports, your mind controls pretty much everything. Your physical ability is one thing, but your mind controls the rest of you. You just have to sit there and visualize—what you can do, and what you can't do.

"My mind's not right," he repeated, "I just say, 'I'ma take off...'"

But what got Rodman's mind not "right" when he came to L.A.? Was it, as he said, the team's "absolute disorganization"? Was it the egos of the other players, who reportedly became resentful when Rodman proved to be a hit, at first, with the fans? It was, after all, L.A., where everybody has to be a star. And Rodman had been playing the star role to the hilt, refusing to talk to his teammates during games, staying off to one side, riding an exercise bike to keep himself stoked. "There's a lot of jealousy and envy," he said. "You got some people in the organization that hate each other. I'm not close to anybody on the team, anybody in *basketball*. It's hard to have relationships with ... anybody.

"But you have to put things in different boxes, okay, this part over here, *great*. But then when I get on the court, I gotta work with these people. I have to do my job, and I'm a professional about what I do. But that doesn't mean I have to *like* the people. It's like saying when you do a

movie and you hate the people you're working with—as far as your co-star or director—you hate them, but you got an obligation. So, it's like if you was married and you hate your wife, why the hell you still *fucking* her? Because you like the sex? Fuck that, put a bag over her head!"

I was a little lost. "So you and Shaq aren't having sex right *now*?" Rodman said, "No."

"You could put a bag over his head," offered Electra. Rodman laughed. "I don't *know* you!" Electra turned around in her seat, a playful expression on her face. "Ask him about his sexuality," she said. "Ask him why he has such a great communication with gay men."

"Gay men?..." Rodman's voice trailed off. "You're a little stunned on that one, huh?" said Electra. "No," Rodman said, then allowing, "I've had orgies." The two said they like to go to Rage, a gay-friendly nightclub on Santa Monica Boulevard in West Hollywood. They said they go there a lot. "I party while she dances," said Rodman. "Drag queens show up at my house," Electra laughed.

"And there's another place in L.A. I go to all the time," said Rodman, spelling out the address of Electra's house. She rolled her eyes. "Don't print that."

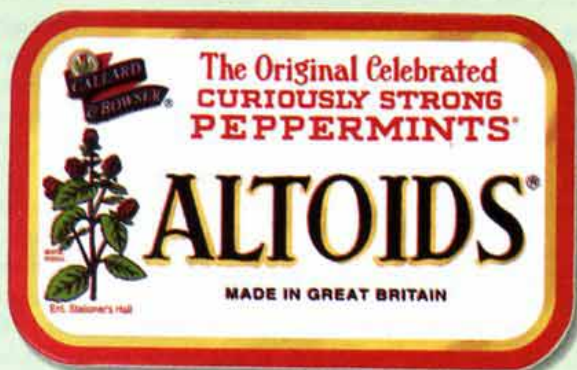
"That's the only good thing about L.A.," said Rodman. "It's where I met Carmen." They met, actually, at a party for the Billboard Live nightclub last February. "On Sunset Boulevard," Electra said. "My girlfriend was doing a fashion show. Dennis said he didn't know who I was."

"I didn't," Rodman said.

"One of his friends was trying to get me to meet some of the guys that he hangs out with and I'm going, *No*," said Electra. "This crazy black guy with green eyes named Floyd, he pulled me over to the bar, and Dennis was standing there, and, I don't know, it just seemed like we were really cool, and we started to get along. We hung out for the rest of the night. The rest is history," she added.

Electra began flying out to Chicago a lot. "I went there all the time,

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**"If I was as rich as Michael Jordan ... fuck. I got to be the world's richest-poor motherfucker in the world."**

like every other week," she said. "She fell in love," said Rodman. Electra said, "He fell in love faster."

"That's the only reason I *stay* in L.A.," Rodman explained. "It got to be like, if I don't come here, I won't get to see you at all. That's the only reason, even though I knew it was gonna be a *lot* of problems...."

When Rodman flew to Vegas to sort out his "personal problems," he told everyone it had something to do with Carmen.

She herself has had a tough time. Last July, her sister, Debbie, died of a heart attack. Her mother, Patricia, succumbed to a brain tumor a week later. "When my mother died, Dennis filled my entire house up with flowers," said Electra. "I had never had a man treat me that way before. People don't know about Dennis's good side."

"Michael Jordan, American hero," said the radio, advertising an HBO special about Rodman's legendary former teammate. We drove a moment in silence. "What's Jordan like?" I asked Rodman. "I don't know," he said. "You don't *know*?" said Electra. There was a long pause. Rodman said, "We got along. Michael Jordan was supposed to be the angel, and I was supposed to be the devil. He had his group, and I had my cult."

"Too rich," Rodman mumbled after a moment. "If I was as rich as Michael Jordan ... fuck. I got to be the world's paidest-poor motherfucker in the world."

"He's not poor," said Electra.

"I'm poor, considering," said Rodman.

"He has fifteen cars," Electra said.

Rodman reached over and stroked her breast.

"I'm tired," she said.

**When they arrived at Rodman's Newport Beach home, they fell right into bed, a sofa converter in the living room of the modestly furnished condo, which looked like a typical bachelor's crash pad.**

A home entertainment center of grave proportions dominated the room. A stuffed tiger watched them, eyes a-goggle.

They lay under the covers, their clothes still on. Rodman was stretched out, his flip-flops and Kangol hat off; his hair was marbled with blond. Electra snuggled in his armpit. He jiggled her from side to side, making her breasts jump. "Stop," she said. Rodman flipped channels, settling a moment on some Japanese cartoons. He flipped again. "Oh! There's my movie!" he said. Richard Dreyfuss was on the screen looking small and sleazy at a race track. "Let It Ride!" "Oh, no, his favorite movie," murmured Electra, referring to the 1989 bomb. "Great movie," Rodman said. Jennifer Tilly was screaming; Richard Dreyfuss had won \$69,000. But then, when he added up all his debts on a scrap of paper, he realized he was left with nothing. "That's just how it is, too," Rodman said. "You win, and then you add up everything, everybody you owe, and you don't have dick! You don't have nothing."

"You read about that lady that won the Lotto?" he went on, shaking his head. "Why's it always people like that? People you never even *heard* of. If I won \$187 million," he mused, "the first thing I would do is tell everyone to *kiss my ass*. And then I'd go out there during a game and take all my clothes off and give everybody the finger. I'd walk off, take my wife"—or his ex-wife—"and

get the hell out of there, throw the biggest party in history, take up a whole block in Santa Monica, have a whole fuckin' parade! A Dennis Rodman Walkathon party right there, drinking and fuckin' in the streets," he said.

He jiggled Electra from side to side again. "I'm trying to *sleep*," she said. "You know what I want to do?" he told her. "You know what I been thinking? I can come out with a record." "What, like, Milli Vanilli?" she yawned. "Somebody *else* would be singing," said Rodman. "I could do the lip sync. I could have a whole album." Electra giggled to herself. "You could probably get away with it."

"How about," Rodman continued, "if I had different people singing—a different person singing on *every* song?" Electra opened her eyes to slits. "I like that, yeah. Eddie Vedder could do one song, we'll get Puffy..." "He could do another song," said Rodman. "We could get women, too," said Electra. "We could get Cher to do one, RuPaul could do one. You could have the Backstreet Boys on one—you could be all of them. You could be *all* the fuckin' Backstreet Boys. I love it."

He hugged her. She laughed.

Rodman's cell phone had started ringing, but he wasn't answering it. His hands were finding his ex-wife under the covers.

I left the room. Walking through his house, I saw the multi-colored mushroom hat placed carefully on top of an armchair, as if it were waiting for him. I stood out on his porch a moment. The sand was white, the ocean blue, the sky yellow. Peaceful.

**Electra had already left that night when Rodman got the call.** It was Kelly Davis, his bodyguard, who finally told him that the Lakers had let him go. Rodman was all alone.

"I was indifferent, pretty much," he said, unconvincingly, when I finally reached him a few days later on the telephone. He sounded exhausted and sad. "I didn't expect it to last," he said. "They didn't explain *why* it didn't last," he added. "They still haven't called me. No one has called." Not Laker forward Kobe Bryant, or superstar center Shaquille O'Neal, who had said, when Rodman came out to L.A., that he "needed a thug in his life."

"I don't expect people to be my friends," said Rodman. "In the NBA, you can always see who your real friends are.... They're saying I'm the one that caused everything, but they have no idea how to win.... I did," he said. "I was just a guy who needed to be reassured."

"I'm not ready to talk to other teams," he said, although as this magazine went to press at least three franchises were expressing interest in him. "I'm gonna pretty much stay away from the game of basketball for a while," Rodman said. "I got a lot of other stuff going on. I'm doing movies, TV, I got record deals, I got my concert tour." He plans to appear on stage with backup singers and dancers this summer in something he calls Dennis Rodman: Unplugged. "You name it, I got it all going on."

How did Electra react? "She was like, I bet you'll be a lot happier now, Dennis," said her ex. "A weight is being lifted off your shoulders."

"Look, no matter what happens to me I'm gonna be strong, I'm gonna survive," said Rodman. "The more fucked up things I do, the more famous I get."

"It's pretty fucked up, *right*?"